

1. Regulatory framework

Article 36 (a) (iv), (vi), and (b) (v), (vii); Articles 39, 41, 47 and 49 of Reg. (EC) no. 1698/2005

Articles 27 and 29 of Reg. (EC) no. 1974/2006 and Annex II points 5.3.2.1.4, 5.3.2.1.6, 5.3.2.2.5 and 5.3.2.2.7

Codes of measures in Annex II of Reg. (EC) no. 1974/2006: 214, 216, 225, 227

2. Target territory

SPA of Castro Verde.

3. Objective

Maintenance of the habitat of steppe-land birds.

4. Rationale for the intervention

Agri-environment Component

Fostering agricultural management consistent with the fauna values to be protected – steppe-land birds.

Forest-environment Component

Environmental valorisation of forest areas: riparian galleries and conservation of tree-plots, clumps or groups of tree species.

The forest-environment measures aim to protect the maintenance of goods and services provided by the forest ecosystems and with no economic return, through the following:

- Re-classification of streams in order to ensure an ecologic corridor that provides nesting and shelter for the bird fauna to be protected;
- Maintenance of clumps favouring the breeding of bird fauna (Bonelli's eagle) and their use as shelters (red kite).

5. Beneficiaries

Agri-environment Component

- Private farmers owning a Production Unit with agricultural plots totally or partially located within the ITI area;

Forest-environment component

- Private farmers, forest holders or owners of forest parcels (in those cases where forest areas are not being farmed), who own forest parcels within the ITI area;

Non-productive Investments

- Beneficiaries/ recipients of agri-environment or forest-environment payments applicable to the ITI area.

6. Implementation of the agri-environment and forest-environment Component

To benefit from any agri-environment payment, the beneficiary must satisfy the general eligibility conditions and respect the general commitments applicable to the declared farm and agro-forestry area.

For each type-specific agri-environment payment the specific eligibility conditions must be satisfied and the specific commitments applicable to the area must be respected.

To receive a forest-environment payment, the beneficiary must satisfy the general eligibility conditions and respect the general commitments applicable to the declared forest area.

For each type of forest-environment payment the specific eligibility conditions must be satisfied and the specific commitments applicable to the area must be respected.

Implementation of the Agri-Environment and Forest-Environment Components in Production Units of ITI Castro Verde

General eligibility conditions		General commitments
Production unit (1)	Agri-environment payments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fulfilling cross-compliance requirements as regards all the extensions of the production unit;(2) Declaring the whole agricultural and agro-forestry area of the production unit within the ITI relevant area; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respecting general eligibility conditions; Keeping agricultural and agro-forestry area in good production conditions and free from brush weed in all the declared area; Preserving trees, stone walls and other heritage elements significant to the landscape, as well as brush and/or tree hedges of indigenous species separating or bordering agricultural plots, without using herbicides; Keeping watering places accessible to the fauna during summertime; Preserving the tree and brush vegetation along water lines, without prejudice to the cleaning and regulation required for a suitable flowing; Using only the plant protection products recommended for Integrated Protection and for organic production; Not making clean burns; Where there be almond or olive groves, regular pruning is required and the soil should not be tilled with ploughs, disk harrows or rotative implements.
	Forest-environment payments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fulfilling, within the whole production unit, the requirements regarding cross-compliance;(2) Declaring the whole forest area; Submitting a Multiannual Assistance Plan (for the lifetime of the commitment) approved by LSS. (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respecting general eligibility conditions; Carrying out the multiannual Assistance Plan.

Agri-environment Component

	Specific eligibility conditions	Specific commitments
4) Maintenance of the dry land rotation corn/fallow (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing a dry land rotation including a small grain cereal in plots with a IQFP ≤ 2 and a tree density lesser than or equal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 trees/ha in the case of holm oak and cork oak woods, oaks, carob trees, chestnut trees and remaining forest species, 60 trees/ha in the case of olive, almond or fig groves and other fruit trees, 50 trees/ha in the case of mixed stands of species included in the points above; Rotation area equal to or greater than 5 ha. (5) Production units with a grazing headage equal to or lesser than 7 LU/ ha of (forage surface + 10% of grain crop area). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using exclusively traditional rotations or its varieties, whenever approved by LSS; The yearly area of small grain cereal shall represent between 20% to 50% of the rotation area; Respecting dates and techniques to be used in felling within rotation areas and for tilling fallow areas; these will be indicated every year by LSS, taking into account the features of the farming year and the state of the annual cycle of animal species subject to conservation; Soil tillage should be done in accordance with the contour lines, in plots with an IQFP >1. Doing one annual tillage at the most, without making furrows, except if authorised by LSS. In plots where chemical weeding is done, un-weeded strips not exceeding 8 metres width and with a surface never under 5% of total surface will be left; In production units larger than 50 ha, seeding and monitoring crops for fauna consumption: 1 ha for each 50 ha of crops, according to LSS; guidelines; Ensuring one accessible watering place per 100 ha during the critical dry season; Not putting in fences or planting clumps without the previous opinion of the LSS.
5) Direct seeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be a beneficiary of agri-environment aid to dry land rotation corn/fallow; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the direct seeding of crops included in the rotation. (5)

Forest-environment Component

Specific eligibility conditions		Specific commitments
5) Renaturalisation of holm oak woods	(1) Minimum 5 ha area (to be validated by LSS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting natural regeneration; Felling all woody and allochthonous invaders, fostering their eradication as prescribed in the farm plan and under the monitoring of LSS; Controlling animal access, especially to natural regeneration areas, by putting in temporary fences and separate protections; Promoting natural regeneration through adequate formation pruning; All the cut material that has no commercial value and originated in the various interventions must be splintered and the chips locally scattered, except for woody invaders and material with sanitary problems, which must be removed from the area; Thickening the holm tree area and the area occupied by species favouring ecologic succession, preferably with base materials collected on the spot and using plantation techniques to be defined by LSS.
6) Preservation of tree/brush-plots, clumps or nucleus of indigenous trees or brushes and of relict or notable specimens and formations	(2) 5 ha minimum area of relict or notable specimens/formations, tree/brush plots, clumps or nucleus of indigenous species of trees or brushes (to be confirmed by the LSS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever there are specimens with remarkable dimensions, carrying out selective tree cuts to ensure the preservation of the big specimens; In the other cases, preserving the adult items/formations and protecting the natural regeneration of the target species; Creating strips or discontinuity parcels, whose dimensions and configuration should be established by the Holding Plan (to reduce the risk of fire); Increasing the number of tree and brush species that favour the target ecological succession, preferably with base material collected locally, and using planting techniques to be indicated by the LSS; Respecting the defensive buffer area and the practices established for it (to avoid pollution or genetic drift through hybridization); Controlling animal access to pasture areas, especially to natural regeneration areas, by putting in temporary fences and separate protections; interdicting it to areas occupied by relict specimens and formations. In the case of formations and specimens with remarkable dimensions, limiting forestry interventions, in order to ensure tranquillity to the bird fauna during critical periods (reproduction/dormitory); Only pruning the target species when the specimens have sanitary problems or when the aim is to obtain natural regeneration strips, to be validated by the LSS; All the cut material that has no commercial value and originated in the various interventions must be splintered and the splints locally scattered, except for woody invaders and material with sanitary problems, which must be removed from the area;
7) Preservation of riparian galleries	(3) 20 meters minimum width in the total of both waterline margins, and 250 meters minimum length; this one may be inferior in wide open valleys with sides flaring out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserving the gallery area, introducing species that facilitate the target ecologic succession and replacing allochthonous species, preferably with base materials collected on the spot; Soil tillage should be localised; Promoting the guidance of the plant cover, preventing its evolution from thickets to scrubs and bushes; Promoting the mending of water line margins by building palisades and later introducing endogenous vegetation, and limiting access to mended sections with temporary fencing; All the cut material that has no commercial value and originated in the various interventions must be splintered and the chips locally scattered, except for woody invaders and material with sanitary problems, which must be removed from the area; Whenever there are passage areas for cattle or persons, these areas should be well defined and marked in order to prevent the access to the areas to be protected.
8) Conservation of the network of ecological corridors	(4) Area of formations included in the network of ecological corridors established in the PROF (to be indicated by the LSS); (5) 0.5 ha minimum area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserving the ecosystem to develop in the ecological corridor, to be confirmed by the LSS; Carrying on the interventions necessary to its conservation/rehabilitation (such as: taking profit from the natural regeneration, thickening, species substitution and enlargement of ecosystem area, control of allochthonous species and woody invaders).

(1) The plots of the production units intercepted by the limit of the geographical area shall be fully eligible, whenever the plot has an area equal to or lesser than 3 ha.

(2) According to articles 4 and 5 and annexes III and IV of Reg.(EC) no. 1782/2003.

(3) The intervention plan may be subject to annual reviews. All modifications shall be approved by LSS and submitted at the time of the subsequent annual confirmation. The intervention plan shall also be consistent with the forest management plan.

(4) The plots sown with dry farming small grain cereal at least once during the commitment's lifetime shall be considered as part of the rotation area.

(5) The areas with temporary ponds are eligible and not subject to the corn/fallow rotation practice

(6) LSS shall take into account the features of the farming year and the state of the annual cycle of animal species subject to conservation

(7) Chisel tooth or rotary cutter is allowed in case of compaction.

Component	Type of support	Eligible area	Modulation and aid level	
AA	4) Maintenance of dry land rotation corn/fallow	Rotation area	0 < Area ≤ 100 ha	80 €/ha
			100 < Area ≤ 250 ha	45 €/ha
			250 < Area ≤ 500 ha	20 €/ha
			500 < Area ≤ 750 ha	10 €/ha
	5) Direct seeding	Area with direct seeding	0 < Area ≤ 50 ha	75 €/ha
			50 < Area ≤ 100 ha	60 €/ha
			100 < Area ≤ 250 ha	37,5 €/ha
			Area > 250 ha	15 €/ha
SA	5) Restoration of holm oak plantations	Area with holm oak plantations undergoing restoration (to be indicated by LSS)	0 < Area ≤ 5 ha 5 < Area ≤ 25 ha	200 €/ha 100 €/ha
	6) Maintenance of groves, clumps or groups of indigenous tree and brush species and relict specimens and formations	Area with groves, clumps or groups of indigenous tree and brush species and relict specimens and formations (to be indicated by LSS)		
	7) Maintenance of riparian galleries	Riparian galleries area	25 < Area ≤ 50 ha	50 €/ha
	8) Preservation of the network of ecological corridors	Area with formations within the network of ecological corridors network defined by PROFs (to be indicated by LSS)		

Type and level of support

Implementation of Non-Productive Investments in Production Units

Eligibility conditions	Scope	Level of support
Non-productive Investments associated to agri-environment payments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of a Rehabilitation Plan for the relevant infrastructures, approved by LSS, without prejudice to possible modification proposals later to be requested; Projects to be submitted shall obtain a favourable opinion from LSS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacing and repairing fences not adapted to steppe-land birds; Setting up enclosures and electric fences; Strategic watering places (cleaning and construction); Rehabilitation of existing structures and/or setting up new structures allowing the breeding of the lesser kestrel and the European roller, in order to preserve/improve breeding conditions; Setting up clumps for shadowing; Maintenance of water dispersion /retention infrastructures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of eligible expenditure (1)
Non-productive Investments associated to forest-environment payments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments shall be contemplated in the multiannual Assistance plan approved by LSS, for the lifetime of the contract; Projects to be submitted shall obtain a favourable opinion from LSS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up or rehabilitation of enclosure/fences and setting up of separate protections (protection against cattle and wild fauna activities); Thickening or replacement of species identified in the annex to the measure; Redistributing its specific constitution along the gallery; Maintenance of water dispersion /retention infrastructures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of eligible expenditure (1)

(1) Unitary maximum costs shall be defined for this type of investments, as well as ceilings per type of beneficiary.