



## Agriculture and Biodiversity in Protected Areas



This document is addressed to the managers of protected areas within the EUROPARC Federation and to members of the Slow Food network who are active in Europe's protected areas and N2000 sites.

This document aims to:

- provide information to the managers of protected areas within the EUROPARC Federation regarding Slow Food, its biodiversity initiatives and possible collaborations at a local level.
- inform the Slow Food network present in protected areas about possible collaborations with European parks.
- highlight good practices that promote agrobiodiversity in protected areas and encourage the sharing of other examples.
- launch a joint process for the creation of a European network of protected areas working to promote agrobiodiversity.

## Biodiversity

*What it is, what it has to do with our everyday food and what we can do to preserve it*

Biodiversity is the diversity of life on many levels, from the smallest (genes, the building blocks of life) to plant and animal species, up to the most complex levels (ecosystems).

All these levels intersect, influence each other and evolve. Over the centuries, traditional agriculture has contributed to the formation of new habitats, the selection and conservation of plant and animal species, enriching the biodiversity of the rural landscapes that we see in Europe today.

**Biodiversity loss** is one of the greatest environmental threats currently plaguing the planet.

The loss of biodiversity does not only involve wild species, but also **agrobiodiversity**, namely the animal breeds and plant varieties which, since the birth of agriculture 10,000 years ago, have gradually and consistently been domesticated to be grown or raised to produce food.

Thanks to the selection performed by farmers over the centuries, **local** varieties and breeds have adapted to the local environment, becoming stronger, more resilient and demanding less external inputs, such as fertilizers, water, pesticides, veterinary care, than their conventional equivalents.

However, over the last 50 years, industrial agriculture has invested in an ever smaller number of hybrid varieties and commercial animal breeds, selected and created to increase productivity, to the detriment of diversity and the connection to the collective knowledge and flavors of individual places.

According to FAO estimates, 75% of agricultural crop varieties have disappeared and 20% of animal breeds reared for food, meat or milk, face extinction.

The **farmers, herders and fishers** who know and respect the fragile equilibrium of nature are the last real guardians of the planet. For millennia, they have been working in harmony with ecosystems, not in competition with them.

As stated by the FAO, family farming is the most common form of food production in both the global south and north, and plays a fundamental socio-economic, environmental and cultural role.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/what-is-family-farming/en/>

## Slow Food

Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization, founded in 1989 to prevent disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us.

Since its beginnings, Slow Food has grown into a global movement involving millions of people, in over 150 countries.

Slow Food believes everyone should have access to good, clean and fair food.

**Good** to eat, because of its sensory qualities, but also its identity-forming and emotional values.

**Clean** because it is produced in an ecologically sustainable way that respects the environment.

**Fair** because social justice is respected during its production and marketing.

Slow Food believes we must return to giving food its proper value, respecting those who produce it, those who eat it, its taste and the environment. Everyone has a right to quality food, and so each of us is responsible for safeguarding that heritage of biodiversity, culture and knowledge handed down through the generations that makes the act of feeding ourselves one of the fundamental pleasures of existence.

## Initiatives

### *Ark of Taste*

The Ark of Taste is one of Slow Food's initiatives to promote food biodiversity. The Ark of Taste is an online catalogue of small-scale quality productions that belong to the cultures, history and traditions of the entire planet: an extraordinary heritage of fruits, vegetables, animal breeds, cheeses, breads, sweets and cured meats...

The Ark was created to **point out the existence** of these products, **draw attention** to the risk of their extinction within a few generations, **invite everyone to take action** to help protect them. In some cases this might be by buying and consuming them, in some by telling their story and supporting their producers, and in others, such as the case of endangered wild species, this might mean eating less or none of them in order to preserve them and favor their reproduction.

Help us save more products by nominating them at [www.slowfoodfoundation.com/ark](http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/ark)

### *Slow Food Presidia*

The Presidia are concrete projects on the ground, directly involve small farmers, sustain quality production at risk of extinction, protect unique regions and ecosystems, recover traditional processing methods, safeguard native breeds and local plant varieties.

Today, over 400 Presidia involve more than 10,000 producers around the world.

### **What does a Presidium do?**

1. **Looks for relevant producers**, technicians and institutions to define the objectives of the Presidium and to create a work group.
2. Surveys the production area to collect data and information necessary to establish a **production protocol**: an important tool to grant traceability and high quality of the product.
3. **Assists producers** in the construction and constitution of a producers association with its own name and brand.
4. **Promotes** Presidia products by telling consumers all over the world that these are extraordinary products and that discovering, buying and tasting them means learning history and traditions of a territory and safeguarding its cultural heritage.

To find out more and discover the Slow Food Presidia around the world:  
[www.slowfoodfoundation.com/presidia](http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/presidia)

## EUROPARC

EUROPARC is the largest European association of protected areas: national and regional parks, natural and biosphere reserves, protected landscapes, marine areas and Natura 2000 sites. Its aim is to promote good management practices and strengthen the role of protected areas as vital tools for the safeguarding of Europe's environmental heritage. The EUROPARC Federation works to improve the management of Protected Areas in Europe through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience, and by influencing policy.

EUROPARC represents hundreds of responsible authorities and thousands of Protected Areas in 36 countries and is recognised around the world as a professional network of European Protected Areas. Protected Areas currently cover over 20% of the European Union's surface area. They are laboratories of sustainability and living territories. Their landscapes have often been shaped over the centuries by traditional agricultural practices. These have significantly contributed to increasing the wealth and variety of species and habitats that now represent the heart of their mission.

This is why the parks are working at a local level to preserve agricultural biodiversity and to promote quality food production.

## Initiatives

### *Prairies Fleuries Competition*

Launched in France in 2010, this national competition for agro-ecological excellence is organized by France's regional and national natural parks, in collaboration with the Environment and Agriculture Ministries, the Chambers of Agriculture, the unions of DOC cheese producers, the beekeepers' unions and many other nature management and protection associations.

The competition recognizes farmers who are working to preserve a wealth of species in pasture or hay meadows. It involves around 600 farms within the member parks.

To evaluate the quality of the grassland, the competition is based on a simple scientific principle: the presence of easily recognizable flowers, an indicator of a good agro-ecological equilibrium, and specifically the presence of at least four plants chosen for their agricultural, ecological, honey-producing and cheesemaking value.

The competition wants to demonstrate that food production and biodiversity can go hand in hand, rewarding the best agro-ecological balance, in terms of agricultural, environmental and landscape quality, and in terms of the sensory quality of the products of livestock farming and beekeeping. The competition encourages a dialog between different local actors and helps to communicate the importance of maintaining France's natural pastures intact. The competition is now starting to be replicated at a European level.

Find out more: <http://prairiesfleuries.espaces-naturels.fr>

### *Park Brands to Protect Quality Products*

Many parks in Italy and the rest of Europe have developed protocols and regulations for the assignment of their own quality symbol or brand to local products and services that meet quality requirements and help fulfill the park's objectives. A park brand allows the park authority to have a positive impact on its territory, encouraging social and economic development and promoting activities compatible with environmental protection.

The French "Regional Natural Park" brand for example, is a protected collective brand which can be used on products or services that respond to the parks' three values:



1. A link with the local area: the producers and artisans involved contribute to the development of the local area and are committed to promoting the park by offering goods and services that add value to the local cultural heritage.
2. A strong human dimension: the professionals share their knowledge and can draw on a network of solidarity across the local area.
3. Respect for the environment: the producers commit to preserving the natural environment and the quality of the landscape specific to each park.

By buying products and services with the “Regional Natural Park” brand, consumers can support the conservation of fragile species and habitats, the safeguard of traditional knowledge, as well as local products and producers. Over the past 13 years, the brand has been used by around 200 agricultural and artisanal products, plus tourism and educational services, involving over 800 businesses in 36 parks.

Find out more: <http://www.parc-naturels-regionaux.tm.fr/fr/decouvrir/produit-terroir.asp>

Similar experiences and practices can be found in other European countries.

See, for example:

Gran Paradiso National Park: [www.pngp.it/en/park-activities/quality-trademark](http://www.pngp.it/en/park-activities/quality-trademark)

Adamello Brenta Nature Park: [www.pnab.it/en/what-we-do/the-park-quality-project.html](http://www.pnab.it/en/what-we-do/the-park-quality-project.html)

Julian Prealps Nature Park: [www.parcoprealpigiulie.it/en/Home.aspx](http://www.parcoprealpigiulie.it/en/Home.aspx)



## Why Slow Food and EUROPARC Together?

Both Slow Food and EUROPARC **have long been committed to protecting biodiversity.**

**They are working together to ensure that the importance of safeguarding domesticated agrobiodiversity emerges clearly from the vital work being done every day in European parks to protect biodiversity.**

Safeguarding domesticated biodiversity does not mean just protecting native varieties and seeds but also promoting cultures, knowledge, artisanal techniques and the interaction between these different components, which over time have interwoven in a constantly evolving process.

Agrobiodiversity is the result of years of interaction between man and the environment. It is the virtuous small-scale producers, farmers and artisans who, with their work, contribute to safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems, the landscape, plant varieties and animal breeds in every corner of the world.

**Small-scale food producers** are the most important guardians of agrobiodiversity.

The creation of alliances between protected areas and local farming will mean being able to:

- put into effect good practices for environmental sustainability in agriculture.
- add value to local production, offering a future to the traditional knowledge of rural culture.
- promote local social and economic development, contributing to preserving the diversity of parks' habitats and endemic species.
- give significant added value to the parks and agricultural businesses involved, creating places where agrobiodiversity can be promoted.

Additionally, joint initiatives of education and awareness-raising aimed at the public are essential to spread the awareness that all together, with our choices as consumers, we can have a crucial impact on the safeguarding of biodiversity.

## The Proposal

Slow Food and EUROPARC want to strengthen and create collaborations between protected areas and local producers for the protection of biodiversity, first of all by realizing and sharing an inventory of good practices.

EUROPARC and Slow Food plan to encourage the creation of a European network of protected areas actively committed to protecting quality agriculture.

## What Can Parks Do?

- Verify the existence of projects for the protection of local food production promoted by the Slow Food network within the park area (Presidia, Slow Food convivia, Ark of Taste).
- Make contact with Slow Food at a local or national level to promote shared actions aimed at promoting the traditional products, knowledge and cultures found within the protected areas.
- Join the Ark of Taste project, nominating food products at risk of extinction.
- Share their experiences and good practices with EUROPARC.

### *Useful resources*

- [Contacts for Slow Food convivia](#) (the term “convivia” indicates the local groups of Slow Food) in Europe
- Descriptions of [Slow Food Presidia in Europe](#) and contact details
- Information about the [Ark of Taste](#) initiative
- [Communication material](#) about biodiversity and the Ark of Taste (films and booklets in multiple languages)
- Slow Food contact: [europa@slowfood.it](mailto:europa@slowfood.it) - [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

## What Can the Slow Food Network Do?

- Contact parks to present the work of the local Slow Food network in favour of biodiversity.
- Invite parks to collaborate on the promotion of traditional products and knowledge.
- Encourage the involvement and participation of local producers in initiatives to preserve biodiversity organized by the park.

### *Useful resources*

- [Contacts for protected areas](#) in the EUROPARC network
- EUROPARC contact: [f.minozzi@europarc.org](mailto:f.minozzi@europarc.org) - [www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)

## Examples of Good Practices

Protected areas around Europe are home to an extraordinary wealth of agrobiodiversity, and many initiatives and projects are promoted by Slow Food and parks to protect species, habitats, agricultural landscapes, work, knowledge and culture that make quality agriculture possible.

Here are a few examples from collaborations that are already active.

**Please send us examples of other collaborations between parks and the Slow Food network in Europe, so that we can share your experiences and invite others to replicate them,** by sending details to the email addresses below:

Slow Food: [europa@slowfood.it](mailto:europa@slowfood.it) - EUROPARC: [f.minozzi@europarc.org](mailto:f.minozzi@europarc.org)



## Good Practices – in Italy

### *The Po Delta Park and the Slow Food Traditional Marinated Comacchio Valleys Eel Presidium*

The first factories for marinating eels were opened in the Po delta in the 18th century, and up until 1956, a company in Comacchio was providing employment to a large number of workers. The live adult eels were brought to the factory in *marotte*, closed boats with special systems for changing the water and keeping the eels alive. Convoys of *marotte* would travel around Italy, as far as Naples. At the factory, the eels would be selected, cut, threaded onto iron skewers and cooked over wood fires in 12 fireplaces.

The Presidium has revived this ancient preservation technique. After being cooked on skewers, the eels are marinated in a brine (water, Cervia sea salt, white-wine vinegar and bay) in wooden containers or tins. The secret lies in the wood for the fires (holm oak) and the quality of the wild valley eels.

The Emilia-Romagna Po Delta Park, in collaboration with the Comacchio municipality, has restored the historic “Sala dei Fuochi” (“fire room”) in the Manifattura dei Marinati factory, and eels are now once again being marinated according to the authentic traditional technique, protected by a Slow Food Presidium production protocol. This fruitful collaboration is helping to guarantee a future for this ancient practice of fishing and processing, and protect the Comacchio valleys habitat, essential to the eels’ survival.

Find out more: [www.parcodeltapo.it](http://www.parcodeltapo.it) - [www.fondazione Slow Food.it](http://www.fondazione Slow Food.it)



@ Slow Food Archives

Examples of other initiatives in Italy:

*Slow Food Presidia in the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park*

[www.gransassolagapark.it](http://www.gransassolagapark.it) - [www.slowfoodfoundation.com](http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com)

*The Julian Prealps Natural Park and the Slow Food Resia Garlic Presidium*

<http://www.parks.it/parco.prealpi.giulie/> - [www.fondazione Slow Food.it](http://www.fondazione Slow Food.it)

## Good Practices – in Spain

### *Environmental and Food Education*

The Junior Ranger 2009 international camp, held in the Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park in Catalonia, Spain, is an important example of the opportunities for educating younger generations that can develop out of the collaboration between EUROPARC and Slow Food. More than 30 young people aged between 13 and 17 and 15 adult Rangers from 12 parks in eight different European countries participated in the camp, whose theme was food and biodiversity. The teenagers were able to appreciate the fruit and vegetables grown organically by a local producer, to participate in the harvest and to learn from the leader of the Slow Food Empordà Convivium. They discovered the importance of good, clean and fair food to safeguarding biodiversity and health, while trying out traditional recipes prepared with seasonal produce.

Find out more:

<http://europarc.org/what-we-do/junior-ranger-network> - <http://emporda.slowfood.es>



## Good Practices – in France

### *Salers Cows and Auvergne Salers Breed Cheeses*

Around a quarter of all French PDO cheeses are produced inside the Auvergne Regional Natural Park in the heart of France, known for its extraordinary chain of volcanic cones. One of them, Salers, is a real jewel, one of France's smallest PDOs, made with raw milk from Salers cows, a breed with a red coat and lyre-shaped horns. A historic, native, hardy breed, it is known for its strong maternal instinct, and the cows cannot be milked unless their calves are present. The farming of this cattle breed, which produces quality beef and helps to maintain the pastures, is promoted by the park by a brand, and the cheese "Auvergne au lait de race Salers" is recognized as a Slow Food Presidium: a good example of the harmony between preserving biodiversity and protecting quality food production.

Find out more:

[www.slowfood.fr](http://www.slowfood.fr)- [Video](#)





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[www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com) - [www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)

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