

BIO-DISTRICTS TERRITORIAL APPROACH WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON RELEVANT TERRITORIES FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

By Kim Assaël

Within the framework of the Family Agriculture Decade and the Sustainable Development Goals, with the participation of representatives from territories and Governments of different countries, [the FISAS International Forum Relevant Territories for Sustainable Food Systems](#) has been realized in Portugal between July 17 and 21, 2019.



The Forum has been organized by the Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD, the Ministry of Agriculture of Portugal, the INNER International network of Eco-regions, the Executive Secretariat of the *Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries* CPLP and ACTUAR. The event was realized in Monsanto, UNESCO Portuguese site, and in [Idanha-a-Nova, where the first Portuguese eco-region was promoted](#).

The international event has brought together speakers from Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, East Timor, France, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, Spain, Sweden and Tunisia, who have contributed with their experiences highlighting the central role that agroecology, family farming and sustainable production have in promoting biodiversity, sustainable food systems and healthy diets for the world population.

The Mayor of the Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova particularly appreciated the presence of all the outstanding speakers, including high level personalities such as the Secretary of State for Agriculture of Angola, the Secretary of State for Agriculture of Mozambique, the Minister for Agriculture and Forests of Guinea-Bissau, the Secretary of State for Forests and Rural Development of Portugal, the Director General of the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of China.

The Director General of FAO, Graciano Da Silva that had inaugurated the event and received the Portuguese Medal of Honor for Agriculture, has also declared that the Green Revolution *"has reached its limits and it is time to implement different models to combat increasing hunger and obesity"*.

As the global food system needs an urgent transition, the interlinked events of the Forum, the *World Forum on Rural Innovation*, the *International Seminar on Important World Agricultural Heritage Systems and the SDGs: Pathways to Cooperation*, and the *International Congress of Eco-regions. Workshop on local public policies for food sustainability* have also been organized to exchange



cross-cutting knowledge for integrated methodologies and policy recommendations.

There have been considered methodologies of territorial action that coherently articulate the value of the natural resources, with the knowledge of family farmers, agroecological practices and innovations, with existing public policies and pacts for establishing Eco-regions. International participants from the CPLP and other countries showed that rural communities have a clear foresight of the challenges that lie ahead, that they can guarantee agricultural research, innovation, investment and policies relevant to their needs. Local and national policy recommendations and knowledge are sought for the implementation of local food systems in line with the SDGs, in a coordinated approach to promote enabling conditions for producers and consumers and create services for a sustainable collective production and consumption.

The [Forum Conclusions](#) show the richness of the participants' contributions to face the challenge of the transition to the new food systems

The event was also the occasion to hold the first global Congress of Bio-districts, organized by the International Network of Eco-Regions Association in collaboration with IFOAM Europe. The participants of Bio-district's experiences from Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia, Sweden, Japan, Ghana, Slovakia demonstrated how the territorial, inter-sectoral approach, including a multi-actors participation, is effective in providing an inversion of priorities. The adoption of the innovative methodology of Bio-districts is able to move from economic competition to eco-environmental sustainability, promoting food security and food sovereignty, through the implementation of its integrated sustainable territorial approach, which favors a virtuous cycle of collaboration among all actors in the green circular economy.

The Bio-districts' congress has allowed an exchange of knowledge on the challenging implementation plans in Eco-Regions, on the dimensions of productivity, environment, economy, health and nutrition and it has claimed the need to support local sustainable food systems, reinforcing the strategic role of local administrations. The *Territorial approach* has been emphasized as the way to promote the transformation of food systems, according which public policies for food and nutrition security have to be developed, in line with the SDGs.

During the FISAS Forum the possible integration of GIAHS dynamic preservation plans and territorial pacts for the implementation of Bio-districts into local public policies have been assessed. The [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems](#) Network managed by FAO, includes 57 systems in 21 countries of different continents. In its Food Security and Nutrition Council Action Plan for 2018-2020, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries CPLP unanimously approved the [development of a GIAHS-CPLP regional initiative](#), identifying some pilot countries in a participative way.

Valuing the great potential of the territorial approach adopted by the Bio-districts and the commitment of the national and local authorities of Portugal, a Memorandum of Understanding between ACTUAR, (Association with the function of Secretariat of the MSC CONSAN-CPLP - *Mecanismo de Facilitação da Participação da Sociedade Civil no Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*) and INNER International Network of Eco-regions, aimed at promoting sustainable food systems and healthy diets in the CPLP countries, was signed during the Forum.



This cooperation agreement will value the exchange of innovative experiences and territorial practices already undertaken that can be the background for joint fundraising proposals, for joint definition of territorial systems of services supporting the transition towards sustainable food systems. The methodological synergy defined during the FISAS Forum in Portugal will pursue the best integration between human cultural diversity with its associated traditional knowledge system and the rich biodiversity of nature, that both in their participative dynamic, shall become innovation for the long-term sustainable territorial management.

To know more

[FISAS Programme](#)

[CPLP Nutrition and Food security Council](#)

[FISAS Conclusions in CPLP website](#)

[Direcao Geral de Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural Portugal](#)

[Fao Portugal](#)

[Associação para a Cooperação e o Desenvolvimento \(ACTUAR\)](#)

[MSC-CONSAN website](#)

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