

Good practice: Land management

Salt Production System of Añana in the Basque Country

Location

Valle Salado de Añana (Basque Country, Spain)

Project leader

Foundation of Valle Salado de Añana with a public-private partnership: local community and sponsors

Key features

- 40% of financial self-sufficiency
- More than 50 employees in 2017
- More than 80,000 yearly visitors

Website

www.vallesalado.com

A Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System

In November 2017, the FAO declared the Salt Valle Salado, located in the town of Salinas de Añana (Basque Country) as the first European Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS). Salado Valley's salt history goes back seven thousand years. Thanks to the existence of a geological phenomenon called Diapir and to the injection of fresh water into a giant salt bubble, a number of salt water springs emerge at the highest part of the Valle Salado. This salt water is channeled by means of an ingenious system of canals to the wells and salt pans, by the force of gravity, where it evaporates to form salt. It is a notable example of interaction between human beings and natural environment: the creation of a unique system, preserved and kept alive in a dynamic evolution, has enabled its adaptation to production rhythms that ensure its sustainability.

Preserving traditional know-how and landscape while encouraging new tourism activities

The Foundation of Valle Salado de Añana, has managed to recover and preserve the material and environmental culture of the landscape to ensure its sustainability. It has also facilitated the maintenance of the salt production with traditional techniques, respecting the millennial "know-how" of the salt pans and has created a school for young salt workers where young people can learn the saline profession. It has also developed cultural and tourism initiatives like free visits for schools, cooperation with great chefs, creation of cultural, leisure and health activities.

Increasing the production and creating job opportunities in the whole region

Valle Salado and its activities have become a significant driving force in the economy of the surrounding area, providing new hope for the future of the salt workers' community and their descendants who had, in many cases, begun to abandon their ancestral home in search of new jobs. The Foundation has had a great impact on the local production, with a multiplier factor in the input/output matrix of 1,48.

The Valle Salado is an example of economically sustainable heritage recovery, as it has achieved to reach a 40% degree of financial self-sufficiency notably thanks to the salt sales to the 80,000 yearly tourists. Its economic activity is becoming an engine for the maintenance and settlement of dwellers in the whole Cuadrilla de Añana area, as both salt production and employment rate have increased.

The project also received many awards, which consolidate it as one of the agricultural and environmental jewels of the Basque Country, highlighted by the Special Jury Prize of EUROPA NOSTRA 2015 in the heritage recovery category.



Innovative aspect

This economic model has allowed the maintenance of traditional salt production which now attracts new salt workers, including young people, with the development of new and attractive tourism activities which ensure a large part of the self-financing of the project.