

Land stewardship

Location

Country: Spain

Scale: regional

Region: Catalonia

Compensated /improved ecosystem services

- enhanced biodiversity
- recreation services

Management

Land stewardship contracts consist of voluntary agreements between a landowner and a stewardship entity (although they may also involve more than one owner or entity) to promote the conservation and sustainable management of land and its associated ecosystem services, with a particular focus on conservation and restoration of critical habitats.

In Spain the concept was introduced in 2000 by the Catalan Land Stewardship Network (Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori). As of 2009, the network encompassed 73 stewardship entities and 629 stewardship agreements, developed not only in Catalonia, but also in the Balearic Islands and the neighbouring country of Andorra. The concept was introduced in the Spanish legal framework by means of the Law on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, which includes a definition of land stewardship and a specific mandate for public administrations to promote it.

Land stewardship supposes a bottom-up initiative through which private agents intervene in areas the government is unable to reach for several reasons, such as budget constraints or landowners' acceptance. During its first stages, LS associations focused in the acquisition of full land property rights; but the high maintenance costs compelled them to redirect the strategy towards agreements with landowners.

There are three kinds of land stewardship contracts:

- 1) owner retains management rights over her/his property;
- 2) owner transfers management rights to the stewardship entity; and
- 3) transfer of the full ownership to the stewardship entity.

Stakeholders

Sellers or service providers:

- Landowner and a stewardship entity according to voluntary agreements

Buyers and beneficiaries of services:

Land stewardship entities are financed by private/social actors interested in environmental conservation, such as companies, NGOs, foundations and sometimes also the public administration that participates through subsidies. Three foundations support most land stewardship contracts in Catalonia, namely:

- Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya (126 agreements) (it protects through the established agreements almost 160,000 hectares (i.e. 5% of the Catalan territory) and in 2009 established a new contract modality in the Catalan Pyrenees involving a very direct relation between monetary payments and providers' actions),
- Minyons i Guies de Catalunya (62 agreements) and
- Fundació Josep Carol (21 agreements) (Puig i Sabé and Masó i Aguado, 2009).

Intermediaries:

A third actor is involved: The Land Stewardship Network that provides administrative and technical assistance to LS entities. However, they are not included in the LS contracts. Funds come from donations to LS.

Timeline

Establishment year: 2000

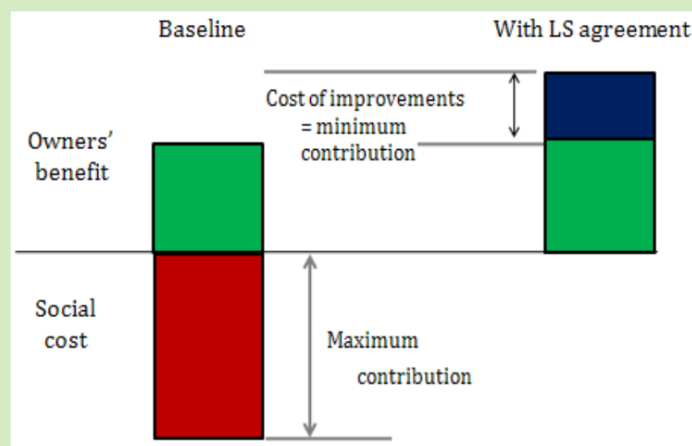
Time horizon: long term

Status of PES: active scheme

Availability of economic data

The covenants contained in the stewardship agreements are free and negotiable between the two sides, so that each agreement is different and depends on the specific conditions and expectations of the two parts. Stewardship contracts under Catalonia's XTC cover 211,337 hectares, predominantly in forested areas.

Volunteers represent most of the labour employed in such tasks, while some organizations have a technician in charge, whose salary in a few cases is covered by a public grant. Due to its volunteering character, the reward to the forest owner is not always a monetary payment but instead usually takes a form of in-kind contribution (e.g. improvement and management works, assessment on maintenance, management, legal aspects or financing opportunities), covering at least the expenditures of the undertaken activities, as illustrated in figure.



Rational of Land stewardship (Adapted from Pagiola et al., 2004)

References / Source of information

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