

Agriculture - side by side



Dominique Lévêque from the Montagne de Reims Natural Regional Park, France, a Council Member of the EUROPARC Federation is excited to host the workshop “Agriculture “at [EUROPARC 2012](#).

In light of the Common Agriculture Policy reform, Mr Lévêque will moderate the discussion on how the needs of nature conservation can be combined with those of agriculture. As the CAP has gradually moved from a production-based structure of subsidies to a market-oriented system; will the same happen to protected area facing tighter budgets in the economic crisis?

The economic value of protected areas is being explored on different levels and the balance between funding subsidies for agriculture protection and the mere protection of “wild nature” is at threat. Particularly, where farming areas are in or close by nature areas. How can an agreement be reached between different stakeholders’ needs with regard to an increasing demand

for farming land and the need to protect rare species? What are the conflicts between nature management and farming? As 15% of Europe’s surface form part of the Natura 2000 network and a large proportion of these areas are designated as being on farming land, large scale farming practices continue to present a challenge for protection aims.

However, the worldwide hype to increase crop production puts more and more pressure on farmers. Agricultural land is supposed to produce the greatest possible harvest. On the other hand are nature organisations encouraged by governments to preserve and restore species and habitats.

As the [European Environment Agency](#) states, “the production of food is the most easily measured economic benefits of protected areas. Other benefits include so-called 'ecosystem services', such as the provision of clean water as well as the regulation of the water cycle carried out by forests, wetlands and watersheds, all of which help to mitigate flooding. Well-managed protected areas also prevent soil erosion and desertification, and help sequester carbon. (...) On land Protected Areas can ensure safe environments for pollinating insects, which ensure the viability of much of Europe's agriculture.

Thus, it is a combination of wild protected areas and agriculture that is needed, and based in the culture of Europe. Concha Olmeda, of [Atecma in Spain](#), and Brendan Dunford of the [Burren Life in Ireland](#) will present their insights in the EUROPARC 2012 workshop and explore if there is compromise route possible between the conflicting interests.

To participate in this workshop, register @ [EUROPARC 2012](#).