



# Conserving biodiversity and strengthening climate resilience through Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems sites in Europe and Central Asia

## What are Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems?

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) are **outstanding landscapes that combine agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and valuable cultural heritage**. They have withstood climate variability for centuries, showing a remarkable ability to reduce the impacts of climate change by building resilient ecosystems that preserve agricultural biodiversity with the help of traditional farming practices

## Why is good to being a GIAHS site?

A GIAHS site is one with the **present and future capacity to provide food and livelihood security** and to generate other local, economic and environmental goods and services.

The **knowledge and practices of these agricultural systems** can be adapted to global or national policies and can **support sustainable development through climate adaptation, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation**. Becoming a GIAHS site assists **traditional and family farming communities** in addressing the challenges of globalization while maintaining agro-ecosystem goods and services.

At the national level, GIAHS can contribute to the **adoption of policies that integrate agricultural heritage** into agricultural development programmes. In this way, GIAHS can be influential in **promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity and genetic resources** for food and agriculture while maintaining rural communities.

## KEY MESSAGES

Peoples' know-how and the **richness of biodiversity** unite in GIAHS to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources and ecosystems. Sites bring together the economic, social and environmental dimensions at the heart of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Traditional agricultural systems such as those that have become GIAHS sites are extremely important for:

- sustaining livelihoods,
- maintaining rural communities,
- preserving traditional and local knowledge,
- protecting unique landscapes and agrobiodiversity, and
- showing examples for building resilience to the changing climate.



## NUMBERS

Designated GIAHS sites  
around the world:

57

Designated GIAHS sites  
in the REU region:

6

Proposed Sites  
around the World:

6

Proposed Sites  
around in the REU region:

1

## NUMBERS

17 percent of the world's land area covered by the region, divided among 28 countries. The Region supports 8 percent of the world's population (470 million people, 35 percent of who live in rural areas), and accounts for 23 percent of the world's forest area, 19 percent of its arable land, and 12 percent of its annual renewable freshwater resources. The region's biodiversity contributes to poverty reduction and economic development as well as global biodiversity values.

### Regional Examples:



**Soave Traditional Vineyards**  
Italy



**Barroso Agro-sylvo-pastoral System**  
Portugal



**Ancient Olive Trees Territorio Sénia**  
Spain

### What is needed to become a GIAHS site?

- Agricultural systems that contribute to food and livelihood security
- Rich and unique agrobiodiversity
- Traditional knowledge and technologies
- Strong cultural values and collective forms of social organization and value systems for resource management and knowledge transmission
- Remarkable landscapes and/or seascapes stemming from ingenious systems and technologies of land and water management

### What is the role of the FAO?

FAO's GIAHS initiative aims to **identify, support and safeguard traditional agricultural systems that sustain and conserve biodiversity** and genetic resources for food and agriculture, respect and promote rural livelihoods and knowledge systems. Through these, FAO intends to contribute to the vision of integrating social and environmental sustainability, according to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the region, as the numbers show, there are just a few sites designated. FAO can provide **support to countries to understand the possibilities and benefits of having GIAHS site(s)** for the dynamic conservation of traditional agricultural systems and for using traditional knowledge to enhance adaptation to the changing climate.

The FAO Regional Office supports the Europe and Central Asia region by enhancing awareness of the values and associated benefits of such agricultural systems and promoting all necessary actions to achieve dynamic conservation.

### CONTACT

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