

GO-INNOLAND



Title: "Social innovation in Common Land Management".

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Website: <https://goinnoland.wordpress.com/>

Video link: <https://youtu.be/jiHGFFMUWRI>

Challenges and solutions

Land abandonment is a complex phenomenon, resulting from the confluence of various territorial factors (difficult access areas, isolated land and steep slopes), demographic factors (urban population growth, decrease of agricultural workers), political factors (agricultural and food legislation, protection of agricultural land, urban speculation policies) and socio-economic aspects (low generational replacement, etc.). The changes brought about by the abandonment of agricultural land have a wide range of ecological and socio-economic consequences. Spatial planning, together with agricultural policies, require measures and scenarios capable of preventing the process of abandonment in each region.

Decision-making and investment problems related to common land management require a strong involvement of the social base of the cooperatives, which requires a participatory action methodology that involves the actors in a common objective.

Many of the experiences recorded in Spain are based on the fact that the cooperative, on the basis of prior planning, takes direct responsibility for the production of abandoned plots or plots at risk of abandonment. In this way, it manages to slow down the fall in production and adapt to the commercial requirements requested by customers. The legislation foresees various figures such as cultivation sections or community land-use cooperatives in some Autonomous Regions. These actions and legal figures could not only contribute to the creation of larger farms through the grouping of plots, reducing the risk of land



abandonment, but would also guarantee an improvement in management, both in the production and marketing phases. The existence of a regulatory framework that allows and facilitates common management initiatives is very much needed.

Funding

Public-private funding sources are available to carry out common management initiatives.

In particular, the GO INNOLAND initiative is being developed with a grant for the implementation of innovation projects of general interest by operational groups of the European Association for Innovation in Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (AEI-AGRI).

Social impact

The intensity of these impacts will be higher in areas where there is a greater presence of small farms, especially grouped in associative forums such as cooperatives. Moreover, the impacts will be felt not only at the production level, but also in marketing cooperatives, supply cooperatives, possible community-managed cooperatives or in common farming sections. Given the difficulties of smallholding in traditional areas producing citrus, stone fruit and other woody crops, this process needs to be systematised and disseminated by different actors in the sector. This will be done with the aim of sharing best practices and extracting lessons learned in order to facilitate their extension throughout Spain.

Environmental impact

The environmental impact of the project is very positive as one of the direct objectives of the project is to reduce the area of abandoned cultivation. Other positive impacts of the recovery of underutilised land are the reduced risk of fires or even the reduced need for phytosanitary applications due to better pest control, which is not currently carried out on abandoned plots.

Economic impact

In this respect, it is worth highlighting the importance of the sectors targeted by GO INNOLAND in the regions where the cooperatives and federations of cooperatives involved in the project are located.

Thus, for example, Castilla-La Mancha, with more than 443,000 ha, accounts for almost 47% of the vineyard surface area in Spain. In citrus fruits, the Valencian Community accounts for around 60% of the Spanish surface area and production. Bearing in mind that abandonment occurs in certain productive areas of these woody crops and regions, we believe that joint management initiatives will allow for optimisation and qualitative improvement, leading to a substantial improvement at national level.

Plans for the future



In short, in the short term, the aim is to propose improvements in business models to enable viable farms and restructuring processes that generate added value and are respectful of the territory and the environment, within an approach of organisational innovation.

In the medium term, it is expected that the innovation project will favour the development of a business network based on the common management of citrus, stone fruit, vineyard, olive and other fruit and vegetable lands, where the participating entities will increase their yields and contribute with their activity to avoid abandonment.

In the long term, it is hoped that the project will encourage greater professionalisation of farmland management, associated with better profitability conditions, and favour generational changeover and the grouping of supply.

Lessons & Recommendations

GO INNOLAND emphasise that, despite the difficulties, cooperativism is a useful tool to promote innovation and resilience in farming. Agricultural cooperatives represent a form of organisation and optimal coordination that can be adapted to the characteristics of each territory. Cooperatives are capable of bringing people together with a common purpose and promoting new models of management that are more efficient, sustainable and viable over time.

