



European Protected Areas & Sustainable Agriculture

Working in Partnership for
Biodiversity and
Rural Development

A contribution to the debate on the
EU Common Agricultural Policy Reform

**Healthy and competitive agriculture
needs a healthy environment and nature
resources as provided by Protected Areas.**

European Protected Areas are National and Regional Parks, Nature and Biosphere Reserves, Marine and Landscape Protected Areas, Periurban Parks, Natura 2000 sites, and other categories of legally designated areas with the common aim of protecting Europe's unique variety of wildlife, habitats and landscapes.

Position Paper

**EUROPARC Federation
February 2018**

Farmers and Protected Areas can be allies, working for common solutions. We must learn from the best practise available in effective partnerships, apply and adapt these models, develop tools to replicate and implement these successful approaches across the European Union.

**A healthy environment
and nature protection
need farmers' engagement.**

**A change in agriculture
and nature conservation
towards a holistic and
integrated vision is
necessary.**

EUROPARC seeks agricultural policies, which can be defined as:

Good for People, Good for Nature
because they ensure a good, secure supply of food,
because they respect and protect
the environment and natural resources,
because they provide a fair income to the farmer.

EUROPARC Federation states:

- 1** Collectively, sustainable agriculture practices and Protected Area management can nurture resilient rural areas and create living landscapes.
- 2** Existing structures of Europe's Protected Area network are available to support working partnerships at local and regional levels.
- 3** Specific measures, programmes and funds are needed to support initiatives on partnership building among Protected Areas, farmers and consumers.
- 4** The new CAP should pay specific attention to farmers who are acting within or close to Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, engaged in environment-friendly agriculture and working in partnership with Protected Areas authorities, in order to recognise their work and reward their efforts.
- 5** The role of the European Union is essential in maintaining a coherent policy on sustainable agriculture across all Member States, as well as in guaranteeing coherence with other European policies and the Natura 2000 network.

About EUROPARC



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.

Our membership reaches a constituency of about 25% of the European population touched by Protected Areas. With our Periurban Parks having 25 million visitors annually.

1 Collectively, sustainable agriculture practices and Protected Area management can nurture resilient rural areas and create living landscapes

The Challenge

Europe has a fragmented landscape, which is under increasing pressure from competing land use demands, challenging conditions for food production, climate change and insufficient management.

This context necessitates change and holds significant opportunities – change is not optional: how it is done, managed, resourced and prioritised is important.

New, better-integrated approaches and more innovative funding mechanisms are required.

While food and farmers' income should remain central issues, it is crucial to further consider the vital function of agriculture for environment, natural resources with genetic biodiversity, local as well as international economy and biosecurity.

The Opportunity

Europe's rural areas provide the life support system of our continent. They are the locus for management of our natural resources, in terms of agriculture and forestry, water management and nature conservation.

It is clear that the long-term viability of rural areas needs an integrated, visionary approach.

Europe's Parks make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas and the viability of agriculture.

Having strong Parks means having strong rural areas.

Protected Areas are driving forces behind regional development. They stimulate tourism, economic diversification, job creation and sustainable food production, thus, strengthening rural communities.

Working with farmers, Parks promote local markets and short marketing chains.

Natura 2000 Sites and Protected Areas are one of the main pillars of the future protection and responsible use of our natural and cultural resources.

Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites are more valuable than ever as repositories for nature, sanctuaries for human well-being and drivers of sustainable economic growth.

The Way Forward

Agriculture remains a vital activity for communities in and around European Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites. There can be effective partnership to develop more sustainable solutions for agriculture.

In Protected Areas, **local-level solutions are being developed for global challenges**, such as climate change and demographic change in rural areas.

Parks coordinate their development objectives in the region with a wide range of stakeholders, working to provide a structure that facilitates a commitment to the future-oriented development of the region from multiple interests.

Case Studies available
europarc.org/toolbox/sustainable-agriculture 



Examples can be also found in the book
Living Landscapes
www.europarc.org/book-living-landscapes

2 Existing structures of Europe's Protected Area network are available to support working partnerships at local and regional levels

The Challenge

Due to its transversal nature, the debate on CAP and on sustainable agriculture needs to consider and involve different sectors and societal groups.

Agriculture and Protected Areas have more often been perceived to be in opposition, but do in fact have complimentary roles.

In Europe, where the majority of Protected Areas consists of cultural managed landscapes, the interdependence on the ground needs to be fully reflected in a more integrated policy.

EUROPARC has identified positive partnerships between the agricultural and Protected Area

communities that can contribute to the creation of Europe's rural areas as living landscapes.

A huge number of successful stories and experiences shows the concrete and positive dialogue with farmers existing in many European National, Nature, Regional and Periurban Parks.

The Opportunity

Constructive partnerships already exist and promote the importance of the EU Directives. They conciliate farming interests with biodiversity conservation, contribute to climate change actions and drive the creation of living landscapes.

Protected Area managers understand that **Nature has no Borders**. Protected Areas are not islands of biodiversity but interconnected and interdependent on what happens in the wider environment.

Despite all efforts, there remains a dramatic loss of biodiversity and a degradation of ecosystems¹.

This is neither good for biodiversity nor for farming.

Protected Areas and agricultural production are part of the same landscape and of a larger, more integrated rural ecosystem. With complimentary management systems, goods and services derived from nature, can be optimised. EUROPARC believes that, in the face of these challenges,

Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites can contribute to a more sustainable understanding and practice of agriculture across Europe.

Protected Areas are providers of vital ecosystem services and act as living laboratories for the development and monitoring of sustainable practises that safeguard biodiversity. In their role as a nexus, **bringing together different stakeholder interests, Protected Areas can serve as catalysts for rural development.**

The Way Forward

EUROPARC is promoting a **fundamental mind-shift on agriculture, nature conservation and biodiversity towards a more holistic perspective** and a **sustainable agriculture**.

The Federation is strongly committed to encourage, support and make visible existing partnerships, by

- collecting case studies & best practice²;
- organising capacity building initiatives³;
- organising workshops⁴ and events⁵;
- coordinating the *EUROPARC Agriculture and Protected Areas Commission*⁶ in charge to develop new tools & methodologies, and actively

participating in the debate on the future of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP post-2020).

The intrinsic role of many Protected Areas is to ensure an integrated perspective including all environmental, social, economic, historical and cultural aspects of the rural territory and local communities.

For many Protected Areas it is essential, often obvious, to take in consideration the connections between different sectors, for example those between agriculture and tourism.

Protected Areas can act as positive catalyst of the rural area, promoting dialogue and partnership, coordinating initiatives, launching projects, raising funds and involving the public⁷.

To fully unlock their potential and scale up the several successful examples of effective partnership building as seen across the EUROPARC network, **Protected Areas need significantly more EU support.**

3 Specific measures, programmes and funds are needed to support initiatives on partnership building among Protected Areas, farmers and consumers

The Challenge

The coherence of priorities and objectives within the future CAP and other EU policies (see grey box), as well as with international environment and climate commitments, needs to be ensured. Measures under the CAP should hence strive for alignment, particularly with the Union's objective of transitioning towards

a green economy preserving ecosystem resilience. Society's concerns about human health and animal welfare also need to be taken into account. **In many European Protected Areas, in order to protect landscapes, specific habitats & species, it is necessary to maintain or restore agricultural activities.**

The EU Nature Directives, the 7th Environmental Action Programme, the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, the Strategy on Air Pollution, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Opportunity

A huge number of Protected Areas collaborate with farmers both to **reduce any impact for the environment** and to **increase the added value of environment-friendly practices**. Many Protected Areas, in rewarding of the value of the landscape and quality of the environment that Protected Area management brings, provide distinctive **recognitions and certifications to producers and products of their territories**.

Doing this, they trigger improvement of the production quality, foster the application of new promotion and marketing strategies and help raising consumers' awareness, thus enabling and supporting the market for local production and the viability of farming in and around the Protected Areas.

Most European Protected Areas protect both natural and cultural heritage, involving the agriculture sector and local communities in their activities.

In some cases, Protected Areas can be the repository of old domestic animal species and traditional crops. Doing that, they conserve the variety of genetic resources, traditional practices and the related immaterial cultural heritage.

The Way Forward

Working with farmers to safeguard traditional cultures in remote areas, as it is practised, for instance, in the **Alpine Italian Adamello Regional Park**, where a set of actions has been designed to help people **slow down the landscape abandonment and to enhance the resilience of the communities**.

Case Study Adamello Regional Park
www.europarc.org/case-studies/enhancing-rural-landscape-biodiversity-animating-rural-communities



Farming close to urban areas is also of concern to Protected Areas. One successful initiative in this field can be found in the **Collserola Regional Park** in Spain, where forest expansion as a consequence of farm abandonment had resulted in the decline of some open space species. To counterbalance this, the Park is working with local farmers, supporting actions to recover farming activities.



Case Study Collserolla Regional Park
www.europarc.org/case-studies/promoting-open-spaces-forest-park-means-increasing-biodiversity



In some cases, Parks, in close cooperation with breeders, are **utilising grazing animals to keep specific management techniques and livestock breeding alive.**

Case Study Transhumance in France
www.europarc.org/case-studies/organisation-sheep-transhumance-order-maintain-remarkable-natural-environments



For instance, French Parks are organising **demonstrative sheep transhumance to raise public awareness about endangered regional breeds or are working with shepherds to preserve flowering meadows.**

Case Study Flowering Meadows
www.europarc.org/case-studies/flowering-meadows-contest-france/



Case Study Gran Sasso
www.europarc.org/case-studies/pecunia-project-valorisation-wool-produced-protected-area/



Enhancing the market for agricultural products, as done by the **Agricultural Park Sud Milano**, in Italy, which works to connect the market of Milan with the producers in the Park, or as practised in the Italian **Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park**, which valorises the wool produced in the Protected Area.

Case Study Sud Milano Park
www.europarc.org/case-studies/parco-agricolo-sud-milano-best-practices-periurban-agriculture/

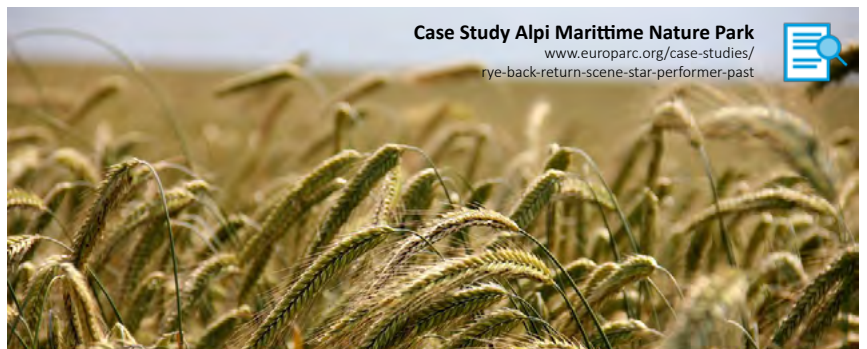


In France collective brands in Parks are designated to **value and differentiate local products** such as the “Esprit Parc National”, “Valeurs Parc Naturel Régional”.



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.

Case Study Alpi Marittime Nature Park
www.europarc.org/case-studies/rye-back-return-scene-star-performer-past



www.europarc.org/edop2016

Moreover, EUROPARC’s annual event **“European Day of Parks 2016 – A Taste of Nature”** has shown clearly that local and regional food production are the strongest connection between people and the land. Over 300 events in 23 countries reaching millions of consumers through TV and news outlets, were organised in Parks across Europe, offering the chance for

visitors to discover regional and organic tastes of nature.

A **book with recipes** was produced, with traditional ingredients and dishes from in and around Protected Areas.



4

The new CAP should pay specific attention to farmers acting within or close to Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, engaged in environment-friendly agriculture and working in partnership with Protected Areas authorities, in order to recognise their work and reward their efforts

The Challenge

Farming in and nearby Protected Areas involves stakeholders of very diverse attitudes, approaches, dimensions, and needs. Thus, when speaking of agriculture in a European context, the diverse realities between and even within countries can be captured

most adequately by speaking of European “agricultures”.

Big agroindustry, intensive agriculture and not eco-friendly practices can have a very negative impact on biodiversity, landscape, natural resources and environment.



The Opportunity

Protected Area managers have to take a sensitive approach towards building effective dialogue and partnership with various stakeholders.

The diversity of European agricultures must be acknowledged and reflected in individual approaches.

National parks in the Netherlands, working together with the biggest *EKO farms* in the region, connecting nature-conservation, farming, tourism, marketing and education. In the **Naturpark-Obersauer in Luxembourg**⁹, developing agricultural methods for the 100ha-farmers to reduce the application of chemical pesticides.



The Way Forward

The Common Agricultural Policy post-2020 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.

For farmers working in or nearby Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, **one key-indicator** in the evaluation of their commitment to sustainable agriculture **must be the existence and quality of collaboration between the**

farmer and the Protected Area management authority. Effective dialogue and positive partnership between Protected Areas, farmers and stakeholders is a necessity and must be adequately resourced.

For instance, good practise can be observed in Ireland with the **Wicklow Uplands Council**. Here, an independent, voluntary organisation which represents the shared interests of over 50 member groups and individuals, supports the sustainable use of the Wicklow uplands.

This is achieved through **consensus and partnership** with those who live, work and recreate there. The **Burren Region**, an internationally important landscape rich in geological, archaeological and ecological heritage, also follows an **effective partnership approach**¹⁰, where more than 150 farmers are involved in a large, farmer-centred, locally targeted, results-based oriented programme.



Protected Areas represent, now more than ever, places of excellence and ideal territories to promote advanced forms of agro-environmental policies favouring regional rural development.

For this key role, Protected Areas, working in partnership with farmers, should be eligible beneficiaries of specific funds for rural development.

Agri-environmental schemes and similar measures have to be reinforced and simplified. **Protected Areas and Natura 2000 managing bodies should be seen as key-actors in these measures**, and be supported to promote them among the local farmers.



Farmers in Adamello Brenta Regional Park, Italy - Photo by Guido Calvi

Farmers have to be adequately remunerated for sustainable practices, providing the society not only with food, but also with a variety of ecosystem services promoting health, landscape and nature resources.

European, national and local policies need to facilitate and guide farming activities towards this responsible direction, through **a strong legal framework but also via voluntary measures and adequate compensation.**

In addition, European policies to raise consumer awareness, fostering an understanding and acceptance for higher product prices - thus, adequately remunerating services provided by farmers - are crucial.



Local products from prealpi Giulie Nature Park, Moggio Udinese, Italy - Photo by: Paolo Da Pozzo

5 The role of the European Union is essential in maintaining a coherent policy on sustainable agriculture across Member States, as well as in guaranteeing coherence with other European policies and the Natura 2000 network

The Challenge

A major change in agriculture and nature conservation towards a **holistic and integrated vision is necessary**. The CAP has to be coherent with other EU policies, such as: the Strategy for Biodiversity, and with international EU engagements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and international Climate Change commitments. **This requires the objective of environmental protection to be strongly integrated into agriculture practices.**

It is vital for the new CAP to increase its emphasis on the environment, climate and the wider rural context in which farming operates.

An essential step to ensure that the new CAP is fit to respond to these expectations will be to involve Protected Areas management authorities and support partnership with Protected Areas and farmers. A voluntary “Charter for Sustainable Agriculture” could be envisioned. **Support for farmers has to be result-based**, and methodologies to evaluate the impact have to be developed or installed (the High Nature Value –HNV- farming indicators for example). Institutions and all public and private stakeholders have to be committed to apply them and to provide the relevant data. These methodologies have to be rigorous but also simple and accessible to small farmers.

“Greening” as specific direct payments in favour of farmers engaged in nature protection, should be maintained and made more efficient.

In order to ensure their effectiveness and a fairer distribution of European and national funds, small farmers engaged in nature protection and environment-friendly agriculture, have to be supported and sustained in accessing these measures.

The Way Forward

The role of the European Union is essential in order to maintain a coherent policy on sustainable agriculture in all of the European Union, as well as to guarantee the coherence with other European policies and with the Natura 2000 network. **EU and Member States should work together** to reach these common objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the application of CAP measures at national and regional levels, Member States and Regions have to respect the priorities and indications concerning environmental sustainability from EU: the goals for biodiversity and nature conservation have to be clearly integrated into the policy framework at all levels.



Locally grown garlic, Resia, Italy
 Photo by: Cristina Buttolo

EUROPARC Position

Protected Areas and CAP post-2020

The role of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites in rural development needs to be valorised by the new CAP.

European Protected Areas, especially Regional and Nature parks, are committed to create living landscapes and vibrant rural areas, and to maintain local cultural identity and heritage. Through their support to sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism, **Protected Areas work actively and concretely against land abandonment and depopulation of rural areas.** Protected Areas' work contributes to a healthy environment, a healthy food production, and to human well-being.

- This key role **Protected Areas play, involving their working in partnership with farmers, claims their eligibility as beneficiaries of specific funds for rural development.**

Agri-environmental schemes and similar measures have to be reinforced and simplified. Protected Areas and Natura 2000 managing bodies should be seen as key-actors for these measures, and be supported to promote them with the local farmers.

- Farmers have to be remunerated, for providing the society **not only food but also a variety of ecosystem services** in terms of health, landscape and nature resources. The European, national and local policies have to push them in that direction, with a strong legal framework but also via voluntary measures, and to compensate and award them. In addition, consumers have to be informed and aware, to create acceptance of products' higher prices, remunerating these services.

- **The new CAP should pay specific attention to farmers acting within or close to Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites**, engaged in environment-friendly agriculture and working in partnership with Protected Areas authorities, in order to recognise their work and reward their effort. In particular for farmers working in or nearby Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, one key-indicator to evaluate their commitment on sustainable agriculture must be the existing collaboration between the farmer and the Protected Area.

- The efficacy of the new CAP will be reached not only by **guaranteeing available funds**, but also by putting more attention on the **simplification of the procedures, the accessibility on the funds, the results of the actions and the coherence with wider EU policies.**

- **Protected Areas are committed to improve partnership with farmers for developing common solutions and creating mutual benefits. These efforts have to be awarded by EU and national and regional authorities at financial, legal and political level.** Protected Areas can play a crucial role in increasing consumers' awareness and public involvement. **Specific measures, programmes and funds** have to be adopted to support methodologies, projects and collective initiatives on **partnership building among Protected Areas, Natura 2000 Sites, farmers and consumers.**

- In order to decrease waste, pollution and harmful impacts caused by chemicals, unsustainable consumption of energy, water and nature resources, **transitions towards organic and sustainable farming**, especially within or nearby Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites, should be strongly supported by European, national and regional policies, with specific instruments- that allow to better recognise and remunerate good practice.



- **Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites can be the laboratories to experiment “innovation”** in agriculture, interpreted in a broader sense: not only in terms of “new technologies”, but also in terms of new eco-friendly methodologies, schemes and actions, involving different actors and looking for a balance of different interests. Moreover, training and capacity building opportunities have to be increased.
- The **role of the European Union** is essential in order to maintain a **coherent policy** on sustainable agriculture across all Member States, as well as to guarantee the coherence with other European policies and with the Natura 2000 network. In the application of CAP measures at national and regional levels, Member States and Regions have to respect the priorities and indications on environmental sustainability by the EU: the common goals for biodiversity and nature conservation have to be clearly integrated into the policy framework at all levels.

References

- 1) EEA report **State of Nature Report 2015** www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu
- 2) **EUROPARC Toolbox “Sustainable Agriculture”** www.europarc.org/toolbox/sustainable-agriculture
- 3) **Siggen Seminar 2017 “Protected Areas for Sustainable Agriculture** Sharing experiences from across Europe that support agriculture in Protected Areas”: www.europarc.org/2017-protected-areas-for-sustainable-agriculture; **Webinar 2017 “Protected Areas for Sustainable Agriculture – building partnership with farmers”** www.europarc.org/webinar-building-partnerships-farmers
- 4) **EUROPARC Conference’s workshops** www.europarc.org/workshops-conference2017;
Seminar-dialogue with EC-DG ENVI 2017 www.europarc.org/news/2017/06/seminar-dialogue-dg-environment-partnerships-biodiversity
- 5) **The European Day of Parks 2016 “A taste of Nature”** <https://www.europarc.org/edop2016>
- 6) **The Agriculture and Protected Areas Commission of EUROPARC** www.europarc.org/agriculture-protected-areas-commission
- 7) As example of public involvement connecting health, agriculture and landscape restoration, see the Portuguese case study of Quinta do Pisão Nature Park (PT) **“A landscape-scale conservation project that links wildlife and people”** <http://www.europarc.org/case-studies/quinta-pisao-nature-park-landscape-scale-conservation-project-links-wildlife-people>
- 8) See the commitment of national and regional parks in France to promote local products with collective labels **“Collective marks in Parks to value and differentiate local products on territories”** www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/SCHMEL-ZLE-Marques-Parcs-France-2017-06-14.pdf
- 9) See the experiences presented in the Siggen seminar: **the National Parks in Netherland with big eco-farm enterprises:** www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/H.Schiphorst-Dutch-National-Parks-WWNP-sustainable-farming.pdf; and the **Obersauer Natural Park in Luxembourg working with agro-industries to identify more sustainable techniques:** <http://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/F.Richarz-Naturparck-Obersauer-Agriculture-cooperation.pdf>
- 10) All case studies mentioned in this document show concrete **examples of positive partnership building**. Read in more detail about the experiences coming from Ireland: **the internationally well-known case study “Farming to conserve our heritage: A Case Study from the Burren”** www.europarc.org/case-studies/farming-conserve-heritage-case-study-burren; and the presentation of the work of the Wicklow Uplands Council **“Twenty years of consensus and partnership”** www.europarc.org/news/2017/02/sustainable-agriculture-partnerships

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