

CHARTER ON PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE

For the conservation, planning, development and management
of periurban agricultural spaces

Castelldefels, September 2010



UE-FEDER

Preamble

The Agroterritorial Seminar, held in Castelldefels (Barcelona) on 8 and 9 September 2010, assembled at the Graduation Hall of the Barcelona College of Agriculture (ESAB-UPC), convened by the *Consorti del Parc Agrari del Baix Llobregat*, the *Fundació Agroterritori* and the *Red Agroterritorial* as part of the AGRI-PROXY project entitled “Local agriculture for re-inventing the relationship between urban and rural areas” as part of the Operational Programme for Territorial Cooperation Spain-France-Andorra. 2007-2013 (Spanish acronym: POCTEFA).

Taking into consideration the proposal of the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on “Agriculture in periurban areas” (NAT/204-EESC 1209/2004) and, in particular, the reference to the need to draft a charter on periurban agriculture.

Aware that periurban agricultural areas have noteworthy environmental, social and economic functions and, therefore, institutions, authorities and the general public should be made aware of the importance of taking part in public decisions relating thereto.

Desiring to consolidate sustainable development based on balanced and harmonious relationship between the social, economic and environmental needs of periurban agricultural spaces.

Noting the importance agricultural areas play in creating periurban landscapes and eager to promote landscape quality.

Believing that landscape is a key element in individual and social well-being and that it can be an element of opportunity as well as a factor of quality and support to periurban agricultural activity.

Wishing to respond to the need for protection, planning, development and management of periurban agricultural areas, and aware that it involves rights and responsibilities for everyone.

A discussion has been held in regard to the Charter on Periurban Agriculture in order to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international levels to protect, plan, develop and manage periurban agricultural areas in Europe. Said policies and measures must be aimed at consolidating farming activity and at the professionals who make it possible (farmers, as well as agricultural technicians and researchers.)

An agreement has been reached as to the following text:

CHARTER ON PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE

For the conservation, planning, development and management of periurban agricultural spaces

Premises

Given that periurban areas are an increasingly important space in many municipalities of the Spain, the European Union and the world, as a result of the contemporary metropolitan model and the subsequent creation of spaces that are halfway between city centres and the farthest outlying rural areas.

Given that periurban agriculture contributes limits and identity to the cities it is a part of, preserving their history and knowledge developed through an ancient process of co-evolution between agricultural and urban systems, and as a green space and enricher of their environmental quality.

Given that periurban agricultural areas are generally areas that can act as connecting elements between open spaces and as separators between different urban spaces.

Given that, in many cases, periurban agricultural areas are the result of the survival and continuation of historic agricultural activity that has generated a significant tangible and intangible cultural heritage (often an unavoidable part of the image and identity of cities); it is a heritage that requires conservation and transmission to future generations.

Given that periurban areas contain agricultural areas, which are defined as those areas in which productive agricultural activity is carried out, so as to generate an ecosystem altered by farming and livestock and a typical rural landscape, and, by definition, fundamentally a producer of food and raw materials.

Given that the true protagonists of any agricultural area are the men and women who farm it and this agricultural area is the field where they can develop their profession.

Given that periurban agricultural areas are under severe pressure as a result of urban growth and its related infrastructure, which is leading to a loss, fragmentation and deterioration of productive agricultural land.

Given that the expectations created by urban and territorial planning in periurban agricultural spaces lead to increased land value, which limits their economic viability, and makes it difficult to obtain stable land lease contracts.

Given that periurban agricultural areas often hold significant environmental values, as well as high levels of cultural biodiversity and spontaneity, or highly fertile soils, values that, at the present time, are particularly threatened by the impact of non-environmentally friendly actions (fly-tipping of waste, soil pollution, water pollution, etc.) related to the proximity of a city.

Given that in periurban agricultural areas relations between town and country can easily deteriorate, either due to the high demand for recreational and leisure uses that - if not properly planned and managed can negatively interfere in the normal development of agricultural activity - or due to conflict because of the inconvenience which the agricultural activity (especially livestock production) can cause in the nearest urban areas.

Given that hobby, social or familiar urban orchards represent a growing demand, but in no case can they be considered professional farming but rather a recreational or therapeutic activity intended for home consumption, which should not interfere with professional agricultural activity or compromise the soil used for professional purposes.

Given that periurban agricultural spaces perform noteworthy **environmental, social and economic** functions.

Given the **multifunctional role of periurban farming** and that this character implies that, beyond the productive values derived from agricultural activity, we find additional ones that respond to the changing needs of society, such as artisanal production, specialized tourism (farm tourism, holeritourism¹, etc.) environmental and educational activities and local food delivery services.

Given that proximity to cities offers significant opportunities to periurban farming businesses to market their production, mainly due to the **proximity of a consumer market** that is becoming more aware of fresh produce, quality and food self-sufficiency, to the need to reduce energy and environmental consumption associated with transporting these products from distant lands and the possibility of knowing its origin and producer.

Given that periurban agriculture has the **capacity to generate services to the city**, including the use of organic matter of urban provenance previously recycled and composted with optimal quality for agriculture, reclaimed urban water, and allowing the natural recharge of aquifers and reducing the risks of disasters (floods, rising temperatures in the city, etc.).

Given that **water and land are scarce and limited resources**, as well as being a common heritage that is difficult to recover, and that the use of these resources should be based on a culture that is compatible with nature.

Given that **local governments have a crucial role in the conservation and development of agricultural areas**, as well as incorporating criteria for intermunicipal cooperation for the management of these spaces.

Given that the **Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on "Periurban agriculture (NAT/2004)**, adopted in plenary on 16 September 2004, establishes the need for institutional commitment between local and supralocal government, social partners (environmental and cultural groups, professional associations, the third sector, etc.), on the one hand, and farmers, on the other, by means of a charter on periurban agriculture.

For all of the above reasons, this CHARTER ON PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE is proposed for the conservation, planning, development and management of periurban agricultural areas with the following

Objectives:

- a. That the **specificity of periurban agricultural areas and urban-rural links** have an explicit recognition in the social, political and administrative areas, based on guidelines, actions and measures aimed at this type of agriculture.
- b. That municipalities with areas of periurban agriculture, especially in metropolitan areas, have **effective tools for planning, conservation and management** of periurban agricultural spaces, while promoting and applying the laws and measures necessary for spatial planning and provide access to the land for those who are joining agricultural activity and those who need to increase their farm's land base.

¹ Holeritourism is a type of farm tourism developed visiting orchards. The word is derived from the Latin *Holus, eris*, meaning 'vegetables'.

- c. That periurban agriculture is understood, studied, analyzed, planned and managed from a **supra-municipal point of view, avoiding exclusively local practices** with the aim of establishing a more efficacious and more efficient public policy aimed at periurban agricultural areas.
- d. That periurban land with agricultural value is **classified as agricultural land**, regardless of whether or not in operation, understanding that “agricultural land” is an end use category in the same way as “urban land” is.
- e. To ensure, beyond the conservation of agricultural land by means of planning instruments, the **dynamic and sustainable development of periurban farming and the areas** where it is carried out with specific regional and sectoral policies.
- f. That the **concept of “agricultural park”²** or other figures for planning and management adapted to each reality be incorporated as significant elements of the will to endow these spaces with a planned project, not only for protection against eventual incorporation into the urban development process, but as a means to preserve their inherent agricultural functions and foster a type of management that promotes within them the economic development of their land and farms, as well as preserving and disseminating cultural and ecological values.

To achieve these objectives, we propose the following

Measures:

Within the scope of recognition

1. To recognise at a national and European level the **specificity of periurban agricultural areas**. This specificity enables the differentiation of periurban agriculture in relation to other types of agricultural areas. In addition, this specificity should also make possible to receive the necessary resource in terms of funding, promotion and support in order to maintain the agriculture. This point has to be achieved, among other mechanisms, through rural development programmes –or the tools being the possible substitutes of these programmes. At once, it is necessary to produce legislation and regulations incorporating the above mentioned specificity and delivering specific policies for periurban agricultural areas. In this respect, a legal definition of what constitutes “periurban agriculture” is essential, as well as one for “periurban agricultural areas”, with maps of reference defining them in spatial terms.
2. To recognise the **professional activity and social role** that farmers play in the development of the economic, environmental and social functions of periurban agricultural areas. This recognition cannot be folklorist rhetoric, but a proactive tool for the development of periurban farmlands.
3. To recognise that **without economic viability, agricultural activity is not possible**. Therefore, it is not possible to maintain periurban farmlands or environmental and social services without a vibrant agriculture.
4. Primarily to promote innovative mechanisms that facilitate the **incorporation of new agricultural assets**, especially young people and women, thereby ensuring the future of periurban agricultural areas.
5. To promote in a coordinated manner **education and technical, scientific and social research or incorporate specific areas of knowledge in university training** specialising in all components set out in this CHARTER to preserve, develop and manage periurban farmlands using multidisciplinary criteria.

² Agricultural Park: periurban agricultural space, managed for the objective of preserving its inherent agricultural function, and for promoting the economic and territorial development of the agricultural operations while simultaneously conserving and disseminating the ecological and cultural values associated with it.

Within the scope of land protection and management

1. To draft and to pass a **plan of periurban farmlands** that is defined under the provisions contained to that effect in an act of Parliament on farmland protection. The plan should specifically identify which farmlands are protected and considered as periurban and what the implications of this determination are.
2. By means of specific urban planning tools, to pass **concrete legislation** allowing the control of speculative processes causing the intrusion of non-agricultural land uses in farmlands or making land renting difficult.
3. To implement the **legal mechanisms**, even –if not available– developing new ones, in order to avoid land degradation processes in terms of leaving productive land idle. These mechanisms have to promote the agricultural re-utilisation. If not, the degradation processes might be invoked as means to justify deleting farmlands.
4. To develop specific legislation to facilitate the **transfer and temporary management of land** for cultivation through contract farming and to promote the creation of land management entities.
5. To plan and establish **specific guidelines to regulate hobby, social or familiar gardens urban orchards** that are suitable for urban areas. These orchards cannot constitute any kind of interference with nearby professional farming. In this respect, these orchards will be implemented based on initiatives from public or non-profit entities on land qualified as systems - under strict public control and active participation of users - located in urban areas or in adjacent populated areas intended for this purpose.
6. To implement, by the pertinent agricultural governmental organisation, an **agricultural impact study as mandatory and binding** whenever any activity is planned on the periurban agricultural area that may imply the involvement and/or loss of agricultural land or a diffuse impact on the entirety of the territory or farming activity.
7. To promote long-term land and agricultural management with the **involvement of government** based on:
 - a. **Agreed land management measures** between governments, especially local ones, with the possibility of incorporating non-profit entities.
 - b. **Spatial and urban planning** that incorporates the conservation of periurban agricultural areas, with strict urban growth boundaries and without submitting those areas to doubts that these spaces are covered by other regional and urban plans, especially by municipal planning. Urban growth boundaries should be planned and designed in order to create a buffer with agricultural areas, allowing the infiltration of agriculture into the city, but not the opposite. Projects that generate scenarios of pressure on periurban agriculture should be deleted.
 - c. A **strategic management and development** plan as a tool for implementation between government and the agricultural sector involved in each of the periurban agricultural areas defined.
 - d. The **creation of management bodies** formed by the government, the social and the agricultural sectors and all those involved in the management of a defined periurban agricultural area.

- e. The promotion of **regional agreements** between the public, social and agriculture sectors to boost and protect periurban agricultural areas and their core values.

Within the scope of governance

1. To consolidate **active participation by women and youth** in regional projects and contracts for land management as a guarantee of present and future continuity.
2. To establish **management bodies that act as drivers and driving forces** of periurban farmlands, that make possible that citizens are conscious and appreciate the values of these periurban areas and develop management projects based on cooperation and - where common goals and interests come together - to promote specific actions.
3. To incorporate as a **work criterion** to be conservative in preserving the values of agricultural land and, at the same time, imaginative and creative in developing its economic, environmental and social functions, and rigorous in regulating the permitted uses.
4. To implement **networks between the rural and urban worlds** that enable partnerships to be maintained between the city and the countryside, which are in the periurban agriculture camp; for example, through the consolidation of local marketing, which puts demand into contact with supply.
5. To define **specific farm tourism products based on periurban agriculture** (e.g., holeritourism –a type of farm tourism developed visiting orchards–, or wine tourism, among others) that enable citizens to appreciate periurban agricultural areas by means of an active immersion as tourists.

In the scope of agronomic management

1. To recover and highlight the **knowledge accumulated** by agrarian cultures and especially farmers and their families.
2. To promote **good agricultural practices** to prevent possible negative impact that farming could generate on the environment through training for farmers for demonstration experiments and research to improve these practices.
3. To develop within periurban agriculture **water management** that must be based on the rational use of surface water and groundwater as well as the use of optimal-quality reclaimed water for farming activity.
4. To developing within periurban agriculture **land management** that encourages those work practices that reduce compaction, increase organic matter content and promote biological improvement.
5. To promote **sustainable farming** that is friendly to the environment and surroundings, including integrated production and organic production.
6. To promote the maintenance and creation of a mosaic of crops, ditches, walls and herbaceous borders, shrubs and trees that become habitats and ecosystems that support the **presence of beneficial flora and fauna for sustainable agro-ecosystems** that, inter alia, control pests and diseases, beyond just that of the undeniable contribution that these margins, borders and walls provide to the aesthetics and landscape.
7. To promote activities to minimise **energy consumption and generation of CO₂**, and increase, where possible, the absorption of CO₂.

Within the scope of marketing

1. To legally define **local agriculture** based on the following parameters: product seasonality, distance (from point of harvest to purchase) and time (between harvest and purchase).
2. To promote local agriculture, the basis of a **local trade**, and which is capable of understanding the needs of consumers, providing food safety, being environmentally friendly and providing cultural identity.
3. To work on the definition, the establishment and strengthening of **short circuit chains and direct sales** through consumer cooperatives, home-delivery produce baskets or equivalent distribution systems.
4. To promote **landscape as a resource** capable of generating synergies for the marketing of agricultural products.
5. To specifically promote **local products** and those from periurban agriculture.
6. To develop mechanisms for **local markets and supermarkets** to differentiate in their offer what comes from local production.
7. To promote **agricultural fairs and organic shops** in which absolute priority is given to local agricultural products.
8. To promote consumption of local products in the **caterings** of public administration, health centres, universities, schools, etc.

Within the scope of the landscape and cultural heritage

1. To promote a **code of good practices** for the maintenance of productive activity (soil conservation, biodiversity maintenance and water quality) and of the agrarian landscape and cultural heritage.
2. To establish mechanisms and economic incentives for conservation, restoration, rehabilitation and re-valuing of **homes and buildings linked to farming** with a traditional, historical and significant character within a region.
3. To recognise **agricultural heritage** as a specific type of asset within the landscape and cultural heritage by means of specific mechanisms for those periurban agricultural areas that have significant cultural, natural or scenic values. These mechanisms should ensure the elimination of those elements that are not proper to agricultural activities or that harm landscape quality and enable the maintenance and development of agricultural activity and other activities compatible with it.
4. To imaginatively manage elements of **periurban agricultural land with cultural and landscape value** (walls, fences, wells, ditches, dry stone huts, etc.), So that they retain their functionality while providing aesthetic agrarian values.
5. To incorporate the **concepts of periurban agriculture and agrarian cultural heritage** in landscape catalogues and in the various urban and spatial planning catalogues, so that specific landscape measures are proposed that enable the maintenance, conservation and development of periurban agriculture landscapes.

Within the scope of biodiversity

1. To encourage those agronomic practices that **promote biodiversity**.

2. To promote the conservation of traditional varieties of agricultural products within the context of what is called agro-biodiversity and promote, where possible, their marketing and consumption.
3. To maintain or upgrade shelter spaces for spontaneous flora and fauna: margins, borders, dry stone walls, etc., while promoting the specific habitats of certain species that collaborate in the fight against pests such as insectivores, raptors, etc.

Under the premises laid out and objectives and measures proposed, the undersigned call the attention of parliaments, regional and state governments to legislate and develop specific policies for periurban agricultural areas, and local and supra-local municipalities to promote *institutional arrangements between those involved in the management of periurban agricultural areas*. Local entities should develop LOCAL CHARTERS OF PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE, which will be specified through the drafting and adoption of a *Strategic plan for sustainable management and development*, outlining the principles and strategic guidelines and clarifying the steps to take to preserve the values and perform the functions of a particular periurban agricultural area, as indicated by the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on “Periurban agriculture” (NAT/204-EESC 1209/2004, paragraphs 2.4.10, 2.4.11 and 2.4.12).

In Castelldefels, 9 September 2010

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The persons listed below have submitted amendments and/or participated personally in the discussion on the Charter on Periurban Agriculture¹. They adhere to the CHARTER ON PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE and act as promoters thereof:

¹ The indication of workplace is merely for informational purposes *and does not imply any representation of the institution or that it automatically adheres to this CHARTER.*