

MAB International Workshop

Biosphere Reserve Branding Through High Quality Products and Gastronomy

30 August – 1 September 2016

Torrechaira Castle – Langharino (Parma), Italy, in the Appennino Tosco Emiliano Biosphere Reserve

Draft Summary Conclusions, Recommendations and Next Steps



The Workshop conclusions and related recommendations and next steps followed on two days of rich discussions and inspiring presentations of biosphere reserve branding and labelling experiences and case studies from Austria, Ethiopia, Japan, Italy, Morocco and Spain. An exposition by the UNESCO Venice Office on Food Security, as well as visits to the Alma International Cooking School, the Carra di Casatico winery, Parma ham and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese factories, Rosa dell'Angelo farm and the Parma City Administration, all added to the richness and success of the Workshop.

Conclusions

1. As a general, overarching conclusion the Workshop emphasized that **high quality food products and gastronomy in biosphere reserves play a key role in enabling the UNESCO MAB Programme to fulfill its vision and mission statements** (see box). Notably, high quality food products and gastronomy help build and maintain thriving societies in harmony with biodiversity, cultural landscapes and traditions, contributing to the identity and recognition of biosphere reserves.

Vision and Mission of the MAB Programme

Our vision is a world where people are conscious of their common future and interaction with our planet, and act collectively and responsibly to build thriving societies in harmony within the biosphere. The MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) serve this vision within and outside biosphere reserves.

Our mission for the period 2015-2025 is to:

- develop and strengthen models for sustainable development in the WNBR;
- communicate the experiences and lessons learned, facilitating the global diffusion and application of these models;
- support evaluation and high-quality management, strategies and policies for sustainable development and planning, as well as accountable and resilient institutions;
- help Member States and stakeholders to urgently meet the Sustainable Development Goals through experiences from the WNBR, in particularly through exploring and testing policies, technologies and innovations for the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Source: MAB Strategy 2015-2025

2. The Workshop emphasized that branding and labelling of high quality food products and gastronomy should play an essential role in the implementation of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and the Lima Action Plan for the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves, notably for reaching the expected outputs related to action C7.1 'Global BR brand established with associated national guidelines' and action C7.2 'BR brand used in marketing of goods and services in line with national guidelines'.

3. Acknowledging the fact that it can be difficult to reach agreements on criteria for sustainable development, together with the often complex management conditions of biosphere reserves involving a broad range of stakeholders, public and private institutions, as well as large differences in opportunities and challenges for achieving sustainability at the national, regional and international levels, the Workshop recognized the difficulties inherent in developing biosphere reserve branding.

4. Furthermore, the Workshop also concluded that the broad range of existing labeling, branding and certification schemes, together with a wide diversity of national, regional and international policies and legislation, makes branding of biosphere reserve products further complex.

5. The Workshop participants stressed that there are many good biosphere reserve branding experiences to learn from around the world and that the Workshop was very useful for this purpose.

Recommendations

1. Biosphere reserves should work as platforms for discussions and creativity, facilitating, support shared visions of sustainability being at the forefront of SDG implementation.
2. Biosphere reserve branding and labelling schemes should be:
 - a. Based on local culture, traditions and circumstances
 - b. Inclusive, involving all stakeholders

- c. Voluntary
 - d. Low cost
 - e. Developed in harmony and synergy with relevant existing schemes
3. There is a need for MAB to elaborate a document with basic principles and criteria for biosphere reserve branding and labelling schemes in recognition of “holistic quality”.
 4. Sharing of experiences related to biosphere reserve branding and labelling should be facilitated and promoted through MAB and biosphere reserve networks, including the MAB web site and facebook page.
 5. North-South and South-South cooperation, twinning arrangements and ‘mentoring’ related to biosphere reserve branding and labelling should be encouraged.
 6. MAB and biosphere reserves should engage with key stakeholder entities and branch organizations, such as the local governments, cooking and gastronomy schools, restaurants, Slow Food Movement, tourism and tour operators.
 7. Establish and support biosphere reserve festivals, fairs and competitions related to high quality food products and gastronomy (such as the Km Zero competition in the Appennino Tosco Emiliano Biosphere Reserve).
 8. MAB should prepare a cookbook with recipes from biosphere reserves around the world.

Next steps

1. Report of the workshop together with PowerPoint presentations, summary of discussions and recommendations to be prepared and made available on the MAB web site.
2. MAB will further develop the new Tourism Destinations initiative including from the perspective of promoting high quality food and gastronomy in biosphere reserves.
3. MAB to launch work on preparing a document on basic principles and criteria for biosphere reserve branding and labelling schemes.
4. MAB shall collect and share case studies and good practices related to branding and labelling.
5. MAB will seek to establish or reinforce partnerships between MAB National Committees and biosphere reserves, with local governments (Mayors), national governments, Ministries, and branch organizations, including the Slow Food Movement, on issues related to high quality food and gastronomy production, branding and labelling in biosphere reserves.
6. Introduce the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop in the elaboration of actions on branding contained in the Lima Action Plan.