



## **NRN Joint Thematic Initiative on Forestry**

### The Multi-functional Role of Forests: The Spanish *Dehesa*

Report of a Study Visit to Andalusia, Spain (27-29 October, 2010)

ENRD Contact Point



*Connecting Rural Europe*

## Background

The NRN Joint Thematic Initiative on Forestry was established in December 2009 with the objective of facilitating the exchange of information and relevant experience between NRNS and key stakeholders in order to guide improvements in the implementation of RDP projects and measures relating to forestry. Three sub-themes were established during 2010 with the Spanish NRN leading a group of national networks interested in issues relating to the "Multifunctional Role of Forests".

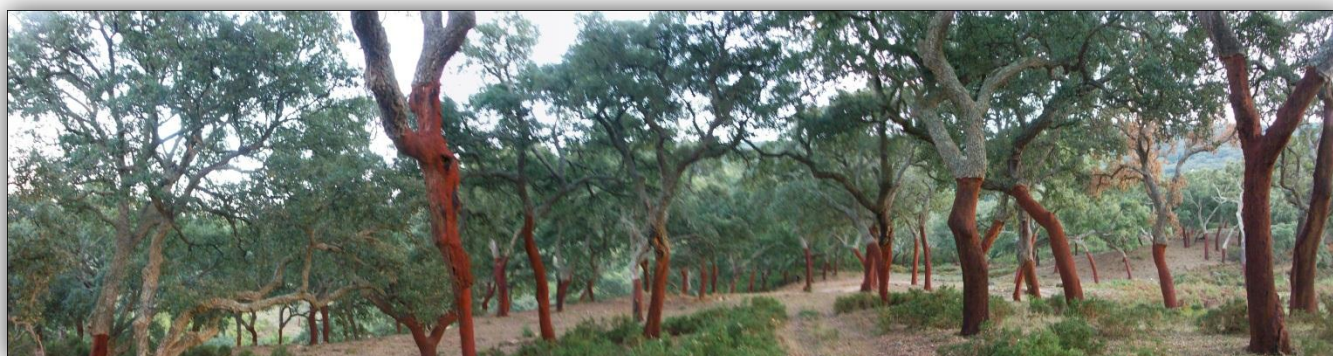
The Spanish NRN subsequently hosted a series of field visits and a workshop in the Andalusia region to a) show different perspectives of the unique characteristics and multi-functional role of the *dehesa* oak forest system found in southern Spain and b) promote the exchange of experiences and views with the participants on multi-functional forests (*see attached programme*). The study visit involved representatives from NRNs, national and regional governments (from relevant departments of agriculture and forestry), LAGs, foresters associations and private forest holders from 5 EU Member States (Belgium, Estonia, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain).



## Outline of the Seminar Activities

On the first day (27 October) a field trip was organised to the Natural Park of Alcornocales (Cádiz) where the participants met with the team of the Grupo de Desarrollo (LAG) "Los Alcornocales" which contributed to the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in the area of the park. The LAG promoted training activities for the local tourism entrepreneurs in order to boost tourism activities based on the ornithological resources and bird-watching. The field trip involved among various activities: a discussion session on the actual implementation of the Charter and the future challenges and; a tour of the "Almoraima" estate where the cork oak forest that supports the local cork industry and the wild fauna and hunting facilities connected to the local tourism activities were highlighted.

On the second day (28 October) participants had a guided visit of the estate of Montefrío, Cortegana (within the Natural Park of Sierra de Aracena y Pico de Arroche) where the grazing of the Iberian pig takes place in the extensive agro-silvo-pastoral system of the *dehesa*. This interesting experience was followed by a visit to the industrial processing facility of Bodegas Lazo (Cordegana) where the Iberian ham (PDO status) is produced. The day concluded with participants meeting in Aracena to discuss the scientific and technical aspects of the *dehesa* production system in a workshop together with representatives from the University of Huelva, foresters and forest companies associations and the General direction of Forestry policy of the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Rural and Maritime Affairs.







On the final day (30 October) a different aspect of the Spanish *dehesa*, characterised by the presence of olive trees, was shown to the participants, who enjoyed also the experience of an olive oil producers' co-operative in the village of Zufre.

### **Conclusions from the Seminar: The *Dehesa* Experience**

This study visit was the first example of a "spin-off" activity generated by the NRN Joint Thematic Initiative on Forestry and clearly highlighted the potential added value of the NRN Thematic Initiatives in terms of bringing NRNs together for joint activities around common topics of interest. Further value was added by the fact that the theme "Multi-functional Role of Forests" was also a

key issue discussed at the seminar on the "Management of Environmental Public Goods" organised by the Belgian Walloon NRN a few weeks later in Namur, Belgium, on 18-19 November. The Spanish and Walloon networks co-ordinated these two events in order to ensure that the interesting insights and wide spectrum of examples of economic diversification provided by the *dehesa* could feed into and stimulate a debate on innovative management practices at the Belgian seminar.

The Spanish study visit was particularly valuable for introducing the participants to the unique characteristics of the *dehesa* and showing practical examples of integration between farming, forest management, tourism and other productive activities. This all contributed to the understanding of the different roles that forest can play in the provision of public goods and services.

The *dehesa* is a very specific Mediterranean system of extensively grazed, wooded pasture that covers the south-west regions of Spain and southern Portugal. In agricultural terms, this is a very marginal system with productivity severely limited by the poor quality of the soil. But in other terms, these areas hide a great potential for diversification and due to their intrinsic characteristics and management practices ensure the provision of a wide range of environmental (biodiversity, soil conservation, landscape, air quality, carbon storage) and social (retention of human capital and skills through the related economic activities) public goods and services.

Three main experiences were presented during the study visit where forests have a pivotal role as a natural and productive environment ensuring links with the wider rural economic activities.

Firstly, the experience of the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in the Natural Park of Los Alcornocales showed the skilful exploitation of endogenous resources in terms of biodiversity, geographical location and orography – with local entrepreneurship linking tourism to bird-watching activities throughout the year.



The Park (a protected area since 1989) conserves the largest cork oak woodlands (together with a range of other remarkable oak species woods, bush lands and pastures) in the Iberian Peninsula and offers an important opportunity for ornithologists to observe the migration flows across the strait of Gibraltar.

The role played by the LAG/GDR "Los Alcornocales" in this area was to bring together public and private stakeholders and work on the promotion of local resources (the existence of more than 250 bird species, the forests and the related cork industry, stock breeding) in an attempt to promote the diversification of the existing economic activities through alternative forms of sustainable tourism (very different to the typical touristic activities of southern Spain!) and attract international and local tourist flows.



A new sustainable development plan for the Park (following one concluded in 2009) will be agreed and implemented with the participation of local stakeholders, including private land owners, tourism entrepreneurs, municipalities and the regional government.

Secondly, the two very different examples shown within the Natural Park of Sierra de Aracena y Pico de Arroche illustrated the diversification potential of the *dehesa* and how it can be realised. In one case (the Estate of Montefrio) the organic production of the Iberian pigs (PDO) remains the main economic activity and the land-owners have responded to the recent economic downturn by: i) further diversification to un-tap the touristic potential of their estate through the creation of a rural tourism facility ("casa rural"), and; establishing an own brand for the commercialisation of their organic production.

In the other case, where the slightly different formation of the *dehesa* comprises mainly olive trees, the economic diversification processes took a different pattern whereby a co-operative of local producers have started the production and marketing of organic extra-virgin olive oil. This has established a valuable secondary economic activity, which although of a limited scale, feeds a local and an international market (South America, Germany) providing important social and economic benefits for this marginal agricultural area.

Finally, all of the examples presented during the visit represent interesting and valuable examples of strategies for forest diversification building upon backward and forward linkages with the rural economy (e.g. tourism, agro-food industry and integration with the agricultural sector i.e. agro-forestry farming). All examples also stand in the wider framework of the local development strategies implemented by the Local Action Groups/GDRs whose presence is pivotal in promoting economic diversification of these rural areas.



STUDY VISIT: THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL ROLE OF THE FORESTS: THE "DEHESA"

Andalucía, España, October 2010.

ENGLISH PROGRAM  
MARM-Junta de Andalucía

**Tuesday, October the 26th:**

**16:00-18:00** Arrival in Seville

**18:30** Participants meet at the front desk of Hotel.

**18:45** Walk through the city centre to the Biodiversity Foundation. Visit of the historical sites of the city and dinner at the headquarters of the "Biodiversity Foundation".

**19:30-21:30** Dinner at the Biodiversity Foundation:

- Welcome words from the Junta de Andalucía (Andalusia's Government)
- Welcome Words from the General Direction for Sustainable and Rural Development

**Wednesday, October the 27th:**

**07:00-08:00** Breakfast at the hotel

**08:00** Transfer to the Alcornocales Natural Park, Cádiz

**10:00-10:15** Reception from the Local Action Group "GDR Alcornocales" in Alcalá de los Gazules. Presentation of the program of the visit for the day in by:

- *Rosa Delgado*, responsible for the initiative of Sustainable Tourism
- *Paula Varela*, responsible for cooperation and promotion
- *Carlos de la Rosa*, gerent of the LAG

**10:15** Coffee offered by the LAG while watching two short documentaries:

- 'When the sky narrows', about their ornithological resources in Alcornocales Park and el Estrecho (English version, 15 minutes)
- 'When they look at us', about the dinamisation of ornithological tourism in Alcornocales Park and el Estrecho (English version, 15 minutes)

**10:45** Transfer to the Nature Room "El Picacho"

**11:30** Arrival to the Nature Room "El Picacho"

- Meeting with entrepreneurs of ornithological tourism (Club Irby)

**12:00** Presentation of the Charter of the Sustainable Tourism

**12:30** Birdwatching

**14:00** Picnic Lunch

**15:00** Transfer to the estate "La Almoraima"

**17:00** Arrival to "La Almoraima"

- Trip around the field in 4x4
- Technical visit of facilities dedicated to cork industry, cattle and hunting, guided by owners and managers.

**20:00** Dinner and accommodation in the estate "La Almoraima"

**Thursday, October the 28<sup>th</sup>:**

**07:30** Transfer to Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve (Huelva) (4 hours)

**11:30** Visit the estate Montefrío (Cortegana)

- Coffee
- Guided visit through facilities and processes linked to the renowned Iberian pig (swine) production

**13.30** Visit the Bodegas Lazo (Cortegana)

- Ham process- cellar and drying facilities

**14.30** Transfer to Aracena

**15:00** Lunch in José Vicente's Restaurant, Aracena.

**17:00** Scientific, academic and technical input on dehesa Concepts and Management (Conference Room in Aracena Park's hotel)

- **17:00-17:30** *Gerardo Sánchez*- General Direction of Environment and Forestry Policies, Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs.
- **17:30-18:00** *Reyes Alejano*- University of Huelva
- **18:00-18:30** *Pablo Almarcha*- COSE
- **18:30-19:00** *Carmen Domínguez/ José Luis Prieto* (ASEMFO/FORESA)

**20:30** Dinner and accommodation in Aracena

**Friday, October the 29<sup>th</sup>:**

**07:30** Early transfer to Seville with fifteen participants (arrival in Seville at 9am).

**09:00** Visit to the Ham Museum- Iberian Pig Interactive Centre

**09:4-** Transfer to olive tree dehesas and growings in Zufre

**11:00-13:00** Visit to the Management and production cooperatives

**13:30- 14:15** Aperitive in Zufre / End of the Study trip

**14:15** Transfer to Seville. Arrival at 15.