MENORCA'S LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME

An agreement for sustainable agricultural practices

In a rapidly evolving society facing complex issues that must be tackled from various angles, we cannot leave the responsibility of finding solutions solely to public institutions. For this reason, the philosophy behind Land Stewardship is to **mobilise the private and voluntary sector in the task of conservation of environmental values.**

In this context, an **Agreement on Sustainable Agricultural Practices** can be signed between a private farm and an environmental organisation; an agreement of mutual aid and benefit to both parties. This Land Stewardship initiative aims to promote agricultural management systems that bring together **economic viability** – fundamental for the survival of the agricultural sector – and the **preservation of environmental values** – fundamental both for Menorcan society and the future of the agricultural sector.

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What are the benefits of the Land Stewardship agreement?

- Training opportunities, consultations and workshops
- Product promotion
- Support from GOB Menorca's agricultural volunteers
- Direct investments on farms
- Social acknowledgement as key players in environmental conservation and land stewardship
- Alliances with other farms adhered to the programme
- Habitat and species inventories

Volunteers recovering a cistern on a farm adhered to the Landl Stewardship programme.

Restored traditional water tank (*aljub*) with solar panel installation and biodiversity ramps.

The Land Stewardship Agreement

In order to join the Network of *Custòdia Agrària* farms, a **voluntary agreement** is signed, with no economic transaction, between the farm and GOB Menorca. Both parties commit to working towards the maximum number of sustainable practices (listed on the following page) to aid the **economic viability** as well as the **natural value** and associated **biodiversity** of the farm. GOB Menorca commits to collaborating through promoting the farm to private and public agents in order to redirect resources and create new channels for sales and product promotion.

These agreements are based on the belief that **positive actions** arise from **mutual collaboration**. They are formalised through the signing of a private agreement, **adapted** to each case and **farm management system**. The agreement does not prevent other agents from being added at a later date, such as public institutions or companies, who wish to support the agricultural land under the stewardship agreement.

Implementing the list of measures includes an adaptation period and follows a calendar established by both parties. The measures are incorporated at a realistic pace that allows for implementation and finding the financial resources. The agreement is initially signed for two years, automatically renewable.

MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE AGREEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Type of crop (to choose)

The type of crop we are choosing determines the water requirement, the emissions associated with its management, its effect on the soil and its impact on local biodiversity, as well as the costs and benefits it generates.

A	What?	Why?
A.1	Rainfed crops	They are adapted to the island's climate, saving water and management time. Reduced risk of aquifer contamination .
A.2	Cereals	Used as livestock feed and a refuge for wildlife. Reduced need for imported feeds and associated emissions.
A.3	Leguminous crops	Capacity to fertilize soil and use as livestock feed.
A.4	Traditional varieties	Fodder, orchard and/or fruit crops adapted to the local climate and resistant to pests. They need less water, phytosanitary products and time of care.
A.5	Productive trees	Additional source of income, base for high value-added products and wildlife refuge.
A.6	Land for natural grazing	Produces feed for livestock without investing time or fuel to manage it.
A.7	No transgenic crops	We want natural food, food sovereignty and agricultural systems that respect the environment.

Crop management (depending on the type of crop)

Cultivated land and land for grazing cattle represent more than 50% of the surface area of Menorca. The practices we carry out have an important impact on the flora and fauna that inhabit the island. We seek to manage the land in a way that promotes biodiversity, as it provides a series of ecosystem services that are essential for maintaining the fertility of the soil, without which the sustainability of our agricultural activity is at risk.

B	What?	Why?
B.1	Avoiding pesticide or herbicide use	These chemical agents not only eliminate weeds or pests, but also negatively affect the area's flora and fauna. If pest problems arise, they will be analysed together.
B.2	Organic fertilizers	Using organic fertilizer helps balance soil requirements. We recommend carrying out a soil analysis to understand the requirements of your soil.
B.3	Maintaining cover crops and mulching	Preventing bare soil is the way to preserve its fertility and avoid erosion. It protects the natural balance between species and minimizes phytosanitary needs. After harvesting, a mulch, green manure or cover crop should be left to protect the soil.
B.4	Crop rotation between plots	Allows the soil recover, preventing soil depletion. Healthy soils reduce the need for fertilizers and pesticides.
B.5	Do not burn stubble	Apart from creating a fire hazard, nutrients, organic matter and ashes are lost due to wind and rain and the ecology of the soil is altered negatively.
B.6	Watering (fodder) at night	The best option is rainfed fodder, but if watering is necessary, it should be carried out during the night to avoid water loss by evaporation. It saves water and energy.
B.7	Correct management of agricultural plastics	Nowadays, plastic is the biggest pollutant and is ubiquitous. If used (in silos, as weed control, etc.), it should be removed when its use is finalised and disposed of correctly. It should never be tilled. One can look into the possibility of using biodegradable plastics.
B.8	Reduce soil erosion and improve soil fertility	Keyline designs and other techniques for water retention and infiltration reduce soil erotion and improve soil fertility. It is also advisable to keep operational ditches and to leave vegetation on the margins as a form of flood control.
B.9	Improving soil fertility	Some options are: installing mobile chicken coops, facilitating directed grazing or marking swale lines to for rainwater management and infiltration.
B.10	Flower areas	Wildflower habitats attract natural pest control and pollinating insects, beneficial to farm productivity. It is convenient to manage 2% of cultivatable land to promote the presence of flower meadows.

Livestock management (only farms with livestock)

The presence of livestock on the farm has implications at many levels. On one hand, the type of livestock we choose will determine their needs and adaptibility to the environment, thus, their ecological impact on water resources and energy consumption (for example, if it is necessary to import feed). On the other hand, how we manage livestock will result in an improvement or degradation of the soil and subsoil. We must manage in ways that minimize negative impacts on resource consumption and maximize positive impacts for soil regeneration.

C	What?	Why?
C.1	Livestock in semi-free regime	Allows for animal welfare, better product quality, saves time in farm management and provides nutrients to soil.
C.2	Autochthonous breeds	Adaptation to local climate and less care and management requirements. This translates into economic and ecological benefits. They are less prone to diseases affecting productivity and are able to feed on what the farm produces, reducing the need for imported feeds and associated emissions.
C.3	Directed or managed grazing	Managing livestock optimising time spent in each plot can have a positive impact on the soil. It provides nutrients it can encourage grass growth for healthy pastures.

Management of natural elements (obligatory)

Areas managed by agricultural estates (crops, pastures and forests) represent more than 80% of Menorca's surface. Our activity must take into account the wild fauna and care for habitats they need to live, feed and breed. We must integrate this perspective when it comes to managing the natural elements on the farm.

D	What?	Why?
D.1	Individual trees	Trees or bushes that, due to their age, have developed substantial growth, provide aesthetic value and heritage. They also provide refuge for animals and insects.
D.2	Wild vegetation	Areas of wild vegetation provide refuge for numerous animals and function as a green corridor. Space should be left for the following: 1) Vegetation along the base (around the crops, generally adjacent to the dry stone walls). It is positive for natural pest control and provides protection from wind. 2) On hills. Pest control, protects from wind and stops erosion caused by strong rainfall. 3) In torrents. Controls the formation of torrents, which can cause the loss of fertile soil.
D.3	Forest areas	The small forested areas that alternate with croplands are important biodiversity hotspots. They have a positive impact on pest control, have landscape value, protect nearby crops and enhance hunting species.
D.4	Dry stone wall	It is important to keep in good conditions the dry stone walls that make up Menorca's landscape. It is a favourable element for the declaration of Menorca as a Biosphere Reserve, as well as helping protect crops from the wind. The spaces between stones provide refuge for wild fauna.
D.5	Temporary wetlands	Temporary wetlands, natural or not, are areas that accumulate a large amount of microscopic life which are important for the development of larger species. They are an essential support for some endangered species, a nice element for sightings and they contribute to maintaining hunting species.

Complementary activities (voluntary)

These activities can be adapted to the situation of each farm.

E	What?		Why?
E.1	Rental of land for orchard	E.5	Installing beehives
E.2	Maintaining historical heritage	E.6	Installing biodiversity boxes
E.3	Maintaining old pathways	E.7	Environmental education
E.4	Commercial cultivation of autochthonous plants	E.8	Favouring hunting species

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