

LA JUNQUERA

Good Practice Collection



Introduction

Alfonso Chico de Guzmán, a fifth-generation farmer, and Yanniek Schoonhoven took over La Junquera with a vision to restore its degraded land through regenerative agriculture. Inspired by the need for sustainable food systems, he transitioned the farm to practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and water conservation. His motivation comes from a deep commitment to future generations, ensuring that agriculture remains productive while reversing environmental damage. Through innovation and collaboration, he has turned La Junquera into a learning center, demonstrating that sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand. Alfonso and his team believe that working in harmony with nature is not only a responsibility but also an opportunity to ensure ecosystem resilience and long-term profitability.

The Farm

La Junquera, located in Murcia, Spain, spans 1.100 ha and is dedicated to regenerative agriculture. Owned by the Chico de Guzmán family for generations, it has evolved into a sustainable farming model. The farm produces organic crops, integrates livestock, and promotes agroforestry. It also hosts educational programs, research initiatives, and student workshops. La Junquera's approach combines tradition with modern techniques, proving that agriculture can restore ecosystems while maintaining economic viability.

The Location

La Junquera is located in the region of Murcia, southeastern Spain, within a semi-arid Mediterranean landscape. The farm spans 1.100 ha of rolling hills, dry grasslands, and cultivated fields, surrounded by natural ecosystems that support rich biodiversity. The area experiences hot summers and mild winters, making water conservation a key priority. Situated near the town of Caravaca de la Cruz, La Junquera is well connected to historical and cultural landmarks. The region is known for its rugged terrain, almond and olive groves, and efforts to combat desertification through sustainable farming.

Agricultural regeneration objectives

At La Junquera, the primary goal is to regenerate the soil and restore its natural fertility while promoting biodiversity and sustainability. The farm focuses on using regenerative agricultural techniques such as crop rotation, agroforestry, and water management. By integrating livestock, organic farming, and natural fertilization methods, the farm avoids the depletion of soil nutrients. Waste recycling is an essential part of the farm's strategy, with composting organic matter to enhance soil health and reduce waste. The farm aims to create a closed-loop system where every element contributes to soil regeneration, ensuring the long-term health of the land and reducing reliance on external resources.



Best Practice Focus

At La Junquera, water management techniques play a crucial role in regenerative agriculture. The farm uses water retention trenches that follow the contours of the land, helping to prevent erosion and manage runoff. These trenches, which cover over 10 km of the farm, also act as ecological corridors, promoting biodiversity. Additionally, ponds are strategically placed to retain water throughout the dry season. These ponds not only provide water for agricultural use but also support wildlife and migratory birds. With over 60 ponds and sediment traps, La Junquera ensures effective water conservation while enhancing the farm's ecosystem.

Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementation

La Junquera's transition to regenerative agriculture required a significant initial investment in practices like water retention trenches and ponds, leading to a temporary reduction in productivity. These upfront costs can be difficult for farms with low profit margins. However, over time, regenerative practices have improved the farm's profitability and resilience, especially against drought and desertification. The farm has transformed from deteriorating buildings to a thriving community with more employees. Despite financial challenges, the long-term benefits of soil fertility and biodiversity have made La Junquera more sustainable. Furthermore, the farm has received private support from various organizations to help fund its project. Such support, along with incentives for farmers, is crucial to making this transition more viable.



Main Slogan

"Inspiring change through regenerative agriculture, education, and local collaborations in a rural setting"

Categorisation, keywords

This case study describes a successful This regenerative agriculture method falls under the macroarea of Sustainability, within the category of Water Management and Soil Regeneration, with the following measures:

Water retention trenches; infiltration trenches; ponds; sustainable water use; regenerative agriculture; biodiversity; ecosystem restoration; soil fertility; rainwater harvesting; composting; ecological corridors, desertification prevention, native plant corridors, sustainable farming, water conservation.

Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Water Conservation: The use of water retention trenches and ponds captures and stores rainwater, ensuring water availability during dry periods.
	Soil Health Improvement: These techniques enhance soil structure by increasing water infiltration, reducing erosion, and promoting long-term soil fertility.
	Biodiversity Enhancement: Water retention features and ecological corridors support local wildlife, helping to maintain a diverse ecosystem.
Disadvantages	High Initial Investment: The upfront costs for building water retention trenches, ponds, and other infrastructure can be significant, which may be challenging for small farms without external financial support.
	Ongoing Maintenance: Regular maintenance is required to ensure the systems function properly, such as cleaning sediment traps, monitoring water levels, and repairing infrastructure.
	Potential Land Use Constraints: The implementation of water management systems may limit the available land for farming or reduce space for other agricultural practices, which could affect overall productivity in certain areas.

Learning points

Knowledge	Knowledge of how to design and implement water retention systems that follow land contours and optimize water infiltration.
	Awareness of the ecological and environmental benefits of these systems in promoting soil health and biodiversity.
	Familiarity with the local climate and ecosystem to effectively choose the best native plant species for ecological corridors and biodiversity.
Skills	Ability to design and build effective water retention systems like infiltration trenches and ponds that work within a regenerative agricultural framework.
	Capability to implement composting practices to improve soil health and fertility.
	Ability to assess the ecological impact of water management systems and their integration into the wider farm ecosystem.
	Developing a deep understanding of sustainable farming practices that minimize waste and enhance natural resources.

References/ Bibliography

- <https://www.lajunquera.es/>

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Regenerative Agricultural Practices for Environmental Rejuvenation and Sustainable Ecosystems on European Farms



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