

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE La Grajera AREA TARGETED BY THE PROJECT

Name of the project area: La Grajera

Surface area (ha): Total 258.2 ha, of which 10 ha will be studied as the control area with standard agricultural practices, and 4 ha will be studied as the organic farming area

Other protection status according to national or regional legislation: The project area possesses the autonomic Government protection status (Official Bulletin of 24 October 1991). Law 4/2003 of Preservation of Natural environments in La Rioja (Ley 4/2003 de Conservación de los Espacios Naturales de La Rioja)

Main land uses and ownership status of the project area:

This project site is private owned and its participation to the project will be on a voluntary basis.

The current uses of the project area are the following:

Nature preservation:	47.15 %
Grasslands:	8.02 %
Non-cultivated fields	7.14 %
Organic farming (olive trees and vineyards)	10.22 %
Traditional vineyards	25.84 %
Autonomic Government Research and Development Centres	1.63 %
Total	100 %

In relationship to the ownership status, the whole area (100 %) belongs to the Autonomic Government, and therefore it is a public status.

Scientific description of project area:

In 1883 a dam was built, where a natural pond probably existed, in order to retain the waters of Iregua River. This is one of the few humid areas of the region and it has become the natural habitat of a high number of animal and vegetal species. A number of aquatic birds can be observed: *Fulica*, *Anas platyrhynchos*, *Ardeidae*, *Anas platalea*, *Gavia*, and occasionally *Circus aeruginosus* or *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embalse_de_La_Grajera)

The project area comprises a land of an alluvial plain in the mouth of Iregua river, tributary stream to Ebro river. The materials of this plain is described as a succession of layers of fine and medium-size grain sandstone, siltstone, and red clay. From the point of view of Edaphology, the soils are classified into the following orders: entisol, inceptisol and alfisol (Soil Taxonomy, 2006). Vineyards are located between the lacustrine ecosystem and steeper slopes with conifer (*Pinus halepensis*) forest patches and a larger mass of *Quercus rotundifolia* of medium density and more than 3 m high. This forest ecosystem supports a number of birds, among which *Sylvia curruca*, *Parus major*, *Parus caeruleus* and *Buteo buteo* can be mentioned.

Importance of the project area for biodiversity and/or for the conservation of the species / habitat types targeted at regional, national and EU:

It is well known that lakes and ponds are affected by farming in surrounding lands. In 1998 organic farming was initiated in part of area of La Grajera. This park fulfils an important role in environmental education of the population and the number of visitors increases yearly. This area includes public research and technological centres and services that give support to farmers and viticulturist of the region of Rioja. The consecution of this project will have an important impact on both consumers and farmers.

