



## REPORT ON THE CROSS-VISIT TO THE BURREN

Visiting LA: Sítio de Monfurado

HNV-Link partner: University of Évora

Host LA: The Burren

HNV-Link partner: Institute of Technology Sligo/  
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Duration of the visit: 3 days

Dates: 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> of June 2018

### Portuguese participants' list

Name	Actor	Institution/Farm
Ana Rita Sanches	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora
António Marques dos Santos	Farmer	M <sup>a</sup> da Conceição da Veiga Marques dos Santos, Unipessoal, Lda
Carla Azeda	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora
Carlos Barroca Lourido	Farmer	Monte da Mouzinha
Catarina Campos	Accompanying person	
Elvira Sales Baptista	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora
Gonçalo Marquês Correia	Farmer	Monte da Amendoeira/Monte da Barroca
Helena Guimarães	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora
Henrique Macau Pereira	Farmer	Herdade Curral da Léguas
Isabel Ferraz de Oliveira	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora
Isabel Loupa Ramos	Researcher	IST/Univeridade de Lisboa
Isabel Manoel	Farmer	Casa Agrícola Condes de Seia, Lda/ Herdade da Falcoeira
João Marques	Public administration	Gabinete de Planeamento, Políticas e Administração Geral - MAFDR
José da Veiga	Public administration	Direção Regional de Agricultura e pescas do Alentejo
José Maria Vaz Freire	Farmer	Sociedade Agropecuária Herdade de Vilares, Lda.
M <sup>a</sup> Manuela Tavares da Silva	Public administration	Direção Geral de Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural
Maria do Carmo Bica	Public administration	National Rural Network
Marta Manoel	Farmer	Ovicharol Lda, Herdade do Tojal
Pedro Manoel	Farmer	Ovicharol Lda, Herdade do Tojal
Teresa Pinto Correia	Researcher	ICAAM/Universidade de Évora



## Irish host team list

Name	Actor	Institution/Farm
James Moran	Researcher	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Brendan Dunford		Burrenbeo trust/Burren Program
Aine Bird		Burrenbeo trust
Farms/ business visited		
	Farmers	Daly's farmhouse
	Business	Burren Perfumery
	Farmers	McCormacks farm
Michael Davoren	Farmer	Burren Irish Farmers Association
Several other farmers	Farmers	Burren Program participant farms
Members of the Hen Harrier project	Researchers	
Members of the RBPS project	Researchers	

## 1. Objective of the cross-visit:

To gain knowledge on the experience of local co-construction of result based agro environmental measures and to discuss possible problems and applied solutions. To discuss in the Portuguese group and with the involved people in the Burren, which pathways can be more fruitful for the implementation of similar RBPS in the Montado, Alentejo, Portugal.

## 2. What were the expectations of the visiting participants:

Within the preparation of the cross visit, the HNV-Link team from UEvora put forward a list of expectation related to the outcomes from the innovation fair, where the decision on the cross visit to the Burren, to understand and detail the process that led to the implementation of the Burren Program, was taken. The initial list of expectations was then discussed with the cross visit participants and sent in advance to our hosts in order to support the preparation of the visit. The expectations were as follows:

- ü To hear from the "Burren program" farmers the overall impact of the implemented measures on their farms – Compare the before and after!
- ü To see locally examples of running RBPS and their outcomes
- ü To understand who was involved (actors) and main drivers along the process of construction and implementation of the RBPS
- ü To learn which problems have come about along the process of implementation of the mixed results based and action based measures and how were they overcome

- ü To understand if there were different stages/steps for the development and implementation of RBPS and if so which were those
- ü To understand if there are financial risk for farmers (eg. need to return payments in case of failure to accomplish objectives)
- ü To understand how fears of failure to accomplish objectives by farmers are dealt with and overcome
- ü To understand what kind of indicators can be used to measure the results on biodiversity and how they are monitored
- ü To see how evaluation based on indicators is accomplished in practice
- ü To understand how are farmers enrolled and engaged in the process of applying to these measures as presumably it is a volunteer act.
- ü To understand the different payments pillar I (BPS; Greening; voluntary coupled support) and pillar II (agri-environment payments schemes action-based, results-based or hybrid; non-productive investments; ...) that benefit farmers in the Burren and how they are articulated;

### 3. Diary of the cross-visit

#### 3.1. Day 1 (04/06/18) - evening

The Portuguese team arrived to Kinvarra in the evening and was received by the Irish team with a welcome dinner where a thanksgiving speech from the Portuguese team and a warm welcome speech from the Irish team were made.

#### 3.2. Day 2 (05/06/18)

#### 3.3. Introductory talk of the Burren LA and presentation of the Burrenbeo trust

The Portuguese group was accompanied by James Moran and received by Aine Bird in the Burrenbeo office in Kinvarra. We had a very interesting overview of the Burren by Aine, that did a presentation on the ancient history and landscape features of the Burren. Furthermore Aine introduced the group to the Burrenbeo trust that "is a landscape charity dedicated to connecting all of us to our



*Fig 1. Aine presents the Burren to the Portuguese visitors*

places and our role in caring for them". The Burrenbeo has an environmental and cultural education role within the local community, particularly devoted to children. Therefore the Burrenbeo, centered on the local community, develops a complementary work to that of the Burren program, of great importance in the mitigation of the rural exodus.

### 3.3.1. Walk at Slieve Carron

Following the talk at the Kinvarra community center, we head to the Slieve Carron, part of the Burren National Park, where we had our first contact with the land of the rock, the limestone pavement, the grassland and the hazel scrubland. We were told about the winterages and their role on the conservation of the amazing pasture floral diversity. We also had the opportunity to testimony the local historic and cultural heritage, both through the built heritage and through the various local traditional histories told by Aine.



*Fig 2. Walk at the Slieve Carron lead by Aine*

### 3.3.2. Lunch and introduction to the Burren Program at Daly's farmhouse

A nice lunch was served in a homey environment at the house of a couple of farmers belonging to the Burren program. At the beautiful garden of Daly' farmhouse we were given an introduction to the Burren program by Brendan Dunford. Brendan told us how the initiative of the farmers motivated by the need to support the agricultural practice of the winterages, resulted in a strong relationship with the academy and the identification of a number of problems and possible solutions for the relation among conservation and production within the Burren. The process of design and implementation of results based agri-environmental

measures in the Burren has gone through a LIFE project that enabled the establishment of a pilot experience that later resulted in the incorporation on the National Rural Development program of mixed results and action based measures especially designed and implemented in the Burren, with the support of the European Commission. Brendan also spoke about the practical implementation of the Burren scheme, explaining in detail the role of the different actors involved such as farmers, farm advisors, Burren program office and Burrenbeo with the local community. At this point Brendon also detailed the role of the farm advisor that builds



*Fig 3. Brendan explaining to the visiting group the details of the Burren Program*

together with the farmer, the farm plan for each year and also for a 5 year plan, as required by the European Commission. The farm plan is an extremely simple document (as much as 2 A4 page) that serve as a guidance for the farmer, in relation to the field that are within the Burren Programme.

The portuguese participants had the opportunity to discuss and ask various questions, at this stage, mostly related to the practical implementation of the Burren program and about the

### 3.3.3. Farm walk

We had the opportunity to speak with various farmers that are part of the Burren program, namely a farmer in action on the recovery of the stone walls that is an action supported by the Burren Program (at a 75% rate) due to both its importance as a cultural feature of the landscape and its crucial role on the farm management (enabling targeted grazing



*Fig 4. Speaking to a Burren program farmer*

and improving herding). Besides the importance of the Burren programme in the farm

economy, the farmers visited also highlighted the importance of the Burren program on their social life and on the attitude toward the future "if there is a problem, we know we will find a solution".

### 3.3.4. The Burren perfumery



In the way back to Kinvarra, we visited beautiful example of a non agricultural business that fit well in the spirit of the local landscape, contributes to dynamize the local economy, helping in the promotion of the Burren. It was also a great opportunity for getting some nice and beautifully scented perfumes and cosmetics that are inspired in the local landscape and use natural and organic ingredients.

*Fig 5. Speaking to a Burren program farmer*

### 3.3.5. Dinner at Linnens and after dinner walk

The day finished with a nice dinner with our hosts James and Brendon, at the pier of Newquay (Linnanes) with the wonderful views of the bay. Over the dinner and during a short after dinner walk on the coast, the conversations about the problems and solution found in the Burren and similarities with our Montado continued in an informal way.

## 3.4. Day 3 (06/06/18)

### 3.4.1. Talk and walk with Michael Davoren (Burren Irish Farmers Association)

We were received at the farm of Michael Davoren and were given the perspective of an extremely experienced farmer (Michael) that has been engaged in the process of construction of the Burren Program from the very beginning, as a farmer and also as a farmer representative. Michael spoke about the conflict between different actors involved in the process, such as farmers and environmentalists and told us about the experience of overcoming those conflicts through permanent dialogue and non extreme positions. Michael also spoke about the importance of reaching the write people within the administration (policy decisors) and showing to the country and to the EU the achievements, step by step, of the Burren.



*Fig 7. At the farm of Michael Davoren*

Walking through the farm in the top of a hill we could see the winterages and, at a distance the lowland grassland, within the same farm. We had the opportunity to better understand the farming systems, the cattle, the herding practices and feeding systems among other practices. We also heard about the impact of both the actions supported by the Burren program and the result set within the program, on the management carried out by the farmer and on the quality and condition of the ecosystems.

On the way to the lunch site, we stopped at a little village called Carron where the Burren program office is located, intentionally in the heart of the Burren, in an Old School house that was recovered and refurbished with the support of the farmers.

#### 3.4.2. Lunch at

We had a nice and relaxing lunch at McCormacks farm also part of the Burren program and renowned as the fictional Parochial House in the Channel 4 TV series "Father Ted". This relaxing moment included a spontaneous cultural manifestation by one of the Portuguese participants – Irish poetry reading (WB Yeats, 1899), *The Fiddler of Dooney*.



*Fig 8. At McCormacks house and the poetry moment*

After lunch, in the way to Tubber we stopped at the request of the Portuguese group to have a in loco try of the coring system of the Burren winterage. Brendon explained in detail and did the exercise of clarifying one field, howing the implicity of it application.

### 3.4.3. Workshop

The final workshop was held at the Tubber village hall and was joined by members of the Hen Harrier EIP and the EU RBAP pilot (list of participant attached). The objective of the workshop was to discuss the design and implementation process of a results based payment scheme focused on the needs and question of the Montado.



*Fig 9. The final workshop*

The workshop started with a round of presentations and followed a short introductory presentation (Annex 1) on the main characteristics of the Portuguese LA, Montado of Sítio de Monfurado and its portrait of innovation.

The main points discussed regarding the process of construction and implementation of a Burren inspired program for the Montado were noted down by João Marques as follows:

- a) The importance of raising awareness, on public opinion and on policy makers, and similarly informing the generality of farmers that this possibility exists.
- (b) The advantage of having the previous experience of The Burren program as an example and have access to the documentation relating to this program (which the Irish team made available) in order to be able to move forward at a faster pace (two years).
- c) The relevance of integrating a new local agri-environmental measure based on results with traditional agri-environmental measures, at the national level and with support from the 1st pillar, despite the expected contradictions, especially in terms of eligibility.
- d) The next steps will be, among others:
- i. Design a new local agro-environmental measure based on results, being the starting point a common vision for the Montado.
  - ii. Create multiple indicators that enable the evaluation of the accomplished results and then try to simplify as much as possible.
  - iii. Construct a table of results, to be carefully and exhaustively tested with the producers, in order to assure the vision addressed in point i).
  - iv. Preparation of guidance documents
  - v. Training of farm advisors and training of producers.
- (e) It should be always kept in mind that farmers are at the center of the success of the program. Their contribution and participation should be encouraged by looking at what is good in their management practices, and from there to seeking the best answers to the risen questions.
- (f) Strong, continuous and close technical support is another key question for the success of the Burren program. This technical support also includes most of the paper work otherwise carried out by the producer, releasing the producer, as much as possible of the paper work, with the benefit of on farm management practices.
- g) Always keep in mind that producers are "business people" and that they have to receive a good business proposition ("does it make business sense?"). It is the producers who will decide whether to accept the proposals made to them! It is about putting producers in control of the situation!
- h) We should take advantage of the coming changes in the common agricultural policy ("hopefully for the best ...") and the fact that the current agri-environmental contracts will be terminated in the short term.

#### 3.4.4. Informal debriefing: Lessons learnt and reflection

After the workshop we all head to the Shanaglih and had a drink in the local pub. This was an opportunity to digest and discuss the previous days. The Portuguese team recorded a number of statements and testimonies from different participants of the cross visit.

Farewell dinner with most of the workshop participant was at The Gallery in Gort. The night finished at a local pub in Kinvarra with a fantastic group (fiddler, celtic harp, guitar..) of friends playing and singing traditional Irsih music. After a few guinness, the Portuguese group also sang some traditional "Cante Alentejano"!

#### 3.5. Day 4 (07/06/18)

##### 3.5.1. Debriefing meeting of the Portuguese team

Although not included in the initial program, the Portuguese team felt the need to have a formal debriefing group meeting before heading back home. This took place in gently provided sitting



room of the Guest house. This meeting was important to make a reflection about the great amount of information and experiences that we all had in the previous days, to confirm the group willingness to go through a path leading to the construction of a "Burren inspired program" for the Montado, but also to plan effectively the next steps to come.

*Fig 10. Debriefing meeting – Portuguese visitors*

As a conclusion of this debriefing meeting two follow up tasks were defined and people allocated to integrate each one of the tasks:

Task 1/Group 1 – To seek/create the necessary conditions for the future implementation of the "Montado Program", this will include action taken to:

- (i) Establish a well informed and close relationship with decision making bodies at national and European level;
- (ii) To disseminate all the accomplishments throughout the process of design of the program;
- (iii) To identify possible source of funding for the implementation of a small pilot program;
- (iv) To construct a project application for the same objective.

Task 2/Group 2 – Technical design of a draft RBPS program for the Montado, this will include actions taken to:

- (v) According with the Vision for the Montado, establish the environmental results/objectives to be accomplished.
- (vi) Select and validate the previous environmental/biodiversity objectives/results according to different criteria (degree of dependency on agricultural practices, previous scientific knowledge on indicator for their evaluation and also on farm practice that promote those results)
- (vii) Design the measure/s and build up the scoring system
- (viii) Calculate costs and levels of payment
- (ix) Design the support system for implementation (farm advisors, farm plans, etc.)

A meeting was scheduled for the commencement of the work for the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

4. The Burren program by the eye of a Portuguese participant from the public administration (João Marques)

The Burren Program draws its strength from the farmers' association with the academy by creating a farmer-centered management model that enables an innovative, constructive but mostly mutually beneficial relationship between agriculture and the environment. Above all, it allows farmers to maintain great autonomy as agricultural producers / entrepreneurs.

The Two Key Points:

- Voluntarily initiated by local farmers allows participating farmers to maintain a high degree of control over how they manage their farms.
- Management is evaluated by effective environmental results and not by making or failing to list actions (moving from traditional agri-environmental measures based on rigid prescriptions to agri-environmental measures based on results).

The constraints of traditional agri-environmental measures: little evidence that the prescriptions made to farmers produce the intended environmental benefits; the high rigidity of these prescriptions, limiting the ability of farmers to manage their farms; not targeted to the specific characteristic of the local ecosystems, and climatic variation among different years.

In the Burren program, each plot is assessed annually on the basis of improved conditions (measurable in a simple and clear way) for biodiversity, landscape, ecosystem services (water quality for example), etc.

It is a reversal of traditional thinking!

- Environmentalists: we need to protect!
- Producers: we decide how to protect! It is about giving producers the freedom to manage their land ...



A combination of success was sought:

- Environmental
- Agronomic
- Economic

Success at these 3 levels has been demonstrated on the basis of academic research as part of a pilot study, allowing to support / justify to the public opinion, public administration and policy makers that this was the best option for the region!

Specific, results-based agri-environmental support is a third level of support, complementing the payment of the 1st pillar (1st level) and national agri-environmental support for extensive grazing (2nd level) but rewarding results obtained rather than penalizing any deficient application of the rigid prescriptions.

Each part of a farmer's holding is classified with a score of 1 to 10 in a score card. The result of 0 to 5 is not rewarded for support supplement. The results of 6 to 10 will receive increasing levels of support, culminating in the maximum support for the parcels with score 10.

The system includes close technical follow-up that avoids bureaucracy to producers as much as possible.

The technicians always try to think about the perspective of the farmers and listen to the farmers. Producers are not told what to do. Producers find that they need to increase their classification, propose a solution and if this solution does not raise environmental problems, it is allowed and will lead to increased support.

It is a payment that comes from a result obtained, being more fair, because it will be the greater the better the result. And the results that can be achieved are differentiated for the different types of plots.

Based on the assessment of each plot, investments are also proposed (restoration of walls, creation of drinking fountains, etc.). These investments are supported at variable rates, 50%, 60%, 75%, based on unit costs and farmers always have the option of performing these tasks or not.

In setting up the program, it is essential to listen to the farmers, but the academic component is also essential as it is necessary to put together an excellent knowledge base on the farming system, to ensure environmental results, to determine support values, to establish unit costs and to ensure a simpler and more accurate system of simple parcel assessment. It is also necessary to establish a battery of agronomic, economic and environmental indicators.

Fundamentally have the ability to listen to what farmers have to say and then make that information into academic facts!

The beginning has to be small-scale, with a pilot project of few producers, with different characteristics in their holdings, then evolving in safe steps and always seeking to alert and clarify public opinion, public administration and policy makers, demonstrating the reliability of the program and all the potential gains: carbon sequestration, tourism, water quality, etc.

Showing, therefore, based on research, that there will be a strong return for each euro invested in the program.

At the same time as the Burren Program, Burrenbeo, a non-governmental organization (Burrenbeo Trust is a landscape charity dedicated to connecting all of us to our places and our role in caring for them) educate and inform the local inhabitants, with emphasis on the youngest, but also the visitors of the region, on the importance of the landscape and heritage of this region. This is supported by the sustainable management of the region on the basis of the local community, in a complementary work to that of the Burren Program and of great importance for stopping the rural exodus that is still occurring.

## 5. Conclusions

The main objective of the cross-visit - gaining knowledge on the experience of local co-construction, in a multiactor approach, of results based agro environmental measures and to discuss possible problems and applied solutions transferable to the Montado - was majorly accomplished. A draft program of future work in order to transfer and adapt the innovation represented by the Burren program is in place by the Portuguese team.

The Portuguese delegation was unanimous about the high quality of the program prepared by the host team caring to give us various different points of view and approaches over the implementation of the Burren program. Moreover, the availability and hosting provided by all Irish team and in particular by James Moran and Brendan Dunford was remarkable. Thanks to all!

