TWO NEW BIO-DISTRICTS ONGOING IN ITALY

TO PROMOTE ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRITORIES

By Kim Assaël

In March 2016 the Bio-districts INNER Network has enlarged in Sicily, in southern Italy, with two more territories which decided to constitute a Bio-district to promote organic production in the frame of a participatory planning process of local sustainable development.

The Bio-districts promoted and constituted in Italy are actually 14 in 10 different Regions of the country, confirming their effective function for integrating goods and services productions, culture, tradition, safeguard of natural resources and landscape in an overall strategy of territorial development.

Specifically on March 5th in Paternò (Catania) the citizens of the Simeto Valley which have a great experience of active participation in land defence and care, created the Promoting Committee of the Bio-district. Taking advantage of the alliances already existing around the *Simeto River Contract,* the Bio-district will have an important role in order to strengthen the territorial governance towards integrated development strategies.

The other bio-district was formally constituted the 6th of March at Lipari, in the Aeolian Islands recognized by UNESCO as *Volcanic and Sea Park*. In the Bio-districts Eolie, agricultural producers, consumers, local public authorities, protected areas, touristic and commercial enterprises, social cultural and environmental associations, they all decide to act according the organic production principles and use.

In both these realities the *Simeto River Contract* as well as the *Aeolian Volcanic and Sea Park* represent the heritage of local communities and are the basis of the strategic choices of the bio-districts' development: improvement of life and working conditions for the population, environmental care and management of common goods. An alliance deriving from the amazing biodiversity of the territories where the cohesion among social and local economic actors is enhanced and a public-private association that deals with the valorisation of the whole social, economic and cultural capital of a territory.

As emphasized by the Sicilian representative of the National Association of Organic Agriculture, promoter of the Bio-districts in Italy, the sun, the sea and the whole environmental and cultural history of Aeolian Islands have a high value for eco-sustainable development of agricultural resources together with a tourism functioning in all seasons, as a crucial economic sector of the island. The representative of the National Association of Hotels, *Federalberghi*, mentioned the dream on the Sicilian islands that every hotel and every restaurant may in the near future present organic menus based on local products coming from very short distances at fair prices.

The International Network of Bio-districts INNER was present either in Simeto valley than in Lipari meetings to emphasize that common identities of a territory, based on the peculiarities of the typical local agricultural and environmental resources, together with culture and landscape, are better organized within international networks and coalitions for the exchange of innovative experiences and information. Its participation enables the continuous improvement of the local system of services and production for the whole population. Being part of the network can be an added value for example to promote a better integration in the use of communitarian funds enhancing agriculture together with other spheres of local economy, in respect of the 20130 UN Agenda.

The events raised great enthusiasm in the two Sicilian territories, underlying the innovative role of the Bio-districts to valorise all the involved actors, to improve the quality of life and to make more and more attractive the territory.

To know more

Simeto River Contract

Simeto River Contract gallery

UNESCO Aeolian Volcanic and Sea Park

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