

# THE NETWORK OF BIO-DISTRICTS STIMULATES BROADEN TERRITORIAL PACTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGAL

By Kim Assaël

In the [Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova](#) it has been decided to build the first Eco-region in Portugal joining forces with other territorial actors to activate initiatives of organic production, agroecology and sustainable development.

This rural [Municipality](#), made of 17 parish councils and a town perfectly preserved, is blessed by nature. Its territory is characterized by the famous [National Park of Tejo Internacional](#), one of the most important in Europe, the forest and [quartzite ridges of Penha Garcia](#), the [Monfortinho Thermal springs](#), where so many different people and cultures have passed by the years, leaving a land with a rich local identity and cultural values. The Municipality is recognized by UNESCO in the World List of Cultural Heritage.

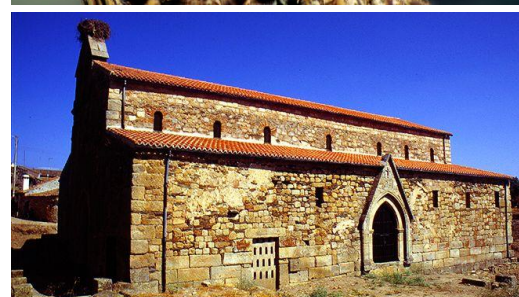
The day 20 of February 2018, a multi-actors agreement promoted by the President of the Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, Armindo Jacinto, has been signed by the Municipality. The agreement involved the Ministry of Agriculture, Secretary of State for Forestry and Rural Development, FAO Office in Portugal, the Municipal Centre for Culture and Development of Idanha-a-Nova (CMCD), the Organic Portuguese association, the Raiano Documentation Centre, four other Municipal councils, agrarian and veterinary high schools, high schools of management, the National Rural Network and territorial organic producers.

The main objectives of the agreement are:

- to reinforce and support all actions directed to socio-cultural, environmental and economic sustainability through the direct and conscious participation of the citizens;
- to improve the organic agriculture of the territory;
- to integrate the nature with the culture of the territory, in order to make this relationship a strategic factor of socio-economic development.

It moves from the commitment and the active involvement of various actors of the community (organic producers, farmers, consumers, schools, tourism operators, citizens and public local administrations). The President of the Municipal Centre for Culture and Development of Idanha-a-Nova valued this agreement as a crucial strategy to seek an equitable and sustainable development for the territory.

Thanks to the multi-actors agreement signed, the promotion of organic products will be closely linked with the promotion of the





territory, facilitating the full economic, environmental and socio-cultural development of the Region. In terms of productivity and efficiency all agro-food enterprises that are often placed in marginal areas and the employment of young people in agriculture can be increased.

The positive environmental functions of organic agriculture, like fertility of soils, biodiversity of plants and animals, the management of hydro geological instability, the protection of water, the care for the rural landscape, will also be strengthened to contrast the negative effects of climate changes, by diminishing soils and water sources pollution.

Idanha-a-Nova also adheres to [the Pact of the Mayors](#) for Climate and Energy which aims at increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources through a concerted process. As explained by the president of the Municipality, an Action Plan will soon be implemented for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, in order to manage the major environmental challenges of the future.

The Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova is also looking for the opportunity to strength its commitments with the cultural heritage initiatives of UNESCO, adopting the Mediterranean Diet methodologies in order to improve the farmers and consumers health, to reduce obesity and malnutrition and prevent related chronic degenerative diseases.

The event has been accompanied by various initiatives. A project to transform the [geo-school-hotel of Monsanto village](#) in an Eco-lodge was presented to promote Eco-tourism in the area. The Entrepreneurial Centre of Idanha-a-Nova presented its organic practices like the use of the natural herbicide called [Katoun Gold](#) for the management of vegetation surface in urban areas and communication routes, which will effectively and safely control weeds.

The President of the first Italian Bio-district of Cilento and the President of the [INNER International Network of Bio-Districts and Eco-Regions](#) attended the meeting, ensuring their interest in working together to achieve the important goals of agreement.

The representatives of the Portuguese Government underlined that this agreement is part of a strategic national plan undertaken to achieve a sustainable model of food production and consumption built upon the territorial communities.

In this framework the President of the Municipality foresees an opportunity to realize in agreement with the International Network of Eco-regions and other international actors a whole system of Bio-districts across Portugal, following up the proposals of the economist Augusto Mateus in his study *O mundo rural, porque sim* (*The rural world because yes*) that could also be the road to position the organic products of best quality from Portugal on international organic markets.

### To know more

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