

# Agriculture périurbaine: problèmes, opportunités et défis

## Periurban agriculture: problems, opportunities and challenges



Bilan de la réunion technique de Bruxelles (Belgique) / 3 juin 2005

Proceedings of the technical meeting held in Brussels (Belgium), 3 June 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

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Periurban agriculture has a significant economic function, but in addition the spaces destined to it fulfil relevant social and environmental functions. They are areas which play a fundamental role in territorial planning, because they put a check on the unlimited growth of cities, they generate landscape and they humanize the urban environment. Moreover, they act as a green lung for large cities and they increase biological diversity.

However, and because of their location, these agricultural spaces are submitted to a great deal of tension. Their economic function, fundamental for their survival in the future, is reduced by the pressure from urbanisation which they must withstand. As a result, the level of abandonment of the country on the part of the farmers is greater and greater despite the protection given to such spaces. What is more, there is even the risk of converting an area destined to agriculture into a "theme park" if the veritable figures, the farmers, disappear.

On the other hand, it is not always easy for the managers of periurban natural spaces to combine agricultural activity with protection of the natural environment and the provision of activities for the public. We should also stress that, together with professional periurban agriculture, other activities also increasingly coexist related to the growing of plants, but whose aims are purely recreational, social, therapeutic or educational, or are aims based on the creation and maintenance of landscapes (landscape gardeners, gardeners, etc.).

But not all are disadvantages: periurban agriculture has, in many cases, a peculiarity which can be taken advantage of to the full: the opportunities offered by the proximity of a consumer market, the growing awareness of consumers in aspects such as food quality (biological agriculture) and safety, traceability and the social demand for new activities (leisure, training, environmental education, agro-tourism, etc.).

The new Common Agricultural Policy 2007-2013 intends to promote a policy of rural development supported by new financial measures aimed at protecting the environment, quality and animal welfare, instead of rewarding, as is done at present, production rates. Herein – perhaps – lies an opportunity for periurban agricultural spaces. And it is because of this that the Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) has been recently founded (October 2004) in The Hague in order to influence the European Agenda of rural development.

There are several subjects to be discussed: What type of periurban agriculture can be done? How is it managed? How should problems be overcome? How to combat urban pressures? And the abandonment of the countryside? How to combine this with the protection of the natural environment and public use? How to promote biological agriculture? And the agro-tourism?

The subjects presented during this meeting demonstrate, in first place, different real experiences and, in second place, they intend to set up strategies of action and provide some answers to the debate so that periurban agriculture may find its place in today's world.

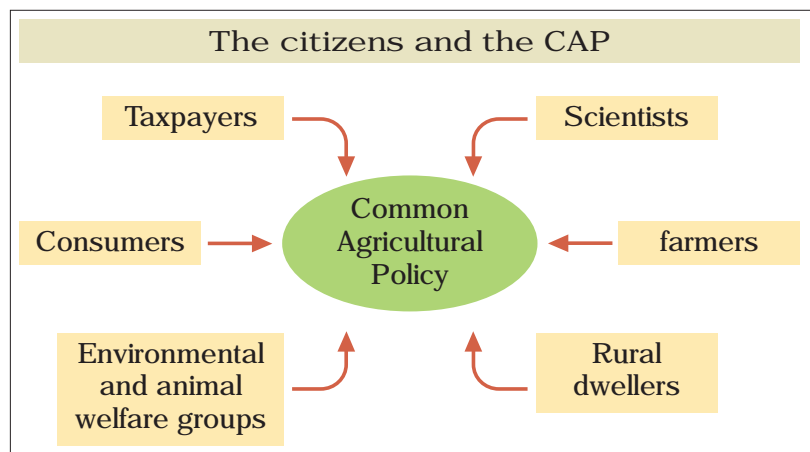
# Integrating environmental Concerns into the Common Agricultural Policy

Maria Fuentes, unit F1 - "Environment and Forestry" ( DG AGRICULTURE - EUROPEAN COMMISSION)

In the past, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was the domain of the farmers. Critical remarks were made by economists, who scrutinised the welfare gains and losses for the different groups of society, and by finance ministers, who were unhappy with the taxpayer cost. But the debate has broadened and significantly changed during the last decade. Meanwhile, it is clear that there are many different interests around the table. As a consequence, the CAP, as it is today, is the result of a much broader social consensus. There is no doubt that environmental concerns have been one of the major driving forces behind the recent CAP reforms.

The farm practices and environment: a critical but difficult relationship

The relationship between agriculture and the environment works both ways. Much of Europe's biodiversity and landscape is linked to agriculture, and their survival depend on farming. This is especially true for the many high-nature-value farmland areas we have in the EU. In fact, where agricultural activity ceases and land is abandoned, the environment tends to suffer. The problem is compounded by the fact that many farms in high-nature-value areas are economically vulnerable.



Some data:

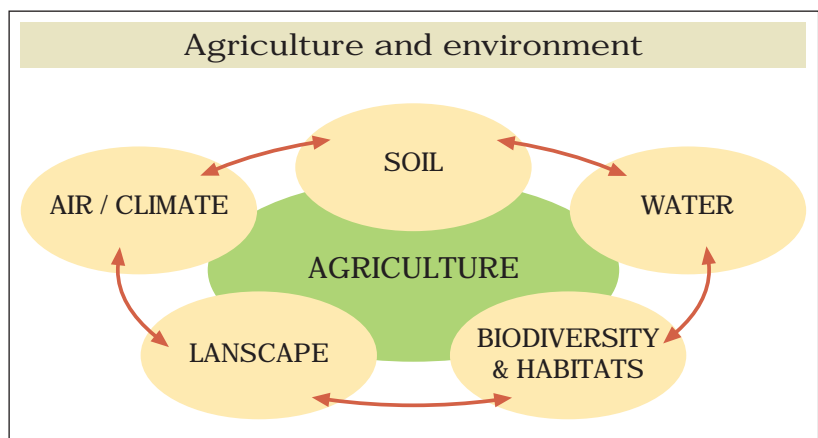
- Over three-quarters of the territory of the EU is agricultural or wooded land.
- Great diversity in land uses and farm management practices from Mediterranean to sub-Arctic regions, from west to east and from mountainous to valley regions but
- Considerable degree of interdependence between agriculture and conservation of the environment and natural resources throughout the EU.

The main linkages between agriculture and the environment are sufficiently well known, although their quantification is difficult and there is still a lot of work ahead for us to isolate the various factors that contribute to environmental change.

The agriculture is the product of local farm structures and farming systems, characterised by specific land uses and farm management practices. Threats to the conservation of the environment and natural resources come from changes in land use and farm management practices. Two major threats to the environment:

- Intensification
- Marginalisation / land abandonment

Much depends on local conditions and inter-linkages, and would be illusory to try to establish one across-the-board agri-environmental policy for the EU



that does not allow to take the national, regional and local differences into account.

Trends, such as agricultural specialisation and poorly managed intensification, but also marginalisation and land abandonment, are the main driving forces behind the decline of farm-dependent biodiversity in the EU.

The Common Agriculture Policy has been one of the driving forces behind these processes for the last forty years. However, since its inception to the recent reform adopted in 2003 and starting this year, the CAP has changed quite substantially.

### Integrating the environment into the CAP

Integrating environmental requirements has been one of the driving forces behind the recent CAP reform. In fact, the EU Treaty recognizes the importance of achieving the right balance between a competitive agricultural industry and the respect of nature and the environment:

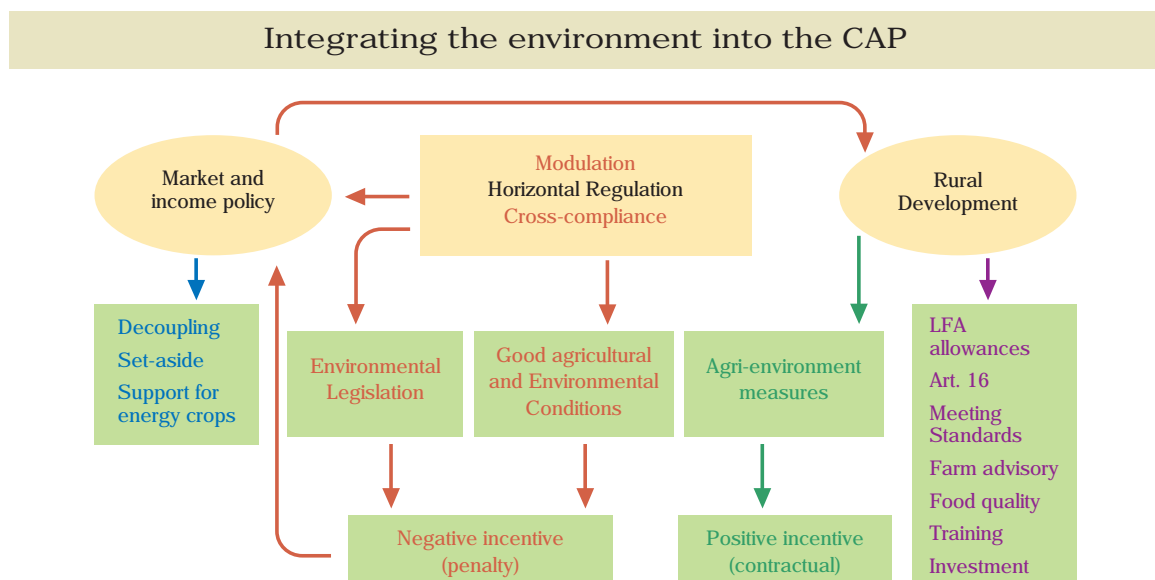
- Article 2 : The Community shall have as its task .... to promote throughout the Community a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development ...
- Article 6: Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities ..., in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The measures to address environmental integration encompass both market and income policy and Rural Development (RD) policy.

Concerning Pillar I, the general framework is set by the Common Rules Regulation (1782/2003). The central element is Cross Compliance, which is indeed a market-based instrument: a negative incentive for not complying with the environmental legislation and the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC). Other elements avoiding harmful effects on environment and biodiversity are the decoupling and the maintenance of set-aside.

Concerning Pillar II . Agri-environmental measures is a positive incentive.

Other environmental elements of the CAP are: Less-Favoured Areas (LFA) payments, article 16. The Training, meeting standards and the farm advisory system are important measures to improve farmers' skills for the application of production practices compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of the environment and biodiversity.



## INTEGRATION STRATEGY: key principles

Farmers should respect basic environmental requirements (reference level) without compensation = Polluter-pays-principle (PPP): up to the reference level the polluter should bear the expenses of carrying out pollution prevention measures or paying for damage caused by pollution.

However, where society desires that farmers deliver an environmental service (environmental targets) beyond the reference level, then society should pay for that environmental service.

Environmental targets and reference levels vary from country to country because of different priorities attached to environmental protection (e.g., different pollution assimilative capacities, different social objectives and different degrees of development and population density).

Both reference levels and environmental targets evolve over time together with technological progress and economic growth. Thus, the conditions under which farmers are rewarded or charged for their environmental performance evolve accordingly.

CAP reform process – shift in structure of expenditure

## Two main measures: cross-compliance and agri-environment measures

To improve compliance with legal standards, one essential element in the strategy of environmental integration into the CAP :

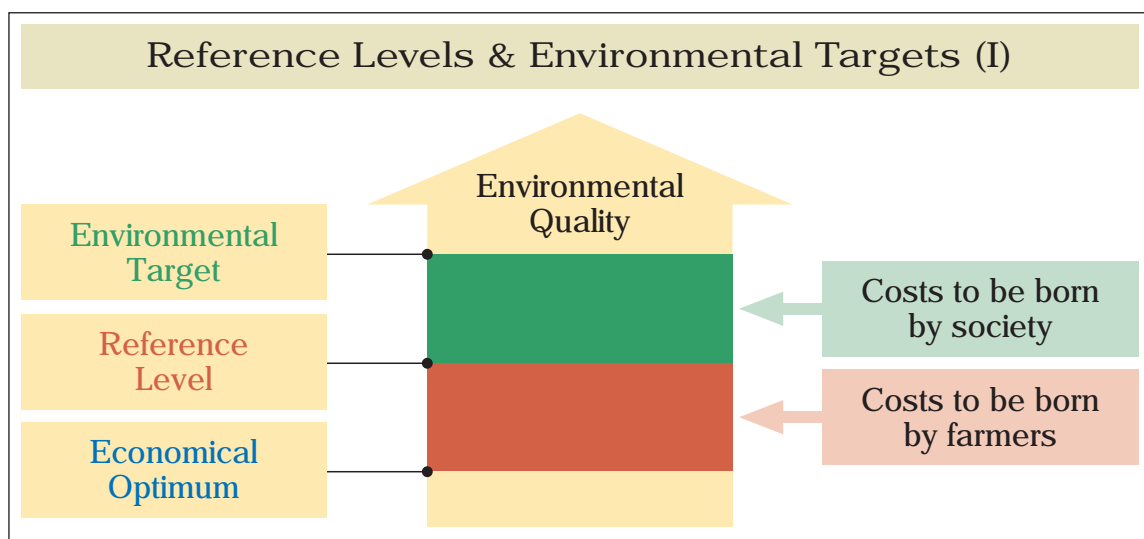
- A farmer receiving direct payments must respect the statutory management requirements and the good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC), i.e., 19 Community legislative acts of which, 5 Environmental Directives from 2005

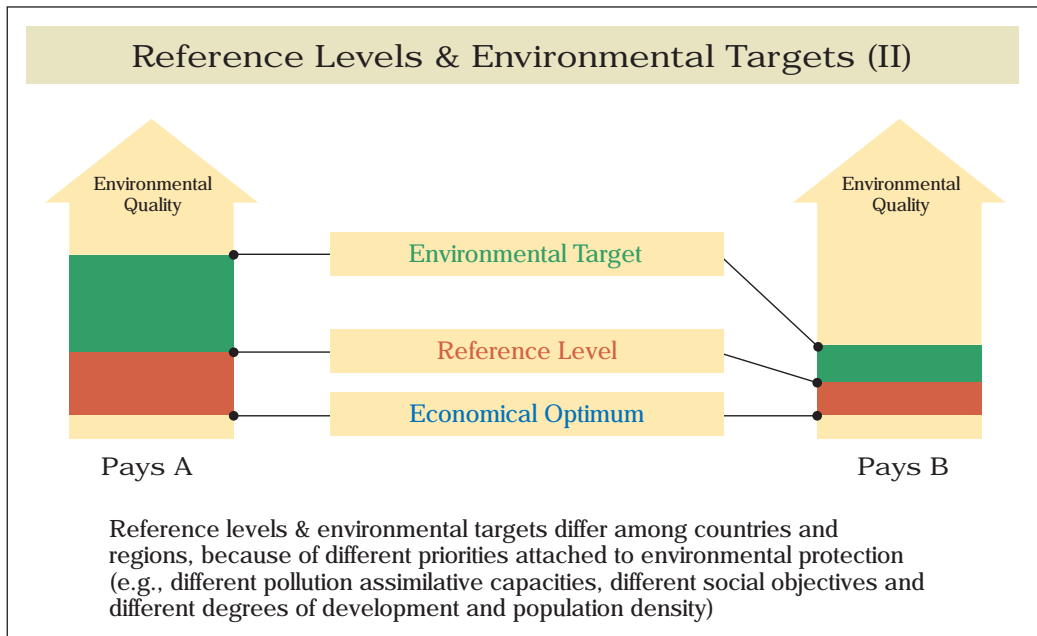
Environmental directives

1. Wild Birds Directive
2. Groundwater Directive
3. Sewage Sludge Directive
4. Nitrates Directive
5. Habitats Directive

On the basis of the common framework set up in Annex IV covering:

- Protecting soil from erosion
- Maintaining soil organic matter
- Maintaining soil structure
- Ensuring a minimum level of maintenance and avoiding deterioration of habitats





### Obligation to maintain land under permanent pasture

The competent national authority must provide the farmer with the complete list of statutory management requirements and the good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC).

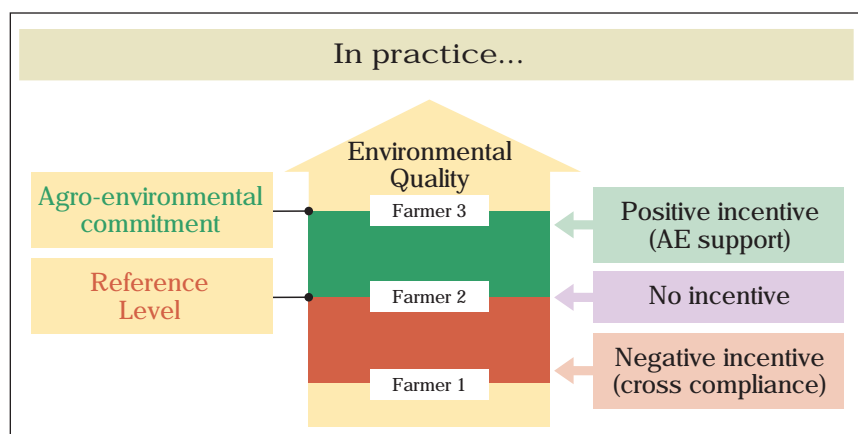
In case of non-respect: reduction or cancellation of the direct payments

### EU-15 RD: Main measures - total European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) (average 2000-2003)

In the 2000-2003 period, more than half of the total Community contribution to Rural Development was spent on Agri Environment Measures (AEMs) and Less-Favoured Areas (LFA) compensatory allowances. Agri Environment Measures alone accounted for nearly 40% of spending.

### Agri Environment Measures (AEMs)

- The core instrument for environmental integration
- Good farming practice sets baseline
- Obligatory for Member State in the framework of their RDP
- Annual support calculated on the basis of the income loss + additional costs + incentive
- Combine horizontal measures with more targeted and demanding schemes
- Implementation in the Member States highly variable; reflects different realities: agricultural, environmental and political
- Share of agricultural area under AEM increasing but still very variable between (and within) Member States



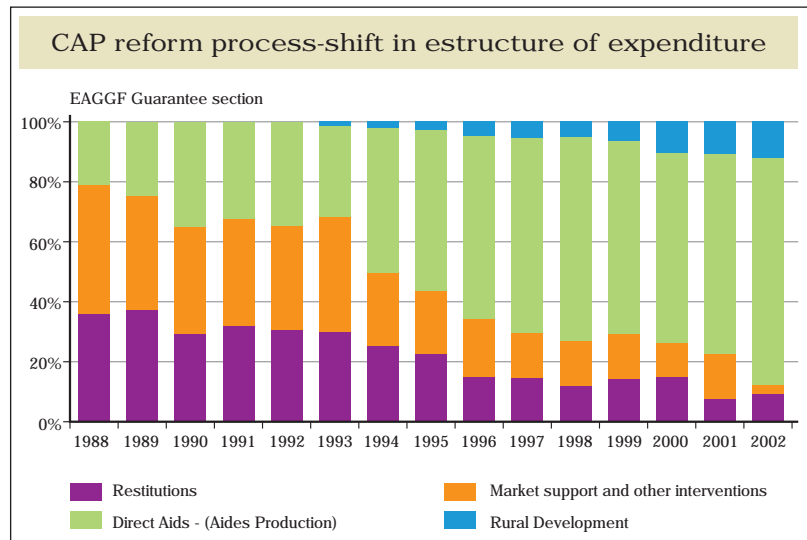


## CAP – Recent developments and proposal for the future rural development policy

The 15 July of 2004, the Commission put forward a proposal for the future rural development policy, for the period 2007-2013, which is currently under discussion in the Council of Agricultural Ministries. The proposal contains elements that reinforce the EU's rural development policy and simplify its implementation. It is proposed to regroup all the existing measures under a single funding and programming instrument: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). It also offers possibilities to further strengthen the integration of environmental concerns, in particular as regards the protection of Natura 2000 sites and other high-nature-value farmland areas.

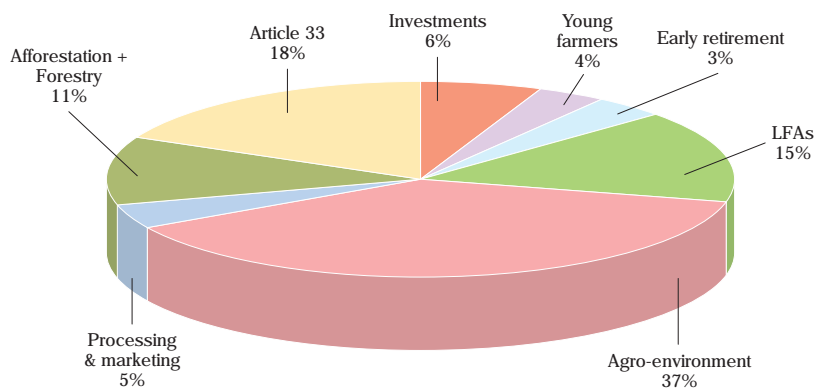
### Rural Development (RD) policy 2007-2013 : main objectives

- Competitiveness of the farm and forestry sector (15%)
- Environment/land management (25%)
  - will continue offering agri-environmental incentives, which are kept as obligatory component of RD programmes,
  - support to farmers in areas with handicaps at risk of marginalisation,
  - support to Natura 2000 sites and areas from the Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- Wider rural development promoting diversification of economic activities (15%)
- LEADER approach (7%)



The proposal is structured around 3 thematic axes, which reflect the 3 major policy objectives of Rural Development (RD) (or, in a certain way, the 3 elements of sustainability). In addition, there is a horizontal axis: the LEADER approach. To ensure a balanced implementation of these objectives, a minimum percentage of the national envelope has been set up for each axis.

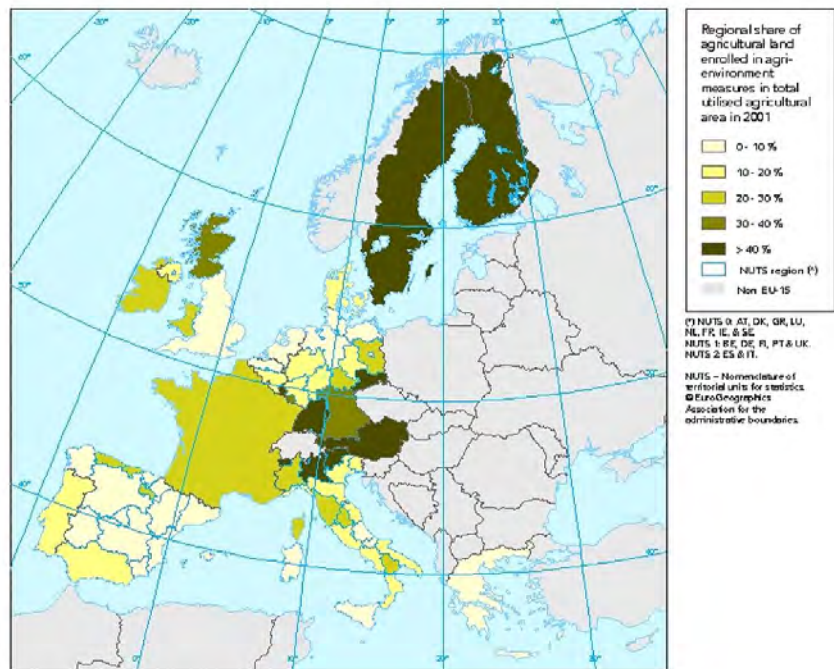
**EU-15 RD: Main measures - total EAGGF (average 2000-2003)**



The second objective includes, among others,

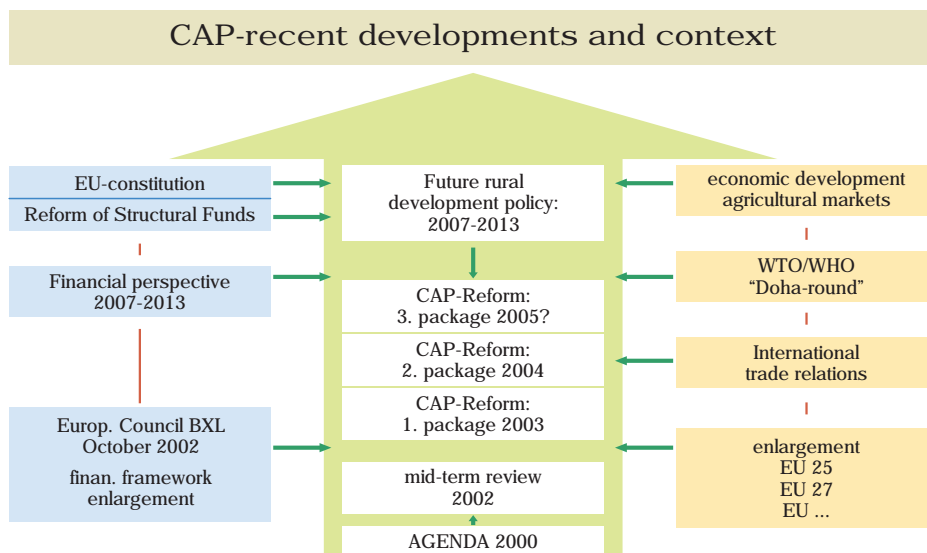
- Agri Environment Measures (AEMs), which are kept on an obligatory basis
- natural handicap payments to farmers in mountains and areas with natural handicaps, where land management should continue, among other, in order to conserve or improve the environment.
- support for farmers in NATURA 2000. Payments are proposed to compensate farmers for costs and income foregone resulting from the constraints in land management and farming practices in these areas
- support may be granted for non productive on-farm investments enhancing the public amenity of Natura 2000 areas and other High-Nature Value (HNV) farmland areas identified in the Rural Development Plan (RDP)
- For Agri Environment Measures (AEMs), beneficiaries must respect the EU and national statutory requirements deriving from environmental legislation + specific requirements for nutrient and plan protection management  
The EU co-financing ceiling is 55% in normal and 80% in convergence regions.

## Share of UAA under agri-environment schemes



## Programming steps

A single, more simple, and coherent framework for rural development focus on commonly agreed EU priorities while leaving sufficient programming flexibility for the Member States.



## Programming step

1) EU strategy document  
setting out the EU goals and priorities



2) National strategy plans  
Translating the EU priorities to the Member State situation and  
ensuring complementarity with Cohesion Policy



3) National or regional rural development programmes  
articulating the four axes  
- MS and regions will continue deciding which measures they wish  
to take up in their RD programmes (**subsidiarity**)

### Challenges ahead

- The CAP reform of 2003 represents a significant step forward in the implementation of the Action Plan.
- Great achievements to celebrate, but look at the forthcoming challenges
- The next step is to use the new and extended policy instruments now available to the Member States in the best possible way to concretely contribute to the EU target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010.
- new Rural Development Regulation: a huge opportunity, high priority to environmental services of agriculture
- Farmers responses to new measures + Rural Development (RD) ?

# OPINION of the European Economic and Social Committee on Agriculture in peri-urban areas

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Joan Caball, reporter of the Opinion

NAT/204 Agriculture in peri-urban areas (Brussels, 16 September 2004)

On 17 July 2003, the European Economic and Social Committee decided to draw up an own-initiative opinion, under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, on *Agriculture in peri-urban areas*.

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 6 July 2004. The rapporteur was Mr Caball i Subirana.

At its 411<sup>th</sup> plenary session of 15 and 16 September 2004 (meeting of 16 September), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 132 votes in favour and three abstentions.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 A productive activity conditioned by the urban environment

1.1.1 Peri-urban areas have been discussed at various European forums, including the European Economic and Social Committee. This is a growing phenomenon that affects many municipalities in the EU as a consequence of urban, industrial and tertiary development and the spread of communication and transport infrastructures, which are gobbling up prime farming land and generating an increasing number of marginal and uncompetitive agricultural areas.

1.1.2 Agricultural activity in peri-urban areas is conditional on the urban environment in which it is practised, in the sense that the latter has negative repercussions for the former, limiting its economic viability. Such negative repercussions are the primary cause of environmental degradation in the area and have a detrimental effect on the social relationship between city and country. Depending on how it is addressed and resolved, this disjuncture between city and country can seriously jeopardise the survival of agricultural activity itself.

1.1.3 In addition to the traditional problems facing peri-urban agricultural areas, another more recent problem has now emerged, namely the protection of free areas near cities, but without agricultural activity. This new problem basically stems from the idea that such areas should be some sort of "theme park", with the result that everything is artificial, decontextualised and impersonal. The aesthetic criteria underlying this idea are based mistakenly on biodiversity protection regulations or an image of the countryside that seeks to marginalise or romanticise agricultural activity.

1.1.4 The EU's Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) stresses the need for farms to diversify by exploring activities that will generate new incomes for farmers. It must be emphasised that without agriculture there is no agricultural landscape, that is, a landscape characterised by fields of crops, animals, meadows and, above all, farmers.

1.1.5 All of these factors (pressure from the urban environment, the idea of agriculture without

farmers, the reform of the CAP) raise serious problems for the continuity and stability of peri-urban agriculture. (Such problems are much more pronounced here than in other similar agro climatic areas, which means there is a higher risk of agricultural activity disappearing.)

1.1.6 Besides the loss of suitable land, farming in some Member States suffers from a lack of clear legislation to regulate the land market and farm leases. With no market in farmland, it is harder for young people to enter farming and for farm sizes to be increased. Many public and private landowners are blocking the land market by refusing to rent land to professional farmers. This is a form of speculation which seriously jeopardises the future of many peri-urban agricultural areas and has to be tackled by the Member States through specific preventive legislation.

1.1.7 Agricultural areas, which are not unaffected by the changes that have taken place in rural communities in recent years, are characterised by certain values and roles, which determine the suitability or otherwise of activities carried out in them.

## 1.2 Much more than merely an economic activity

1.2.1 The EESC, which has a direct interest in ensuring that the economic, environmental and social development of Europe's rural areas is sustainable, wishes to point out that the environmental, social and economic role played by agricultural areas is more important in peri-urban areas than elsewhere. This is because in peri-urban areas agricultural land acts as a green "lung" for major cities; these areas are, moreover, a key element in regional planning as they prevent the unlimited growth of cities, fashion the landscape and give the urban environment a human face. However, the economic role of such areas – essential for the protection and future prospects of agricultural land – is diminishing owing to urban pressure and the lack of importance attached to farming in the economic fabric of peri-urban areas.

1.2.2 According to the first principle of the Salzburg Conference, there is no farming without a living countryside, and there is no living countryside without agriculture<sup>1</sup>. The EESC wishes to stress that the real protagonists of peri-urban agricultural areas are, and indeed must be, essentially professional full-time farmers, while also recognising the important role played by part-time farmers in many peri-urban areas.

## 1.3 Constraints and opportunities: agriculture in heterogeneous and constantly-changing areas

1.3.1 The EESC is aware that it is not easy to reach a unanimous definition of peri-urban areas as they are extremely heterogeneous and constantly changing. Such areas are essentially the interface between strictly rural areas and the urban world; they preserve the fundamental characteristics of the former while integrating certain aspects of the latter.

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1 Literally, "A living countryside is essential for farming, as agricultural activity is essential for **a living countryside.**" - Conclusions of the second European conference on rural development in Salzburg, 12-14 November 2003 – MEMO/03/236.

1.3.2 The common characteristic of peri-urban areas is their territorial, environmental and social fragility and the fact that they are found on the peripheries of cities. It is the professional farming practised in these areas that is known as "peri-urban agriculture". This professional farming co-exists with other activities linked to the growing of plants for recreational, therapeutic, educational and other reasons or for the purpose of creating and maintaining landscapes (landscape gardeners, gardeners, etc.). Such activities are especially important in some regions of the Member States.

1.3.3 Peri-urban areas are rural areas that face specific and characteristic constraints that set them apart from other rural areas, and whose survival is seriously threatened.

1.3.4 At the same time, peri-urban agriculture often presents unique characteristics that must be exploited to the full, e.g. the opportunities provided by its proximity to consumer markets, growing consumer awareness of issues such as food quality and safety, and social demand for new activities (leisure, training, environmental education, ecotourism, etc.). These new complementary activities could help spread the entrepreneurial risk and boost agricultural incomes.

1.3.5 Article 20 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) stipulates that "Less-favoured areas may include other areas affected by specific handicaps, in which farming should be continued, where necessary and subject to certain conditions, in order to conserve or improve the environment, maintain the countryside and preserve the tourist potential of the area or in order to protect the coastline", reinforcing the EESC's oft-repeated view that peri-urban agricultural areas constitute "areas affected by specific handicaps".

1.3.6 Agenda 2000 and the recent CAP mid-term review have given further impetus to these guidelines.

1.3.7 The preamble to the Conclusions of the Salzburg Conference stresses "the need to help European farmers take up their multifunctional role as custodians of the countryside and market oriented producers in all of the EU"<sup>2</sup>. This was echoed in the EESC's own initiative Opinion (rapporteur: Mr Bros) on The CAP second pillar: outlook for change in development policy for rural areas (follow-up to the Salzburg conference)<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Objectives for the conservation and development of peri-urban agriculture

2.1 In the EESC's view, peri-urban agriculture undoubtedly faces specific constraints stemming directly from characteristics that can be easily identified and defined. Specific measures must therefore be introduced for the conservation, planning and management of peri-urban areas with agricultural activity. To achieve this, the EESC proposes that mechanisms and instruments to conserve and develop peri-urban agricultural areas should be promoted.

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2 See footnote 1.

3 CESE 961/2004 – NAT/243

2.2 Objective 1: Social, political and administrative recognition that peri-urban areas with agricultural activity are rural areas facing specific constraints

2.2.1 Bolstering an active and powerful network of "intermediate cities"

2.2.1.1 The EESC notes that the "metropolitanisation" of Europe is a growing phenomenon resulting in an increase in large cities and a constant and irreversible reduction in fertile land, the main constraint on peri-urban areas, as pointed out in its own-initiative Opinion (rapporteur: Mr Van Iersel) on European Metropolitan Areas: socio-economic implications for Europe's future<sup>4</sup>.

2.2.1.2 This decline in agricultural activity has repercussions not only for the agricultural sector but also for the maintenance of natural resources, protection of the quality of life of city dwellers and balanced land management.

2.2.1.3 From the point of view of a balanced and sustainable Europe, the EESC stresses the need to bolster an active and powerful network of "intermediate cities", defined not so much by their demographic size as by their role as a mediator between rural and urban areas within their area of influence.

2.2.1.4 Such a network of cities is only possible if surrounded by agricultural and natural areas, in short peri-urban areas, that can act as buffer zones between built-up areas and as corridors between natural areas, enhancing and consolidating the personality of towns and cities, protecting biological diversity and making viable agricultural production possible.

2.2.2 Acknowledging the role of agriculture in the relationship between city and country

2.2.2.1 In the EESC's view, the first essential instrument must be social, political and administrative recognition that these rural/urban (i.e. peri-urban) areas with agricultural activity face specific difficulties and play a key role in the relationship between city and country.

2.2.2.2 Recognition of peri-urban agricultural areas and the agricultural activity practised in them is conditional on (a) a study of the problems both facing and generated by these areas and (b) a full analysis of the different values that they encapsulate (water, landscape, biodiversity, architecture, agricultural system, etc.) and of the economic, environmental and social role that they are called upon to play as a result of these values.

2.2.3 Raising awareness as a tool for recognition

2.2.3.1 Society needs to understand that land is a limited natural resource and a common heritage that is difficult to recover once it has been destroyed. For this reason, centripetal (inward) urban growth must be promoted through programmes designed to restore and reclaim degraded urban areas and obsolete industrial areas, as this will prevent the loss of even more land to construction, and through specific legislation to stop speculation in the farmland on the periphery of many European cities.

2.2.3.2 To ensure that such areas are given social, political and administrative recognition across Europe, the EESC proposes that a boost should be given to European action on peri-urban agricultural areas and the agricultural activity practised in them. Such action must recognise the values and roles of such areas and prepare the way for each country to draw up specific legislation on their protection and development, based on common fundamental criteria.

2.3 Objective 2: Preventing peri-urban agricultural areas from becoming part of the urban process through regional planning, urban planning and municipal initiatives

2.3.1 The EESC believes that to protect peri-urban agricultural areas it is not enough for politicians and society as a whole simply to pay lip service to the idea of preserving such areas; it is also imperative that all the Member States have and apply instruments for managing peri-urban agricultural land in order to prevent the speculation that results in such land being abandoned.

2.3.2 In the EESC's view, such land management instruments must be created, underpinned by six pillars:

- a) legal regional and urban planning instruments at European, national and regional level, and land use instruments at national and regional level that take particular account of peri-urban agricultural areas and agricultural policies and make it difficult to reclassify farmland for other uses;
- b) legal and transparent instruments to regulate situations in which private or public landowners temporarily cease to use land; professional farmers should be offered the opportunity to rent such land for the purposes of growing crops and/or raising stock, thus helping to improve farm output;
- c) avoidance of excessive taxation of land used for agriculture in these areas, which should be taxed on the same basis as urban industrial and/or residential land;
- d) new and better initiatives at municipal level to reinforce the subsidiarity principle (responsibility of local authorities and politicians) in municipal planning, in all cases using supra-municipal criteria based on inter-municipal cooperation and territorial cohesion;
- e) new criteria for municipal funding, such as the concept of "protected agricultural areas" in which the protection of agricultural land takes precedence over urban occupation, making it possible to reduce the dependence of municipal funding from taxation on other criteria;
- f) the mandatory and binding introduction of "agricultural impact studies" by the relevant agriculture administration whenever action is planned in a peri-urban agricultural area which could involve the loss of farmland.

2.3.3 In short, the aim is to use regional planning, urban planning, land use instruments, municipal funding and agricultural impact studies to protect peri-urban agricultural areas from the city's constant demand for land (for urban growth, industrial and tertiary development, and communication and energy infrastructures) and to prevent any land degradation that could be used to discredit and justify the disappearance of peri-urban agricultural areas.



## 2.4 Objective 3: Ensure the dynamic and sustainable development of peri-urban agriculture and the areas in which it is practised

2.4.1 In the EESC's view, the dynamic and sustainable development of peri-urban agriculture and the areas in which it is practised can only be ensured by allowing local authorities to play a key role, incorporating elements such as inter-municipal management as well as supra-municipal planning.

2.4.2 For this reason, peri-urban areas need to get together and set up a body whose fundamental objective is not only to protect but also to revitalise agricultural areas and agricultural activity by means of supra-municipal plans for the conservation, use and management of land.

2.4.3 The involvement of farmers in this body will ensure that it is a genuine partnership, enabling them to promote their objectives among local groups (general public and politicians) and other interested partners (universities, environmentalists, etc.) and reach agreement on how agricultural areas should be managed.

2.4.4 Managers of peri-urban areas must have a conservative approach to the values represented by peri-urban agricultural areas, but a progressive approach to proposals on how to develop the role of such areas, adopting a positive, imaginative and creative attitude. They must also strictly regulate land use in such areas. In short, they must use sustainability criteria.

2.4.5 A subsidiarity-based approach to the management of peri-urban agricultural areas is essential to ensuring that the authorities and farmers make a commitment to protecting and developing such areas, in other words a contract for sustainable agricultural management between the public administration and farmers.

2.4.6 Management must be based on a "cooperation network"<sup>5</sup> between public and private stakeholders involved in management, and headed by a "participatory and managerial body". This body must bring together common aims and interests, and instigate specific actions tailored to the particular area and its natural resources (e.g. promoting its products, use of information and communication technologies, encouraging environmental education, preserving the countryside, etc.). In short, a body which establishes the general conditions, monitors their application and encourages measures to assist and nurture peri-urban areas.

2.4.7 It is a matter of following, including in areas with peri-urban agriculture, the approach proposed at the Salzburg Conference, where it was stressed that "*Future policy must mainstream EU support for rural areas through bottom-up local partnerships*" [and] "*More responsibility must be given to programme partnerships to define and deliver comprehensive strategies based on clearly defined objectives and outcomes*" (sixth and seventh principles of the Conclusions of the Salzburg Conference)<sup>6</sup>

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5 The cooperation network is in response to a situation characterised by a conflict of interests and/or competences, to the growing need for efficiency, the need for a solution to the problems by means of integrated cross-sectoral measures, the need to establish contacts, coordinate and share responsibilities. This means that all the territorial stakeholders have to be ready and willing to establish clear objectives, plan and act together.

6 See footnote 1..

2.4.8 In addition to "contracts for sustainable agricultural management", consideration must also be given to supra-municipal management projects which, in view of the specific characteristics of agricultural areas (rural-urban areas), must be presented as "rur-urban" projects between administrations and managing bodies that protect and reclaim agricultural areas and generate income by city and countryside working together. It is imperative that some of the income derived from the non-agricultural benefits generated by agricultural areas revert to the farming community.

2.4.9 Such "rur-urban projects" must be promoted by the participatory and managerial bodies for peri-urban agricultural areas and based on multi-sectoral criteria, including products that respond to consumer demands, environmental elements that limit the impact of productive activity on the environment and create and maintain the landscape, and social elements that respond to urban needs, such as using agricultural areas for outdoor and educational activities.

2.4.10 Before the managerial bodies for peri-urban agricultural areas draw up rur-urban projects and contracts for agricultural management, the parties involved in managing such areas (i.e. the authorities, in particular local authorities, and the farming sector) must first draw up and approve an institutional agreement on the need for an integrated style of management.

2.4.11 This institutional commitment by local and supra-local authorities and farmers could follow a series of general principles laid down in a "Charter on peri-urban agriculture".

2.4.12 To further consolidate this charter and reinforce the mutual commitment, a "sustainable management and development plan" could also be drawn up and adopted, setting out principles, strategic guidelines and specific measures to protect the values and develop the roles of a specific peri-urban agricultural area.

### 3. Conclusions

3.1 Such rur-urban projects and the mutual commitment documents must be based on criteria laid down in a city-countryside pact operated by the managing bodies and with arrangements to promote participation by the general public and the farming community. These pacts require the following objectives to be met:

a) Objective 1: There must be a territorial conservation and development project for areas with peri-urban agriculture. Such projects must be based on regional, urban and land use plans, and on specific legislation to regulate the market in farmland.

b) Objective 2: Peri-urban land must be kept in agricultural use by means of instruments and mechanisms which guarantee this continued use, reducing as far as possible urban pressure and land use for non-agricultural activities, and to facilitate access to farmland.

c) Objective 3: An integrated form of management based on a managerial body to promote and mobilise areas of peri-urban agriculture and raise awareness of their value. This must also ensure dynamic and sustainable development through a commitment to manage land on the basis of rur-urban projects and a contractual relationship between the public, authorities and farmers in the form of a sustainable agricultural management contract.

3.2 To meet these objectives, the following are essential:

- a) Moves to encourage women and young people to participate actively in territorial projects and agricultural management contracts, to safeguard the present and future status of these areas.
- b) A public perception that farming can guarantee food safety because it follows environmentally friendly and socially responsible farming methods.
- c) Recognition of the importance of water in consolidating peri-urban agricultural areas. Specific legislation is needed not to restrict the use of water for agriculture, but rather to introduce a new "culture of water" based on limiting the use of surface water and groundwater and re-using water produced by waste water treatment plants for agricultural purposes.
- d) Bolstering these peri-urban agricultural areas through society's recognition that they face specific difficulties.
- e) Development of instruments and actions intended to raise agricultural incomes, increase the efficiency of infrastructures and improve the provision of services to farming.
- f) Promotion of production and marketing systems that meet market demands, with special attention to the promotion of food diversity by encouraging sustainable farming which respects the environment, cultural identity and animal welfare.
- g) Rational use of resources (in particular land, water and landscape) and their protection.

3.3 In view of the precarious situation facing peri-urban agricultural areas and European peri-urban agriculture as a whole, the EESC believes it is essential to establish a European observatory for peri-urban agriculture that not only has a European perspective on peri-urban agricultural areas and the agricultural activity practised in them, but also acts as a reference centre for monitoring, analysing and raising awareness of the situation of peri-urban agriculture in Europe and a place where local and regional authorities and different European bodies can come together to discuss this issue, proposing initiatives for the conservation and development of these peri-urban areas and their agriculture.

Brussels, 16 September 2004

Roger Briesch. The president of the European Economic and Social Committee

Patrick Venturini. The secretary-general of the European Economic and Social Committee

# Periurban agriculture in Randstad region (Netherlands). PURPLE (Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe)

Michel de Jonge, Secretary of PURPLE

## 1. Regio Randstad Holland, network metropolis in Europe

Regio Randstad is a co-operative administrative union of the provinces of Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland, the regional authorities of Amsterdam region, Rotterdam region, The Hague region and Utrecht region and the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht. The co-operation aims at strengthening the international economic position of Randstad Holland as well as maintaining a high living standard in the areas involved.



Randstad Holland originated in a delta. This fact has left the area with a characteristic agricultural landscape highlighted by peat meadows, low polders, flood plains and dunes. Much of the development and cultivation history is still visible in the landscape today. Dykes, ditches and ponds are characteristic elements of this landscape, often with a high scenic value.

In the Randstad provinces the greater part of the land is still used for agricultural purposes (80%). Characteristic for the agricultural area is the diversity of functions. This varies from cultivation under glass in the Westland and bulb growing in the northernmost part of the province of Noord Holland to dairy farming in the 'Green Heart' (groene Hart) and large-scale arable farming in South Flevoland.

The varied countryside in Randstad Holland is currently undergoing many changes which are inextricably linked to the characteristics of this peri-urban area. These changes are caused mainly by urban pressure and the increasing interrelation between cities and countryside. However, the growing importance of these areas as green-blue 'lungs' and the need to overcome their natural limitations are becoming increasingly manifest.

### Urban pressure

With approximately 7.5 million inhabitants the Randstad provinces form a densely populated region. The four Randstad provinces have an average density of approximately 900 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Nearly half of the population of the Netherlands lives in this area, on a quarter of the country's total surface. In the centre there is an open agricultural central area that is surrounded by the four major cities: the 'Green Heart' National Park, in which soil-related agriculture, and particularly dairy farming, still dominate. On the outside of this 'ring of cities' we find open areas, including the 'Laag Holland' National Park, the polders in the northernmost part of

the province of Noord-Holland and the IJsselmeer polders. The growth of the population and increasing prosperity generate continuous expansion of urban constructions, which goes hand in hand with the demand for infrastructure and commercial sites. At the same time the sub-urbanisation causes villages and small towns in the countryside to expand. This increases the pressure on areas with an agricultural function. The result is fragmentation of the agricultural landscape. And meanwhile, city-dwellers continue to flock to the 'shrinking' countryside to look for peace and quiet and getting in touch with nature.

## 2. PURPLE Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe

The Launch of the Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) was done during the conference on City and Countryside, Finding a New Balance in Europe's Urbanised Regions Organised by Provincie Zuid-Holland on behalf of Regio Randstad on 21 and 22 October 2004 in The Hague, The Netherlands.



This conference followed the successful European peri-urban conference in Flanders in 2001 during the Belgian EU presidency, which focused on “open space functions under urban pressure” and the need for a peri-urban agenda in Europe. The majority of urban areas is facing challenges of social, economic and agricultural change, and at the same time they are the main actors in EU competitiveness.

The new reformed agricultural policy is a comprehensive and fundamental reform to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including strengthening of rural development policy, in scope and financial resources.

The CAP has two pillars that are interrelated: agricultural and rural development. The sector agriculture has to go through major restructuring processes towards sustainable production, international competitiveness, food safety, traceability and product quality. The urbanised regions need, at the same time, to ensure that enough space is available for food production and for sufficient quality of life for their citizens.

The Provincie Zuid-Holland on behalf of Regio Randstad has organised the European Conference, Finding a New Balance in Europe's Urbanised Regions to strive for a common European perspective on the future of peri-urban regions and the need to define a common policy agenda.



## . Organization and members

### - General assembly

The General assembly is composed of eleven member regions that now represent eight EU Member States.

Regions : Malta, Frankfurt, SE England, Catalunya, Flanders, Mazovia, Lower Silezia, Ile de France, MHAL (Maastricht, Heerlen, Aachen, Liège and Hasselt-Genk) , Stockholm , Randstad

### - Executive Board

On the 15th of April 2005 the first Executive Board of PURPLE was elected (composed of 5 members). The board will first operate for one year.

### Action Plan 2005

#### - Lobby actions

- First PURPLE General Assembly 14& 15 April – Paris

- UK Presidency PURPLE Event, Greening the Green Belt 5th, 6th and 7th October 2005



## PURPLE RESOLUTION TEXT Paris 15 April 2005

The Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe; PURPLE calls upon the European Union Institutions and Member States to recognise the importance of peri-urban regions. These regions play a vital role in planning and managing the transformation towards multi-functional land use and agriculture, with consideration for both a globally competitive agriculture sector (fast production process) and locally sustainable agriculture (slow production process)

Following the principles of the Lisbon Agenda, peri urban regions acknowledge the challenge of global competitiveness and innovation for their territories and seek to guide the agricultural transition between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar of the CAP.

Support from Europe and Member States is needed as peri-urban regions lead the process towards a new balance between cities and countryside in Europe.

*PURPLE's View about current EU-proposals EAFRD/ERDF/EU Financial Perspective 2007-2013*

### A. Changes needed in EAFRD regulations t

1. *Areas with over-pressure included in European rural policy.* Although PURPLE welcomes the Commission Proposal for the EAFRD, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2007-2013, the European Commission and Council are invited to pay more attention in their rural policy to the specific needs of peri-urban regions, with high population and economic activities in adjacent urban zones.
2. *Europe's rural policy should respect regional diversity.* PURPLE wants to express its support for the multifunctional model of the European CAP that will encourage regional diversity. Each region is unique as reflected in its rural and agricultural development. Europe should foster variety and diversity in agricultural and rural development and implementation should respect the principle of subsidiarity.
3. *Maintenance of agriculture in each peri-urban region.* When farmers disappear from our territory, it threatens the viability and maintenance of open space, near our cities. PURPLE strives therefore

to maintain a critical mass of agriculture and well-managed open space to support agricultural infrastructure and biodiversity. The definition of open space will vary according to the particular urban/rural mix in each region.

4. *LEADER+ welcomed in EAFRD* The success of the bottom-up approach to rural development, as demonstrated through programmes such as Leader+, deserves a place in the new EAFRD-regulation
5. *Young farmers a must.* In peri-urban regions young farmers are key actors in rural entrepreneurship and must be fully supported by European and Member State policies.
6. *Greater possibilities for green services.* Peri-urban regions see a growing potential for green services and would welcome more flexibility and simplification in the European Regulation to support pilot projects in this field (including issues surrounding state aid). The transition process will require at least a decade to develop the potential for both publicly and privately financed green services.
7. *Innovative food chains.* The EU and Member States policies and regulation should enable a wide range of experiments for the reconnection of links between City and Countryside producers and consumers, both within the peri urban regions as well as between different regions. Local and multi local food chains should ensure a greater transparency, visibility and traceability of the agricultural chain. The challenge is how to create strategies that add value for agriculture.

#### *B. PURPLE wants opportunities from The European Regional Development Fund*

8. *Complementary action between ERDF and EAFRD is necessary.* PURPLE welcomes the recognition of the urban dimension and the need to link urban and rural areas in the ERDF draft regulation for 2007-2013. The European Commission is invited to recognise flexible multidisciplinary actions in peri-urban regions with support both from ERDF and EAFRD.
9. *European policy and programmes need to pay more attention to spatial development and territorial cohesion.* Open space in peri-urban regions should be included both in EU spatial policy and in regional cross-border and interregional programmes, in order to manage increasing pressure on the quality of life in peri-urban regions. Since many of the problems faced by peri-urban regions go beyond national borders there is strong need to encourage and intensify all levels of co-operation between regions.
10. *Support within the Regional Competitiveness Objective for changes in the agricultural industry.* Peri-urban regions face an increasingly competitive and innovative environment. The European Commission is invited to consider opportunities for actions by peri-urban regions in the Competitiveness Objective of EU Regional Development Policy.
11. In the light of climate change predictions, problems associated with water (flooding, water quality, and shortages) are likely to have a strong impact in peri-urban areas. The environment and risk prevention –strand in the Competitiveness Objective needs to offer opportunities for actions and investments (eg restoration of dunes/dykes/water basins /restructuring agricultural /industry-sites close to risky water-areas, as a result of floods or rising of sea levels)

#### *C. The EU financial perspective 2007-2013*

12. *Budget 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar CAP assured.* PURPLE wants to support the current proposed budget level for rural development, which it considers the minimum level necessary to assure a sufficient number of high-quality rural development programmes in Europe.
13. *EU budget at 1,14% GDP* PURPLE considers the budget proposals of the Commission, as set out in the Financial Perspective, at 1,14% GDP, to be necessary. Due to fast global transitions (WTO, competitiveness, and enlargement), it is important to work from a European perspective, both in Rural and in Regional Development programmes

PURPLE wants to underscore that the problem of CAP and Rural development needs financial commitment from all levels of government, to solve problems and guide transitions. Territorial and agricultural transitions need an integrated approach between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the CAP, and interdependence between the priority axes in Rural Development Regulation

# The Parco Agricolo Sud Milano: Between agriculture and environmental conservation

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Bruna Brembilla, Advisor for: the environment, natural resources, hydraulics, quarrying in the Milan province, and President of the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano.

The history of the constitution and planning of the Sud Milano agricultural park has been a long and winding road, started some time ago. In fact, the idea of the park was introduced for the first time as part of the planning of the metropolitan area, towards the end of the 1960's. Towards the mid 1970's, the idea of an agricultural park as a "large green belt" became stronger, the objective being to create a large area where agricultural development and much-needed leisure space could co-exist. So, in 1983, with the passing of regional law no. 86, the Sud Milano national park was born, and identified as an area of environmental importance, and subsequently classed, with an integrated legislative text, as a "metropolitan belt and agricultural park". In 1990, thanks to a "proposals committee" made up of towns and villages with interests in the project, regional law no. 24 was approved and came into force. This established "the institution of the Sud Milano agricultural park". "Agrosylviculture" (farming of land and forests) was accepted as a central and interconnecting element of the law and of the committee's goals.

The park's layout is therefore unique; those who expect it to have clearly defined and limited structures may be disappointed by the Sud Milano. This is because the layout blends in with the natural features of the immense and fertile Po plain, of which it forms part. This is the main characteristic of the Park, a vast area made into a park in order to defend and promote the heritage and history of an area, which, over the centuries, has provided work, soil richness, agriculture, tradition, defence and water supply. The adjective "agricultural" which describes the park is not just an attractive name, it expresses the personality of a park whose character has been formed by the history of the land. It is also part of a range of parks adjacent to the Ticino and Adda Nord areas.

Three fundamental elements distinguish it from the other parks, and these could be identified as vital to the understanding of this land: Nature, Tradition and Art. These three terms as a whole identify the richness of the contents inherent in this land, and each word separately represents an aspect of the park. This becomes evident when we study its elements.

The Park has, since 1999, carried out a series of studies and projects with the aim of improving knowledge of the land, and promoting projects aimed at both the agricultural sector and the environment. In the agricultural domain, the SITPAS (The Sud Milano Park's Land Information System), was a rigorous project, which not only involved many of the park's work units, but also all the existing farms in the area. The project had a preliminary phase of collecting data from the land, relating to hydrology, and urban planning projects being carried out. Particular attention was paid to data regarding the main economic activity of the park: agriculture. All the data to be fed into the SIT system was organised in a data base especially made for the purpose. The park's institutions, professional associations, and, therefore, every farmer operating within the park, shared the work in creating this information system. So the study was possible thanks to the above mentioned, but also due to the implementation of a survey of farms carried out via visits to the land.

What follows, outlines the findings and procedure of our SITPAS. The work enabled us to situate every operating farm in the Park on a map, and also identify the dimensions of each; in so doing we noticed that the greatest sized farms are situated in the areas best suited to agriculture. Our research enabled us to confirm that on this protected land area containing periurban agricultural activity, 35,000 out of a total of 47,000 hectares are used for intense agricultural activity. Within the Park there are 910 active farms with rotating crops, and dykes, which exploit the richness of the soil. This proves there is an enviable water network fed by underground springs. We have even been able to verify that there are over a thousand farms in current use, which have their legally registered bases in the 61 towns and villages in the park, but whose farmed lands may not necessarily be within the park's boundaries. The work involved in collecting the data also led to the creation of useful soil-use reading cards. These inform about the varied distribution of crops, and enabled us to identify 4 subdivisions within the park, which correspond to the boundaries of the towns and villages. These break down into a subdivision to the west, one to the south west, one to the south east, and the last to the east of the park.



We noticed that rice crops are present (in 74% of the total area) in the south west of the park, while it is absent in the west and east areas, where there is barley, wheat and, above all, pastures. In this mosaic of agriculture, corn is the most evenly distributed whilst beetroot is concentrated in the east.

This distribution can be explained by taking into account the fact that in the east and west areas, agricultural activity is mainly focused on zoo-technical elements, and, therefore, on corn and autumn /winter cereal crops and pastures, while the south west sectors are characterised by rice culture, which relies on the strong presence of water irrigation networks. The south east area acts as an intermediary between the two topographies described above. As well as this study of every farm and its succession of crops, our analysis was supported by the accessing and processing of European Union data for each farm, regarding agro-environmental measures. Another piece of information we learn concerns the rural, historic, and architectural heritage present in the Park's land. In fact, the consciousness, valuing and promotion of this heritage will allow over a hundred working farms within the park to be visited, leading to a lesson in combining the modern with the traditional. This is because, inside these historic, and undeniably culturally interesting, buildings, modern and competitive agricultural activity takes place, obtaining the best the land can offer. This combination of factors means farms retain their independence and can resist urbanisation. As part of our analysis, we took a census of the farms which are orientated towards organic farming, which, at present, unfortunately takes up little more than 0.5% of the agricultural surface area. There are currently only 9 organic farms operating an area of 200 hectares, although we must add another 60 to these which are being converted. The products of this agriculture are generally fodder and cereals for the raising of cattle. Organic products sold are therefore meat, milk, and other animal derivatives. Organic vegetables take up a smaller surface area than the cattle feed, but these allow the grower to receive an optimal, and far from negligible, income from the land area in question. Next, come rice and honey products, made according to organic methods.

This situation is perhaps due to the fact that conventional crop farming in the Park area produces more, and benefits from financial support, which in turn means that it is not always beneficial for the farmer to change over to organic farming. The characteristics described so far contribute to the structuring, and the creation of an identity, for the largest protected periurban space in the Milan province. We can now begin to reflect on what is generated by such farming and different recent modes of land use here, linked, for example, to people's enjoyment of this land, the closest to the city.

From this point of view, the farms, even if only a negligible number – hardly 20 – have made an effort to become multifunctional in their activities, which in the majority of cases, has led to agro-tourism. Clearly, they are still only a very small number, and what they offer is less related to accommodating people at the farm, than to the restaurant trade, which is highly successful due to proximity to the big city. With this in mind, the Park has recently begun to coordinate a communication plan, which will announce events and promotions in the area. What has been exposed of the project so far has been accompanied by support for the involved farmers, thanks to the implementation of a collaboration programme with farms, called (translated from Italian) "The Special Agricultural Project". Born in 1998, the project, introduced by the Lombardy Region for Regional Parks, proposed a series of measures with the aim of promoting and supporting multifunctional agriculture. It is still active, and the Park has subsequently managed to develop in different areas, ranging from information regarding sustainable farming techniques, to the financing of conversions towards what is environmentally friendly. These are made as a result of conventions with farmers, to arrange the supply of services, and the management of areas of major environmental importance, such as forests and wet lands. Added to this is the possibility of receiving aid for sustaining areas with dykes, which, for the Park, represent an environmental element of great interest, and the recovery of traditional crop techniques, which have almost become extinct. There is also the possibility of organising training courses for farmers, on important themes for their farms, such as on certified environmentally friendly systems.

Finally, the most recent project, and one still being developed, is to promote the valuing of agricultural activity, and to make it possible for the farm to acquire a label of "supplier of environmental quality". So we now have the environment and natural resources issue to add to the main theme of the park we described earlier. This has clearly generated the need to connect some estates, and these represent an important aspect of this rich, multi-faceted subject. The question of conservation, environmental management, restoration and environmental conversion, have led the park to working in various directions and on different projects. These range from the management of recognised sites of community interest, to the conversion of run-down places, to the re-introduction of certain animals, or even to rebuilding forests which have disappeared over the past

century, to their original character. Some of these projects have been carried out alongside a wider management aim; they have led to the identification of a vast and genuine ecological network, and enabled the preparation of environmental management scenarios for the whole area.

To attain this, ecological techniques and methodologies have been followed, particularly in the field of landscape and animal ecology, to carry out a study of the conversion possibilities within the Sud Milano park. This has the aim of supplying operational management information.

To do this, we opportunely chose certain bio-indicators regarding birds, and we evaluated the existing relationships between the bio-indicators and the structural characteristics of the landscape. We used certain scales of depth of study. A sub-regional grouping of areas allowed us to describe the characteristics of the agricultural landscape of the Po plain. We also illustrated the tendencies of certain bird populations, as a way of collecting information on the elements of the landscape which need priority protection. The land of the Sud Milano park is at the middle of our scale. At this level, we analysed the landscape, identified the main bio-indicating species, and we were able to propose a model environment plan, a model of an ecological network, and a model of a wide ecological corridor.

On a more detailed scale, we considered three areas around the park's nature reserves (Muzzetta, Lacciarella, Fontanile Nuovo di Bareggio and that of the Bosco di Cusago). Around these four nature reserves, we identified some areas where we carried out an in-depth study of the fauna and hedge life.

Taking ecological principles as a reference, (in particular those regarding landscape ecology and conservation biology) we established, as an objective, the proposal of agricultural landscape conservation methods, and we identified conservation priorities. In fact, we noticed the importance of conserving, and eventually restoring the semi-natural elements, such as hedge life which characterised the Lombardy plain landscape 70 years ago, where fauna is now diminishing. At the middle of the scale, we selected the bio-indicating species, based on the fauna analysis carried out. The landscape analyses showed the structure and the alterations produced. We have conceived and proposed an innovative ecological network model, and defined a wide corridor.

The local scale analysis of hedge life, and of the existing relationship between the hedges and plant and bird life, led to the identification of the necessary characteristics of hedges for bio-indicating species. At the same level, we were able to carry out a synthetic evaluation of the quality of the hedges for sheltering animal and bird life. The models presented have been checked according to the distribution of the fauna. We were also able to produce an efficient proposal for restoration.

The accounted experience, which combines the subjects of periurban agriculture and ecology more strictly related to environmental protection and area conservation, had led us to reflect on the importance of these areas in the sustainable development of the metropolitan area.

As a result of these observations of the Park land, some towns and villages, whose land is 90% agricultural and almost totally within a protected area, have envisaged new development policies. They take into account the implementation of the new European Agricultural Policy which radically changes the agricultural sector, but which at the same time has potentially revolutionary effects on land management. In fact, the separation of economic support from production "frees" agriculture from overproduction, and opens the way ahead to it being used consistently for environmental ends. With the new Policy, it is possible to imagine integrated policies which use agricultural areas as part of an environmental goal, such as, for example, the creation of a network of ecological corridors, and infrastructural gullies. These represent important elements of rationalisation for our Lombardy context, particularly for the metropolitan system there.

These considerations carried out within our territories find an equivalent on a European level, in the advice of the European Economic and Social Committee on the subject of periurban agriculture, published in the official EU journal in March 2005 (See paper nb. 2). They are also documented in the charter of tendencies of the European network of periurban regions (PURPLE) (See paper nb. 3). These are case studies which reinforce the need for a redressing of the balance between town and country, a subject very close to the hearts of those who, like us, live in periurban spaces. It is useful to reflect on the upholding of agriculture and on the issues of conciliation between agricultural use and other uses (recreational, housing etc), which can indeed be combined, through good practice. This would mean identifying the necessary land elements to fulfil the needs of different sectors and interests. We can also identify a new strategy, at the heart of which protected periurban spaces contribute to the image and identity building of their metropolitan areas.

In the specific case of the Sud Milano agricultural park, these tendencies and needs can be resolved by building a top-to-bottom sharing process with citizens, farmers, and the experiences of the 61 towns and villages which make up the territory of the park, to bring about the implementation of appropriate policies for this protected area. These policies could be, for example, regarding the choice of regulations for soil use and planning, or associated with support for conservation, restoration, promotion, environmental education, security, job promotion, local development, and so on.

The multi-faceted character of the existing Sud Milano agricultural park underlines the originality of the initial idea, which is clearly different to the concept of the creation of a park purely for nature protection in outer city areas. It is also different from the idea of a leisure park for urban users. The original character of the Sud, namely as an agricultural park, stood out from other parks, and support for it is still widely shared, as it has generated an innovative concept. This is of agriculture as a servicing element of land conservation, for sustainable management of the areas closest to a big city, in this case Milan. The park becomes the green “container” and lungs of a big city. The idea of an agricultural park can therefore be stated to revolve around two main axes: on one hand, the upholding and promotion of productive agricultural activity, and on the other, the protection and conversion of networks of elements which are today the evidence of this agricultural heritage, even if they are not directly linked to production (farms, abbeys, hedges, ditches for irrigation and water sources, and so on).

# The Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park (Barcelona) agriculture for the future in a high-quality periurban area

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Ramon Terricabras Maranges Agricultural Land Use Director of the Technical Office for Land Use Action of the Natural Areas of the Provincial Council of Barcelona. Manager of the Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park Consortium

## 1.- Introduction:

The Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park is located to the west of Barcelona, just 10 minutes from the city centre and specifically in the low-lying valley and delta of the River Llobregat. It is one of the most “hard-working” rivers in Catalonia: over its short, 170km length it has historically provided hydrological power for the coal mines along its higher stretches, before flowing past a number of industrial colonies, and finally supplying water for irrigation, mainly in the low-lying valley and delta through two canals: the Infanta Carlota Canal (1819) and the Derecha Canal (1858). The area has a long tradition in fruit and vegetable growing, and has for many centuries been the main supplier of fresh fruit and vegetables to the city of Barcelona. With an agricultural surface area of 2,938 ha, the Agricultural Park represents the last corner of agricultural land in the immediate area surrounding Barcelona. The park takes in land belonging to 14 municipalities with a total population of some 700,000.



In 1998, two tiers of local government (the *Diputació de Barcelona* -Provincial Council of Barcelona- and the *Consejo Comarcal* -County Council- of El Baix Llobregat) and the leading professional farming organization in Catalonia, the *Unió de Pagesos* -Farmers Union-, together with the 14 municipalities with agricultural land within the Agricultural Park founded the Agricultural Park Consortium with the aim of “*participating and cooperating in the across-the-board management of the agricultural area defined in the Special Urban Plan for protection and improvement, as well as in the contents of the Management and Development Plan (MDP)*” of the Agricultural Park (Article 4 of the Consortium’s Statutes). The MDP establishes that the objective of the Agricultural Park is “*to consolidate and develop the basis for land use and to facilitate the continuity of agriculture by promoting specific programmes which enable the preservation of values (productive, resource-based, ecological and cultural) and to develop the functions (economic, environmental and social) of the agricultural area in the framework of sustainable agriculture integrated into the area and in harmony with the natural environment and its surroundings.*”

The Agricultural Park forms part of one of the twelve linked areas or parks which make up the Network of Natural Spaces managed by the Department of Natural Spaces of the Provincial Council of Barcelona (member of FEDENATUR). The parks cover a total of 100,625 ha of protected natural and agricultural areas, and, in addition, make up one of the 51 large-scale projects of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona which the Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona<sup>1</sup> has established to “*respond to the new economic and social challenges of the*

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1 The Agricultural Park is one of the ten large-scale environmental projects of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona. With a surface area 628 km<sup>2</sup>., the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona is made up of 36 municipalities with a total population of 2,923,114.

*21st century and to build up a Metropolitan Area capable of thinking strategically”.*

The Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park is managed by a Consortium formed by three promotional bodies: the Provincial Council of Barcelona, the County Council of El Baix Llobregat (both are public authorities above the municipal level) and the largest professional farming organization in Catalonia- the *Unió de Pagesos* (Farmers' Union). The 14 municipalities with agricultural land have joined the Consortium, forming part of its management structure.

The management of the Agricultural Park is based on the MDP which establishes five strategic lines of action geared towards:

- 1) The efficiency of the infrastructures and services in the agricultural land
- 2) The improvement of the production, marketing and sales of agricultural products.
- 3) The modernization of the farms.
- 4) The successful formation of a quality space in harmony with the natural surroundings and its consolidation.
- 5) Disseminating knowledge on the natural and cultural heritage found in the Agricultural Park.

Strategic lines of action which develop specific objectives and measures, resulting in biannual plans of action approved by the Plenary Council of the Agricultural Park Consortium.

## 2.- Production-quality-income-future

Of the five strategic lines of action of the MDP of the Agricultural Park considered in this paper, it is the second which is being developed the most: *“in order to promote systems of production and sales and marketing which encourage the increase in incomes generated by farms.”*

Since the beginnings of the Agricultural Park, as managers, we have been certain that in order for agricultural land to exist and be conserved, it is necessary to count on the active presence of farmers in the area who work towards the fundamental objective of increasing their income from farming through the supply, in a competitive market, of products differentiated by their origin, quality and proximity to the market, along with the direct relationship between the producer and the consumer.

To this end, the Agricultural Park has decided:

- a) To promote more environmentally-friendly farming methods.
- b) To support initiatives around the identification (quality and origin) and promotion of the consumption of farming products.
- c) To disseminate the values of the landscape as a resource for the generation of income.

### 2.1.- Promoting more environmentally-friendly farming methods.

The Agricultural Park works with the three farmer Crop Defence Groups (ADVs- two of the ADVs are fruit and vegetable growers while the third is for fruit tree growers) who operate within the Park. The cooperation consists of supporting their technical experts specialized in the introduction and extension of good farming practices in the farms of the area, such as integrated or ecological production practices, through the provision of infrastructures (they make use of the facilities and the services of the Agricultural Park Consortium) and help for their proposals for experimentation and education in farming through grants and infrastructures aimed at these groups. The aim here is to increase the level of technical know-how to ensure a proper rationalisation in the use of fertilisers and the fight against pests and diseases.

The ADV manages experimentation fields in the Can Comas farm in the municipality of El Prat de Llobregat, where the Information and Management Centre of the Agricultural Park is located.

Among the work being done there, of particular note is the introduction of biofumigation and bio-solarisation, eco-farming techniques for soil disinfection, and the use of the technique of sexual confusion in the fight against certain fruit tree pests.

Together with training and advice for the farmers who put the techniques of the ADV into practice, the Agricultural Park has also published a story for children aimed at students aged 11-12 who take part in the Park's teaching programme, "The agricultural ecosystem". The story is called "En Vermelló i en Llargarut" ("Red and Lanky": Red is a tomato and Lanky is a cucumber). It is used as an introduction for schoolchildren to integrated agricultural production and the fight against pests by biological means.

## 2.2.- Supporting initiatives around the identification (quality and origin) and promotion of the consumption of farming products.

The professionalism of the farmers involved is fundamental in the final result of agricultural production. One way to demonstrate their professionalism is to produce under objective quality-based criteria such as the Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) or other public or private brands such as the brand name of the Agricultural Park, "*Producte fresc del Parc Agrari*" (Fresh produce from the Agricultural Park).



The Agricultural Park offers the possibility, with prior application and acceptance of a set of regulations, for farmers to be able to use the brand "*Producte fresc del Parc Agrari*" (Fresh produce from the Agricultural Park). This indicates that the produce has been grown in the area of the Agricultural Park, respecting natural rhythms, and resulting in tastier, more nutritional and fresh produce. At the same time, the aim is to enhance the reputation of and promote the seasonal produce of the Agricultural Park.

The brand is also associated with a campaign aimed at restaurants, entitled "*Els sabors de l'horta*" (The tastes of the market garden). This is a gastronomic campaign in which restaurateurs of the municipalities in the Agricultural Park offer clients the opportunity to try dishes either with more traditional or creative cuisine styles, in which some of the produce used is "fresh produce from the Agricultural Park". In this case, the term "*Producte fresc*" is written in the menu of the restaurant, next to the name of the dish. Two campaigns are organised a year corresponding to the winter and summer seasons.

Work is currently being done on promoting the "*Producte fresc*" brand in the stalls of local markets where farmers can sell directly to the consumer. This campaign will be supported by leaflets informing the public where they can buy fresh produce from the Agricultural Park and the restaurants where they can try them.

Also worth mentioning is El Prat breed of capon chickens which has been recognised with a *Denominación de Calidad* by the Catalan Government since 1987. It has also been classified as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) by the European Union since 1996. The Prat capon is characterised by its lion-coloured plumage, a large and pointy crest, and its featherless blue legs. It is raised on the ground and fed on a special diet to prevent it putting on excess fat. The chickens are killed after a minimum of ninety days. A fowl fair is held every year in the municipality of El Prat de Llobregat based around this breed of capon chickens.

The artichoke from El Prat-Baix Llobregat is also being promoted with the aim of earning an EU PGI for this highly-regarded produce on the Barcelona market.

## 2.3.- Disseminating the values of the landscape as a resource for the generation of income.

If landscape is defined from the viewpoint of the observer, from his/her emotions, as does the European Landscape Convention which defines it as "*any part of the land, as it is perceived by people...*"<sup>2</sup> it is clear that for a society like our current one, which demands that agricultural products are healthy and organoleptic (pleasant to the senses), it is not enough for this to result from the application of good farming practices, but, rather, it is also essential that the consumer perceives the quality in the origin of the area where products are produced. This perception is achieved if the land is ordered and has a pleasingly-positive image and, in

consequence, everything produced there must, in theory, be good. Herein lies the reason for promoting wine growing areas of Catalonia as *“cartas del paisaje -letters of the landscape”*. These are tools which define a code of conduct to which the economic and professional agents voluntarily adhere with the aim of achieving a certain positive image of the productive land, associated with “ordered land”, and a certain positive image for agricultural products among consumers. A pleasant-looking land presumably produces healthy products. This is a growing reality which is present in the collective memory of a significant percentage of today’s society.



This is a fundamental question in the management of a periurban agricultural area with a propensity towards being a receptor of everything that the urban city does not want, and so can easily destroy or disorder the landscape of an area. The “excellence of the landscape” is beginning to be seen as something marking it out as distinctive, and this is becoming increasingly relevant in the competitiveness of different areas.

The Special Plan for the preservation and improvement of the Agricultural Park aims to draw up, among others, two Development Guide Plans (PRD) based on the planning of rur-urban uses and the environmental and landscape quality of the Agricultural Park. The goal is to establish which activities, which are not strictly rural or agricultural, can be compatible with the economic, environmental and social functions of the Park and which cannot, while at the same time *“introducing criteria and recommendations in order to adapt and integrate the area of the Agricultural Park with the surrounding environment, and so creating a quality landscape, understanding that this is an added value in addition to the farming activity itself, which instead of interfering, improves the economic and territorial viability of the Agricultural Park”*.<sup>3</sup>

While the corresponding PRD is being drawn up, the Agricultural Park is working on the landscape PRD, based on three actions:

- a) Temporary flooding of fields
- b) Collection of traditional fruit tree varieties.
- c) Establishment of the *Agropolos*
- d) Water management and its quality control.
- e) Environmental and urban control.
- f) Management of the network of tracks and irrigation ditches.

a) Temporary flooding of fields (“Estanyats”)

An important asset of river deltas and the perception of them among society lies in their wealth of birdlife. In a specific area of the Agricultural Park, traditional farming activities have been brought back, consisting of temporarily flooding fields located next to the protected reserves and areas around the Agricultural Park, which when properly managed helps to expand the nesting and feeding areas of birds.

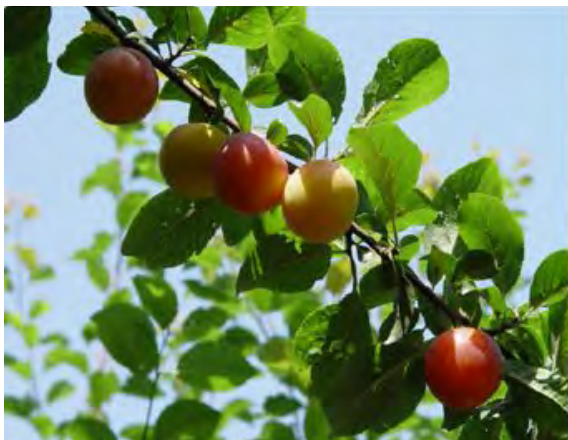


This action is an example of the successful combination of farming with wetlands and protected areas, since the possible loss of production of the farmer from ceasing to grow crops during certain periods is compensated economically by the Agricultural Park.

b) Collection of traditional fruit tree varieties.

In 2001, the European Commission approved a Life programme of the Diputació de Barcelona (Provincial Council of Barcelona) which included, among others, a pilot programme entitled “*Setting up an arboretum for the recovery of species and traditional varieties of fruit trees in the Agricultural Park*”. This project has permitted the recovery, maintenance and conservation of the main traditional fruit tree varieties of the Agricultural Park. At present, and thanks to the survey done by technical experts from the IRTA (Catalan Institute of Research and Technology into Agri-foods) the *arboretum*, with a surface area of 18,000 m<sup>2</sup>, now has a collection of 62 varieties of eight species (apple, pear, peach, prune, cherry, olive, grapevine, kaki fruit). The trees in the *arboretum* are grown following the principles of ecological agriculture. Moreover, in addition to being a germplasm bank, the *arboretum* is a demonstration field showing farming of fruit trees following ecological criteria.

To promote the *arboretum*, a series of educational leaflets have been published as a specific action to prevent the loss of a valuable part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Agricultural Park through the conservation of the diversity of the trees grown. The leaflets describe the *arboretum* and the different varieties of fruit trees planted.





### c) Establishment of the *Agropol*

The objective is to plan land use and eliminate anything that does not fit in this agricultural landscape and in some cases to offer areas for relocation. This is the reason why the Agricultural Park, through its MDP, proposes the creation and development of “*areas for facilities in the Agricultural Park which enable the concentration of public and private companies and organisations, along with common services for farmers (centre for the standardisation of products, parking for agricultural machinery, supply of fuels, etc.)*”<sup>4</sup>

At present there are two *Agropolos* in the Agricultural Park, one located in an agricultural cooperative (Cooperativa Santboiana) and a second in the Management and Information Centre of the Agricultural Park itself. The centre in Cooperativa Santboiana is an *Agropol* built for the concentration of agri-environmental supplies and services. The centre includes a sales service for raw materials for farmers (fertilisers, pesticides, tools, livestock meal, etc.), an agricultural machinery hire service, a diesel supply post, a collection service for recycling the plastic used in greenhouses, a collection service for used machinery oils and containers of plant protection products, etc.



The second *Agropol* is the Management and Information Centre of the Agricultural Park itself, located in a renovated farmhouse (Can Comas, in the municipality of El Prat de Llobregat). In addition to housing the technical and management services of the Agricultural Park itself, the centre is also home to the technical consultants who work for the Crop Defence Groups (ADV), the Mosquito Control Service of the County Council<sup>5</sup> along with the Surveillance Service of the Agricultural Park and the promotion and guide service of the educational programme: “The agricultural ecosystem”. In addition, the *Arboretum* and some experimentation fields are located in the confines of the centre.

The two *Agropolos* are also used to relocate and plan economic activities, some of which are spread across the Agricultural Park, such as family allotments, riding stables and garden centres, etc. The location of a new *Agropol* is currently being studied for this type of activities.

### d) Water management and its quality control.

One of the greatest strengths of the Agricultural Park lies in its network of irrigation distributed fundamentally through two 19<sup>th</sup>-century canals. A geographical information system is currently being developed within the *SIG@T* program (Agri-territorial Information System of the Agricultural Park) which will enable, and with the information which this encompasses, management to be carried out based on the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of this natural resource. At the same time, for some years now, water quality controls are being carried out at various points along the irrigation network.



4 Management and Development Plan, measure 3.1.3

5 It should be remembered that the Agricultural Park is located on a river delta which still conserves important wetlands supporting large numbers of mosquitoes. Their population needs to be controlled so that they do not become a nuisance for the people living in the numerous towns and villages around.

e) Environmental control and urban control.

The Agricultural Park has a permanent Surveillance Service whose mission, in addition to the control of possible robberies of agricultural products, is to carry out environmental and urban control in order to detect illegal dumping and discharges, and unauthorized building work. The reports by the Surveillance Service are communicated daily to the corresponding municipalities so that they can act and sanction if this proves necessary.

The Surveillance Service for the management and control of incidents has its own version of the SIG@T program: *SIG@T-Vigilancia*.



f) Management of the network of tracks and irrigation ditches.

The Agricultural Park has an extensive network of tracks, and irrigation and drainage ditches which define and characterise the landscape, and so their maintenance is fundamental both to guarantee that they are efficient, and from the point of view of the landscape. To this end, the Park runs maintenance programmes which are carried out together with the respective local authorities and with the associations of irrigation users. At present two new applications of the SIG@T program are being developed: *SIG@T- caminos* - for tracks and *SIG@T- red riego* for the irrigation network.

### 3.- Projecting the Agricultural Park to the outside world

The future of the Agricultural Park, located in an area submitted to constant urban pressure, depends in part on the actions carried out within its confines for its preservation, improvement and development. But its future also depends on how it projects itself outside the park, both in promoting itself and in not becoming isolated from a Europe-wide movement in defence of periurban spaces and particularly of periurban agriculture. The participation of its managers, politicians and technical experts is therefore of prime importance in the debate forums. This is because these forums are always a source of information and pressure to deal with the official bodies of the EU and the governments of EU countries in order to achieve *the "social, political and administrative recognition of the existence of periurban areas with agricultural activity as rural areas with special restrictive difficulties"*. This is expressed in the first objective of the report of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on "Periurban Agriculture" passed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2004, that is: the need *"to maintain agriculture in each periurban region"* as is proposed by the European Platform of Periurban Regions (PURPLE) in its Hague Resolution dated 22 October 2004; or the need to *"promote and support from the local sphere mechanisms for the preservation, management and invigoration of periurban agricultural and natural areas"* as is indicated in the second Orientation Guide "Land and sustainable development" of the Strategic Plan of the "Arco Latino" local authorities network.

It is in this context that the European Conference on Periurban Agriculture was organised entitled “Strategies and instruments for the sustainable protection of periurban areas in the European Union”, and the active participation, at an EU level, of the technical experts of the Provincial Council of Barcelona and the Agricultural Park in:

- The drawing up, as experts, of the report of the EESC on periurban agriculture, and so advising the present writer.
- The meetings of the “European Platform of Periurban Regions” (PURPLE).
- The meetings of the thematic group “Land and sustainable development” of the "Arco Latino" network of local authorities, governing the "periurban agriculture" working commission.

#### 4.- Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can note two final reflections on the importance of periurban agriculture:

1. In the final document of the second European conference on rural development held in November 2003 in Salzburg in its first principal it is stated that *“There is no agriculture without living countryside, nor living countryside without agriculture, but living countryside does not only benefit rural society, but rather society as a whole”*.<sup>6</sup>
2. The French historian Fernand Braudel states in his book “L’identité de la France” that *“we should remind the Europe worried about immigration that it has always had immigration but it has never seen a Europe without farmers, and yet we are about to see one”*

Hence, the objective of the Agricultural Park of El Baix Llobregat is to consolidate the presence of farmers in the area and to permit the maintenance of a series of living periurban agricultural spaces, and this is not possible to do in isolation. It is necessary to learn about and exchange experiences and to participate in all those European initiatives whose common objectives are the defence, planning, management and development of periurban agricultural spaces, in a Europe which is becoming increasingly peri-urbanised.

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6 First principal of the 2nd European Conference on rural development. Salzburg, 12 -14th November 2003

7 Fernand Braudel, historian (1902 - 1985). “L’identité de la France”, published in three volumes in 1986 by Arthaud.

# Sylviculture in a periurban forest: Soignes Forest (Brussels)

Stephane Vanwijnsberghe, Engineer- Head of the Forestry Department at the Brussels Institute of Environmental Management (Brussels Instituut voor Milieubeheer) Green Areas Division

## 1. Some notes on vocabulary:

“Sylviculture” refers to the culture of woods and forests, and “forestry” concerns wood production. The “culture” of a forest depends on the objectives of its owner. Wood production and the obtaining the biggest income (timber and hunting) are among the most popular management objectives. But the forest also constitutes a diversity of landscapes, presents complex ecosystems which shelter diverse flora and fauna, and forms an area of leisure and discovery for the public.

## 2. Management of a periurban forest

### 2.1 Characteristics of the Soignes Forest:

The percentage of the presence of different species is the following:

74% Beech

16% Oak

8% Pine and other conifers

2% Other

### 2.2 Management by Brussels

The main objective of the management plan is to tend towards a “social” forest, which satisfies, and will continue to satisfy, (ie sustainable management) the recognised modern functions of the area: landscaping functions – recreational and educational, nature conservation (symbolised in the Soignes Forest by the presence of roe deer). These functions will be integrated into the running of the site (integrated and differentiated management).

The general principles are:

- Limit any practise that may lead to soil degradation
- Maintain the features of the cathedral beech grove
- Ensure a diversity of quality landscapes
- Keep the forest in a good state of cleanliness
- Promote the importance of the historic cultural heritage
- Ensure public visits are well received (access, viability, safety)
- Meet the various public demands for recreation
- Ensure the various leisure activities co-exist well
- Inform the public about, and sensitize people to, the issues of nature and sustainable management
- Increase forest biodiversity
- Tend to the natural regeneration of the plantings
- Preserve, even restore, certain specific environmental areas
- Protect natural water sources (surface and subterranean)

Restoration  
of a local driveway



Loading of  
beech tree logs

#### A: Landscape management

The challenge is to offer diverse, high quality landscapes, and to manage borders, preserve glades....

#### B: Management of biodiversity

The challenge is to ensure the preservation of rare natural environments and species, and to promote the development of biodiversity.

Fauna: In the Soignes forest, 39 species of mammal have been counted. There are roe deer, whose presence and protection symbolise the very essence of nature conservation as well as an abundance of rabbits and foxes. Squirrels, particularly the Korean squirrel, are numerous, as are bats. There are 132 species of birds, amongst which there are interesting populations of cave-dwelling birds, and birds of prey. There are also reptiles, batrachians, fish in the lakes and pools, insects and spiders.



A young roe deer

Flora: Part of the countryside charm that the Soignes forest offers is its presence of flowers (hyacinths, anemones, lily of the valley, jonquils, wild garlic) and mosses. The forest is considered to be the richest in moss in the whole Benelux region. Some species of its flora and fauna are unique in Belgium, and perhaps even in the world.

#### C: Management of Users

The challenge here is to develop the recreational function of the area, while ensuring its preservation. Among the different users of the forest, are walkers –alone, or in pairs or groups, sometimes accompanied by one or more dogs. There are also traditional and sporting cyclists, horse riders, joggers, anglers, and groups of young people. Finally there are people with limited mobility, participants of group or solo orienteering activities, nature lovers and students revising for exams. A warm reception for the public is guaranteed via a series of installations in the forest: 28 parking areas, 48 benches, 71 bench-tables, 229 rubbish bins, 3 sports fields and 98 barriers to prevent cars entering. Recreational areas have also been built, 4 lit walking paths, and 3 jogging paths.

#### D: Management of the Historic and Architectural Heritage

It is vital to ensure the preservation of important historic and architectural heritage.

#### E: Inform and communicate with the public

Information given to, and real dialogue with, the public, need to be clearer. For this end, the objectives are:

- Enquiries about the behaviour of the public in the forest
- Enquiry about the expectations of the public
- Consultation with the public on the management plan project
- Partnership with the media (press, radio TV)
- Publication of folders
- Forest museum
- Development of a participatory platform
- Development of a website



The games field of Blankedelle



The Rouge Cloitre Abbey

### 3 Conclusion

Sylviculture depends on the societal context in which the forest exists.

In the case of a periurban forest, sylviculture is oriented towards landscape management, conservation and development of biodiversity, and user management. Wood production is no longer just a secondary method of reducing administration costs by selling quality products. It is necessary to inform the public about the management proposals, and to implement real communication with the public.

# French periurban agriculture: The Terres en Villes network, and the experiences of the participant cities

Serge Bonnefoy, Director and technical secretary of the ADAYG (Association for the development of Grenoble Y and its Agriculture) and of Terres en Villes

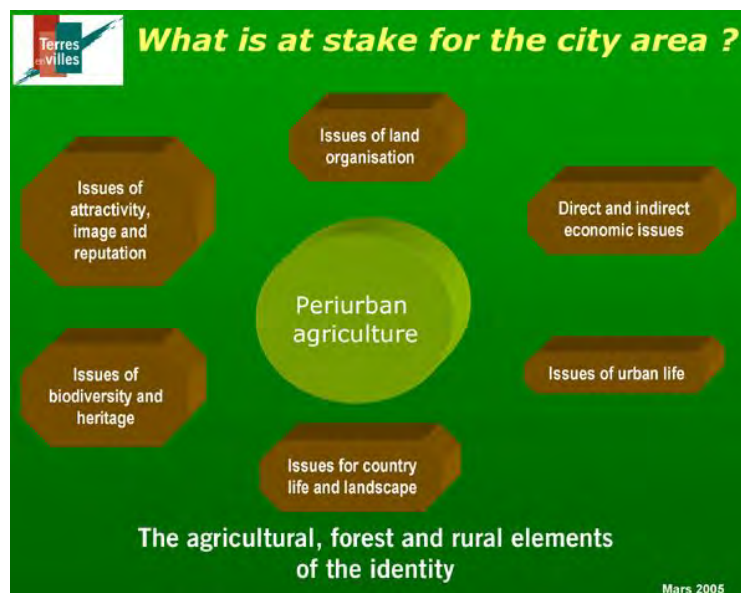
Urbanisation is a major trait of social and economic development in France, as it is elsewhere in European Union countries. It is mainly evident in urban regions' expansion into the countryside, and their absorption of an ever greater number of rural spaces into their perimeters.

This mutation, often brutal, radically changes the urban area as well as the rural space, which becomes periurban. As the mutation is not organised in a balanced way, urban logic suffocates the elements of rural life. All too often, the city marginalises rural activity, purely for the benefit of the urban area's economy. Not only agriculture, but also forest activity, which gives value to the majority of rural areas, are gravely affected. Farms particularly, especially smaller ones, are poorly prepared to face this new challenge, end often end up disappearing.

## Periurban agriculture and its stakes

Periurban agriculture is very diverse. It is determined by the local ecosystem, the type of urban history, the type of agricultural history. Periurban agriculture suffers numerous handicaps such as land pressure, certain effects of urban organisation, extra costs, and professional and political isolation. But it also has some huge benefits, such as being so close to a consumer pool, and other opportunities that urban life offers. Nevertheless, it represents very fragile agriculture, which should be defined as being somewhere between "comfort agriculture" and "field agriculture".

Periurban agriculture means there is lots at stake for the city and its surrounding land:



At the same time, periurban agriculture means there is a great deal at stake for French agriculture

- It plays an important part in the production of goods and agricultural services
- It plays the role of "guinea pig" and innovative leader
- It puts farming in the heart of the "agriculture and society" debate, and physically places it at the point where land meets road /rail networks

## 2) The emergence of periurban agricultural policies in France, and the Terres en Villes network

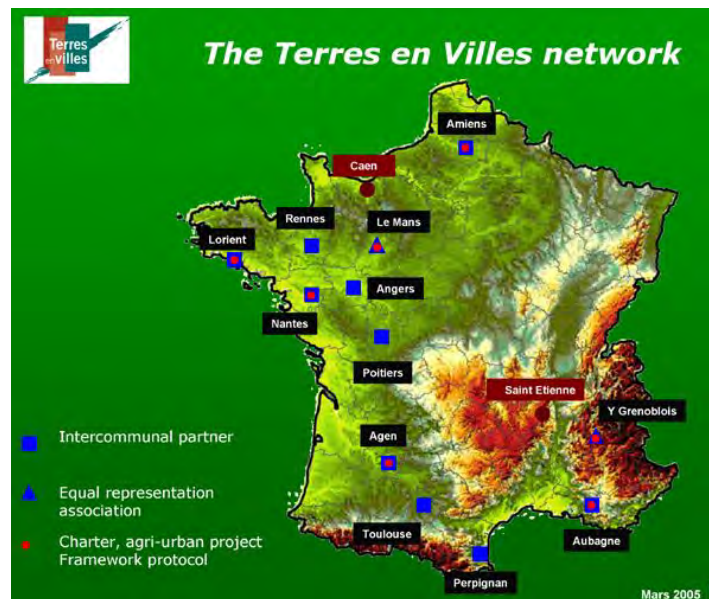
### A slow emergence

- 1960's: The state and the Ile de France (Greater Paris) region
- 1970's: The first periurban agriculture local policy (urban Lyon region)
- 1980's: Benchmark local experiences
- 1990's: The return of the State, the redressing of the balance between collectives/profession, the concept of network
- 2000's: A first diffusion  
The creation of Terres en Villes in Perpignan  
Periurban legal measures on development of rural territories (Loi sur le Developpement des Territoires Ruraux)  
Approaches towards the European Union

### The "Terres En Villes" network

On June 15 2000, having implemented periurban agricultural policies in their respective areas, the regionally elected representatives and agricultural managers created the "Terres en Villes" network. In July 1995, this association, ran equally by the representatives and managers, grouped 14 urban zones and associate members: the permanent assembly of government departments of agriculture (APCA), national federation of land management and rural establishment societies (FNSAFER), and the national shepherds association (Bergerie Nationale)

These areas wanted to share their experiences, exchange their knowledge, promote the role of, and interest in, periurban agriculture, and support the development of similar policies, both in France and abroad.



### Missions

- 1) Exchange knowledge between members: Seminars, training courses, build a "knowledge bank"
- 2) Participate in the debate over agriculture and the city: various interventions, contributions by periurban land development contracts (CTE), and contribution by the PAEN (a support group helping to promote periurban agriculture and nature. Also a pre-representative study by the ministry of agriculture, food, fishing and rural life and general management of forest and rural affairs (MAPAAR-DGFAR) , approaches to Europe, and research partnerships...
- 3) Common experiments, projects

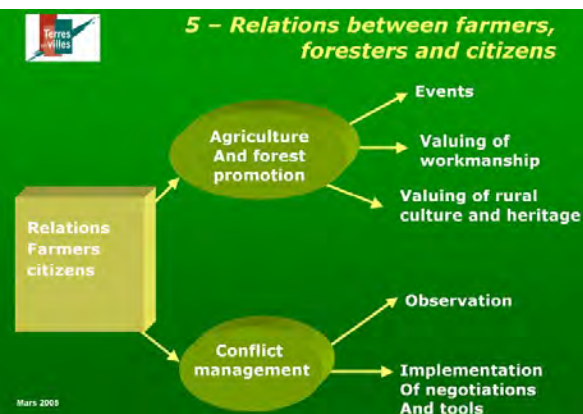
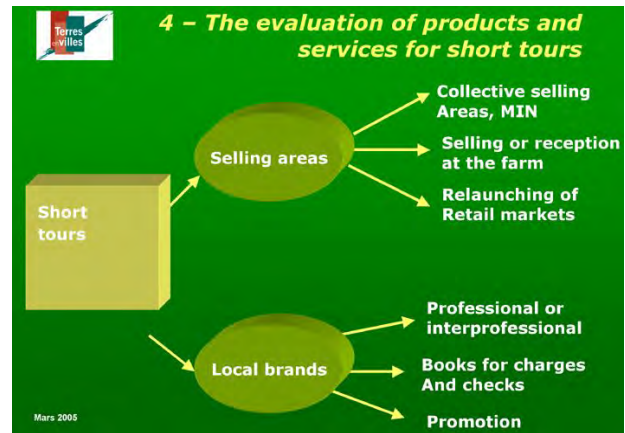
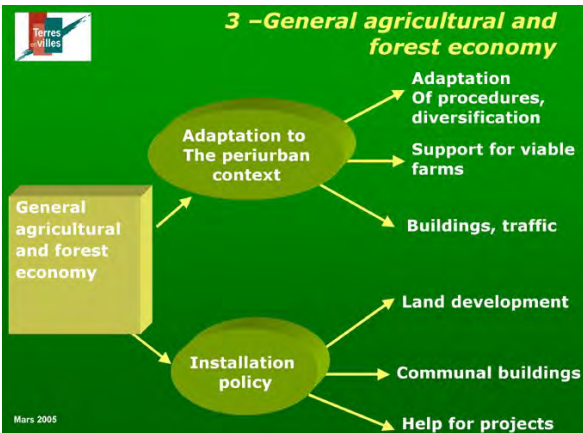
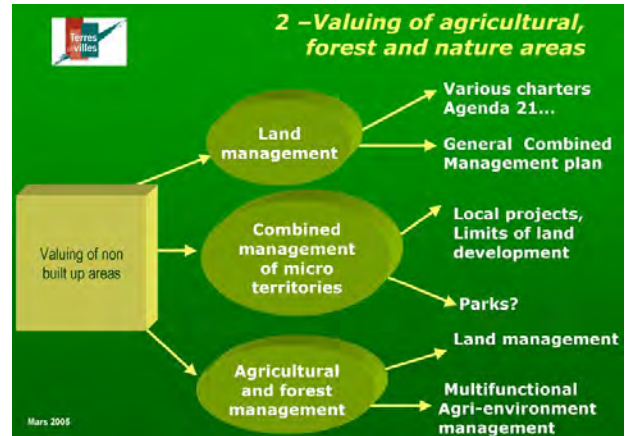
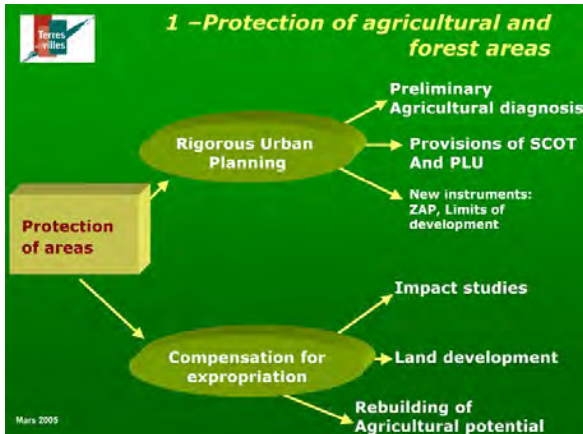
### Values of "Terres en Villes"

- 1) an approach based on agricultural and forest point of view, toward the urban areas
- 2) a multifunctional approach which integrates the economic angle
- 3) a shared responsibility between elected members, the profession, and other participants



What meanings ?

- improved communications between villages, towns and cities
- the agriculture crisis and the “territorialisation” of agricultural policy
- increasing consciousness of the effects of urban expansion and the “putting on the agenda” of the question of green areas and nature in cities



Experiences of the Terres en Villes cities  
Our hopes and expectations on a European level

- 1) A recognition of periurban agriculture and open spaces in rural development policy, as well as in social cohesion policy
- 2) An adaptation of current measures and legislation (eg. organisation of producers), towards periurban specifications
- 3) The mobilisation of “leader” approaches in cities

Our actions

- 1) Exchanges with Fedenatur, Purple, Arco Latino
- 2) A questioning of cities and capitalisation of various national partners
- 3) A seminar on “which European policy for periurban agriculture and open spaces?” ( 8 July in Grenoble)
- 4) A Terres en Villes resolution



## Which European “periurban agriculture and open space” policy?

### “Terres en Villes” hopes and initial proposals

Grenoble, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Terres en Villes considers that the preparation of future European programming is strategic for the protection, and promotion, of periurban agriculture, forests, and open city spaces both in France and elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, urban and periurban life is the concern of the whole of the European Union. This is why Terres en Villes has, since late 2004, been working on the issue. It has mobilised its committees, interviewed its members (from urban and agricultural federations from many French regions), and had exchanges with European networks and institutions engaged in similar reflections (Purple network, Arc Latin, Fedenatur, Social and Economic European Committee) .

This preparatory work led Terres en Villes to organising the Grenoble seminar, and presenting, in this pre-contribution, its hopes and initial proposals. Terres en Villes ends its *official contribution in November 2005*.

In favour of a complete understanding of this urban and periurban issue in Europe, by taking into account the “periurban rural” point of view.

In spite of the fact that urban and periurban development are a major trait of European development, European politicians have historically separated the urban issues from the rural and agricultural issues, resulting in the following paradox:

- the “urbans” throw the “periurban agriculture and open spaces” question back to agricultural policy and rural development
- the “ruralists” throw the same question back to the urban section of regional development policy

This paradoxical situation has thus led to the problem being continually ignored.

It is crucial today to consider the town, city, and metropolis as areas having both built up and non-built up areas, and primary, secondary and tertiary activities. So we must adapt policies to the reality of urban and periurban life in Europe.

In favour of land management and sustainable development which are thrifty with space

From “Terres en Villes” point of view, the European Union has a fundamental role to play in the matter:

- in valuing these principles in the context of the EU’s own schemes of management and development
- in inciting European states to harmonise their legislations
- in promoting good practice, which moreover could put pressure on French laws to change: SRU, LOADT, Law on rural lands

For an awareness of the specific requirements and handicaps of periurban agriculture, and periurban open spaces

Under very strong urban pressure, agricultural periurban areas – both forest and nature areas - buckle more than they reasonably should. Agricultural and forest businesses are thus confronted by: increasing land prices, the dividing up of their land, generating extra costs developing conflicts over who uses, professional isolation and a whole range of specific constraints which all too often lead to the ultimate disappearance of the business.

Paradoxically, this is happening while there are new urban and societal demands for public health, quality products, “nature in cities”, recreation, and territorial and cultural identity. These demands could become interesting assets for businesses which value open spaces, it only remains that the opportunities are able to be seized! That’s why Terres en Villes proposes that French and European policies take these specific requirements and handicaps into account, so that the adaptation towards the above welcome activities can be harmonious and bring development.

In favour of the right kind of support, coming from good rapport between European politicians

“Terres en Villes” considers that the issues of agriculture, open and natural periurban spaces, falls in the sphere of two large-scale European policies:

- common agricultural policy
- cohesion policy

*Considering the commission's proposals for the second pillar of common agricultural policy,* Terres en Villes asks:

- that the specificity of the agricultural and periurban open spaces question, is clearly recognised in the European texts, as well as in the French strategic plan and its regional components
- that periurban agriculture is clearly identified as a priority in the context of the following measures:

#### 1) Improvement in competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors

- action to inform and professionally train those active in the forestry and agriculture sectors
- installation of young farmers
- utilisation of advice services by farmers and forestry workers
- growth in the perceived value of primary farm and forestry products

#### 2) Management of space

- payments to help farm workers in challenging areas (except mountain areas)
- Natura 2000 payments
- support for non productive investment

#### 3) Diversification of the rural economy, and quality of life in a rural setting

- Diversification of non-agricultural activities
- Encouraging of tourist activities
- Protection, promotion and management of natural heritage, contributing to lasting economic development

#### 4) “Leader projects”

It is “Terres en Villes” absolute priority to support the creation of “leader projects” in big cities, based on the promotion of periurban open spaces, and agricultural and forestry development

*Considering the Commission’s proposals on cohesion policy, Terres en Villes asks:*

- That objective 2 “Regional competitiveness and Employment”, and objective 3 “European co-operation over territories”, support the implementation of integrated management projects on open periurban spaces
- That these objectives encourage support actions in favour of open spaces which are not taken into account in the second pillar of the PAC: certain environmental actions, sensitisation of inhabitants, social integration, environmentally friendly tourism
- That objective 3 supports the development of European, and North South co-operation in the matter

Finally, in Terres en Villes’ view, a clearly articulated explanation of the two policies and three foundations (FEADER, FEDER and FSE) is crucial for the understanding and implementation of integrated programmes for periurban open spaces. Clear rules of play adopted at European and national level need to be highlighted.

#### **In favour of major implications for cities and their active inhabitants**

City authorities need to set a good example by taking into account all of the components of their territories, and integrating agriculture and open periurban spaces into their land projects. Providing this is the case, the city and its active inhabitants can be the key players in the carrying out of the local projects. This is why Terres en Villes underlines that the “Leader” approach is fundamental and can support development, in case this is slow. Moreover, Terres en Villes underlines its wish that the implementation of its policies can establish links between regions, which can then probably contribute to its European policies.

# Sustainable development in the Rome countryside. Experiences in Nature reserves run by RomaNatura

Massimo Bugli, President of RomaNatura

Paola Pierucci, Staff of RomaNatura (Agriculture and Sustainable development)

Rome is the greenest European capital city. The majority of the green areas are made up not so much of gardens, but of agricultural and nature areas, which surround, and penetrate into, the city. Thus they form part of the peripheral built up area of the city. The periurban natural and agricultural landscape assumes a fundamental role for the city: it is the guardian of the memory of the city's history, and of the source of primary or difficult to reproduce resources. It is essential from an ecological as well as economic point of view, and the area also plays a leading role in providing areas and services for city people to enjoy. The agricultural landscape therefore constitutes a fundamental connecting element between human activity and the environment, which man has stamped his mark on in various ways. These vary according to environmental situations and production techniques, but are always founded on a need to somehow harvest the area in question. The promotion of the rural area must continue to protect the values and production methods directly or indirectly related to the rural world. This is in order to promote and revitalise the culture of farming, which is seriously threatened by urban and industrial traits, and by the phenomenon of socio-economic decay. Looking at the make up of periurban agro-economic areas in this light, shows the impact upon the area made by infrastructural development, and helps us to see ways of moderating, restoring and improving the periurban landscape, and compensating for the problems. This can be with financial support, with the farms playing the main roles in the redressing of the environmental balance, providing they can be helped to recuperate compatible production methods.

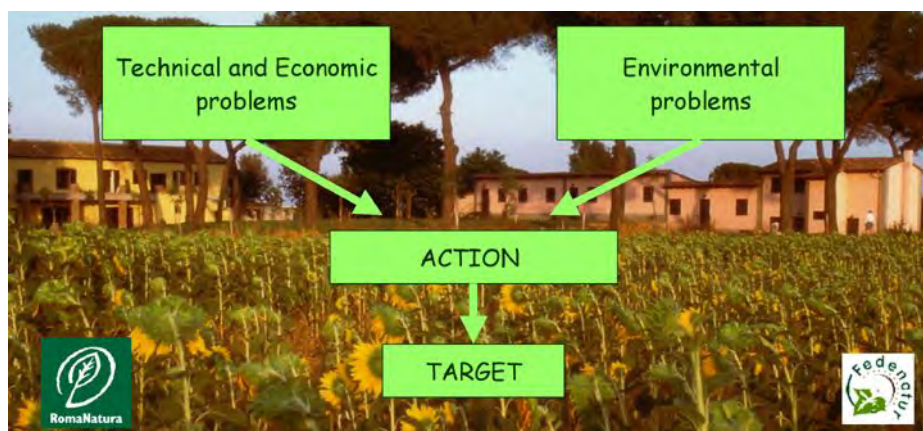
The objectives are:

- The redressing of the eco-environmental balance between city and countryside
- Promotion of natural resources
- Environmental landscape restoration, to create viable land in the agricultural habitat
- Rebuilding of a productive function which is compatible with the environment
- Protection, promotion and sustainable development of a land's resources
- Upholding of biodiversity
- Citizens' participation and implication

The establishment of a protected area has implications, not only for land protection, but also for promotion and sustainable land development. In the agrosilvipastoral domain particularly, integrating human activity into environmental protection can achieve the desired objectives.

The management organisation must, during the planning stage, consider the environmental context where the protected area is located, and try to integrate the characteristics of this space, into the inhabited "humanised" area.

In protected areas found in urban and periurban spaces, this integration is more difficult to achieve, in the sense that here, human life has stamped a greater mark on the area, creating a great imbalance at the heart



of the environmental system. Agricultural activity in these areas is also conditioned by, and subject to, negative consequences, which limit its economic sustainability. These negative repercussions are the principal causes of land deterioration, and affect social relations between city and country. Imbalances incur, which, depending on the way they are treated and resolved, can have a negative influence on the survival of agricultural activity (source- European Economic and Social Committee: Advice on the question of periurban agriculture NAT/204)

The research into, and obtaining of, economic sustainability and social and environmental development, are the focal point in the upholding of the agricultural landscape. The latter is characterised by cultivated fields, meadows, pastures and woods, which are impossible to conserve without the presence of the farmer.



Seen thus, the environment is no longer just the context in which the objectives must be implemented. Instead it is now an active element of the project, and a real generator of sustainable development. These difficulties are surmounted by making an effort to diversify the farms economy, by introducing activities which can supply new sources of income for farmers. These activities, implemented within the constraints of respecting environmental sustainability, will be supported, not only to provide new ventures and incomes for land managers, but also to strengthen the role that rural areas play in the context of urban life. This will be possible by recognising, above all, the social, political and administrative role of these simultaneously rural and urban (periurban) areas, where farming faces many challenges. Also needing to be recognised is the role that these areas play in defining relationships between city and countryside, by analysing the valuable elements of the area (water resources, landscapes, biodiversity, architecture, agricultural structure etc). Finally, an awareness of the economic, environmental and social functions that the areas must fulfil according to their make up, needs to be instilled.

Agriculture within nature reserves plays a decisive role in the constitution of the landscape in question: out of a total 14,000 hectares, 60.84 % are agricultural land. This figures illustrate how the RomaNatura Organisation must orientate its goals essentially towards the protection and upkeep of this landscape. It should be underlined that the cultivated fields and their farms constitute, as well as their environmental importance, an added historic and cultural value, traditionally known in this area as "Agro-Romano". Regarding the characteristics of the farms concerned, there are two main types of farm:

- 1) very extended agricultural surface area (over 200 hectares): these are few farms, generally run by specialist technicians, who, thanks to the size of their land, obtain substantial income from their farming

- 2) small agricultural surface area (less than 30 hectares): these are more numerous. They are often family-run, and due to their type of activity, often cannot supply a source of income for future generations.

Among the activities that the Organisation has developed this year, we essentially find:

- Educational “City farms”, which have welcomed over 20,000 schoolchildren
- The implementation of a charter of services proposed by the farms in the protected area

Among the farms present in the RomaNatura protected areas, the most representative, regarding number of services projected in the area, is the Cooperativa Sociale Integrata a.r.l – agricoltura nuova. As well as organic crops extending over 200 hectares, the cooperative proposes the following services:

- Selling area (fruit, vegetables, cheese, bakery products, meat)
- Mill and oven for the production of pastry and pastries
- Cheese dairy for cheese production
- Refectory service for staff
- Catering service
- Door to door sales
- Merry-go-round
- “City farms”

## Conclusions

There is still much work to do for the farms found within the RomaNatura Organisation’s protected areas to become truly multifunctional. The strong anthropogenic pressure from urbanisation, and the abuse and neglect of farms make land protection and environmental promotion, via sustainable development, difficult. As well as supporting farms, the Organisation intends to coordinate a series of projects aimed at upholding periurban architecture through a much larger scale of initiatives. These involve agriculture, but also carry an environmental element much more aimed at the development of the whole area, rather than just specific farms. Thus the added value resulting from these activities will bring about a promotion of the land that will affect all the activities present.

- The promotion of agricultural products: the Natura In Campo label
- The joining of the EFCF (European Federation of City Farms)
- Participation in the Life Romax Kyoto project



# Gallecs, a contribution towards the development of local, sustainable micro-economies of small and medium-sized towns around the second metropolitan belt of Barcelona.

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Victoria Caballero, manager of the Espai Rural de Gallecs (Mollet del Vallès).

## Concept and reflection

The terms: Open spaces? Free and open spaces? The functional component of landscape? ...

- The importance of the urban concept compared to the importance of the rural concept.
- The importance of the large city and its surrounding urban belts compared to the identification of small and medium-sized towns which have not been entirely invaded by urban or industrial encroachment of the land.
- The importance of citizens, environmentalists, landscapers, architects, compared to the importance of farmers
- Are we periurban or perirural?

*The very definition of periurban implicitly involves a dependency on the urban (around the city) and likewise, in the symbolic sense, a cultural superiority of the city over the countryside.*

## The general questions

Can agriculture exist without farmers? Can nature (sustainable environment) exist without countryside? In any case, without countryside, there are no farmers.... neither the environmental balance necessary, nor the added value of leisure and quality of life of urban citizens.

Some characteristics which link the city to the countryside (closer)

- The globalisation of markets
- Mass culture and individual and community fragmentation
- The aging of the autochthonous population
- Unemployment

Some characteristics which separate the city from the countryside (closer)

- Agricultural or "free" land to be able to carry out a rural activity
- Economic activity linked to the primary sector or the related tertiary sector (with the exception of selling to public).
- Globalisation affects in a different way:
  - Industry can "delocate", agriculture in general must specialise
  - Agriculture in periurban areas can only survive in the long term by opting for quality and using strategies involving symbolic values (nature, health, quality of life...)
- Lifestyle with several distinctive characteristics (working hours, type of work)
- Possible identification of a model of life connected to values identifiable as a social and/or cultural group.

The metropolitan belt of Barcelona

- Gallecs is located in the second metropolitan belt (coming out of Barcelona) or in the first belt (coming in from the rural counties). The distinctive characteristics of small and medium-sized towns of the metropolitan belt: Are we periurban or perirural?

*In order for the bases of a balance in land use to be established, the road we take must have two directions, one going forward, and the other coming back; two entries and two exists*





Land value and its classification in relation to the economic and social dynamics. Gallecs, an another example.

- The amount of land which may be urbanised is related to a macro concept: economic (from the price of the land itself to the potential of the economy...) and homes. The land which may be urbanised has an economic value in itself, its role understood as “quality of life has scant importance: environment, agriculture, sustainability, workers, inhabitants...” Everything must be cheap to maintain, because land is expensive and the economy is important.
- The land which may not be urbanised is related to a micro concept: economic and homes. The land which may not be urbanised turns the order round: agriculture-environment-programmes-actors- ... “quality of life”

Gallecs evolution:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Stage (60's and 70's) - The public expropriation by state decree - Dictatorship-.Macro objective: satellite town of 150,000 inhabitants.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> stage (80's) - The maintenance of public property transferred from the state to the region – Liberal-nationalist government democracy. Land urbanised without planning. Objective: economic for location of industry and homes necessary to maintain the development of the Metropolitan Area.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> stage (2000's) - The maintenance of public property and the application of an Urban Guide Plan which classifies land as “not for urbanisation” and for special protection, and protects it environmentally by means of a PEIN (*Plan de Espacios de Interés Natural*- Plan for Areas of Natural Interest) transferring its ownership to the new consortium made up of six municipalities

affected by the expropriation and three departments of the Generalitat (the Government of Catalonia).

β The farmers

While the land was urbanised without planning, it was maintained by means of its economic value. The cheapest way of maintaining it was to let the farmers stay there (land and houses). The uniqueness of Gallecs is that the farmers have always formed part of the defence of the land. The



farmers are still active players on the land. The ownership is public, with agricultural planning and management agreed.

*Governments and the law affect development models and land use planning but the countryside cannot be managed by decree. For agriculture to be competitive and sustainable, a day-to-day process is needed with the agreement of the main players: the farmers. And being a farmer is not an easy job to do anywhere, and even less so in the metropolitan regions.*

The strategic lines of action of the Gallecs project:

1. AGRICULTURAL LINE OF ACTION:  
CULTIVATION, PRODUCTION,  
COMMERCIALISATION

- Research
- Dissemination and promotion
- Proposals for commercialisation:



- The network – Second metropolitan belt
- Promotion of self-management

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL LINE OF



### ACTION

- Research
- Promoting awareness
- Education
- Dissemination and promotion

## 3. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUE OF ACTION

- Revaluation of autochthonous culture and all of its aspects
- Creation of spaces of identity-based and intercultural coexistence
- Proposals of leisure related to local surroundings.



## PROGRAMMING, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

### CONCLUSION

The aim of Gallecs is:

- to recover harmony between the land and its inhabitants: animals, plants and humans.
- to gain respect for the defence of natural and cultural biodiversity
- to promote the micro-economy in the face of the potent macroeconomic reality of the market.

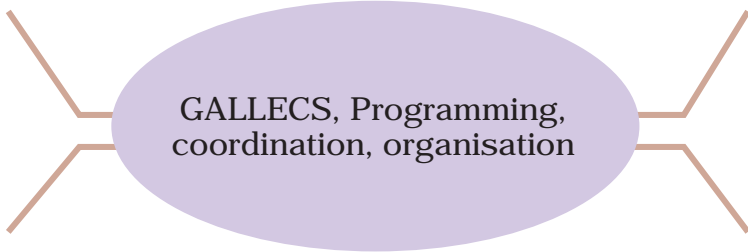
Public: above municipal level

- Declaration of principles
- Institutional committee
- Technical committee
- Agreements

Agriculture associations  
 Gallecs Farmers Association

- Regular assemblies
- Joint or coordinated programming
- Agreement
- Economic and technical support

Association of Producers for Quality of El Vallès Oriental

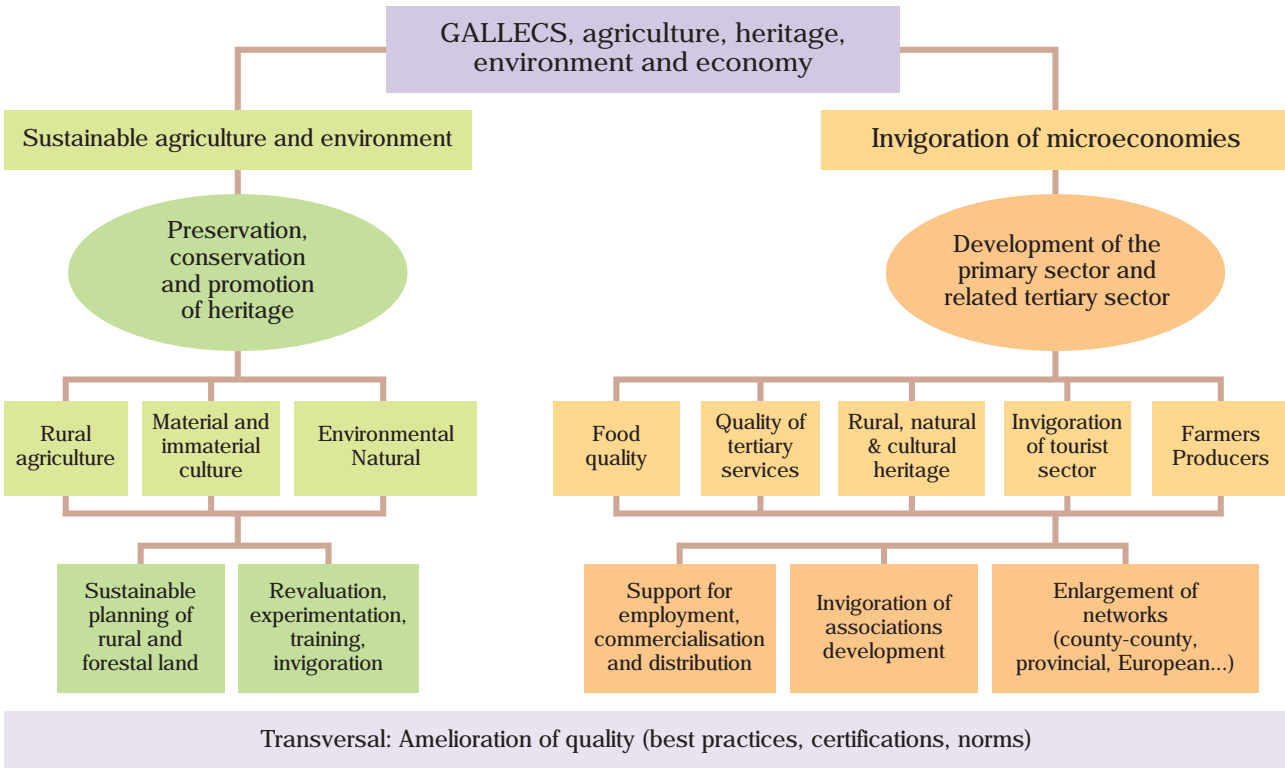


Public: Municipal and Intra-municipal

- Across municipalities
- Joint or coordinated programme
- Regular meetings

General associations

- Environmental organisations
- Cultural organisations
- Association organisations
- Sports and leisure organisations
- Fruit and vegetable growers



# The brand image of the Natural Parks of Andalusia

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Maria Isabel Ferrero Muñoz, Head of the Department for Sustainable Development. RENPA (Red de Espacios Naturales Andalucía).

Andalusia is a region whose situation, at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, and lying between two great continents, Europe and Africa, gives rise to a land of vivid contrasts and great diversity. This is clearly demonstrated in its rich cultural and natural heritage.

Andalusia is home to high levels of biological diversity in animal and plant species, and a great range of landscapes, and is considered as one of the best conserved regions in Europe. This huge level of biodiversity is reflected in the number of protected natural areas, covering more than 19% of the region, representing one of the highest percentages in the European Union.

The creation of the Network of Protected Natural Areas of Andalusia (RENPA) in 1989 represented the start of a process of protection of the different spaces of the Autonomous Community, in accordance with a progressive policy towards the conservation of nature which favours the economic development of Andalusia.

There are currently 146 Protected Natural Areas in Andalusia:

- 2 National Parks.
- 24 Natural Parks.
- 28 Natural Reserves.
- 32 Natural Sites (Parajes Naturales).
- 4 Recognised Natural Reserves (Reservas Naturales Concertadas).
- 19 Periurban Parks.
- 35 Natural Monuments
- 2 Protected Landscapes.

8.7 million hectares of protected surface area in Andalusia

Natural Parks are privileged areas for the development of sustainable development models, with a use which does not exhaust natural resources and permits their usage and enjoyment for the coming generations.

In this framework of action, the Consejería de Medio Ambiente (Andalusian Department of the Environment), through the ADAPT Community Initiative, has put into effect the ADAPT project – Natural Parks. The ADAPT programme seeks to help workers to adapt to the evolution of the needs of the job market and, in the specific case of ADAPT-Natural Parks, the aim is to strengthen the idea that development and the conservation of natural resources can and must, go hand in hand.

Some of the actions put into effect by the ADAPT project are training-orientated in order to improve the qualifications of workers and business people who work within the protected natural areas. In the case of Cardena-Montoro Natural Park, actions have been geared towards issues such as hunting management, and the commercialisation and associations of ecological agriculture. These actions attempt in part to alleviate the deficiencies which have been detected through a diagnostic study of artisan activities in the Parks especially in relation to the exploitation of natural resources, and traditional and popular crafts.

Tourism is considered as an activity with great potential in the Natural Parks, providing that it is framed in models which are respectful towards the exploited resource in question; the landscape, the cultural heritage, the traditions, the different ways of living,... The ADAPT project also identifies and regulates the Nature Monitor as a new profession who helps visitors who come to the natural areas to enjoy themselves by means of knowledge and communication, and by adapting their needs with what is available in the area. A study is also being carried out on the limits and potentials of the different protected areas to receive these tourist visits so that they can guarantee the quality of visits by promoting nature interpretation, the recognition of nature's values and its understanding. In addition, contacts are maintained with other European projects, mainly with the Federation of Natural Parks of France, for the exchange of experiences.

However, one of the actions of greatest interest lies in the creation of the “Parque Natural de Andalucía” brand. This initiative, a first for Spain, seeks to allow the people and companies established in the Protected Natural Areas to benefit from a valorisation of the land, by offering the visitor differentiated products and services, associated with the environmental values of the Parks which promote the image of a natural, artesian and authentic product. The certified products are marked by an exclusive label which consumers can recognise for its image and the values it offers.



In this initial stage, the Parque Natural of Andalusia certificate is seen as a pilot experience which establishes the basis for the brand. The commitments which form the guarantees of the values of this brand name are:

- Local character Products from companies and people who work in the area of the municipalities of the Natural Parks
- Environment Ensuring compliance with environmental legislation, including specifically the legislation pertaining to the Park, and taking on a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Quality Writing up documents in order to establish procedures to ensure the high-quality specifications of the product or service.

Certification is aimed at the following classes of products:

- Natural products most of which is produced in the Natural Park.
- Craft products resulting from totally or partly manual processes and whose characteristics are determined by the skill and experience of the producer.
- Nature tourism consisting of leisure activities, restaurants and accommodation.

In addition to the opportunity of using the positive image of Natural Parks in society, linked to its values and image which identifies an area, the Parque Natural de Andalucía brand seeks to offer business people:

- The strength of the network through the certified products for the exchange of professional and business experiences.
- Promotion of products through the webpage of the Department of the Environment (Consejería de Medio Ambiente) and promotion of common actions such as participation in trade fairs and the publishing of promotional material (leaflets, catalogues, etc.).
- A gateway towards new promotional and distribution channels such as the sales outlets of the public facilities of the Department of the Environment itself, and the hotels and restaurants certified by the brand.



# From landscape architecture to “land art”: Agriculture as a driving force behind the development of Lille Metropole’s periurban (peripheral urban) parks

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Pierre Dhenin, Managing Director of the joint commission “Espace Naturel Lille Europe” (Nature Area Lille Metropole)

The Espace Naturel Lille Metropole (ENLM) is a joint commission representing 40 local authorities and the urban community of Lille Metropole, with the aim of creating new nature areas. Created in October 1992, today it manages just over 1200 hectares of natural spaces around Lille.

Lille Metropole is the most agricultural urban community in France: 50% of its area is farmed, which is some 42,000 of its 81,000 total hectares.

To develop a policy of creating large periurban (rural urban) parks, it was absolutely essential that agricultural businesses would want to get involved. To create a positive atmosphere on both sides, several years of debates, studies and meetings were necessary.

Today, the ENLM, in allegiance with the Chamber of Agriculture, proposes aid for farmers in periurban parks to farm the local land, and so encourage landscape architecture. This is part of a huge landscape management plan. The commission is also in favour of creating farm tours, and ultimately organise regular exchange trips between farmers in France and abroad, to exchange new ideas to strengthen collaboration in the project. Today, periurban parks are even considered to be important in creating sustainable agriculture.

## Part 1 Landscape architecture

For four years agricultural businesses have been able to benefit from technical and financial aid to ensure the integration of their buildings into the landscape.

Farmers first participate on a voluntary basis, for a 5-day introductory training course. After that, a landscape architect joins them for three days, and establishes with the farmer a finely detailed plan, and financial assessment of the landscaping of his farm. In this way the farmer can protect certain areas of his farm (eg specific plantations intended as a refuge for birds, or installations to dissuade the public from trespassing). Finally, the farmer can begin to implement the plan, benefiting from special funds, which can be up to 2000 Euros a year, for 3 consecutive years, to buy his supplies (the workforce costs are at his own expense).

A dozen agricultural companies have already benefited from ENLM aid and training. One of them, Wavrin, was able to transform its artificial pastures into rich prairies. The ENLM has also helped Villeneuve d’ Ascq, where they helped ensure the survival of 40 “trait de Nord” horses, a local breed in danger of distinction.

Still more have worked with ENLM, for example to demolish blockhouses or transform them into homes for bats...

## Part 2 – Trips and workshops

Every two years a trip is organised abroad, which helps farmers become familiar with methods of diversification and enriching the quality of their land. Park technicians and urban planners from the Development and Urbanisation Agency of Lille have created working groups with agricultural managers, who work for the future of the role of agriculture, in planning generally.

### Part 3 - Networks of open farm

Since 2004, a second measure has been put in place which is aimed at the agricultural enterprises situated in the park areas: the creation of tours of the farms which are open to the public. Training here mainly concerns the reception at the farm. Farmers who have benefited from the training can then officially have their farm toured, and the ENLM assures active promotion of these farms.

In this way farmers become key players in the countryside development. They contribute to the value of the region, by bringing about a quality nature heritage, which preserves agriculture.

To date, some fifty farms have been part of the scheme, under which Lille was able to lead an exceptional "land art" operation in 2004. Led by Jacques Simon, the area presented over fifty hectares, and was awarded the landscaping "grand prix".

### Part 4

From July 3<sup>rd</sup> to September 12<sup>th</sup> 2004, almost 50 hectares of the Parc de Deule, an area shared by three local authorities, became the greatest exponent of "land art" seen to date in France. It was unique for several reasons:

- its size
- its duration. As a rule, land art is ephemeral; the cutting of a field's grass, a vegetable or mineral assemblage, a design on, or of, a sand dune, slag heap or snowy field. All of which last just long enough for a photo but in this case there was a gamble: to rely on the natural growth of vegetation for a period of three months.
- The way it was implemented: five agricultural companies and over 650 volunteers took part in the project from its conception, to its full implementation, using workshops set up in January 2004.

High School students from all over the region, (from schools of agriculture and horticulture, fine arts, and architecture,) joined up with some ten local associations, schoolchildren, and employment agencies from the urban community. They carried out the works of art, in the fields which had been prepared by the five partner agricultural companies.

The Chamber of Agriculture has been a very active partenaire. This action was completed with five week-ends of animation activities which have gathered over 10,000 walkers in three months.

This operation had a major impact on the local national and international media. The eight months of artistic adventure contributed to the opening of the Parc de la Deule, and the founding of the first tour of open farms in the area.

The partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, Local Authorities and the ENLM was enriching and exemplary.

It is important that farmers feel they have a role in, and benefit from, the growth in the number of visitors coming to enjoy themselves in sites run by the ENLM - areas often considered to be the green lungs of Metropolitan Lille. Local walkers, often seen as pests to farming activity, are now some of the new resources for periurban farming.

The Chamber of Agriculture and the farming profession need to maintain viable and sustainable farming methods, and to overcome any hurdles relating to developing activities close to a city. Working towards recognising farming activity on the city's doorstep, is helping the joint Commission to seize this valuable opportunity and be able to intervene to minimise certain constraints.



# From ignorance to partnership – the case for farming in the Miribel Jonage national park (Lyon, France)

Daniel Page, President of the agriculture /forestry commission of SYMALIM  
Didier Martinet, Director General of SEGAPAL

Spreading over 2200 hectares upriver from Lyon, the Miribel Jonage park is emblematic of natural parks, regarding both its characteristics and the stakes involved in the development of periurban (rural urban) nature spaces.

For over ten years, the park has been the object of concerted planning, founded on the compatibility of, and balance between, the four main vocations of the area: its natural underground water source, its leisure potential, nature, and its vineyards. Today, the park welcomes over 3.5 million visitors a year who participate in relaxing activities, sport and leisure. Close to an urban area, it also plays an important role in terms of social cohesion and integration. With a rich environment, it shelters a remarkable natural heritage: former branches of the river Rhone, beavers, over 20 species of protected plants, to name but a few elements.



## Agricultural issues at the outset

Agriculture was present in the area before the park was created. Originally, the plan was to create a lake covering the whole area, which would have led to the end of the agriculture. But the project was abandoned, so the farming continued.

In 2001 the plan was to integrate agriculture into the development of the park.

But a lack of relations between the land owner and farmer, brought about a mutual ignorance and no ensuing contact whatsoever.

The SYMALIM was unaware of the details of different practices, and was mainly concerned with the quality of its underground springs.



## Objectives

Today the SYMALIM wishes to integrate agriculture into its overall plan: (land management, human presence, economic activity) on condition that it is compatible with the vocation of the park (short term cohabitation with the public, medium term water source, and protection for the vineyards). It also wishes to give greater value to the park via creating specific jobs to be carried out on the land. Finally it wishes to define the status of the farmer.



## Means

President Rene Beauverie decided to thoroughly investigate this issue, which has been much studied, but always remained too complex to decipher.

An agricultural commission made up of elected members of SYMALIM, technicians from the group specialised in resolving issues with water, nature heritage, environment and public safety was created. The elected members were sensitised to the issues of periurban agriculture, its evolution, and cereal production.

Sites which have employed a similar approach were visited.

## Methodology notes

Carry out a diagnosis.

Personal interview with each farmer involved. Specially designed questionnaires to pinpoint the exact situation. Interviews carried out by a young agricultural engineer, recruited for this purpose.

Setting up of exchange meetings (the first expected to be quite difficult).



The information gathered fed into a database. Areas to be developed localised by using an aerial photo. Data evaluated and acted upon by the SIG.

## Results of the diagnosis

The thorough interviews provided us with a precise overview of the situation, and a knowledge of the farmers, their practices and their farms. Thus we would be able to direct their environmental expertise towards nature heritage, the use of water and to the promotion of its quality (exogenous products). Daily cohabitation with the public would be emphasized to be feasible and in line with their interests.



## Summary of results

400 hectares are used for agriculture, by 25 farmers, who are all from other areas, as there is no registered office in the park.

Predominance of corn, linked to the presence of water, which allows irrigation, and therefore a guaranteed source of income in this difficult periurban context. The absence of rearing is explained by the distance between the farms and land.

Farming in the park: pastoral management of the park  
No blatant excess of fertilisation materials, processing and irrigation

A manure heap for crop fertilisation - no taking into account of its residues, or channelling of. Need for systematic phytosanitary treatment.

A lack of understanding of regulations regarding channelling areas (protection perimeter)  
Parcels of land judged vital. Even if there is no threat of the disappearance of cultivated areas within the park, farmers regularly see their farms dismantled for their infrastructure or equipment.

A statut to clarify: Implementation of a legal study

Land acquisition by the DUP, cancellation of existing leases – occupiers no longer have any rights (prescription every 4 years)

Some people pay off the rent, others don't . Amounts to pay vary greatly.

Statut of land to be clarified. Public or private domain? The occupant's status ensues from this: Lease or agreement? Need for a legal study.



Transparency of the lawyer's findings. He exposes his conclusions publicly: Agricultural land is part of the public domain

Proposal: Impossible to establish a lease on a public domain

Suggestion: An agreement of temporary occupation of a specified length, and renewable

Elaboration of the charter

Objective: recognise and reassure the farmers that they are real partners. Breathe life into a participative dynamic, with referents which will be the driving force behind its implementation

The charter, co-developed by the various partners, will establish the rights and duties of everyone involved, as envisaged by the park.

Discussion on duration. Spreading over time will allow the envisaging of interesting projects of lasting development, and make the farms more durable.



Numerous work meetings between the Park's elected board, farmers, technicians and other agricultural trust organisations: the Department of Agriculture of the Rhone and Ain, official Regional Agricultural Managers. Themes are determined in accordance with the vocations of the park, and specific work groups are constituted.

2004: A year of work dedicated to the elaboration of the charter

A growing interest on the part of the farmers is perceived, and confidence takes root.

The main axes:

- 1) Historic: Recalling the work done and changes since the birth of the park
- 2) Reciprocal engagements: Certain obligatory measures go beyond the actual ruling in force
- 3) Implementation of guidelines, either for a continuing of practices, or if necessary, to bring in changes

Summary of some commitments

Definition of access routes to the land parcels. The park will ensure their upkeep and the farmer will maintain a band of grass running along the routes edges

Implementation of a single spokesperson at the heart of the SEGAPAL to manage agricultural issues. Protection of the water source via optimising fertilisation efficiency. Taking charge of earth analysis. Checking of spraying installations to improve application of phytosanitaires. Crop rotation, to diversify fields.



Balance and perspectives

Charter signed in January 2005, 17 partner farmers, bound by convention to occupy the areas for a duration of 10 years, save infringement of the charter

The payment for the occupation shall be the same for all, and fixed at 50 Euro per hectare

A step forward, resulting from a concerted effort, which led to reciprocal confidence, replacing the previous mutual ignorance which was verging on mistrust.

The principle of periodical meetings is adopted. The charter must stay alive, and so may need adapting.

This charter, co-signed by the president of the Regional

Department of Agriculture, was warmly greeted by the various participants in the park scheme, and particularly from the Water Board. The Regional Department of Accounts, welcomes the initiative.

This Charter is the result of much work, but also the first stage of a reciprocal partnership. Everyone should be aware of, and respect the importance of, the undertaking.

A first communication project with the general public will take place on the occasion of the great Park Fete, on the 11 September 2005 (7000 visitors)



For more information contact SYMALIM: Olivier Pillonel, tel + 33 4 78 80 23 92

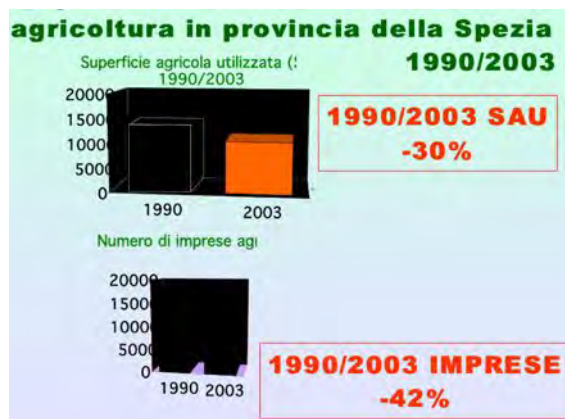
# Experiences and perspectives in periurban agriculture, in the Montemarcello- Magra Park

Salvatore Licari, Vice-president of Montemarcello-Magra park

Over the last decade, agricultural activity in the province of La Spezia has undergone a significant reduction both in terms of agricultural surface area used, and in the number of farms found there. Limiting the study to the Montemarcello Magra Park Community area, we notice that agricultural activity on the Magra plain, characterised by large crops of vegetables and fields of fruit trees, has also undergone a process of reduction in its productive capacity. This is due to the increase in the price of land, caused by the advance of the urban environment expanding into the Magra Valley.

## IL PARCO IN CIFRE

Sup. Area Protetta	Kmq.	27,260
Sup. Aree Contigue	Kmq.	15,948
<b>Totale superficie</b>	<b>Kmq.</b>	<b>43,208</b>
Superficie agricola (23%)	Kmq.	9,973



However, there has been an increasing sensitivity towards environmental problems, and new trends in tourism orientated towards the enjoyment of countryside and land. This has given a new value to agriculture as an extension of local culture and heritage, in particular in the Mediterranean area, where farming is seen as giving added value to the landscape.

The Montemarcello-Magra park's policies of placing greater value on local agricultural products were written in this context. They were developed around the following themes, which are generally founded on the capacity to generate an added value to quality agricultural productions.

- Promotion of durable, biological, quality agriculture
- Promotion and commercialisation of labels guaranteeing authenticity and origin
- Integration of agricultural policies and elements important to tourism, into various sectors

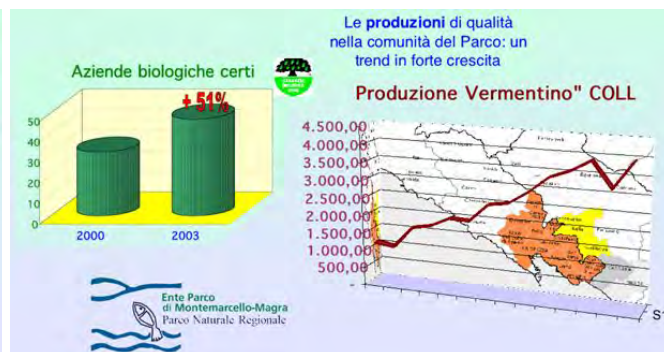
**Agricoltura e zootecnia biologica**

♦Programma triennale "L'applicazione del metodo dell'agricoltura biologica nelle aree parco" – FEOGA – PSR Regione Liguria

♦Programma triennale "L'allevamento biologico di animali di bassa corte nel Parco di Montemarcello – Magra"

Sperimentazione di colture biologiche in collaborazione con

- Aziende con marchio di qualità biologica
- Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica



The park has therefore developed a support programme for agriculture, made up of:

- The implementation of two triennial demonstration programmes showing how to apply biological methods for cultivation of crops and cattle raising, in farms situated in the park territory. These programmes have also been set up with the help of EU funding for agriculture.
- Participation in support programmes for local and traditional products (particularly local wine and oils which carry regional quality control labels) and in tourist development programmes in the cultural, rural, and food and wine sectors. In particular, the accent is placed on the creation of a tourist itinerary (dal Vara al Magra), organised through associations of local institutions and producers, to promote products carrying a regional quality control label.
- Finally, as regards the creation of inter-sector policies to promote agriculture at the heart of tourist development programmes, the "Marinella" urban project is being developed inside the Magra Park. It is a large scale tourist development programme, carried out by the Monte dei Paschi di Siena group, who foresee urban and land re-management of the Basse Vallee de Magra, over an area of around 560 hectares, and the reorientation of the "Marinella" farm (zoo-technical farm of around 400 heads- 1,320,000 litres of milk /year.)



The criteria followed in the project, (in line with the programme choices implemented by all local institutions, as well as, naturally, the Organisme Parco di Montemarcello-Magra,) is to create an integrated tourist development model, capable of coordinating different forms of tourist enjoyment of land. In this model, agriculture plays a fundamental role in the active enjoyment of cultural and environmental aspects the area offers. The multi-sector "Marinella" tourist project revolves therefore around the themes relative to:

- The conversion /integration of the agricultural and tourist sectors by means of the reorientation of farm towards biological productions, diversification of the cheese sector towards local, high quality products, through agreements with small producers, and the opening up to active and pedagogical tourist enjoyment.
- The reorientation of bathing stations
- The reorientation of the pleasure boating sector

This presentation draws to a close with the central theme of the project, in line with the goals of this meeting, concerning the support and development of periurban agriculture.

The project is thus divided into themes, which, regarding this contribution, concern:

- The general theme of the project as a whole, which is the rapport and connection with other land projects, such as the Montemarelllo- Magra park, the Luni Archeological park and the surrounding area of hills, within a framework of land conservation of the areas in question.
- The specific theme of "parco campagna" (country farm), which includes the development programme of Marinella's agricultural property, the synergic integration of the farm into the tourist development programme, and the recovery of the local farming village for tourist and commercial profit, as well acting as the farm's reception area.