UNAC – União da Floresta Mediterrânica (Union of Mediterranean Forest)

UNAC – União da Floresta Mediterrânica is a federation of forest owners’ organizations, representing the interests of the Portuguese Mediterranean area Vis a Vis domestic and European institutions, using a technical and political intervention strategy. The stone pine (Pinus pinea) is currently one of the most interesting tree species in the Mediterranean agroforestry economy because of the potential leading role that the pine cone and pine nuts sector can ensure as an effective contribution to strengthening the economic value of a forest product together with the contribution to reduce the risk of abandonment and land desertification in areas with limited sources of income. In fact, if well managed, these pine stands can also play a key role in ecological processes, such as water retention, soil conservation or carbon storage, adding features of low intensity agroforestry multiple-use systems and providing work and diversifying sources of income to rural populations.

To meet these needs, between 2012 and April 2014, UNAC developed the Program for the Enhancement of the Pine Cone and Pine Nuts Sector.

Example and important agent in the promotion of innovative approaches in Portuguese areas affected by Desertification, the UNAC’s interventions deserve a high public recognition in Portugal and at the UNCCD level.

www.unac.pt
Awardee
ACOM – Associação Nacional de Criadores de Ovinos de Raça Churra Galega Mirandesa (National Association of Purebred Sheep Churra Galega Mirandesa Breeders)

Place of activity
North East Portugal
Trás-os-Montes
Planalto Mirandês

Churra Galega Mirandesa is an autochthonous purebred sheep species, being classified as a threatened indigenous breed, with a strong reduction of the herd dimension in recent decades, which is the underlying reason for having received additional aid under European agro-environmental measures.

The sheep production is carried out in extensive system. The sheep mostly eat cereals, grasslands and shrubs of the natural flora, with a view to meat production; nevertheless the wool is also used in the manufacture of typical handicraft articles. This constitutes a viable economic activity, also contributing to the maintenance of human presence in rural areas where there are low populations’ densities.

The ACOM is a private civil society association which aims to safeguard and promote the purebred sheep Churra Galega Mirandesa through livestock genetic improvement, economic valuation of their products and the extension and promotion of the natural environment in its region of occurrence, characteristically confined to the more susceptible to desertification territory in the northeast Continental Portugal, of, the Mirandês Plateau. Mobilization and motivation of younger people to pastoralism as well as the promotion and marketing of related products constitute activity clusters deserving increasing attention also with a view to protect the species. A live example of one of the most important interventions of the National Action Programme to promote the human and natural conditions on the DLDD affected areas makes the ACOM intervention deserve public recognition in Portugal and at the UNCCD level.

http://www.ovinosecaprinos.com/galegam.html

Awardee

AEPGA – Associação para o Estudo e Proteção do Gado Asinino
(Association for the Study and Protection of Donkeys)

Place of activity
North East Portugal
Trás-os-Montes
Mirandês Plateau and surrounding regions

Founded in 2001, AEPGA is a non-profit organization which aims at preserving an endangered endogenous donkey breed (Miranda Donkey), as well as at promoting and dignifying the breed, not only genetically speaking, but also as cultural heritage. Consequently, apart from the close relationship the Association maintains with local breeders to ensure donkey and mule welfare, it organizes a very large number of regional and national activities each and every year, showing the cultural richness of this animal’s homeland, the Miranda Plateau.

This approach, that takes into account the biological, ecological and cultural dimensions, tries to reverse the overall symbolic and economic devaluing felt during the second half of the 20th century and is translated into a multidisciplinary project with an impact on various areas of intervention, especially on the drylands of the north Portugal and includes the definition of the breed’s standards, a reproduction programme, a breeding center and continuous work together with a larger number of local farmers.

The AEPGA is also an active member of the North Regional Commission to Combat Desertification and a relevant partner in the implementation of the NAP. It also has an important role within the national / mediterranean Desert Watch monitoring project. Having in mind all this context, the action of AEPGA to DLDD interventions is recognized as meritorious in the region and in Portugal, and deserves public recognition at UNCCD level.

www.aepga.pt
Awardee

Eng.º Alfredo Cunhal Sendim (Herdade do Freixo-do-Meio)

Place of activity
South of Portugal
Alentejo
Montermor-o-Novo – Foros
de Vale Figueira

Herdade do Freixo-do-Meio is a private farm and enterprise in the Alentejo region; it integrates 440ha of cork-oak and holm-oak agroforestry system and totally converted into the Biological Production Mode since 2001. In the fulfilment of its mission, based on exigency, transparency, knowledge and innovation, this farm has elected the Organic Agriculture (EU regulation) as a means to approach the challenge of exploiting the north Mediterranean “Montado” in an efficient way. All the breeds are indigenous, the production is carried out in extensive system and at the rhythm of nature, These animals are registered in the respective genealogical books and their products are totally certified as organic products; their meat is cut, processed and packed in the meat processing unit that exists in the farm, like other agro-industrial structures.

Inventor, heart and driving force of this enterprise development programme, which also comprises a strong social component, Alfredo Sendim is an independent expert advisor of the Portuguese government for the reformed EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and he was also chosen for European VNR features interviews to illustrate the reasons for a “fairer and greener CAP”. These interviews, and the script in 23 languages, are available on the net, illustrating the news ways for SLM solutions on the drylands of the west Mediterranean region.

The very positive results achieved in this farm for all ecosystem services need to be disseminated and similar management practices should be promoted in equivalent conditions. This is why the Alfredo Sendim’s interventions deserve more enlarged public recognition in Portugal and also at UNCCD level.

http://www.herdadedofreixodomeio.com

PORTUGAL DRYLAND CHAMPIONS 2014

Awardee

FENAFLORESTA – Federação Nacional de Cooperativas de Produtores Florestais, FCRL

Place of activity

Portugal

FENAFLORESTA is the only Portuguese federation representing the local forest cooperatives at national and international levels since 2000. It includes, as associated members, mainly cooperatives where the dominant holgings are of small dimension (less then 3ha average per producer), which represent close to 20% of the total 400,000 private Portuguese forest owners, including important regions in the desertification affected areas.

The activities of this federation and its associates are diverse: certification, innovation and promotion projects as well as assistance to the forest owners, namely in forest fires, including forest firefighters interaction, wood organization and paper pulp, furniture, cork and resin exploitation and commerce. It also organizes different opportunities to disseminate and promote better forest management practices (including those related to soil conservation and combat desertification), for politicians, local leaders, cooperatives’ technical departments, farmers, etc. In addition, it organizes monthly technical meetings, several seminars, and training sessions and produces relevant publications.

The federation is member of the National Commission to Combat Desertification and its action is recognized as meritorious and deserves public recognition.

www.confagri.p
Awardee
Forestis – Associação Florestal de Portugal (Forestry Association of Portugal)

Place of activity
Portugal

Forestis – Forestry Association of Portugal is a nationwide organization of associative character, of a non-profit and public utility nature, founded in 1992, aiming at actively assist forest management and defense as well as the associated organizations of private and community forests. In 2001, as a result of its activity, it was recognized as an environmental non-governmental organization.

Currently, it has 31 associated forest owners’ organizations (OPF) focused on local activities and representing and technically supporting/assisting more than 15,000 private forest owners.

Member of the National Commission of the NAP and of the North Regional Commission to Combat Desertification, Forestis has a prestigious intervention both on institutional and on technical matters related with forest actions to combat desertification and land degradation. Its performance deserves public recognition in Portugal and at UNCCD level.
Awardee
Arqta. Maria José Facco Viana Festas

Place of activity
Portugal

With degrees in landscape architecture and in agronomy and a master in urban and regional planning, Maria José Festas has started her carrier as civil servant in 1976, firstly in Environmental Studies and afterwards in Spatial Planning and Urban Development, dealing with diverse subjects related to territorial and urban development and territorial cohesion. She worked at the Directorate General for Territorial Development until her retirement last month.

Throughout the years, she attended several national transsectoral meetings and was the Portuguese delegate at different EU and international working groups and committees. She participated in the negotiations related to the launch of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and, since then, until retiring this year, she represented her Directorate General in matters of its competence and as such participated in the different national actions and initiatives related to desertification, making the link between territorial and urban development and desertification.

Member of the National Commission of the NAP and active participant in the working groups for the alignment of the NAP with the Strategy 2008 / 2018, Maria José Festas has a high prestigious intervention on the institutional and technical matters related with the Desertification on the Mediterranean Region. Her example deserves the public recognition in Portugal and at UNCCD level.

www.dgterritorio.pt
Awardee
MONTE, Desenvolvimento do Alentejo Central, ACE

Place of activity
Nomination for intervention in Cape Verde (Santo Antão Island) co-financed by development cooperation at bilateral level.

Monte NGO is a Portuguese civil society organization, created in 1996 in Arraiolos, a small village in the Portuguese Alentejo region; its mission is to undertake initiatives that contribute to sustainable development of rural areas and reinforce local governance processes.

In 2012, in partnership with the Regional Council of Partners, MONTE started “Baloi D‘Horta”, working in the island of Santo Antão in Cape Verde, a semiarid region. This intervention aims to boost short commerce circuits, through the support/assistance to small family agriculture holdings and consumer awareness campaigns to promote regular consumption of local vegetables - the regular consumption of local products helps to support family agriculture and increase farmers’ income as well as diversify the range of tradable products and, therefore, contributing to the sustainability of Santo Antão’s economy. The proximity commerce reinforces trust between producers and consumers, and also contributes to trade at a fair price. The local agricultural products are marketed in baskets - Baloi d' Horta – filled with the seasonal agricultural products and prepared weekly. Gathered in groups, the local farmers are the ones who organize the production, prepare the baskets and deliver them to consumers, tasks that progressively they ensure in an autonomous and responsible way.

The adaptation of Monte’s NGO experience to the rural area of Santo Antão’s island and today’s results are quite interesting and recognized by producers and consumers as well as national authorities. This is a relevant example that makes the difference at local level in Cabo Verde and involves the Portuguese Cooperation for Development. And this initiative deserves a public recognition in Portugal and at the UNCCD level.

www.monte-ace.pt
Www.uevora.pt/pessoas/ (id)/4578
Awardee
Primeiro Fundo Floresta Atlântica (Pffa)

Place of activity
North and Centre Portugal
Municipalities of Bragança, Vimioso Vinhais, Covilhã, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Fundão, Guarda, Mogadouro, Penafiel Pinhel Marvão, Portalegre and Sabrosa

Primeiro Fundo Floresta Atlântica is a closed special investment fund for forest property, with private subscription and 10 years duration, renewable, with an amount of 20 million euros. The investment policy of the fund consists in the acquisition or leasing of forest areas that have potential for the development of SLM projects in areas with suitable ecological and structural conditions: 14 forest investment areas preferentially located in disadvantaged classified regions, where 23 management units with about 5,000 ha were leased or acquired, especially in regions susceptible to desertification. The management practices of PFFA are convergent with the strategic objectives of the Portuguese NAPCD, namely for the promotion of several ecosystem services.

All PFFA areas are FSC® standard certified and 20% of those areas are also PEFC standard certified, therefore its long-term commitment is to guarantee the social, economic and environmental benefits of the forest management, regularly verified by independent internal and external audits. And the PFFA was chosen by the European Investment Bank to implement a pilot project in Portugal and/or Spain focused on a new Natural Capital Financing Facility.

The PFFA innovative approaches to funding and forest managing and recuperation of degraded lands, including in areas affected by desertification, is recognized in Portugal as meritorious and deserves public recognition at national and at UNCCD levels.

www.floresta-atlantica.pt
PORTUGAL DRYLAND CHAMPIONS 2014

Awardee
Eng.ª Teresa Maria Azevedo Avelar

Place of activity
Portugal

Degree in Agronomy by the Instituto Superior de Agronomia of the Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (1974), where she was assistant professor of General and Agricultural Hydraulics

Her retirement happened this year (2014). She worked in the Ministry of Agriculture since 1978, the first 10 years linked to the development/establishment of irrigation areas. Afterwards, she integrated the national coordination of the Specific Program for the Development of the Portuguese Agriculture (PEDAP) and followed, in different competences, the negotiations of the reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy, namely when the agro-environment measures were created back in 1992.

From 1997 until 2007, she focused her activity on the relationships between agriculture and environment, and became the Environmental Auditor of the Ministry of Agriculture. Then, until 2012, she became the Head of Department of Environment e Rural Space Planning of the Planning and Policies Office. She assisted governmental offices integrating environmental concerns in sectorial policies, namely within the preparation of the several Rural Development Programs, including coordinating the preparation, at national level, of the implementation related to the environmental demands and conditionality within the PAC, which were created by the 2000 and 2005 CAP reforms. She assured national representation in several international fora, namely, since 1992, in the OECD Working Group on Agriculture and Environment.

She participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the UNCCD and, ever since, took part in the several works and initiatives for its implementation in Portugal. Member of the National Commission of the NAP and active participant in the working groups for the alignment of the NAP with the Strategy 2008 / 2018, Teresa Avelar has a high prestigious intervention on the institutional and technical matters related with the Desertification on the Mediterranean Region. Her example deserves the public recognition in Portugal and at UNCCD level.