



**EUROPARC**  
FEDERATION



ALFRED  
TOEPFER  
STIFTUNG  
F.V.S.

## Siggen Seminar 2017

### Protected Areas for Sustainable Agriculture:

Sharing experiences from across Europe that support agriculture in Protected Areas.

Siggen, Germany - 10-13<sup>th</sup> March 2017



### Background

*Bringing together Protected Area professionals to share experience and knowledge in differing aspects of Protected Area (PAs) management and innovate new ideas is at the heart of the EUROPARC Federation's work.*

*With the generosity of the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung F.V.S., EUROPARC has access annually to the private seminar centre at Gut Siggen in North Germany, hugging the Baltic Sea coast. Alfred Toepfer Stiftung's founder was also one of the Federation's founders and played an important role in its growth and development. It provides this*

*facility to EUROPARC exclusively in order that those working in Protected Areas have an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge and to enable EUROPARC to use the time wisely to take forward its own development. The opportunity to exchange knowledge, share experience, and establish professional contacts are most beneficial for working in the international context of conservation. The knowledge that participants gain in Siggen feeds back into their work in the different regions of Europe and fosters their sense of connectedness and togetherness in the EUROPARC Federation.*

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## Overview

According to the [EUROPARC Strategy 2015-2021](#), *“Sustainable Agriculture in and around Protected Areas”* is among the federation’s priorities and *“To promote people and nature friendly agriculture across Europe”* is one of the strategic objectives.

EUROPARC is committed at different levels: case studies collection on best practices in European protected areas; training and exchanges of experiences among its members (e.g. the Siggen seminar 2017); organisation of specific public awareness events (as the European Day of Parks 2016 “Taste of Nature”); lobby and advocacy at national and European level with EU institutions; and dialogue with international NGOs (participation in the Sustainable Food and Farming Platform, the CAP NGOs working group, and the European Habitat Forum).

For this reason, the Siggen Seminar 2017 has been devoted to *“Protected Areas for Sustainable Agriculture: Sharing experiences from across Europe that support agriculture in Protected Areas”*, and focused on Protected Areas promoting Sustainable Agriculture initiatives that:

- contribute to protect habitats and species
- improve landscape management
- support the work landowners and farmers, and resulting in high-quality productions

with a view to develop **new guidance and models to improve the cooperation and partnership between protected areas and the farming community.**

### Aims:

- To share concrete examples and experiences and learn together how to build, implement and reinforce partnership among protected areas and farmers
- To provide inputs to the new Sustainable Agriculture Commission of EUROPARC that will be established during the seminar and will take forward this area of the federation’s work, developing a possible new Charter for Sustainable Agriculture in Protected Areas, or other kind of tools and good practice guidance
- To contribute to the case studies collection for training and advocacy initiatives and dialogue with stakeholders and policy makers.

## Participants:

20 participants from 10 countries (Portugal, Italy, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, France, UK, The Netherlands). Representatives from national agencies, regional governments, parks, farmers and NGOs. Mainly EUROPARC members. See annexed list.

## Programme:

3-day residential seminar, from 10 to 13 of March 2017. [See detailed programme.](#)

## Synthesis of the debate and main conclusions

The seminar fitted its purposes. **The high level of knowledge, experience and interest of all participants made the seminar very successful.** Moreover, the presence of farmers' associations representatives helped definitely the participants to incorporate the farmers' perspective in the debate.

The event included 2 key-speeches, 19 case studies (including presentations in sessions and case studies collection), 1 written contribution, 4 EUROPARC presentations (about the federation's work, partnership tools, and CAP public consultation), questions time, debates and interactive sessions.

The key-speakers shared their successful stories on **promoting the importance of the EU Birds Directive in conservation management of farmland**, and on **conciliating farming interests with biodiversity conservation requirements**, on the perspective both of conservationist NGOs and of farmers. The huge number of case studies illustrated a lot of very interesting projects and dialogue initiatives between PAs and farmers.

**The seminar confirmed that agriculture** (and livestock breeding) **is crucial for many European PAs.** Some participants **recommended including in the debate also the fishing activities in Marine Protected Areas**, because challenges are similar and experiences of partnership with traditional fishermen can offer interesting contributions and inputs (e.g. in Italy).

A preliminary question was about terminology: **some participants suggested another definition than "sustainable"**, such as "nature friendly agriculture" or "conservation agriculture", but finally the debate revealed possible risks of misunderstanding that would not facilitate the dialogue with farmers.

The exchange of experiences and the debates helped the participants to understand how situations and challenges can vary in the different PAs, and **how much a good dialogue with the sector is essential** in any case to reach nature's conservation objectives.

### Case studies showed that agriculture in/near PAs can be extremely different:

- it can be necessary to **continue to protect specific landscapes and habitats**. Often this is related with small farmers, marginal rural areas, traditional cultures. In these cases, PAs need promotion and strengthening of these activities (*e.g. case studies in Alps*)
- it can have a **big negative impact on landscapes and habitats** (often this is related with agroindustry and intensive agriculture). In these cases, PAs need to limit the activity and to reduce the impact, promoting more environment friendly practices (*e.g. case studies in The Netherlands and Luxemburg*).

Of course, several situations can be “in the middle” of these two extremes.

Therefore, stakeholders can be very diverse regarding attitudes, approaches, dimension, and needs: **PAs have to take in consideration very carefully this aspect to build effective dialogue and partnership.**

### Main issues for Protected Areas and Agriculture

For several PAs, the **management of conflicts between wildlife and farmers** is an important challenge (e.g. damages caused by large carnivores to domestic animals or by deer and wild boars to crops, etc.). This not concerns all PAs, but, where present, this issue has a strong impact in the dialogue with the agriculture sector.

**Participants mentioned other factors affecting agriculture**, as climate change, and air and water pollution. Responsibility of them involve many actors, but, of course, PAs play a key role for a general good management of the environment.

Several participants underlined **the link between tourism and agriculture in PAs**. The two sectors can have a mutual positive influence, supporting strongly each other, with promotion of consume and buying of local food products, rise of “farm tourism” offer, increase of visitors’ awareness on rural life and traditions, etc. (*e.g. several examples of European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in PAs*). Nevertheless, tourism development (especially mass tourism) can have a negative effect, producing land’s use conflicts, abandonment of the agriculture activities, preference to cheaper and industrial food products, etc. **Therefore, a wide vision and a coherent governance of the local development in all aspects are needed, to guarantee sustainability and socio-economical advantages for all sectors.**

Participants stressed also that **agriculture is strongly connected with cultural heritage**, contributing to build tastes, traditions and local communities identity.

Also for these reasons, to reinforce the link between the sector and consumers, as well as with the general public, is unquestionably strategic.

More than one case studies illustrated the importance of knowledge exchanges among farmers acting in/near PAS and the success of **study tours** organised for them. Overcoming any language barriers, these **concrete visits on the field help farmers to learn new environment friendly practices.**

## The role of Protected Areas at local level

The **role of PAs in promoting sustainable agriculture** was the main topic of debate.

It can be different if the park has to deal with traditional practices, or with agroindustry, as mentioned above.

In the **first situation**, the **park can play an important role in animating the rural areas**, providing recognitions/certifications to producers and valorising their products. Parks can work with farmers in increasing the added value of these practices, improving the quality of their production, applying marketing and promotion strategies, and raising consumers' awareness.

Moreover, parks can support small farmers in bureaucracy obligations and simplifying administrative procedures. Finally, in some specific cases, park can decide to maintain these agriculture activities for biodiversity protection purposes, even when not economical profitable.

In the **second situation**, when **facing intensive agriculture practices**, the park should concentrate on monitoring and reduce impacts. In these cases, the **dialogue with farmers at a deep technical level** can be very useful to suggest alternative and more nature friendly practices and techniques.

Always, PAs can act as **positive catalyst of the rural area**, promoting dialogue and partnership, coordinating initiatives, launching projects and funds raising, involving public.

## How to create partnerships with farmers?

About the core of the seminar (***how to build, implement and reinforce partnership among protected areas and farmers***), many suggestions and recommendations emerged from the participants. Moreover, EUROPARC offered some additional inputs based on other federation's programmes (Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, Transboundary Program, Learning Landscapes).

### In synthesis:

- **switch from conflict management to alliance building**, working on mutual benefits
- **consider economical aspects** but also **cultural and socio-psychological** components as the emotional bond of farmers with their territory: partnership is a matter of "people"
- **knowledge and information** both on socio-economic and environment are needed
- importance to **involve farmers in decision making** from the beginning
- privilege **bottom-up** processes
- promote mechanisms like *consensus decision making*
- partnership is important not only between PAs and farmers but **also to build network among farmers themselves**
- **other alliances** can be very useful: media, landowners, other organisations (e.g. Slow food), other actors (e.g. "haute cuisine" chefs)
- there is a **risk in promoting new labels**, too many already existing
- look for positive experiences, as the **agri-environmental schemes**
- must remain a **voluntary approach**

## Protected Areas and the Common Agricultural Policy

Last point of the seminar: the engagement of the PAs and EUROPARC is not only at local level on the field, but also in the **dialogue with policy makers**.

In this framework, the **Public Consultation on the Modernising and Simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, launched by the European Commission, is very important (see <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/FutureCAP> , until 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2017). Therefore, during the seminar, this initiative has been presented by EUROPARC and discussed among the participants.

## The EUROPARC Commission for Sustainable Agriculture

**The EUROPARC Commission for Sustainable Agriculture has been officially created** and had a first preliminary meeting just after the Seminar. The Commission is composed by EUROPARC members from France (Chair), Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Netherlands, and Estonia. The Commission will work two years. Its mandate is to help the Federation in the promotion of sustainable agriculture in protected areas, identifying methodologies (as such a possible new Charter for Sustainable Agriculture in Protected Areas, or other tools) to support partnership between PAs and farmers.

Commission's page on EUROPARC Website: <http://www.europarc.org/network/europarc-commissions/agriculture-protected-areas-commission/>