



# Protected Areas as laboratories for Sustainable Agriculture

**The role of Protected Areas in  
implementing the EU Green Deal  
& EU Agricultural Policies**

Position Paper

EUROPARC Federation  
2021



# Introduction

Wheat field © Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (IT)

## **EUROPARC welcomes the priorities set in 2019 by the European Commission and the European Parliament in the EU Green Deal.**

The vision expressed in the Green Deal is our life-line to a sustainable future.

The Green Deal contributes to elaborate innovative solutions for a greener society, able to protect biodiversity and natural resources, promoting sustainable economic activities, human well-being and planet's health.

The priorities foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy, together with the Common Agriculture Policy -CAP, will have an impact on human and ecosystems' health.

**European Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites have a crucial role to play in the concrete implementation of the Green Deal.**

A healthy environment is essential for healthy food production. Sustainable agriculture is essential for a healthy environment that protects biodiversity.

**Farmers and Protected Areas managers can and must be allies.**

**Only with the active and positive collaboration between farmers, local communities and nature conservation sector we will manage to make agriculture more sustainable, good for nature and good for farmers.**

EUROPARC Federation is strongly convinced that the vision expressed in the Green Deal is our life-line to a sustainable future.

**“If we want clean air and drinkable water for everyone, if we want a biodiverse and climate-neutral society, if we believe in justice and solidarity and if we would like to give a perspective to the future generations... for these reasons we give our full support to the EU Green Deal”**

- excerpt from EUROPARC's letter to the President of the European Commission Mrs Ursula von der Leyen, Regensburg 28.04.2020

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© Parco Agricolo Sud Milano

## About EUROPARC



**EUROPARC**  
FEDERATION

[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)

The EUROPARC Federation is the largest and most representative Protected Area network in Europe, comprising almost **40% of the Natura 2000 network**. Nature and Regional Parks alone cover **8%** of Europe's land.

Our members manage Europe's Protected Areas, covering almost every regional, national, European and international designation, such as National Parks, Nature and Regional Parks, Natura 2000 Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar Sites, Geoparks, World Heritage Sites.



# EUROPARC's Position

## What do Protected Areas offer

**Protected Areas as places for Sustainable Agriculture**  
 Their role in implementing EU Agricultural Policies & the EU Green Deal



Agriculture and tourism at the Pilat Regional Park (FR). © S. Petrosillo

**1**

Protected Areas and sustainable agriculture together create resilient and healthy rural areas within living, working landscapes.

**2**

Protected Areas support partnership with farmers and with consumers.



From producers to consumers: very tasty food in the parks



Protection of pollinators and environmental education at the Sintra-Cascais Nature Parc (PT)

**3**

Protected Areas contribute to achieve European policies, objectives and targets.

© Nova pasta, Sintra-Cascais Nature Parc (PT)



# EUROPARC's Position

## What do Protected Areas ask



1

Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites should be key actors of the new Common Agricultural Policy and National Strategic Plans.



Vineyards © Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre (IT)

2

Specific measures, programmes and funds to support partnerships between Protected Areas, farmers and consumers are needed.



Cooperation between the drinking water supplier © Archive Nature Park Öewersauer (LU)

3

Policy coherence with the Green Deal is necessary at European, national and local level.



From Brussels to the field. Image by Committee of Regions

# Protected Areas and sustainable agriculture together create resilient and healthy rural areas and living, working landscapes

## The situation now

Europe's rural areas are under increasing pressure from competing land use demands, challenging conditions for food production, climate change and insufficient management. This context necessitates change, but also holds significant opportunities.

Food security and farmers' income should remain central issues, but agriculture has also a vital impact on health, ecosystem services, natural resources, water, soil, wild and domestic biodiversity and protection of valuable specific landscapes.



People working in the field © Nova pasta, Sintra-Cascais Nature Parc (PT)

## Protected Areas have been developing local-level solutions for global challenges.



Conservatory orchard of Burdinne  
© Burdinale-Mehaigne Nature Park (BE) - S. Petrosillo

## What we can achieve

Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites in rural areas are laboratories of sustainability, which can recuperate traditional methods and experiment innovation, whilst looking to balance the interests' of different local actors.

Collaboration between rural and Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, contributes to social and economic goals taking a holistic view of agriculture, tourism, green job creation, sustainable food production, consumers awareness and local community involvement.

# Protected Areas support partnerships with farmers and with consumers

**Protected Areas as places for Sustainable Agriculture**  
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## The situation now

Agriculture and Protected Areas are often perceived to be in conflict. However, constructive partnerships and successful stories exist and a large number of experiences shows concrete and positive dialogue between Protected Areas managers and farmers.



The demand for "0 KM food" is increasing amongst citizens. Periurban agriculture is well placed to meet these needs. Earth Market © Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (IT)

## What we can achieve

Working together despite the challenges, Protected Areas managers and farmers conciliate agriculture interests with biodiversity conservation, to contribute to climate change actions and to maintain vibrant rural areas.

Information, dialogue, mutual understanding, collaboration, and partnership with local farmers and business are crucial.

Protected Areas play also an important role in public awareness about biodiversity and sustainability. For this reason, they also contribute to influence consumers' behaviors and to strengthen the relation between farmers and customers.

The EUROPARC Federation is strongly committed to encourage, support and promote successful partnerships, contributing to build capacity and sharing good practices.

The EUROPARC Commission for Sustainable Agriculture and Protected Areas is developing new tools & methodologies to support partnerships, and is actively participating in the debate on the future of the European Common Agricultural Policy.



Wicklow Uplands-IE ©T. Byrne



For more information & webinars on Sustainable Agriculture, go to the [EUROPARC Knowledge Hub](#)

# Protected Areas contribute to achieve EU policies' objectives and targets

**Protected Areas as places for Sustainable Agriculture**  
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## What we can achieve

Protected Areas are ideal locations where sustainable agriculture, aligned with the EU Green Deal vision, can become real.

In the **Common Agriculture Policy**, Protected Areas can be key actors in supporting farmers for achieving green targets, encouraging the implementation of ecoschemes and agri-environmental measures.

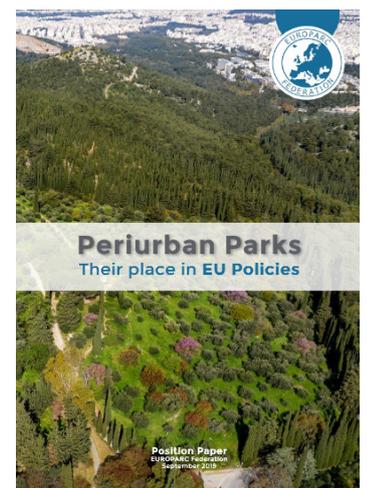
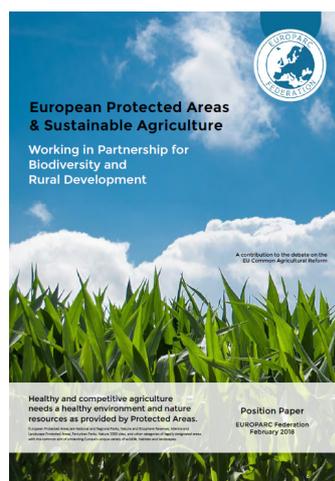
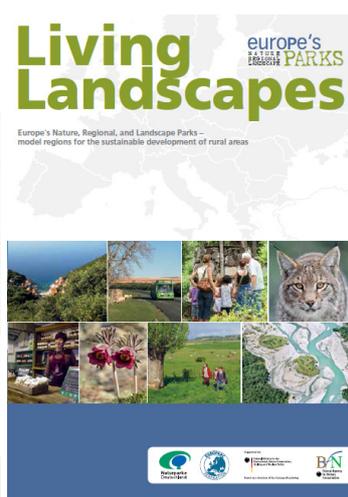
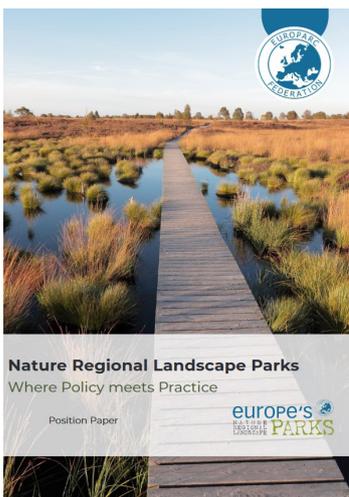
Protected Areas have a strategic role to contribute achieving the EU Nature Restoration targets set in the **EU Biodiversity Strategy** on an agriculture: reversing the decline in pollinators, reducing the use of chemical pesticides, creating high diversity landscape features in agricultural fields, increasing agro-ecological practices and remediating contaminated soil sites and free flowing rivers.

The **Farm to Fork Strategy** will find in Protected Areas and their partners important allies in the achievement of a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system and stimulate hospitality and food service practices also in collaboration with the local tourism sector.

By creating living landscapes and providing vital partnerships, Protected Areas are key players for the implementation of the EU Rural Development Policy.



Learn about how Parks support European agriculture policies in EUROPARC's different policy papers





Agricultural landscape and water meadows © Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (IT)

# Specific measures, programmes and funds to support partnerships between Protected Areas, farmers and consumers are needed

## The situation now

To minimize negative and increase positive impacts of agriculture, a transition towards organic, extensive or sustainable farming should be supported. To fight against land areas abandonment and a transformation of the rural landscape, a holistic approach is vital.

This should be done especially within or nearby Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites. Successful partnerships will only be possible if based on mutual trust and long term collaboration amongst all stakeholders.

Time, skills and funding constraints can hold Protected Areas, farmers and other stakeholders back from creating meaningful partnerships and projects that contribute to rural development.

## What is needed

The new European funds for agriculture and for biodiversity recovery should be used at national and regional level also to better remunerate good rural practices implemented in collaboration between local business and Protected Areas.

It is necessary to recognize these “laboratories” of partnership for sustainable rural development in all European Structural Funds

This includes the European regional development fund, European social fund, Cohesion fund, and European agricultural fund for rural development, as well as recovery plans and funds.

# Case studies

Click the images to read the full case studies

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Collserola Regional Park in Spain. A successful initiative for farming and biodiversity in a periurban context. To counterbalance forest expansion as a consequence of farm abandonment, the Park is working with local farmers, supporting actions to recover farming activities.

The farmers working in the National Park Schiermonnikoog - a Dutch Island - are cooperating to lower their environmental impact, reducing the number of cattle on pastures. They will compensate financial loss with the creation of their own cheese factory and local brand.



Being an important drinking reservoir, Nature Park Öewersauer (LU) works with the local farmers and water supply company on technical solutions to improve the soil and water quality in the area.

French Parks are organising demonstrative sheep transhumance to raise public awareness about endangered regional breeds and they are working with shepherds to preserve flowering meadows.



The Adamello Regional Park in Italy is working with farmers to safeguard traditional cultures in remote areas. A set of actions has been designed to reduce land abandonment and to enhance the resilience of the communities.

In France collective brands in Parks are designated to value and differentiate local products, such as the “Esprit Parc National”, and “Valeurs Parc Naturel Régional”.



One successful project supported by the “Eco-museum of rye” in the Alpi Marittime Nature Park, Italy, has facilitated, year after year, the crop recovery by organising a small group of farmers open to collaboration and experimentation, and developing two different product lines – flour and straw.

# Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites should be key actors of the new Common Agricultural Policy

Agriculture within and nearby Protected Areas across Europe includes a wide variety of farming attitudes, approaches and needs. The size of farms itself is also very diversified, going from small family farms in Alpine Parks, up to large agroindustrial farming businesses, near parks in the Netherlands.

The CAP National Strategic Plans should be elaborated and implemented with the direct involvement of Protected Areas and their farmer partners, and take into account their specificities.

Protected Areas represent, now more than ever, places of excellence and ideal laboratories to promote eco-schemes and advanced agro-environmental measures. Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites managing bodies should be seen as key-actors in these measures, and be supported to promote them among the local farmers.



The new Common Agricultural Policy should incentivise, recognize and reward farmers who are working in or close to Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, engaged in environment- friendly agriculture and working in partnership with the Protected Areas' authorities. Effective dialogue and positive partnership between Protected Areas, farmers and other stakeholders is a

Wheat field © Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (IT)



# Policy coherence with the EU Green Deal is necessary at EU, national and local level

The European Green Deal is essentially the roadmap towards a sustainable EU economy, with the ambition to turn climate and environmental challenges into opportunities.

Consequently, a major change in agriculture and nature conservation towards a holistic and integrated vision is necessary.

The role of the European Union is essential to ensure the integration of sustainable agriculture priorities within the Common Agricultural Policy, and to guarantee its coherence with the EU Strategy for Bioiversity, the EU Nature Directives.

Financial investments should not contradict but rather be streamlined to the shared vision and priorities as envisioned by the EU. European agriculture.

The EU and Member States should work together to reach these common objectives through streamlining national, European and global goals and policies. Even in the framework of their autonomy, Member States and Regions have to be in line with the EU priorities and indications concerning environmental sustainability.

Vegetable fields © Nova pasta, Sintra-Cascais Nature Parc (PT)





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