

**Sy04007**

**Traditional ecological knowledge and conservation of biocultural heritage: facing the challenge**

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Mountains areas have particular physiography and a long history of human occupation enabling certain species and habitats to remain relatively unchanging and providing unique landscapes. Safeguarding natural features has been a key reason for creating protected areas such as some of the most important Portuguese natural parks. It's been more than thirty years since the creation of these parks and there are some visible positive effects on nature conservation. However, population ageing and the abandonment of many activities, particularly those related with agriculture and traditional farming systems, are facts influencing local knowledge transmission and the systems of plant-use, having some adverse impact on agro ecosystems biodiversity and cultural landscapes, for whose conservation the parks were created. IUCN (2008) considers that protected areas should support biodiversity conservation, while also contributing to people's livelihood and providing the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. Biocultural heritage sustains landscapes, wild gene pools, wild foods and medicines, and essential ecosystem services (e.g. soil, water, carbon sequestration) that support people and agriculture. It includes biological resources, as well as, long standing traditions, practices and knowledge. Understanding complex knowledge systems and their ongoing interaction is crucial for improving useful knowledge, skills and innovations for resilient farming, for food and health security and for adapting to drivers of change. Biocultural approaches to conservation can achieve effective outcomes, recognizing, respecting and combining multiple knowledge systems into conservation planning. Using examples from the Montesinho Natural Park (PNM) and the Douro International Natural Park (PNDI), this presentation discusses that addressing erosion of both cultural and biological diversity requires the development of a conceptual framework for assessing trends affecting traditional knowledge and responses to several issues, e.g. promoting communication between stakeholders, designing tools, providing adequate policies.

**Acknowledgments**

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