

MALTA

Soil erosion & soil management

Location
Siggiewi

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P4 – Ecosystems
management

Measure
M04 – Investments in
physical assets

Funding
Total budget 83 771 (EUR)
EAFRD 42 808 (EUR)
National/Regional 14 269
(EUR)
Private / own 26 694 (EUR)

Project duration
2019 to 2021

Project promoter
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An organic farm used CAP funding to mitigate soil erosion and enhance biodiversity by restoring traditional dry stone walls and planting new olive trees.

Summary

Soil erosion is quite common in Malta as a result of rainwater runoff and intense winds. A couple of young farmers who run an organic farm in Malta used CAP funding to implement a non-productive investment, which included the restoration and construction of traditional dry stone walls and the planting of new olive trees.



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Project Results

The dry stone walls and the new olive trees provide windbreaks, which have reduced erosion of the farm's soil and created additional habitats for local flora and fauna.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ For the beneficiaries, this CAP-funded project is part of a long-term vision for education and awareness-raising. The growing demand from local pupils and teachers for the farm's educational programme demonstrates that young people are interested in learning about sustainable agriculture.

Context

David and Abigail Galea are young farmers who manage an organic farm on the outskirts of Siggiewi in the southwestern part of the main island of Malta. Their farm has been affected by soil erosion due to rainwater runoff and the intense winds which dominate the area. To protect their land and promote biodiversity, the couple decided to restore and increase the number of dry stone walls and to plant olive trees.

Dry stone walls (locally referred to as 'rubble walls') are thought to have been a feature of the Maltese agricultural landscape since the ninth century C.E. Aside from their aesthetic value, they protect the soil from erosion and provide a habitat for flora and fauna.

Objectives

The aim of this non-productive investment project was to mitigate soil erosion and protect biodiversity in the area.

Activities

A total of 326 metres (or 603 m²) of dry stone walls were restored or constructed without the use of mortar according to the traditional method of placing dry stones in such a way that gravity and friction act as natural binders for the wall. An independent contractor was engaged to carry this out, and an architect was contracted to supervise and sign off on the work.

The couple also planted a total of 183 olive trees around the perimeter and throughout the farm. These will protect the soil from erosion by acting as wind breakers, while their roots will prevent runoff from rainwater.

This project contributed to the educational and awareness-raising activities that the farm organises for local school students. The programme usually covers themes such as organic farming, biodiversity, marketing farm produce, etc., and this RDP project provided an opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience of environmental protection actions.

Main results

The dry stone walls and the new olive trees provide windbreaks which have reduced erosion of the farm's soil and created additional habitats for local flora and fauna.

Key lessons

The beneficiaries are committed to sharing their passion for sustainable agriculture with younger generations and for them, this CAP-funded project fits into a long-term vision for awareness raising. Allowing young learners to see 'behind the scenes' of environmental actions as they are happening, and then inviting them back to see the impact of the work, proved to be really popular with local schools.

"The grant was really beneficial because we could complete our project and also aim higher. We were able to invest more in agriculture thanks to the grant and support."

David and Abigail Galea

Additional sources of information

n/a