How Biodistricts are empowering and re-embedding agroecological food systems in local economies?

Perspectives from Spain and Italy
SPAIN, 1 COUNTRY, 17 COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

- Spanish economy based on farming until the 60’s
- Farmers displaced
- Empty rural areas
- Difficulties to access to land
- Health problems in rural areas and farmers
- COVID-19’s new reality.
ORGANIC DISTRICTS AND ORGANIC FARMING BRINGING HOPE TO SPAIN

2,437,891 ha 50,047 operators in 2020
EXPERIENCES IN PROGRESS

Organic-District del Vinalopó Mitjà i Alt (Alicante, Spain)

It started as a LEADER project run by South Alicante’s Local Action Group as an initiative of ASIR (Association for Sustainability and Rural Innovation), and the first step was to draw a diagnosis of 4 municipalities of this area and identify all actors in the agri-food chain.
A sectorial group of debate was created to involve all actors of the agri-food chain in the creation of an Organic-District inspired in the International Network of Eco-Regions:

- consumers,
- organic farmers and processors
- trainers
- local associations
- municipalities …
The pilot project covered a 14.308 m² area with 4,837 inhabitants and the 4 municipalities and Alicante’s regional government were involved in the diagnosis and the 4 months pilot project.

The project intended to extend to the entire territory of the Local Action Group of South Alicante. Having coastal cities in the network will increase the bioregional consumption.
8 local organic farmers were part of the pilot experience and have started a network of local agroecological rotational markets in the 4 municipalities:

- Hondon de las Nieves
- Hondon de los Frailes
- Alguena
- La Romana (Vinalopó Mitjà)
The first steps taken for the establishment of the Organic-district brought some positive results:

- the **promotion of the organic products** and production systems
- the **promotion of a fairer way of consumption**, based on local solidarity to support rural development and better valuation of local and traditional products
- the **spreading of the local agricultural knowledge**, culture and tradition within the local consumers and also among visitors
Next steps planned:

- To **consolidate the market network**
- To introduce **local organic products** in menus of **public canteens** and in those that need to be supervised by public administrations (starting in those municipalities that are already involved in the pilot project)
- To **add other municipalities** to the network.
- To work with coastal and urban municipalities to **develop an urban-rural shared responsibilities model**.
Next steps:

- To **develop capacities and knowledge in organic farming** (for current and new organic farmers), in nutrition (for families, schools, etc.) and in sustainable and fair consumption-production models.

- To **strengthen alliances and cooperation within the community** and with neighbouring communities.

- To **put into value the local culture and cultural differences**.
EXPERIENCES IN PROGRESS: Process initiated in Mallorca

- Mallorca; is a Mediterranean Island of 3640.11 km² and over 900.000 Inhabitants.
- Its economy was based on farming until the ‘60s and was taken over by tourism from the ‘80s until the 2020’s COVID-19’s pandemic.
- More than 1/3 of the farmland has been abandoned.
- The island is divided in 6 different pedoclimatic regions
37.825 ha 1.020 operators in 2020
A joint strategy was defined involving all stakeholders, in order to boost the local economy and promote sustainable rural development, taking as the basis the island's food system and the organic local production and consumption.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

- SEAE- Spanish Society for Organic Farming and Agroecology, member of IFOAM EU.
- APAEMA-Mallorca’s Association of Organic Operators’s.
- CBPAE- Balearic Islands public Control Body
- Fundació Iniciatives del Mediterrani; NGO
- Administration: Balearic Islands Government, Mallorca’s Regional Council, Municipalities
- Local Organic Consumers’ Associations
- Local Civil Society Organizations
- Tour Operators & hotels, restaurants and cafeterias.
- Local food retailers
The creation of APAEMA- Mallorca’s Association of Organic Operators’.
The establishment of sectoral working groups.
The establishment of weekly markets for local organic products in different towns and cities (Palma on Tuesdays and Saturdays, Santa Maria on Sundays, etc.)
The establishment of the Annual Day/ Fair for Organic Products.
The implementation of a strategy to supply organic products for school canteens (GPP)
The creation of the Organic Farmers’ Cooperative.

The promotion of different Cooperative’s projects on joint production planning, processing and commercialization for meat and vegetable products.

The signing of an agreement between Tour operators and the Cooperative for the purchase of local organic products and for the supply of organic vegetable waste for composting.

Social and school organic orchards.

The consolidation of advisory services for organic operators.
PARTICIPATORY ACTIONS IN SERRA DE TRAMUNTANA AND PLA DE MALLORCA

✓ Serra de Tramuntana is part of UNESCO’s World’s Heritage and is threatened with soil erosion.
✓ Pla de Mallorca has serious problems with water contamination due to Nitrates.

LATEST PROCESSES STARTED:
✓ Conducting multi-stakeholders’ workshops in 7 municipalities in the Serra de Tramuntana, to identify both needs and potentials at local level, as well as the interest in jointly advancing in the consolidation of Organic Districts.
✓ Conducting multi-stakeholders’ workshops for the municipalities in the Pla de Mallorca to identify possible actions to be taken to reduce nitrates water contamination at a local level, as well as the interest in jointly advancing in the consolidation of Organic Districts.
NEEDS

- Local dynamizers.
- Joint research and training on organic methods between farmers, technicians and researchers.
- Land Banks and Territorial Agreements to allow access to land to new farmers (young and not-so-young farmers).
- To create dynamic networking and redesign the local economy and community.
A BIG STEP....
Thank you very much!!

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