

Valdaso – Agri-environmental agreement in Italy

SUMMARY The Valdaso agri-environmental agreement is based on a grass root initiative of farmers who want to stop the negative impacts of their local farming systems on the environment. Valdaso is a valley alongside the Aso river, in the Marche Region at the east coast of Italy. The area is highly specialised in fruit production. In past times, the orchards have been cultivated with a high amount of chemical inputs. In order to stop the pollution of water and soil, farmers in the area founded a cooperation and started an initiative to adopt integrated management techniques at territorial scale. This collective action was supported by the regional and provincial authorities, which set up an AEA (agri-environmental agreement) financed by the regional Rural Development Programme (2007-2013 programming period).

Contract Type



PES contracts including AECM

Public Goods

SOIL

WATER

AIR

Field of action



Basis of Payment



Action-based

Involved contract takers



Collective

OBJECTIVES

- Protecting water, soils and air from pesticide and nitrate pollution
- Integrating sustainable management techniques at territorial scale
- Reducing health risks
- Savings in production costs due to reduced use of chemical products and machines

CONTRACT DETAILS

Participation, involved parties & requirements for participation The parties involved are a group of farmers who initiated the programme. They are organised in the local farmers' association Nuovae Agricoltura, i.e. New Agriculture. Other stakeholders are the regional and provincial governments of the Marche region. In addition, the ASSAM advice centre (Agenzia Servizi al Settore Agroalimentare della Marche) has played an important role as adviser, supporter and analyst of the impact of the measures.

In 2012 almost 100 farmers participated in the programme, managing 560 hectares with IPM (integrated pest management techniques). As the AEA is specialised in a particular area and farming system, the operation of an orchard in the Valdaso Valley was a prerequisite for participation.

After 2013, when the AEA period ended, it was transferred to a new AEA and integrated into the regional RDP 2014-2020 of the Marche region. The context has changed and there are difficulties in managing the new measures.

Nature of contract & measures The AEA established precise targets to be achieved in a period from five to seven years. Such targets include a 30% reduction in macronutrients that are used in the territory and the substitution of agri-chemical inputs that are characterised by acute or chronic toxicity, respectively by 90 and 85%. To achieve this result, the AEA was structured as an integrated package of measures. The actions that were specifically implemented to reach environmental objectives included integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, mating disruption, organic farming and the introduction of green covers. The fulfilment of the measures was linked to CAP payments to the farmers (650 €/ha/year).

Advice & support Training and informative activities have been included in the agreement to set up a capacity building programme for farmers with specific training activities on IPM techniques. The training was provided during farm visits and workshops. In addition, farmers within their association have exchanged information on successful measures and application methods, thus providing mutual support.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Well defined farming system

- Farm size, specialisation in fruit production, intensive agriculture
- Collective approach necessary to make the technique of advanced IPM effective

Social capital

- Trust and reciprocity due to: local leadership (ASSAM technician), small group of motivated farmers (Nuova Agricoltura), tradition of cooperation

Policy innovation

- Integrated suites of measures, focus on farmers' attitudes and motivations, adoption of measures targeted to local needs, involvement of a public extension service
- Effective communication and information regarding the new farming practices and the results of the agreement

Local network

- New approach to innovation, resulting from the involvement of a broad range of local stakeholders

Further information:

Vanni, F. & Conderoni, S. (2013): Collective action for public goods: The case of Valdaso agri-environmental agreement. European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS), Conference Paper.

