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ANIMAL PRODUCTION AND MARKETING FOR THE DIFFUSION OF ORGANIC FARMING IN THE NATURAL PARKS OF TUSCANY

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The pilot project

The Pilot Project on the Development of Agriculture and Organic Livestock Production in the Regional Parks of Tuscany was enforced following the protocol of agreement among the Councillorship for the Environment, the Councillorship for Agriculture, ARSIA (Tuscan Regional Agency for the agriculture development and innovation), the Tuscan Association of Organic Producers (CTPB), the Park Service of the Alpi Apuane, the Park Service of Maremma, the Park Service of Migliarino, San Rossore, and Massaciuccoli. The Project had a duration of three years, from September 1997 to September 2000, with regional funds of 200 million lira (about €100.000) per year.

Objectives

The project's objective was that of promoting organic agriculture in the Parks, in order to reach the conversion of 30% of the farms in the parks, with an organic UAA (Utilised Agricultural Area) that represented 20% of the total (Migliorini P., 2000; Battino V. *et al*.,

2000).

Actions

The technicians of the Tuscan Association of Organic Producers, CTPB (agronomists, livestock production experts, veterinarians), together with ARSIA and the Park Services, performed the following actions:

1. Information and dissemination of the techniques of organic agriculture, in order to favour the conversion of the farms in the parks through contacts with the farmers, field visits and meetings.
2. Technical support and live demonstrations to agronomics, livestock productions and veterinary medicine, for the farms already converted to organic production or currently in the process of conversion.
3. Promotion of organic products in the parks and identification of possible commercial outlets.
4. Activity of co-ordination and promotion of the project.

Park of Alpi Apuane

Area: 20.598 ha

Provinces: Lucca, Massa Carrara

Since 1985

Territory

The territory of the Park is made up of the area of the park and by a contiguous area, as identified by the Regional Law 65/1997, in which there are 230 farms, with a medium age of the managers of about 53 years. The farms are mostly small or very small, often family-run, with prevalent use of spare time remaining from other main activities.

Principal production

Livestock production in the area is characterised by the presence of cattle and sheep farms, mostly in the areas adjoining the park. The animal products consist of pork sausages, beef, sheep and goat meat, rabbits, fresh milk, cow, sheep and goat cheese, ricotta cheese, trout, honey, beeswax, bee propolis, royal jelly and bee pollen. The most important agricultural products are fresh chestnuts, chestnut flour, wheat flour (corn, spelt), firewood, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, forage for animal use, apples, pears, herbs, wine, oil and undergrowth products such as wild strawberries, mushrooms, blueberries and raspberries.

Project activity

Chestnut flour: the food chain project concerned with saving the chestnut groves through free-climbing techniques, forming an association of producers and saving a historical stone water mill.

Principal results

1. The conversion of 5 farms to organic production.
2. The creation of semi-free livestock production of Cinta Senese (autochthonous pig breed), and production of organic Lardo di Colonnata.
3. The creation of a fruit arboretum with autochthonous species.
4. Production of organic chestnut flour using the ancient water mill.

Park of Migliarino, San Rossore, Massaciuccoli (MSRM)

Area: 24.000 ha

Provinces: Lucca, Pisa, Livorno

Since 1979

Territory

The Regional Park of MSRM, founded in 1979, covers about 24.000 hectares along the coastline between Viareggio and Livorno. Although it is in the centre of a highly urbanised

area, this territory has maintained remarkable natural characteristics, and it is one of the rare examples of a coastline which has not been built up.

Principal production

The agricultural surface inside the Park is of 9.400 hectares, with an utilisable agricultural area (UAA) of 7.000 hectares. In the Park Estates (Coltano, Tombolo, Padule Nord, Padule Sud, Migliarino, San Rossore) the main products are grain, forage, livestock production, industrial cultivations of fruit orchards and horticulture.

Principal activities

In 1999, the following activities were complete:

1. High-quality tomato in protected cultivation
2. Potato cultivated in open fields
3. Precocious peach trees
4. Strawberries in protected cultivation
5. Veterinary homeopathy

Main results

Since the beginning of the project, 4% of the active farms within the census have converted to organic production:

1. 6 farms within the Park and
2. 2 farms in the adjoining areas.

The total converted UAA was 600 hectares, representing 8.5% of the park's SAU:

Present situation:

1. 1.200 hectares of organic UAA within the Park
2. 17% of the total UAA

Park of Maremma

Area: 18.000 ha

Province: Grosseto

Since 1975

Territory

The territory of the park extends along the Tirrenian coast from Principina a Mare to Alberese and to Talamone. Significant geographic points are represented by the Ombrone River, the mountains of Uccellina, the swamp area of Trappola, as well as the marine coast. The protected area and the adjoining area are part of the Municipalities of Grosseto, Magliano in Tuscany and Orbetello, for a total of 18.000 hectares.

Principal production

In the park, there are a high numbers of areas cultivated with grain (mostly durum wheat), sunflowers, olive trees and forage, those connected to the livestock sector for the production of milk and meat from cattle (for meat the Maremmana breed, for milk the Italian Holstein) and to a few sheep farms (the Sardinian breed). Other production in the park includes fruit (grape vines and peaches) and vegetables.

Main activities

1. Trials with olive tree fly abatement methods, using mass trapping and «poltiglia bordolese» (an organic insecticide, composed of sulphate-copper and slaked lime) in small doses.
2. Trials of cultivation in open fields of watermelon, using beneficial insects.

Principal results

The farms converted from the beginning of the project were 19 (30% of the total from the census) for a converted UAA of 742 hectares, equal to 27% of the convertible UAA. The number increased to 20, with the conversion of the Regional Farm of Alberese, a UAA of 1,232 hectares equal to 50% of the convertible UAA.

Future developments

The Region of Tuscany has recently published a new three-year program for the Development of Organic Agriculture in the protected areas and in the areas of the Ecological Network of Tuscany. Among the different initiatives, ARSIA will co-ordinate a new project that foresees the participation not only of the three Regional Parks but also of the protected Areas of the Provinces, enlarging the area of participation and the number of possible farms participating in the project. The Project will have a duration of three years, from October 2003 to September 2006, with regional funds of €309.000.

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