

PORTUGAL

Sustainable use of agricultural land

Location

Castelo Branco

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis

Axis 2 – Improving the environment and the countryside

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 24 993

EAFRD 8 435

National/Regional 2 812

Private 13 746

Project duration

2010 – 2011

Project promoter

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An agricultural holding installed 42 ha of pastures which helped increase the farm's livestock while increasing carbon sequestration and offering environmental services.

Summary

An agricultural holding, which had been producing organic meat over 615 ha sought to increase its production of fodder to feed a larger herd and provide multiple environmental benefits.

In 2010, the producer installed 42 ha of biodiverse pastures using a mixture of seeds of several legumes with Rhizobium inoculation.



In parallel the producer assumed a set of commitments regarding the establishment, composition, management and monitoring of the pasture.

Results

42 ha of multiannual biodiverse pastures installed.

Increased available of quality organic fodder, enabling increases in herd size.

Improved farm sustainability by lowering production costs, and increasing the quality of production;

Improved nutrient retention in the soil from the mix of legumes and maximised carbon sequestration.

Enhanced biodiversity in the pasture habitat.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ It is possible to improve the profitability of farms, whilst improving their performance in terms of soil quality, nutrient management, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- ❑ Relatively simple actions without the need for high-tech interventions can provide multiple on-farm benefits.

Context

The project took place on a farm in Castelo Branco in the Central Region of mainland Portugal. The holding covers an area of 615 ha of arable crops and natural pastures. For several years, the holding has been breeding cattle and sheep for organic meat production.

However, the soil of the farm is poor. It was advised to increase the quality and quantity of fodder production on the farm to feed a larger herd and provide multiple additional environmental benefits.

The farmer was aware of the use of biodiverse pastures developed by the company FERTIPRADO, with positive effects on improving the sustainability of extensive agricultural holdings and carbon sequestration.

Objectives

The project aimed to establish biodiverse pastures rich in legumes in order to achieve several objectives, including:

- increase the availability of fodder that is richer in nutritional value;
- improve the nitrogen content and texture of the farm's soil;
- safeguard organic production and farm sustainability; and
- support local biodiversity.



Activities

The project installed multiannual biodiverse pastures using a mixture of seeds of several legumes, which are inoculated with a specific Rhizobium that allows high rates of nitrogen to enrich the soil.

The producer assumed a set of commitments regarding the establishment, composition, management and monitoring of the pasture.

Main results

- Creation of 42 ha of multiannual biodiverse pastures.
- Improved soil quality and structure and maximised carbon sequestration from the biodiverse pastures, which are rich in legumes
- The new pastures were fully integrated into the ongoing organic meat production on the farm, increasing the available of quality organic fodder and enabling increases in herd size
- Improved farm sustainability by lowering production costs, and increasing the quality of production;
- The project allowed the farm to become part of the innovative project "Terraprima", promoting the application of 'Biodiversity Engineering' for improving the environmental and economic performance of agricultural holdings, with the direct intervention of the farmer through the provision of environmental services that are recognised and remunerated by the Portuguese Carbon Fund.

