



# Biodiversity and Agriculture in the Mediterranean

## Challenges and opportunities in the Mediterranean

Agriculture plays a crucial role in our economies, and provides the main source of food, income and employment to many rural populations in the Mediterranean region.

However, large amounts of **species, varieties and breeds**, many of which are endemic to the region, and the **ecosystem services** they provide, are **under threat due to unsustainable agricultural practices**.

The Mediterranean agricultural industry is heavily dependent on water **using an astounding 75% water resources**. In combination with **climate change**, which is leading to increased water shortages and droughts, this unsustainable exploitation of water is very concerning and is having severe consequences on the regions biodiversity. The leakage of agricultural **fertilizers** and the use of **pesticides** is also accelerating this biodiversity loss.

IUCN is putting its efforts towards reducing this threat by encouraging sustainable practices that maintain **Mediterranean Landscapes** and ensure the socio-economic stability of rural communities. Working as well in building bridges between urban population and rural landscapes.

## Towards resilient, equitable and sustainable agro-ecosystems

The Mediterranean basin holds one of the richest collections of species in the world, and its agricultural systems support important processes and functions that bring direct benefits to human society such as **pollination** and **food provision**.

Many farmers are aware of the need to change to more sustainable practices; but the way agricultural landscapes are actually shaped, deeply depend on market, demand and final consumers' preferences and choices.

Nowadays, several initiatives to enhance and protect biodiversity in agricultural landscapes are being put in place around the Mediterranean basin and the European Union with its new green deal roadmap, which includes the farm to fork and the biodiversity strategies, is leading the change to a more sustainable future for agricultural landscapes.

## Benefits of sustainable agro-ecosystems



water regulation



soil retention



carbon sequestration



climate regulation



availability of water and nutrients



supply of food for sustenance and human welfare



maintenance of insect species that help in the control of pests and disease vectors and pollination



## Why is it important?

The adverse impacts of **unsustainable agricultural practices** on the Mediterranean pose a **serious threat to the regions biodiversity** and the ecosystem services they provide.

To sustain biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, it is essential **to work on a holistic way**, as agricultural systems are complex and interlinked in many different ways. This is why it is important to work with farmers and citizens to support and incentivise the transition to fully **sustainable practices** and to facilitate the use of traditional varieties of crops and breeds.

Improving the condition and diversity in the entire food chain, from farmer to consumer, will increase the sector's resilience to climate change, environmental risks and socioeconomic shocks, while providing healthy and nutritious diets, sustainable livelihoods and biodiverse agricultural landscapes.



## What can be done?

**WORKING TOGETHER.** The private and public agricultural sectors need to work together to enhance sustainable practices.

**NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS.** Using nature to create solutions, with which sustainably manage and protect agricultural systems. Creating linkages between agriculture, Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change agendas.

**AGRICULTURE AND CITIES.** Enhance sustainable links between rural and urban areas. Providing conditions to improve agricultural systems while providing healthy foods.



## What are the main objectives of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation

IUCN-Med is putting its efforts in encouraging practices that maintain sustainable and biodiverse agricultural landscapes and in building bridges between urban and rural landscapes.

**1 CONNECT** the conservation community with sustainable agriculture.

**2 SUPPORT** the agricultural practices and landscapes that maintain biodiversity, and the ecosystem services it provides.

**3 CREATE** a sustainable connection between cities and agriculture.



## PARTNER WITH US TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER

### Enhancing biodiversity in agricultural landscapes. From lynx to olive groves.

- Connect conservation community to agricultural reality, building upon existing IUCN network an “agricultural supporters network”. To have a proactive conservation community that understands and enhances the work on biodiversity friendly agriculture, advocating with practitioners in Mediterranean agricultural landscapes.
- Enable the conservation community to understand linkages between biodiversity and agricultural practices to develop a work programme on win-win actions.

### Nature based Solutions for agriculture. Old solutions to new challenges.

- Application of Nature Based Solutions to agricultural landscapes to ensure also benefits to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity as well as transparent and inclusive governance systems.
- Building bridges between climate change agenda, conservation and agriculture.

### Improving the link between cities and rural areas. Biodiversity in cities’ food agenda.

- Following the momentum created by the Milan pact, enhance practices that certain cities are implementing and have clear positive impact in biodiversity conservation in agricultural landscapes.
- Develop a know-how to other cities.

...by 2024