

### Portugal – innovation example 3

## INDEPENDENT PROJECTS – THE CASE OF HERDADE DO FREIXO DO MEIO

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- **Location:** Central Alentejo, Portugal
- **HNV system:** Agrosilvopastoral system Montado
- **Scale of operation:** Initiative of one farm, involving at present 8 independent projects
- **Timespan:** Operating for approximately 10 years.
- **Keys to success:** The strong initiative of the promotor - Freixo do Meio Farm Manager. The widely known principles of management and production of the Freixo do Meio (biodynamic and organic agriculture and permaculture principles), through its various initiatives within the field of sustainable production respecting the Montado Natural values.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

### Problems addressed by this example

- Need to increase diversity of products out of a farm system
- Need to progress in recovering soil fertility within the farm system
- Need to increase human presence in the farm (for safety reasons)
- Social concerns as guidance principal of farm function

### Story in a nutshell

The Herdade do Freixo do Meio houses small independent projects, under certain rules (agroecology principles of production and common objectives with Freixo do Meio), and mostly complementary to its own productions. The objective is to act appropriately within the social and economic current situation, taking advantage of existing potentials and strengthening the Freixo do Meio project as a whole. There are presently 9 autonomous projects installed. The first was implemented by Mr. Antonio Abel, formerly in charge of the homestead, who, upon his retirement, undertook an artisanal honey production / transformation independent project.



Figure 4



**What does the Independent projects of Freixo do Meio achieve for HNV farming?**

- ↑ Production of goods and services in accordance with agroecology principles
- ↑ People leaving and working in the Montado
- ↑ Diversification of products and services within a farm unit



Contributes to the social (directly) economic (indirectly) and environmental (directly) sustainability of the system (within Freixo do Meio)



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

**Achievements**

Since 2008, HFM acts as an economic active agent by embracing autonomous but complementary projects that strengthen the system as a whole and increase the amount of products available from the farm. Among others, the independent projects include a 4.5 ha aromatic and medicinal garden (2011), home-made bags and complements (2011), 2 ha of a horticulture garden and 5 ha of orchards (2011), free-range chicken production with a movable chicken house (2012), a centre for artistic animations, storytelling and pedagogical workshops (2012) and a industrial kitchen that prepares ready-made meals.

**How does the Independent projects (IP) of Freixo do Meio respond to the HNV LINK innovation themes?**

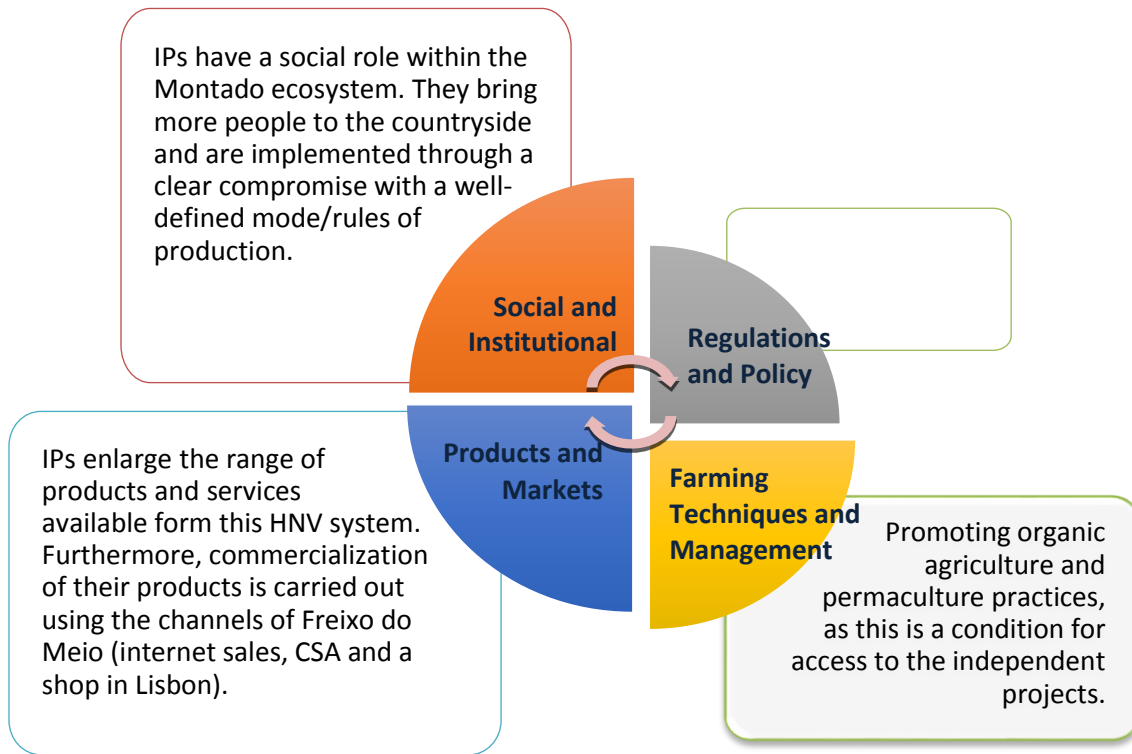


Figure 8 Shows how this innovation addresses the four themes of the HNV-Link innovation framework.

**The process that made it happen and critical factors for success**

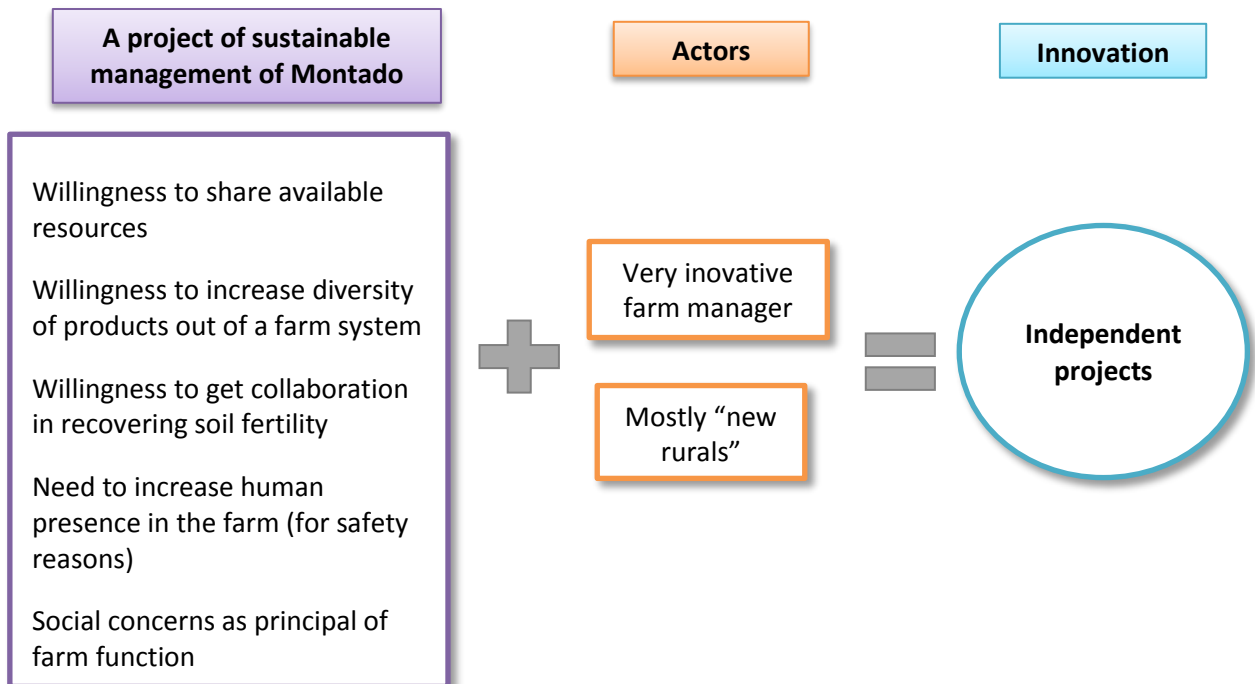


Figure 9

The independent projects from Freixo do Meio are, so far, a one farm innovative initiative that results from a unique farm setting that characterizes Freixo do Meio.

Although there is no such legal relation as a renting contract or any financial retribution, there is a legal written agreement that defines rules of functioning.

There is no specific funding associated to this initiative, however the independent projects promoters have used CAP funds for installation of their independent projects.

### Lessons learnt from this innovation example, and its potential replication

- Very successful initiative, but so far dependent on a single farm/farm manager
- For replication of IP within other Montado farms, the involvement of a farmers association could be important for legal support for both the farm manager and the IP promoter



Figure 10



Figure 11

### *Overall lessons from this example, especially from point of view of HNV farming?*

The implementation of independent/autonomous projects is a very effective way of engaging new HNV farmers, as the host farm sets the rules for functioning of those IPs.

### *Is the innovation unique to its territory and its characteristics, or is it replicable in other areas?*

The IPs is so far a unique example within Alentejo, and it is an individual farm initiative, however it is replicable to other farms, as the farm structure – mostly large dimension farms – is the most common in the region.

### *Could it be rolled out on a bigger territorial scale?*

Yes, after dissemination of the success of this initiative within Freixo do Meio.

### *What would be needed to do this successfully?*

Probably the engagement of a farmers' association for the dissemination of the initiative and its advantages and drawbacks.

Legal support on the setting of the rules for the establishment of the agreement for Independent projects in each farm.

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