The Farm of Jesus Villena

1. Introduction

We are located in Velez Málaga, in a place with a microclimate that allows the cultivation of subtropical products with mild temperatures throughout the year. The economic interest in avocado with very high prices is assuming a boom of plantations throughout the Axarquia, which is transforming a coastal landscape characterized by steep slopes. In this farm ecological management is developed, that is a minority among the producers of the area. The conviction of Jesus for the ecological values and for the protection and improvement of soil makes this farm an example to follow.

2. Promoter profile



First Name
Jesús

Last Name
Villena

Birth Year
1972

Gender
Male

Education

Degree in Psychology

3. Farm Profile







Address
Vélez-Málaga, Axarquía, Málaga, Spain.

Country
Spain

Farm area in hectar
4.50

Date since when the promoter owns/rents the farm
Wed, 01/01/2003 - 12:00

NUMBER OF WORKERS	**FAMILY MEMBERS**	**EXTERNAL WORKERS**
Full time	1	0
Part time	1	0

Farm description

It is ecological farm of 4,5 hectares of tropical crops of avocado, mango, and sweet potato located in Vélez Málaga on the coast of the Axarquia Malagueña. The varieties of avocado are Hass, Lamb Hass, Fuerte, and Bacon, which complement each other in pollination and have different ripening times, that allows to extend the harvest for 8 months. The farm makes direct sales through online store, but the most important part of marketing remains in a traditional way via distributors, producers' baskets, and through word of mouth. The main customer is in Belgium, an ecological distributor that sells directly to consumers.

Jesus has a special concern for the improvement of soil, for this they carry out periodical amendments on an annual basis and plant vegetation cover of cereal and legume as a green manure. From biodiversity point of view, in addition to respectful management with the auxiliary fauna, they maintain 20-30 hives that facilitate pollination and supply them with honey.

In a young mango plantation that is not yet productive, they introduce a complementary crop of sweet potato, which allows diversification and generates economic utility in a surface of whose potential is still to be developed.

Website and social network links
www.frutorganic.com

4. Multifunctional/sustainable farming and European Agricultural Landscapes (EAL)

Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words
Avoid soil erosion
Biodiversity
Direct sales
Quality/Organic/Certified production
Renewable energies

Free Text

The farm is in the delta of the Vélez River surrounded by mountainous landscape on the coast of the Axarquía de Málaga. Being in the delta between high slopes and next to the Mediterranean Sea, this landscape has a microclimate of mild temperatures throughout the year with a high level of humidity despite low rainfall. All this creates an ideal situation for subtropical crops such as mango, avocado, cherimoya, or loquat. Organic farming guarantees quality products free of pesticides, but within the management Jesus emphasizes soil management. They have two large terraces to overcome the ramp where they develop a continuous improvement of the soil with the contribution of organic matter (manure, pellet, pruning remains, leaves, adventitious plant cover and sown), thereby ensuring high levels of soil fertility.

Regarding the management of biodiversity, the management of vegetation cover is very important. One part is planted (cereal and legume) and the other part is adventitious with several cuts per year. This vegetation cover guarantees the quality of the soil, prevents movement of soil between the terraces and guarantees the presence of auxiliary fauna so important to maintain the populations of pests in these crops.

For irrigation, they use localized irrigation equipment powered by solar energy reducing emissions and guaranteeing sustainable management of resources.

One of the reasons of success is the landscape itself, which enables crops that in other places would not be possible to produce. By cultivating the type of product with higher profitability, the development of investments and facing higher costs of inputs and labour derived from ecological management is possible.

It is necessary to include in the regulated training the values of the landscapes, as well as to stress out the importance of the soil management. Technically well-trained organic farmers are needed. For those who enter this sector and want to do direct sales it is necessary to be trained in the management of electronic commerce, web positioning and social networks, to improve administrative skills, marketing and commercial capabilities.

Advice/Recommendation

- The conversion to ecological management requires a strong conviction and clear ideas, because after starting the processing the crop suffers a production loss, we must tolerate that frustration and bear external pressures, as it is difficult for others to understand the goals, motivation, and objectives.
- Part of the improvement comes from self-criticism, this allows continuous improvement.

5. Considerations, skills/competences involved and queries/questions

General considerations

The landscape provides climatic characteristics necessary for cultivation of these species. The coast of Granada and Malaga are the only site in Spain with conditions that make these crops possible. In addition, this crop is transforming the landscape, which is going from being arid and dry to showing authentic tropical orchards, the beauty of this transformation is the added value for the multiple tourists who come to the Malaga coast every summer.

One of the biggest lessons to be learned from this case is the importance of soil management. In organic agriculture it is to use organic matter as fertilizer and soil structure improvement factor. The incorporation of manure, vegetation cover, pruning remains, and pellets allow richer soils. Vegetation cover also ensures a biodiversity that helps pest control in these crops.

From the training point of view, it is fundamental to demand regulated training in ecological cultivation of subtropical products, to train on the values of the landscape, and on the importance of soil as a key factor. Electronic marketing, marketing, and administrative processes are key for those who want to develop direct sales.

For those who want to start the conversion to ecological in a professional way it is important to know what they can expect, have a vision in the medium and long term, staying convinced about the principles and values that impel them to take that step. Assuming that the ecological management involves lower production, requires more inputs and more labour, in return you get the satisfaction of obtaining clean products with higher sales price.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Landscape and cultivation. • Determination. • CAAE and Global GAP certification. • Low competition among ecological producers.	• Still young mango plantation. • Higher costs. • Lower production. • E-commerce.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Agritourism. • Ecological management. • E-commerce development. • Export.	• Climate change. • New plantations. • Very attractive cultivation worldwide.

Keywords

EAL Keywords
Delta Landscapes
Orchards

Farming Key words
Avocado
Fruit
Mango

Permanent crops

Main Training/Skills/Competences

Having solid knowledge about organic farming is fundamental. This type of management requires well-trained professional farmers. It is essential to defend the role of the soil as an agricultural element and as a factor of the landscape, for this it is necessary to train the farmers on how to use it, maintain it, and improve it. From the point of view of vegetation, cover, farmers must know which ones are more suitable for each crop and how they favour the appearance of beneficial auxiliary fauna for crops. The use of beekeeping as a pollinator is especially relevant for farmers who produce fresh fruit.

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Queries/Questions

- This case defends the values linked to organic production. Are you aware of the productive, management and dedication implications that this type of crop requires?
- Linked to the landscape in which you are, are there climate opportunities to develop new crops that can be an economic opportunity?
- Are you aware of the value of the soil and all the techniques you can apply to improve it?
- What other multifunctional activities would you link to the landscape described?

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