

Extremadura is leading the project Demeter which will turn agricultural and livestock resources in Spain and Portugal into tourist attractions



The Government of Extremadura, in collaboration with the Regional Development Agency of Alentejo (ADRAL) is the lead partner in the project 'Demeter', within the Cross-Border Cooperation Program Spain-Portugal 2007-2013 (POCTEP). 'Demeter' aims to make the most of the agrarian and livestock resources farmers have in their villages in Extremadura and Alentejo to offer touristic, gastronomic and leisure products in the countryside. Theoretically, this will boost the local economy, generate wealth, increase employment opportunities and in this way, encourage stability among the local population.

With a budget of €1,738,900, financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Region of Extremadura, a series of activities for economic diversification of rural Extremadura and Alentejo (North, South and central) are being developed. The goal of these activities is promoting sustainable and balanced rural tourism as the engine of the agricultural economy in border areas.

Principal areas of action

Agro tourism, recreation, and gastronomy are the project's three pillars, which revolve around a series of actions based on providing quality, innovation and a unique offering. These are aimed at economic diversification, dissemination and designed product promotion, as well as the exchange of experiences, strategies and training and awareness of

local people. These emphases aspire to diversify the business of the local people, encourage entrepreneurship and, above all, increase employment options for young people, and preferably, women.

With this in mind, gastronomic routes are being designed to bring value to local agro-food production and promote typical traditions, working directly with businesses to create a network that offers quality gourmet dishes and products based on the agrarian characteristic of each area. Sustainable agro tourism is simultaneously being developed promoting and diversifying agricultural, livestock, horticultural and cork products of the area. Furthermore, these actions include a complementary range of leisure activities. First and foremost, this prolongs the average stay of tourists and visitors, as well as generates employment for the local population. It also encourages business start-ups in tourist fields. Finally, promoting and disseminating these routes and delicacies will take place through farm trips or travelling exhibitions and media campaigns.

Exchange of experiences and strategies

The starting point of the Demeter project has been the development of a cross-border strategic analysis, looking to rural development as a framework for action, along with the exchange of experiences. This is done so that a true cross-border strategy for sustainable rural



development can be coordinated. At the same time, the project will launch the Cross Border Rural Development Centre, which will continue beyond the life of the project, and which will be a reference point and instrument for establishing common policies for economic development in border villages. Finally, in the framework of this project's last phase a cross-border rural development conference will be created. Along with Demeter, Extremadura is participating in cross-border cooperation projects in the International Tagus and the Grand Lake Alqueva, in the Guadiana River.



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