

Abstract title

Challenges in the field of the nature protection: quality, biodiversity, innovation, competitiveness

Expert

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Content

The contribution that the Sicilian Region wants to make to this event is a demonstration of how it is possible to protect and preserve the environment that surrounds us, restoring the ecosystem in areas where the wealth of endemic flora and fauna has been gradually deteriorating and- at the same time- how is possible to gain environmental, social and economic benefits from this project. Several projects have been carried out to protect and restore the environment and wildlife; many of these have been financed with European funds in particular from the LIFE Nature program.

It was observed that the transition from a traditional agriculture to a modern intensively mechanised one, and the abandonment of rural areas have changed the agricultural habitat, exposing a large proportion of farm animals and endemic vegetable species to the risk of extinction. To draw attention to this, a number of projects have been realised with the aim of protecting and recovering species in danger of extinction. Here, we want to show as an example of recovery of the Sicilian fauna, a project which does not fall in the projects co-financed with European funds, but I talk about this because it is an interesting example of conservation of biodiversity and a vehicle for the cultural and historical promotion of a territory.

The re-introduction of the donkey of Pantelleria, into its natural environment, has already allowed us to activate new services related to transport, in particular to help the revival of rural areas that are inaccessible by motor transport. Examples are: In Castelbuono, where donkeys instead of mechanical means are used in the historical medieval center to collect municipal waste and in the islands of Marettimo, Linosa, Filicudi and many others small islands where the donkey is used for the transport of people and goods, and also to take around tourist.

In this way, it integrates the recovery of the animal breed with the need to balance the ecosystem. This supports two important priorities: the re-development of local traditions through the recovery of an almost extinct animal species, and enhanced environmental protection through the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. So a project which starts from the need to regulate the conservation of animals biodiversity and habitats, also brings economic and environmental benefits to urban rural areas and to local economy.

Finally, we urge a change in EU policies to ensure they are more: - Incisive in encouraging projects that defend ecosystems at risk; - Functional in the support of the cooperation of the different European regions, which share the same problems; - More focussed on greater dispensation of funds targeting urban-rural and cross-border projects.

Further information

- www.regione.sicilia.it
- <http://www.regione.sicilia.it/Agricolturaeforeste/azforeste/>