

BIO-DISTRICTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

LONG TERM VISION FOR THE RURAL AREAS

The territorial Bio-districts approach have been recognized as a promising concept for rural development in the framework of the [Long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas -Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040](#) launched by the European Union in June 2021.

The EU Communication states that "The evolving consumer demand for better quality, more sustainable and healthy food including organic products can generate new opportunities for farmers and the rural economy. The transition towards organic production methods, the development of short supply chains, local processing and innovative products, in line with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy and the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production, can contribute to strengthening the role of farmers and increasing their income. Sectors like tourism also benefit from a wider offer of quality touristic activities, including on-farm activities, the production of local quality products, the adequate management of landscapes and sea-land interactions in coastal rural areas. Bio-districts - geographical areas where farmers, the public, tourist operators, associations and public authorities enter into an agreement for the sustainable management of local resources based on organic principles and practices - is a promising concept in this regard, in particular in combination with the Natura 2000 network". (Opportunities for Rural Areas, page 8).

On 30 June 2021, the European Commission put forward the [long-term Vision for the EU's rural areas](#) identifying the challenges and concerns that Rural Areas are facing, as well as highlighting some of the most promising opportunities that are available to these regions.

The Communication states that Rural areas can and should play a central role in achieving the targets of the [Farm to Fork](#) and the [Biodiversity](#) European Union's strategies. These strategies are part of the [European Green Deal](#), the Commission's policy agenda for a sustainable, climate-neutral Europe by 2050, acting as a vehicle for investment and growth. The Vision highlights that the preservation of natural resources, the restoration of landscapes, including cultural ones, the greening of farming activities and shortening supply chains will make rural areas more resilient to climate change, natural hazards and economic crises. As providers of services that protect ecosystems and solutions for carbon neutrality, rural areas have an increasingly important role to play in climate change mitigation and the sustainable bio and circular economy.



Based on a wide consultations with citizens as well as other actors in rural areas, the Vision proposes a [EU Rural Pact and Rural Action Plan](#), which set out a series of initiatives and provides that the major EU policies are reviewed through a rural perspective. The Vision and Action Plan identify four areas of action, supported by flagship initiatives, to enable rural areas become:

- Stronger: focusing on empowering rural communities, improving access to services and facilitating social innovation;
- Connected: improving connectivity both in terms of transport and digital access;
- Resilient: preserving natural resources and greening farming activities to counter climate change while also ensuring social resilience through offering access to training courses and diverse quality job opportunities;
- Prosperous: by diversifying economic activities and improving the added value of farming and agri-food activities and agri-tourism.

The Bio-districts operating in different European countries have been implemented on the initiative of local actors adopting an innovative and participatory governance, involving organic producers and their associations, local governments and public services, citizens and environmental associations, tourist operators. In March 2021, the territorial Bio-districts have already been recognized as good practices and new business models in the framework of the [Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production](#) launched by the European Union.

The new recognition in the framework of the *Long term vision for the Rural Areas* adopted by the European Union represents a great opportunity to strengthen their approach for an integrated management of the territorial capital and resources. In a Bio-district, the promotion of organic products is closely linked with the promotion of the territory, to achieve the full development of its economic, social and cultural potential.

The recognition can also encourage other territories in their implementation, supporting their work through the new instruments and financial resources. In rural areas of the European countries, Bio-districts can make an important contribution to increase the value of local food, culture, traditions, natural resources and landscape in an overall integrated strategy aimed at renewing the territorial development and reducing depopulation.

To know more

[Long-term Vision for EU Rural Areas by 2040](#)

[Long term Vision for EU Rural Areas in ec.europa.eu](https://ec.europa.eu)

[EU Rural Areas in numbers](#)

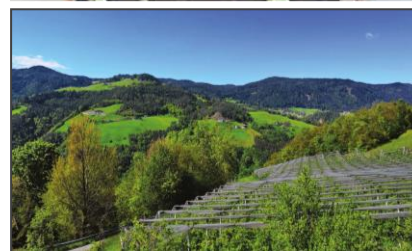
[European Network for Rural Development](#)

[Scenarios for EU Rural Areas 2040 Report](#)

[European Green Deal](#)

[EU Biodiversity Strategy](#)

[EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#)



[Natura 2000 Network](#)

[Bio-districts in FAO Agroecology Knowledge Hub website](#)

[Bio-districts brochure in FAO website](#)

[Bio-districts in Agroecology 44 Good Practices CFS FAO](#)

[Bio-districts website](#)

[IDEASS Bio-districts brochure](#)

