

Paqui Ruiz Requena Farm

1. Introduction

The greenhouse is located in the municipality of El Ejido on the Almeria coast, where the largest number of greenhouses in Europe is concentrated, its layout and number have earned the nickname of Plastic Sea and by its own merits is known as the Europe Vegetable Garden. The greenhouse in Almeria allows intensive agricultural production, being a driving force from the economic and social point of view, making it possible to keep the population and attract labor to a region that without this resource would depend exclusively on tourism. This case is an example of how the greenhouse can have a sustainable management, respecting the fauna and the soil, and constitute by itself an agricultural landscape worthy of consideration.

2. Promoter profile



First Name

Paqui

Last Name

Ruiz Requena

Birth Year

1983

Gender

Female

Education

Secondary Education

3. Farm Profile





Address

Las Norias, El Ejido, Almeria, Spain

Country

Spain

Farm area in hectar

1.00

Date of establishment of the farm

2002

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	1
Part time	0	0

Farm description

The farm consists of 1 ha of plastic production where the red pepper and yellow melon are alternated, the greenhouse is in El Ejido (Almería) near the Punta Estinas-Sabinar Natural Place, it is a family farm where Paqui shares the activity and the equipment with his mother with the support of his grandmother, the predecessor of both. Previously their main crop was courgette, but the appearance of a virus has forced them to transform their production into pepper and melon for 4 years. From the commercialization point of view, they use private distribution channels that export abroad, which obliges them to comply with very strict certifications, especially for export to the USA. This commercialization forces to develop a greenhouse management based on the principles of integrated production with a minimum use of synthetic products for fertilization, which means that no pesticides (herbicides, insecticides or fungicides) are used, based on the biological pest control, solarization, and mechanical weeding, thus ensuring sustainable management and healthy and pesticide-free products.

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

Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words

Biodiversity

Quality/Organic/Certified production

Free Text

In this farm, the sustainable management is very important with no use of insecticide, fungicides, and herbicides, in exchange to biological control, solarization, and mechanical weeding is being developed since 2003, which makes for example the use of bees and bumblebees possible for the pollination of the crops, and maintaining a high population of tiger fly, the fundamental auxiliary fauna to control certain pests. The soil is enriched annually with organic matter from manure to improve soil fertilization and structure. In summer the greenhouses are whitewashed, which produces the reflection of light and therefore a reduction of the temperature under plastic and environment of the region, this is known as the Albedo effect.

The plastic is no longer an uncomfortable waste, now there are many plastic recycling companies and the new plastics are biodegradable. From the water management point of view and given that Almeria is a particularly arid region, in the last few years multiple desalination plants have been built, which provide this resource to many farmers. From the energy point of view, the greenhouse in this area is very efficient, the characteristics of this area means that in winter it is not necessary to maintain the temperature with heating and the fuel consumption and emissions are minimal.

In the beginning, the change to integrated production was difficult because of the scarce availability and price of biologically controlled material, but the trends in the sector have normalized these practices. In this sector, the disease control is very important, the entry of a virus that affected the courgette forced to transform this greenhouse, thus it is important to identify a product that would be an opportunity and bet on its implementation.

One of the biggest problems is to finance the renovation and modernization of greenhouses and the purchase the equipment, on the sale through private warehouse you get an extra price with respect to cooperatives, but not belonging to OPFH (fruit-and vegetable-producer organisations) prevents them from accessing subsidies for the greenhouses' improvement.

In the future they plan to market through cooperatives, where the defense of the product is not on the best quality level, but it allows them to move to organic production and access financing to improve their farm.

At the beginning, as a woman, she found certain barriers and prejudices on the part of certain colleagues in the sector. At present, Paqui has found her place as a well-known and respected farmer in her environment.

Advice/Recommendation

- It is important to access agriculture through set-up programs. Setting up a greenhouse without financing is difficult. From the commercialization point of view, it is important to belong to OPFH (fruit-and vegetable-producer organisations) in order to finance investments and improvements.

