

Vale da Esteva

Embracing the Spirit of Laudato Si
for Sustainable Living



About Vale da Esteva

As forests shrink, species face extinction, social injustices persist, and violence against animals continues, we have no doubt that these issues impact all of us and all living beings. Within this awakening of consciousness lies the power to make a difference.

Cristina Levine M. Xavier de Sousa, a Laudato Si' Animator and the owner of a 105-hectare farm in the heart of the International Tagus Natural Park, close to Castelo Branco, Portugal, decided to take action.

Previously used for conventional agricultural practices and hunting by its former owner, Cristina's property is now undergoing a significant transformation to become a holistic ecological and animal sanctuary where the ideals of wildlife protection, reforestation, biodiversity, and environmental education are met.



Three Key Action Areas

Program name – Regeneration of the Ecosystems of Vale da Esteva (REVE)



Agroecology



Nature Tourism



Knowledge LABs



2023 Achievements



- In November 2023, the distinguished researcher and farmer Ernst Götsch graced the Vale da Esteva property with his presence. Thanks to his vast knowledge, his visit allowed the AGRO team to gain valuable insights into syntropic agriculture techniques. Additionally, he initiated a trial field amidst eucalyptus trees, allowing the team to experiment with innovative approaches.
- On December 28th, the architectural project to renovate Vale da Esteva's buildings was submitted to the Municipality of Castelo Branco, marking a significant step towards progress.



2024 Achievements

In the first quarter of 2024, Vale da Esteva took significant steps towards achieving its goals:

- We signed a Community Commitment Protocol with the Parish Council of Castelo Branco.
- We partnered with Living Seeds—Sementes Vivas, the largest organic seed producer in the Iberian Peninsula.
- We launched the educational program "Vale da Esteva Goes to School". As part of the program, Vale da Esteva generously offered 60 stone pines and participated in the Parish Council's initiative "Growing up with a Tree as a Godchild".
- Vale da Esteva was invited to participate in the first meeting of the GoNaturePositive study, which is co-financed by the European Union Horizon NUA. The meeting was held at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland on March 6th, and Vale da Esteva was invited as a guest project.



The Mission and the Commitment

"REVE – Regeneration of the Ecosystems of Vale da Esteva" is a mission and commitment shared by its mentor, CEO, and all the people involved in various aspects of it.

The proceeds generated from the program will be fully invested in the program itself and in favour of those who work in it.



Why Laudato Si'

Sustainability

Laudato Si Platform provides a profound, religious, and moral framework that strengthens and supports sustainability efforts. Vale da Esteva can gain spiritual insights and knowledge to advance its social and environmental initiatives by engaging with like-minded organisations.



Why Laudato Si'

Collective Action

At Laudato Si Platform, we understand the importance of environmental sustainability and its impact on our world. We are dedicated to fostering a collaborative space where businesses, civil society organizations, and religious institutions can come together to solve these challenges. Together, we can make a positive difference for our planet and future generations.



Why Laudato Si'

Ethical Practices

Vale da Esteva reaffirms its commitment to ethical and ecologically responsible business practices by associating with the Laudato Si Platform. The company also underscores its dedication to operating in a way that respects human dignity and protects the planet.



Why Laudato Si'



Engagement

Laudato Si' provides an opportunity to engage with policymakers, advocacy groups, and communities. We can build trust, foster transparency, and strengthen relationships towards the common good by participating in dialogue and collaboration.



Assessment of Current Practices



Sustainable Trade Practices

Energy and Waste

The architectural and remodelling project aims at implementing energy efficiency measures in operations to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

We are enhancing waste management practices by implementing recycling programs and exploring opportunities for waste reduction.

Short Supply Chain

Collaboration with local producers and suppliers to promote sustainability throughout the supply chain, including adopting sustainable sourcing practices and transportation solutions.

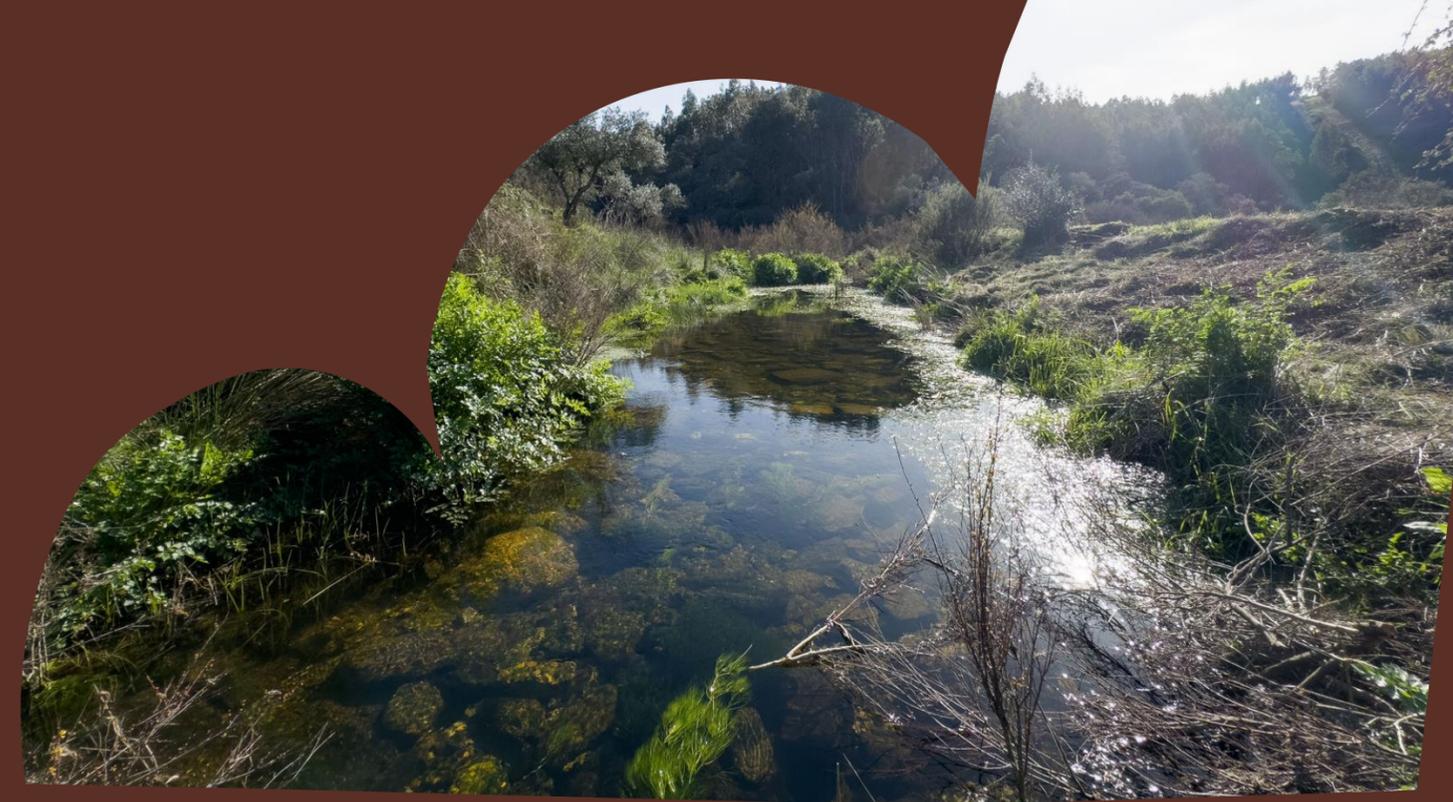
Environmental Impact

Enhancing the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of environmental impact assessments by addressing any identified gaps and incorporating stakeholder feedback.

Strengthening existing sustainability initiatives and explore new opportunities for environmental conservation, social responsibility, and stakeholder engagement.



Environmental Impact



We are enhancing the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of environmental impact assessments by addressing any identified gaps and incorporating stakeholder feedback.

Strengthen existing sustainability initiatives and explore new opportunities for environmental conservation, biodiversity recovery, soil regeneration, reforestation and eco-social responsibility.



Lifestyle Goals



Plant-Based Kitchen

A plant-based diet significantly reduces our ecological footprint by conserving water, land, and energy resources while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions associated with animal agriculture.

Embracing plant-based cooking fosters culinary creativity, introducing individuals to a diverse range of fruits, vegetables, grains, vegetables, and spices, thereby expanding their palate and enriching their meals.

Economic Resilience

By reducing the distance goods travel from farm to table or factory to shelf, emissions from vehicles are minimized, helping to combat climate change.

Additionally, supporting local businesses fosters community and economic resilience by keeping money circulating within the region.

Ecological Spirituality

Building a Chapel dedicated to San Francis of Assisi at Vale da Esteva with an ecumenical centre is our testament to the values of peace, harmony, animal protection, and environmental stewardship. Inspired by San Francis of Assisi's legacy, known for his deep connection to animals, nature, and all living beings, the chapel will serve as a sanctuary for spiritual reflection and interfaith dialogue.



Goal Setting

Full Alignment with Laudato Si' Principles

Vale da Esteva's goal-setting process is guided by the principles of integral ecology towards ecological conversion and sustainable development.

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

We are tracking the emissions across operations and implementing strategies to minimize carbon footprint, including energy efficiency measures, renewable energy adoption, and transportation optimization.



Increase biodiversity

Implementing habitat restoration projects, native species reforestation, and wildlife conservation initiatives. E.G., Bees, bats and tits. We are monitoring biodiversity indicators to track progress towards the goals.



Ethical Sourcing

Conducting supplier assessments to ensure adherence to sustainability and ethical standards. We always prioritize procurement from certified and responsible sources to uphold our commitment to ethical business practices.



Engagement

Development of community outreach programs, educational workshops, and participatory projects that involve and empower residents in environmental conservation efforts. We are monitoring participation rates and feedback from community members.



Action Plan 2024 -2030

Agroecology

Agroecological practices to promote sustainable farming methods that prioritize soil health, biodiversity conservation, and water efficiency.

Food production (plant-based and dairy-free).



Nature Tourism

Refurbishing the buildings in Vale da Esteva presents a unique opportunity to experience the countryside experience while preserving heritage.

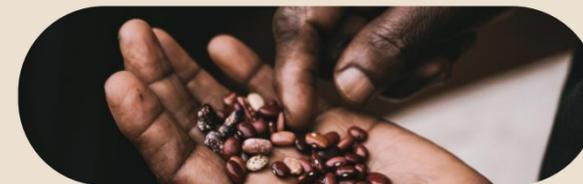
The San Francis of Assisi Chapel pilgrim hostel aims to offer essential amenities for Santiago-bound pilgrims.



LABs

Programs on science, innovation, art and plant-based cuisine, as well as ecological practices in food, preserving culinary traditions and encouraging conscious eating.

Essential Oils Production Unit.



“Humanity still has the ability to work together
to build our common home.”

– Pope Francis –

www.valedaesteva.pt