

## Opportunities for the local community

Land stewardship benefits not only the landscape itself, but also the local community through:

- Employing local crops yielding products of high added-value, certified as climate-friendly, friendly to landscape and native biodiversity. Local varieties are used and cultivated in an environmental-friendly manner, with low carbon and water footprint.
- Linking products with local entrepreneurship and tourism, through attracting tourists on site and/or exporting the products beyond the island.
- Highlighting the material and cultural values of terraces, vis-à-vis their diachronic contribution to the societal and cultural evolution of the entire Archipelago.

The aforementioned benefits can be extended to other communities in the wider area, both in the Aegean and the Mediterranean, through the transfer of experience and know-how gained in the project concerning the actual use of terraces as green infrastructures (maintenance - reconstruction of terraces, good cultivation practices).



## LIFE TERRACESCAPE

The LIFE TERRACESCAPE project aims to the functional restoration of terraces through re-cultivating them after many years of abandonment. The immediate objective of the project is to demonstrate the benefits of such an action on the spot, with the expectation that the effort will be multiplied by other locals. The ultimate objective is to create adaptive *green infrastructures* functioning as a barrier against the effects of climate change. The action takes place on the island of Andros, aiming to expand to other Aegean and Mediterranean islands.

The project, entitled *Employing Land Stewardship to transform terraced landscapes into green infrastructures to better adapt to climate change* (LIFE16 CCA/GR/000050) is implemented by the University of the Aegean for the period 2017-2021, in collaboration with the Municipality of Andros, the Green Fund, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Hellenic Agricultural Organization - DEMETER and the National Observatory of Athens, with the financial support of the European Commission.



## Land Stewardship for Andros Island terraces: Aegean farmers

A stewardship opportunity for the future of the Aegean landscape



 <http://lifeterracescape.aegean.gr>

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## Terraces of the Aegean

Terraces, also known as *aimasies* on Andros Island, are manmade horizontal strips of land created since the ancient times to permit or facilitate cultivation on slope terrain (i.e., on hills and mountains), almost always supported by walls. These walls, usually made from drystone (*xerolithia*), constitute one of the most characteristic landscape elements in the Mediterranean.

Terracing is a human practice that has visibly shaped the insular landscape in the Aegean, while also functioning for the protection of this landscape against natural disasters. Therefore, it can carry on operating as a barrier against future threats associated with the upcoming climate change, at the same time providing shelter for wildlife. Thus, terraces may be considered as *green infrastructures* of the utmost importance for the present and future of the island landscapes.

Until 1960s terraces constituted a key element of the primary sector, supporting agriculture, livestock farming, and beekeeping in the islands. In recent decades, however, they were almost completely abandoned along with the traditional land management that has been proven beneficial for both soil fertility and biodiversity. As a consequence, island ecosystems became vulnerable to a variety of threats, including climate change.

### Effects of terraces as green infrastructures

- ✓ Flood risk reduction
- ✓ Soil retention, reduction of erosion
- ✓ Water permeability easing, aquifers replenishing
- ✓ Soil fertility increase through appropriate management
- ✓ Microclimate regulation
- ✓ Shelter and food provision for wildlife

## Land Stewardship

Land stewardship is a strategical tool to preserve the values of the landscape and of the environment as a whole, by prioritizing the functional restoration of agro-ecosystems, the capacity to respond to environmental disturbances, and the preservation of biodiversity, without excluding man, farmer and/or land owner. In this context, the participation of the local community through supportive practices is *sine qua non*.

The land stewardship strategy is based on the establishment of a *Cooperative Land Stewardship Organization*, in which all interested farmers and landowners, as well as other professionals, participate and work together to restore the landscape. The landowners' participation procedure is simple and involves the signing of voluntary agreements so that their land can be made productive. In this way, land stewardship contributes not only towards environmental protection and landscape conservation, but also provides those who are involved with economic, social and cultural benefits, both tangible and intangible.

Land stewardship has international impact and application. Many European organizations are active in the land stewardship network, such as the Catalanian XCT (Xarxa de Custodia del Territori), a collaborator of the TERRACESCAPE project.

### Aegean Farmers

A top priority of the TERRACESCAPE project is the establishment, for the first time in Greece, of a *Land Stewardship Organization*. Indeed, under the name *Aegean Farmers* and in the form of social cooperative enterprise, such an organization, has been a reality since December 2018.

