



The landscape farm

Eco-farming as a tool for landscape conservation and local identity.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Santarém, Portugal

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P4 - Ecosystems management

Focus Area: Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

Measures: M11 - Organic farming

Funding:	Total budget	47 822,24 (EUR)
	EAFRD	7 816,32 (EUR)
	Other (national funding)	5 000 (EUR)
	Private/Own funds	35 005,92 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2020-2024

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Project results

- > 20 hectares of abandoned fields transformed into productive agroforestry and regenerative landscape agriculture
- > Eight permanent jobs (four women and four men from the village, plus over ten casual staff during peak production time such as olive-picking)
- > Hundreds interested in the concept of landscape agriculture via farm visits
- > Zero-waste property - if vegetables are unsold, they are used for animal feed
- > Plastic-free
- > Carbon incorporation into the soil via best practices and the use of animal manure to enhance soil biodiversity and productivity
- > Organic certification
- > Research with students from local academia
- > Portuguese agro-ecological network implemented
- > Invited by the local administration to represent best values and products at national and international fairs (both organic and non-organic), knowledge exchange, promoting the character of local landscape and the importance of managing farms with landscape, identity, biodiversity and personal values
- > Sense of pride fostered throughout the community

Summary

The Landscape Farm project is about creating a new approach to farming by fundamentally changing the mindset of farmers, from only being producers of food to becoming landscape managers. Thus, food is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of preserving culture, protecting biodiversity, enhancing soil quality, managing water, restoring rural ecosystems, creating safe and beautiful places to live in and enhancing the nature of the landscape of each region. That mindset then needs to demonstrate a path towards integrating food production into social and environmental aspects in what can be termed 'landscape farming'. In short, there are as many ways of producing food and preserving local gastronomy as there are landscape units and these create jobs, networks and biodiversity, and help the country's agriculture adapt to warmer climates in the present and future.



Key lessons and recommendations

Overall:

- > Importance of coordinating landscape policies (as described in the European Landscape Convention) with local knowledge and sustainable agro-ecological practices that create much-needed jobs in a rural environment
- > Networking
- > Communicating
- > Quantifying actions

On a personal level:

- > Be resilient
- > Be open-minded but focused
- > Listen
- > Do not be afraid to fail
- > Firmly believe that the work being done is important for past, present and future generations
- > Be a voice for the community

Context

The Landscape Farm is a small, family-owned operation in Santarém, Portugal. It has been making organic produce and selling to organic groceries and direct consumers since 1991. The owner, Jorge Cancela, is a landscape architect who inherited the house from his family and bought 20 hectares of land to set up the farm with his children.

The project emerged from seeing huge transformations in the fields and local landscapes. Until 40 years ago, the region was a mosaic of centuries-old olive groves, vineyards, wheat fields, vegetable gardens and fig orchards. Today, they have been transformed into either abandoned fields or super-intensive new olive groves. Birds have disappeared, and wild boars are now the most common mammal to be found. With his agricultural and landscape expertise and experience, Jorge decided that it was time to find an alternative way to produce food, maintain jobs and preserve culture, biodiversity and beauty.

The aim of the Landscape Farm is to show that a small organic farm that cares about people and the landscape can be an alternative to the extremes of abandoned or super-intensive farms.

The family produces seasonal and varied horticultural products such as beetroot, onions, cantaloupe, tomatoes, lettuces, basilic, cabbages, rocket, potatoes, garlic and leeks, with small orchards and vineyards alongside, creating a diversified ecosystem. In the slopes and peaks of the land, there are traditional olive groves and some native woodlands. They also produce organic honey and herbs, and all produce is sold fresh or canned without any artificial ingredients.



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Objectives

The Landscape Farm project set out to create eight permanent jobs – four for women and another four for men. In terms of the land, the aim was to return 20 hectares of abandoned land to organic farming, while preserving the ancient olive trees and traditional vegetable cultures that were in the area as well as ensuring the ecological, social and economic sustainability of the project.

Achieving this would bring with it the additional benefit of raising awareness about the importance of farming and consumption in terms of how it can affect the protection of European landscapes and cultures.



Activities

The project first began in 1991 and, over the years, the various activities carried out have added more resilience to the system.

The team began with the acquisition of abandoned land in a suitable area for organic farming (with no intensive cultures nearby or use of agrochemicals in recent decades). They then designed the landscape and water plans for the properties, which gave them an idea of how many people they would need. With the help of the new staff, they cleared some of the abandoned land and began the process of turning it back into productive land.

The team created a pond and restored ancient wells using Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding. They bought donkeys and mules, which provided them with manure. They planted the orchards and the vineyards and prepared the soil for the vegetable gardens (again with CAP funding) and began to restore the productivity of the ancient olive groves. CAP funding was also used to create vegetable gardens and restore the surrounding hedges and an olive press was purchased to make olive oil.

The farm achieved official organic certifications for all their products, which enabled them to get a licensed kitchen for transforming the vegetables. This progress led to them hiring more staff to work in the kitchen due to demand from direct clients and organic stores. The next step was to create a small space for clients to enjoy organic meals on the farm, and this was tied in with programmes for people to visit the farm, learn about landscape and organic farming, as well as having meals there. Specific 'experiences' were designed for visitors looking to spend a day as a local farmer.



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The team also held a variety of workshops on organic agriculture, landscape farming and agro-ecology, and this eventually progressed to receiving research students on site, working together with universities in areas such as entomology, agro-forestry and tourism.

Main results

Thanks to the project, 20 hectares of abandoned fields were turned into productive agroforestry and regenerative landscape agriculture. Eight permanent jobs were created, with work for four women and four men from the local village, plus more than ten seasonal jobs at peak production times such as for olive-picking. Furthermore, hundreds of people have gained an interest in the concept of landscape agriculture via visits to the farm.

The farm is a good example of a zero-waste activity, where everything that is produced is used. If more vegetables are produced than can be sold, the excess is used either for compost or to feed the farm's chickens, rabbits, sheep and donkeys. The farm is also plastic-free, so no potential waste material can enter the productive process. Carbon is incorporated into the soil through best practices and the use of animal manure to enhance soil biodiversity and productivity.

The farm has achieved organic certification and has gone on to carry out research with students from local universities. The farm is part of a Portuguese agro-ecological network involving cooperation with local universities, and is regularly invited by the local administration to represent best values and products at national and international fairs, whether focused on organic farming or not, where they can expand their range of knowledge and champion the importance of managing farms with landscape, identity, biodiversity and personal values.

More generally, the local landscape and its values and character have been preserved and developed, which has fostered a sense of pride throughout the community.

Key lessons and recommendations

The project has highlighted the importance of coordinating landscape policies (as described in the European Landscape Convention) with local knowledge and sustainable agro-ecological practices that create much-needed jobs in the rural environment.

On a more personal level, it has taught all of those involved, and in particular those leading the project, to be resilient, open-minded

but focused, to listen, to not be afraid to fail and, most of all, to firmly believe that the work that they are doing is important, for past, present and future generations.

Networking, communicating and quantifying actions were all critical, but overall, one of the main takeaways for farmers was the importance of being a voice for their community.

Additional information:

The Landscape Farm website:

<https://www.thelandscapefarm.pt/>

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/thelandscapefarm/>

Instagram account:

<https://www.instagram.com/thelandscapefarm/>

Project description on Reforma Agraria:

<https://www.reformaagraria.pt/perfis/4029/>

Video of the project on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/721606515>

