

**ENRD Seminar on  
Stakeholder Involvement**

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# **The experience of an Environmental NGO in shaping rural development policy**

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# The practice in 3 lines!

- **‘Sowing nature’**: SEO/BirdLife campaign for a living countryside in Spain: farming and rural development compatible with thriving rural areas and healthy biodiversity, and natural resources (water, soil, climate). Close working with WWF and others.

## Main purpose - *Why?*

- Promote HNV farming consistent with prosperous rural areas
- Reduce impacts of intensive farming: water, agrochemical use, habitat destruction, soil erosion and promote a more nature-friendly approach
- Prepare Spanish agriculture for climate change with ‘nature-friendly’ adaptation

# Stakeholders concerned - *Who & how?*

- SEO/BirdLife member of BirdLife Agriculture Task Force at EU levels (partners from all MS; 10-15 most active)
- Very active at national level with WWF; also at regional level (17 autonomous communities with their own RDPs). We are NRN members and in RDP Monitoring Committees
- Other collaboration/similar positions with others seeking a radically different CAP (pastoralism, family farmers, organic..)
- Produce technical reports and position papers: challenge current CAP and propose alternatives
- Farmland Bird Index as vital tool, as well as problems for individual farmland bird species
- Practical projects: agri-environment schemes in Natura 2000, Natura 2000 'DO' label, organic 'Riet Vell' business
- Events, lobby: direct contact with governments & MEPs; e-petitions

# Lessons from Spain and as part of EU process

- Green NGO campaign was too narrowly framed to capture public imagination: language too 'technical', lacked big simple message
- We lacked allies outside NGO campaigning/thinktank community
- There are many other powerful and influential lobbies.
- 'IPCC effect': good technical arguments alone are not enough; inertia and short-term vision may prevail.
- EU and Spanish citizens were either worried about other things, ill-informed or unmotivated – but did we really try to reach them?
- Long track record of solid work: BirdLife is a respected stakeholder . We need to use that better!
- Having allies in Spanish regions/farming unions would help with national debate
- NRN functions and mandate are too limited

# Achievements/Results

- Better understanding of how institutions and lobbies function, with improved network of contacts (allies and 'potentials') and possible nucleus of a wider movement
- Thanks to presence, reputation & arguments: easier to get funds for projects to test our arguments ('Natura 2000' label; analyse design/application of agri-environment schemes)
- In spite of problems with stakeholder participation (Spanish Ministry & many regions), we achieved broad stakeholder support for complaint letter to CE
- In some places, on some topics, doors are opening (influencing details of RDPs: design of agri-environment measures, monitoring programmes...)