

The Agricultural System Ancient Olive Trees Territorio Sénia

1 Good morning, my name is Teresa Adell, and I am the manager of the “Mancomunidad Taula del Sénia” and responsible for the “Millennial Olives of Sénia Territory GIAHS site”. Thank you very much for the invitation to participate in this Regional Workshop about GIAHS in Azerbaijan organized by the FAO Office, speaking on “Cooperation between stakeholders and political unity of municipalities.”

2 The Sénia Territory consists of twenty-seven municipalities from three different regions (fifteen Valencian towns, nine Catalan towns, and three Aragonese towns). It has an area of two-hundred and seven thousand hectares and a population of one-hundred and twelve thousand people. We have in common: history, language, culture, tradition, and also the existence of a high number of millenary olive trees in our territory, which we will now explain how we are working to preserve and enhance their value.

3 In our territory there are 3 very different areas: coast, interior (where the millenary olive trees are located) and mountain. There are differences in the size of the villages, we have some with 30,000 inhabitants and other mountain municipalities with 16 inhabitants. The economic activities are also different: the primary sector has a greater presence in the inland villages and industry is more developed on the coast.

4 There is also a great diversity of political parties in local governments. We have 11 municipalities governed by the socialist party (left), 6 by the popular party (right), 6 municipalities with nationalist parties and the rest by different parties.

5 But there are many things that unite us and that we have in common: geography, history, language, culture, customs... The philosophy of the Taula del Sénia is always to add or multiply, never subtract or divide; Collaboration between private and public sectors and Cooperation with all administrations.

6 In this picture, you can see the landscape known as the sea of olive trees of the Sénia Territory. In our area, the main crop is the olive tree (having 33.500 hectares of rainfed olive groves and only 275 hectares of irrigated land). Olive groves stand for 16% of the total surface of the territory.

7 Our project has its origins in the concern of local people about the spoliation of millenary olive trees that had been occurring. A lot of them being removed from the land. Sold and moved elsewhere as decorative elements.

8 From the “Mancomunidad Taula del Sénia”, the first action carried out was to make an inventory of all the thousand-year-old olive trees that we had. This inventory was made in 2008 when 4.080 millenary olive trees were registered. Having more than 3.5 meters of trunk perimeter at 1.3 meters above the ground. Nowadays the inventory has grown up to 6.500 millenary olive trees and has specimens of more than 10 meters of trunk perimeter like the one shown in the picture.

9 This is an example of the record used to store information of each olive tree, with all their measurements, characteristics, pictures, and location.

10 This olive tree named “la Farga de l’Arión” has been dated as being 1.707 years old. The olive tree is still producing fruit and its oil already delighted the Romans, since it was planted in the times of Constantine the Great.

11 The Polytechnic University of Madrid has dated some olive trees of our territory, and their ages range between 1000 and 1700 years old.

12 Having geolocated all the olive trees that we have in the inventory we concluded that its placement matches the one of the Roman Via Augusta, which clarifies the age of the olive trees.

13 The olive tree and the culture of oil have always been very present in our territory throughout history. Here you can see millenary olive trees next to a medieval castle or another olive tree next to a baroque dome. And also oil mills of medieval times that have been in operation until the early 20th century and now have been rehabilitated as interpretation centers.

14 In the last few decades, millenary olive trees have been seriously endangered by spoliation. We have been working for almost 15 years to protect these trees and make sure their value gets recognized. Raising awareness among farmers and land-owners and helping the draft of protective laws.

In the pictures, you can see the acts of recognition to the farmers who preserve their olive trees and produce certified oil.

15 This is a picture of the harvesting process of one of these olive trees. It’s done manually and with the greatest respect for the tree. And at the bottom, you can see the 16 brands of oil that are being marketed certifying their origin and quality through the “Aceite Farga Milenaria” warranty brand.

16 Good morning, my name is Jaume Antich and I’m the president of the *Asociación Territorio Sénia*, made of 50% economic and social sectors and 50% by the *Mancomunidad*. This warranty brand has a regulation of use approved by the three autonomous communities and the ministry of agriculture. The management organism is mixed (50% public and 50% private). It guarantees that the origin of this oil is only from olive trees with a trunk perimeter of more than 3.5 meters and that its quality is Premium. All the bottles bear the seal shown in the picture.

17 All of this has been possible with sustainable resource management. Keeping unchanged the ancient lands with autochthonous varieties that are well-adapted to the environment and a very low crop density (50 to 70 olive trees per hectare). 95% of all millenary olive trees are of the “Farga” variety.

18 The olive grove is rainfed so it doesn’t harm the scarce water supply. Dry stone constructions are still being used to prevent erosion, keep humidity levels stable, avoiding strong wind consequences, and maintain biodiversity.

In the Sénia Territory, dry stone structures and olive grove landscapes go hand in hand.

19 In addition, all the agricultural and livestock activity of the Sénia Territory maintains a balance and is closely interrelated. The cultivation of the olive grove needs and at the same time favors other activities, both in the primary and tertiary sectors. This results in a sustainable system, both economically and environmentally.

20 In recent years, different efforts are being carried out to recover abandoned millenary olive trees. This has been done by small farmers and entrepreneurs who have seen employment and business opportunities in the production and sale of oil from millenary olive trees.

21 Here are some photographs of the recovery of these olive trees and the restoration of the landscape.

22 An important development of oil-related tourism has been made lately. In recent years we've seen an increase in the number of people who are looking for this type of tourism product, which can be fully integrated with farming.

23 Activities like visits to open-air millenary olive tree museums, guided tours, tastings and samplings, itineraries, festivities, and symphonic concerts.

24 Lunches of local products and oil under the olive trees and cultural activities such as concerts, theater plays, and poetry readings.

25 We also have the collaboration of the restaurants in the area that have been totally involved in the project. Millenary olive trees oil is perfect for pairing with other local products like the truffle.

26 In the best restaurants of the territory we can find dishes inspired by millenary olive trees and using their oil. In the pictures you can see three examples. We have a growing gastronomy tourism attracted by high quality and broad offer. In the Sénia Territory there are three restaurants with a Michelin star.

27 From the Mancomunidad Taula del Sénia we work to disseminate and promote the culture of olive oil. Activities have been carried out in all the schools of the territory so that from childhood they learn to love and respect these trees.

28 We attend fairs, participate in institutional events, celebrate the anniversary of some olive trees on their birthday, and organize festivities around these trees.

29 Numerous educational activities are carried out: cultivation and pruning of millenary olive trees, oil production, tastings, and samplings. Every year in November, a congress is held with the participation of national and international experts.

30 We have two travelling exhibitions dedicated to millenary olive trees. Different publications about olive trees, oil and gastronomy of the zone. We keep presence on social media and have a website www.oliveresmillenaries.com where you can find information related to our project.

31 All of this work has been rewarded with national and international awards and recognitions. These are some examples: Hispania Nostra Award, Europa Nostra Award, Council of Europe Landscape Award.

32 The millenary olive trees of the Sénia Territory have also been declared Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the F.A.O., for meeting all the requirements:

- agro-biodiversity,
 - food security,
 - culture and value system,
 - local knowledge system and tradition
 - and landscape.
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33 We are currently working on an Interreg Sudoce project called VALSIPAM, which aims to create a network of SIPAM territories to improve their management and valorization methods. Nine partners are involved, five are Spanish, two are Portuguese and two are French.

34 Thank you very much for your attention. We are pleased to invite you to visit our ancient olive trees.

Finally, we leave you with a 2-minute video where you can see a small sample of the olive tree landscapes of the Sénia Territory.