

THE FEDERATION RACES DE BRETAGNE FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEMS IN FRANCE

In December 2019 the Federation [Races de Bretagne](#) was awarded as one of 15 [Rural Innovation Ambassadors](#) within the EU Rural Innovation Contest at the Organic Innovation Days organized by the European Platform TP Organics in Brussels (Belgium). TP Organics honoured their innovative approach and their contribution to more sustainable food and farming systems.

The Federation *Races de Bretagne* works to maintain and develop the genetic resources and heritage represented by Breton breeds. The group of breeders conducts on-farm research to develop management practices that optimise breeding of local livestock while respecting animals, people and the environment.

95% of the cooperating farms associated in the Federation are certified organic. The farms of local breeds are small and medium-sized, manage production systems that are resource-efficient and they are integrated into short supply chains, selling most of their products directly. The Federation supports these strategies that go beyond breeding, developing quality products that are sold locally and directly to the consumers, thereby supporting rural economies.

The Federation was created in 2011 by a group of breeders committed to save Breton breeds and to safeguard agricultural biodiversity to face their decline generated by the agricultural intensification. Some of these rustic breeds whose number declined rapidly in the past years have been saved from extinction and they are now developed thanks to the work of the Federation. Conserving local breeds is important as these are adapted to the native pedo-climatic conditions. The value of developing these breeds is multiple, for its cultural, biological, environmental, gastronomic and economic aspects at the same time.

A beautiful article published in 2019 by [France3 Regions](#) presents some of the local breeds that the Federation has contributed to save from extinction and their characteristics which make them valuable for sustainable agriculture. For example:

- The *Bretonne pie noir*, the smallest of French cattle breeds which provides a daily quantity of milk much lower than the other breeds. But the high quality of their milk, richer in fats and proteins, is its specialty and also allows to produce a cheese which is very appreciated by consumers.



- The *Poule Noir de Janzé*, more effective than a biological insecticide. Raised in orchards, these hens feed on harmful insects and selectively eliminates them, without damaging plants and soils like common insecticides do.
- The *Mouton d'Ouessant*, the ecological mower. These sheep are unproductive in meat but they adapt to sloping and uneven terrain, finding the resources to feed themselves while developing the strategic function of cleaning soils without using machines and fuel.
- The *Porc Blanc de l'Ouest*, raised outdoors. These pigs don't adapt to building concentration and they feed on the grass of the prairies. The rate of growth is slow because the outdoor breeding, but they are pigs whose fat contains polyunsaturated fatty acids.



The document of the Project [Environmentally Efficient Agriculture 2016-2018](#) offers an overview of the initiatives carried out by the Federation to capitalize on and support the practices of local breeders. The document highlights that all breeders have a systemic approach. The practices in breeding of Breton local species are very diverse because they take into consideration different aspects as the breed (qualities, faults, assets, possibilities), the soil and surfaces of the farm (qualities, productivity, species present), the farming. The processing or sales practices are also determined in function of these variables. These practices are very different from one farm to another and the objective of each breeder is to make the most of the potentialities of the breed within the context of the farm.



[The Federation currently associates 10 local organizations](#) who are dedicated to safeguarding 11 local breeds. The purpose of the Federation is to undertake any cultural, genetic, technical or administrative approach with associations in the interest of the conservation of these breeds. Communication within the value chain, educating farmers and breeders, and disseminating good management practices are the strategies adopted by the Federation to save the important heritage represented by local breeds, promoting a development model inspired by agroecology and supporting the local economies.



The [State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture](#) Report published by FAO in 2019 highlights that many key components of biodiversity for food and agriculture at genetic, species and ecosystem levels are in decline. [The proportion of livestock breeds at risk of extinction is increasing](#): 7.745 local breeds of livestock are still in existence and 26% of these are at risk of extinction. The Report highlights that *Biodiversity makes production systems and livelihoods more resilient to shocks and stresses, including those caused by climate change. It is a key resource in efforts to increase food production while limiting negative impacts on the environment. It makes a variety of contributions to the livelihoods of many people, often reducing the need for food and agricultural producers to rely on costly or environmentally harmful external inputs.*



In this international framework, the work done by the *Races de Bretagne* Federation represents an example that can inspire agricultural producers, local governments and services from other regions to take a similar path in recovering local breeds and developing more sustainable agroecological systems.



To know more

[Races de Bretagne website](#)

[Races de Bretagne in Facebook](#)

[Races de Bretagne in TP Organics website](#)

[Races de Bretagne in Youtube.com](#)

[Article in france3-regions website](#)

[Environmentally Efficient Agriculture 2016-2018](#)

[Article in bcd.bzh/becedia/fr sitio web](#)

[Article in lesbiodiversitaires.fr](#)

[Article in dicimeme.bzh sitio web](#)

[Bretonne Pie Noir in Twitter](#)

[The State of the World Biodiversity in FAO website](#)

[The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture
FAO 2019](#)

