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MEMBER

Farmland Biodiversity for Rural Wellbeing

Living Lab BiodivRURAL | Spain



BiodivRURAL

**Farmland biodiversity for
rural wellbeing**

BiodivRURAL is a group of several entities dedicated to agroecology in theory and/or practice, based in the north of Extremadura and sharing the desire to improve the quality of life in this area (where we all live) through the promotion, practice, and knowledge transfer of the improvement and conservation of biodiversity in farmland.

The core of BiodivRURAL is formed by entities dedicated to primary education, nature tourism, sustainable livestock and farm management, conservation, and research in basic and applied ecology.

At BiodivRURAL, we work to ensure that rural populations experience the value of the surrounding nature, while preserving it.

Aim

As a rural area, our main problem is **land abandonment due to rural exodus**, result of a combination of unsustainable environmental, economic and societal aspects of our territory.

In our opinion, one of the root problems is **in the disconnection between the population, the food and the biodiversity**. There is a lack of understanding the human beings as a part of the ecosystem, which we shape with our consumer/producer choices and policy decisions.



Main focus of BiodivRURAL. Source: BiodivRURAL

Being aware that it is the producers who are on the front line of food production at BiodivRURAL we consider that those who need more an innovative way of farming are all the rest of the population, as consumers. If there is no innovation in the field, the problem presits, and the producers abandon the area – creating a new problem instead of solving the one related to sustainable production.

At BiodivRURAL we work to understand what needs to be done with the whole value chain (all inhabitants of the territory) to build a population who supports farmer innovation regardless of each individual's role in society.

Our aim is to connect the agroecology research conducted in the region with as many inhabitants as possible, co-creating with them a form of science outreach that is useful to them, so that they perceive the value of having a sustainable agricultural production in a healthy ecosystem.





↑ SOCIETY



Aim of BiodivRURAL. Source: BiodivRURAL

Background information

The Aprisco association was established in 2020 with the purpose of connecting agroecological research conducted in our area with the nearby educational sector. Our dream was (and still is) to establish a structure and set of processes that will profoundly benefit the rural population from the research and practice of agroecology. Since then, the various entities that make up our LL have collaborated on different projects without any formal structure.

After learning about LL methodology and group process facilitation (including topics such as governance, conflict management or group cohesion) we decided to become an official LL.

Funding structure

We are currently funded exclusively through European, national and regional projects. But we are actively working to diversify our sources of income and to have a financially healthy structure before the end of our current projects.

Activities

- Co-creation of scientific outreach and knowledge transfer activities and materials with different population segments.



Experimental garden established in the courtyard of the San Martín school through the

experimental garden established in the courtyard of the San Martín school, through the LegumES project. The activities were co-created with the teachers and inspired by the research activities carried out, through the same project, at RI Aprisco– December 2024 to June 2025. Source: BiodivRURAL



Final closing event of the 2024–2025 school year: World Cafe with students and teachers to deepen their experience with the experimental garden and receive feedback - June 2025. Source: BiodivRURAL



Presentation of a project on crop wild relatives to Monfragüe National Park and Biosphere Reserve staff (management, rangers, technicians and environmental educators of the National Park and the Biosphere Reserve) – February 2023. Source: BiodivRURAL



Cooprado farmers' school field visit to learn about the relationship between extensive livestock farming and CWR conservation - June 2024. Source: BiodivRURAL

- Facilitation of networking between local population





Awareness and networking day with a film screening of “Kiss the ground” followed by a round table discussion with local stakeholders, including farmers, and mayors of the municipalities in the valley – July 2022. Source: BiodivRURAL



Networking event entitled “Co-Creation Workshop: Sowing innovation ecosystems in rural ecosystems”. With the aim of facilitating innovation in our area, this event was organized so that people who work with the natural environment as an office could meet and explore possible synergies together – March 2023. Source: BiodivRURAL

Methods, stakeholder engagements and tools

On the one hand, we organize internal events (for the core group, i.e. LL partners) which are especially focused on: 1) group cohesion and conflict management; 2) decision making; 3) keeping us up to date on what everyone is doing; 4) sense-making and inquiry events to explore possible opportunities and synergies identified; 5) identifying and implementing new opportunities and synergies; and 6) developing and implementing new projects.

Externally, with the rest of stakeholders of the territory, we organize thematic events that we consider interesting for every moment, always focused on

agroecology, in different villages of the area.



Sense making session for a regional strategy for the conservation and use of Extremadura's CWRs. Source: BiodivRURAL

Achievements

- The concept of the Crop Wild Relatives (CWR), a topic we are working on at the LL (regionally funded DeheWildVALUE and European-funded COUSIN project), has gained visibility. Thanks to new regional funding to establish three more CWR genetic reserves in publicly managed Dehesas, several municipalities have joined the project, and the tourism sector is very interested in further exploring the topic.
- Awareness of the social, economic, and ecological value of legumes in our region (LegumES, European-funded project) is growing, and new activities involving elderly people and immigrants are set to begin next year.
- The network of schools that will implement the activities and materials co-created with teachers and students from San Martín School is growing.

Contribute to a rural population with a high-quality education, with high literacy and love for the agroecosystem we inhabit, and with high quantity and quality of opportunities

Knowledge is power. - BiodivRURAL moto



BiodivRURAL regional CWR conservation and use strategy planning meeting - April 2024. Source: BiodivRURAL



BiodivRURAL internal strategy meeting - June 2025. Source: BiodivRURAL

Publications

- **Interview conducted by the students from the San Martín school** (Garganta la Olla) with Elisa Pizarro from the Aprisco Association and Christian Schöb from the Rey Juan Carlos University. They talk about the LegumES project, approached with the LL methodology. <https://radioedu.educarex.es/luzenlasondas/2025/06/06/legumes-de-la-agricultura-de-ayer-a-la-sostenibilidad-del-manana/>

- **Technical workshop on crop wild relatives:** this was one of the first meetings with practically all the agents involved in the LL (academia, conservation, education and tourism). This event was the starting point for several subsequent workshops and other activities with different target audiences, all of which focused on CWR. <https://www.canalextramadura.es/video/los-parientes-silvestres-de-monfrague>
- **Conference given at the Instituto de Investigación en Cambio Global de la URJC** (Research institute devoted to understanding and counteracting global change) in which BioRURAL's experience was shared with the academic community. Through practical examples, basic concepts of the LL methodology were explained with the aim of encouraging researchers to do science in a way that increases the positive impact on the territory. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/instituto-de-investigaci%C3%B3n-en-cambio-global-urjc_livinglabs-cambioclimaertico-investigaciaejntransdisciplinar-activity-7332741763297611777-gZge?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAACm6JIKx2u1-s0wT3XQBqPuE →

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