

Conservation and put in value of the millenary olive trees of the Sénia territory

The Sénia Territory has a population of 112,000 inhabitants and occupies 2,070 km². In it there are 27 villages (15 in Valencia, 9 in Catalonia and 3 in Aragon) that share common Geography, History, Language, Culture and Traditions. It is the place with the biggest concentration in the world of millenary olive trees.

During 2006 and 2007 the Mancomunidad Taula del Sénia (association formed by city councils) and the Sénia Territory Association (50% social and economic sectors and 50% the city council association) were created and since then they collaborate promoting the territory.

Once the inventory of millenary olive trees was finished (with more than 3,5m of perimeter measured at 1,3 m from the ground), which includes more than 4,800 units, spread out in the 22 villages, working together and with the help of other Administrations (European Union, Ministry, Autonomous Communities, etc.) and institutions (Santander Bank and Foundation) we are obtaining excellent results.

With the sponsorship of Santander Bank, the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, two of those olive trees was dated with the following results: number 1,878, called la Farga del Arión which is in Ulldecona was planted in year 314 a. C. (Emperor Constantin, 306-337 a.C.), and number 117, called la Farga del Pou del Mas in La Jana was planted in year 833 a.C. during the times of Emir Abderramán II, years 822-852).

The **Main objectives** of the project were: enhancement strategy of the olive trees and its olive production, the oil, but also the other traditional olive oils of traditional varieties and establish synergies with other sectors: restoration, tourism... And reality is that they have surpassed any previous expectation.

These are some of the **results**, briefly exposed:

- **Self-awareness of the owners, but also of the people of the territory.** They are conscious that producing a high quality olive oil, it is much better paid and at the same time they enjoy a very particular heritage that they can pass on to their successors. But, also, some olive trees that were once abandoned, are farmed again.
- **Improvement of the production process: olives and oil.** In general terms, more quantity than quality was produced before. Now, with the advice of the best specialists during all the production process, recollection and transportation of the olives, but also in the preparation, storage and conservation of the oil, the quality of the oil has become much better.
- **Increase of the millenary oil certificated production.** In five year we have progressed from 1 to 8 oil mills and from 750 to 12,500 bottles of 0,5L certificated by a renowned enterprise and official analysis and oil tasting. 4 mills are Catalanian and 4 are Valencians (6 cooperatives and 2 private). An olive oil which is of golden green colour, with fruit flavour and medium-high intensity which reminds us the recently mown lawn, tastes between hot and sweet, a soft bitterness and very low astringency.
- **Increase of the production of traditional varieties of oil.** Apart from la Farga variety, which means 96% of the millenary olive trees, other varieties such as Morruda and Sevillenca (which are D.O. Bajo Ebro-Montsià) while in the area of Aragon almost all are of the Empeltre variety. Other local varieties are Cuquello and Marfil. All of them. Apart from virgin oil extra quality, they also produce oils of only one variety, which are very appreciated in the market. And are working in premium controlled cutting (Aceite Vía Augusta), from those oils and that can become a symbolic identity of the Sénia Territory.
- **Collaboration agreements with the best restaurants of the area.** As an exchange for consuming olive oil of the millenary olive trees of the Sénia Territory and Via Augusta oil, each restaurant created new recipes with those oils that were included in the menu and two books were published: Gastronomic Guide Millennium Olive Oil of the Sénia Territory and

Via Augusta Oil, at the Heart of the Sénia Territory. We also had promotion stands in La Boqueria market and Santa Caterina market in Barcelona, AVE station in Valencia...

- **Tourism on oil: museums, areas and walks in the millenary olive trees.** Thanks to agreements with the owners, mill and city halls, 2 natural museums of millenary olive trees have been created: Arion in Uldecona (Tarragona) and Pou del Mas in la Jana (Castellón), in places with the largest concentration of olive trees. Also 6 areas with millenary olive trees have been adapted, either in public estates (Alcanar, Canet lo Roig and Vinaròs), or if they were private, thanks to agreements (in La Sénia, Godall and La Foia de Uldecona). Signals are in three languages and access is easy and free, except for the Arion museum where there are guided tours by the Uldecona municipality. In addition, in Cervera (Castellón) and Santa Bárbara (Tarragona) there are museums in historic oil mills. Some routes have also been started to make on foot or on bicycle that link museums and areas and go along the traditional olive groves and its natural surrounding (stone walls, fauna and flora...) which shapes a landscape known as "the sea of olive trees".
- **Itinerary exhibition o Millenary olive trees d the Sénia Territory.** 30 panels that can be displayed of 200x80 cm with 100 spectacular photographs of the best olive trees. Apart from travelling across the region, it has been in Tarragona, Valencia, Madrid... and many other places have already asked for it.
- **Scientific congresses and presentations on millenary olive trees and their olive.** Since year 2011, an annual congress takes place, with reputed specialists at national and international level. The conferences have also served as platforms for presenting that year's new harvest of millenary olive tree oils and single variety olive oils from the region.
- **Networks on millenary olive trees.** Apart from the ones already mentioned: owners, oil mills, restaurants, commerce, tourism... there is total collaboration with the tourism offices and other local technicians, as well as with study and research centres in the area as well as as from other universities and a permanent Forum on monumental olive trees via the internet.
- **Studies and Scientific works.** Apart from the Inventory of the olive trees of the Sénia Territory, finished and updated, the studies of the Fundación Alicia (Gastronomy of millenary olive trees oil and Cooking with the olive oil of the traditional varieties), and the IRTA (A research institution of the Generalitat of Catalonia) both on the genotype of the millenary olive trees, as well as on the quality of the oils of millenary olive trees and also on the oils of the traditional varieties and other on natural paths among the olive groves.
- **Recovery of the monumental olive trees in Vallibona.** It is a project started thanks to the collaboration with the Banco Santander Foundation and an Employment office of Servef to recover those olive trees, abandoned during a long period of time, and their surroundings, of high ecological value.
- **Promotion/dissemination.** Books: Millenium olive trees, alive monuments, Olea europaea "Farga" with an introduction by Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Cooking with Traditional Varieties of Olive Oils from the Sénia Region with an introduction by Ferrán Adrià. In addition to this, press clippings (ABC, El Mundo, El Periódico, La Vanguardia, El País, Ara, Levante, Desarrollo Rural, Descubrir, Geo, Olivarama, Mercacei...) in TV (Tele5, Antena 3, TV-1, TV-2, TV-3, Canal 9, Aragón TV, Xarxa and other TVs of the region) and videos (Oil and millennium olive trees, The natural millennium olive trees museums and others for the European awards).
- **Awards and recognition:** AEMO Olivo Farga Arión Award (2006), Llorenç Torrado to producers Award (2011), 2 AEMO Awards (2011): Olivo Mater and Olive Culture Promotion, Honorary Diploma of the Mediterranean Diet Foundation (2012), China Innovation SIAL prize for the Acomont millenary olive oil (2012), AEMO Award to the Promotion of the Olive tree culture (2013), Hispania Nostra – Banco Santander Foundation Award to the conservation of our heritage (2013), Europa Nostra Award to Historical Landscape of the millenary olive trees of the Sénia Territory (2014), AEMO Award to the olive tree of the couples (de las parejas) (2014), AEMO Award to the olive tree of the four legs (2016) and, finally, Special Mention of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe (2016).

- **Godfather, Ambassadors and others:** Oriol Romeu, Juan Echanove, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, María Galiana, Pepa Fernández and Vicente del Bosque. And Twinning with the film 'El Olivo' directed by Icíar Bollaín.
- **Webs and social networks.**
www.aceiteolivosmilenarios.com, www.tauladelsenia.org
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