

NEW TERRITORIAL PACTS FOR IMPLEMENTING BIO-REGIÕES IN PORTUGAL

By Kim Assaël

In November 2018 the Municipality of Vila Pouca de Aguilar and the Municipality of [Idanha-a-Nova](#), that implemented the first [Bio-região of Portugal](#), in collaboration with the INNER Network, have organized a [series of Conferences with public administrators and agro-food producers to promote the culture of territorial organic approach in the country](#).

A delegation of the [International Network of Bio-districts and Eco-regions IN.N.E.R](#) participated in the Conferences to attest how other European territories have already undertaken the same experience and to motivate the interested actors in Portugal. The innovative territorial organization of Bio-regiões relies not only in the organic methods of cultivation that enrich the soils and preserve biodiversity, but especially through its overall system of values, it increases work opportunities, valorizes traditional knowledge and local cultures that are disappearing and stimulates a growing attractiveness of territories for eco-tourism, thus representing a successful way to promote a sustainable and inclusive local development.

The Conferences have been attended by local governments, representatives of the producer's movements, public organisations, experts from the agro-food sector. In the territories of Alto Tâmega and San Pedro do Sul the involved actors have signed partnership agreements and built the Promoter Committees of their Bio-regiões.

The State Secretary for Forestry and Rural Development, Miguel João de Freitas, attended the Conferences and declared that the Bio-regiões approach has been endorsed by the Portuguese policy as a strategy to combine the benefits of the organic production with the potential for development of rural areas, in order to better face the international challenges to build sustainable agro-food systems. A committed and winning strategy to make territories really sustainable and competitive.

The Secretary of State also invited to set up a space for the coordination and promotion of Bio-regiões within the [National Rural Network](#), jointly managed by AGROBIO (Portuguese National Organic Association) and INNER Network. This initiative would support the Bio-regiões already established or in process of being implemented, for the aspects related to the new ways of governance and integrated territorial strategies, in view of proposing to the European Commission new lines of actions consistent with these policies for programming the post-2020 funds.



The experience of the [first Portuguese Bio-região in Idanha-a-Nova](#) has contributed in achieving these extraordinary results at the national level. The Bio-região adopted a strategy shared among local actors to reduce rural depopulation enhancing the quality of life of citizens, the identity value and the landscape beauty in coherence with the 2030 UN Agenda.

In the Alto Tâmega Region, the agreement to establish the Bio-região Promoter Committee and to join the INNER Network was signed in [Vila Pouca de Aguilar on 21 of November](#), involving the Alto Tâmega Inter-municipal Community, the Alto Tâmega Municipal Association, the 6 Municipal Councils of Alto Tâmega, representatives of the University of Trás-os-Montes and the University of Alto Douro. The rural area of the Alto Tâmega, located in the north of the country, includes the six municipalities of Ribeira de Pena, Boticas, Vila Poca de Aguilar, Montalegre, Chaves, Valpaços. With an area of 2,922 square kilometres and 89,260 inhabitants, the Region has been inhabited since prehistoric times and was recently recognized by the FAO as *Important System of the World Agricultural Heritage (GIAHS)* for the agro-forestry-pastoral system of the Barroso Highlands. The *barrosane* cows, a local recovered biodiversity heritage, currently enjoy the [DOP Barroso brand](#). The organic products of the territory include not only veal, but also dark honey obtained from the vegetable mantle of heather, olive oil, wine, chestnut beer. [The socio-economic and environmental potential](#) includes the Boticas Park, Roman remains as the Trajano bridge, the hospitality in rural tourism houses, the paths along the Roman roads of the thermal water, all cultural attractors capable to strengthen the tourism development and the identity value of the Bio-região.

At the northern-west corner of the country, within [the territory of San Pedro do Sul](#), the partnership agreement to establish the Bio-região Promoter Committee and to join the INNER Network has been signed the 25 of November. The rural area is characterized by a traditional and family farming and the focus of the agreement is based on building a common sustainable development strategy for internationalization of local products, identifying appropriate market places, enhancing the territorial value, creating wealth and investment capacities.

A Conference was also held in [the territory of Torres Vedras](#), located 50 km from Lisbon and characterized by an intensive agriculture, mainly viticulture. The Conference had a character of preliminary promotion of the Bio-região approach, focusing on the needed changes in conventional agro-food systems and the Mediterranean Diet as a sustainable lifestyle. The representative of FAO in Portugal attended the Conference emphasizing the new international trends that promote typical food products enhancing the territories of origin as a whole.

Among its promotional activities, the Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova presented the strategy of Bio-regiões also in Spain, in the framework of the *IV Rural Innovation World Forum (FMIR)* held at Moraleja in November 2018. The Idanha-a-Nova Bio-região participates in the organization of this biannual cross-border Forum promoting innovative solutions for a modern rural life, to reshape the agro-food systems of territories enhancing all human, cultural and historical resources.



The results attained by the Conferences in Portugal with the participation of the involved local actors and national authorities confirm the worth perspective provided by the systemic approach of the Bio-regiões to experiment new local production platforms, renewed thanks to the active community participation and by investments on the whole development potential of the territories.

To know more

[Bio-regiones Conferencia Portugal website](#)

[Red Rural Nacional Portugal website](#)

[News in Red Rural Nacional website](#)

[Idanha-a-Nova in Red Rural Nacional](#)

[National Policy for organic agriculture](#)

[News in Agrobio Portugal website](#)

[News Torre Vedras](#)

[News in Agrotec.pt website](#)

[FAO Portugal](#)

[Idanha-a-Nova website](#)

[INNER Network website](#)

