



## Proposal for a Master Thesis

**Title: Agriculture and the provision of water-related ecosystem services in the nature conservation area “Doñana” in Andalusia, Spain**

### **Background of the research**

The zone of the Doñana in the South West of Spain, close to Cadiz, is one of the most valuable nature protection areas and wetlands of Spain. It is habitat for a multitude of rare bird species and insects and one of the most important resting places of migratory birds en route between Northern Europe and Africa. Naturally, the survival of its ecosystem value strongly depends on the water regime applied in the area. Principal productive activities in the area are growth of rice and strawberries, both of which are deeply intertwined with the local water regime, and therefore with the “health” of the wetlands area. For example, for a long time already local farmers are accused of significant overexploitation of aquifers in the area, leading to a lowering of water tables which puts survival of the Doñana wetlands at risk. After, in the eyes of environmental NGOs, authorities did not do enough to positively influence water management in a way that would benefit the protection of the nature conservation area, environmental NGOs now work in the area in order to convince local farmers to use production methods that benefit the wetlands. For example, together with German and Dutch retail chains WWF/ Adena developed a certification scheme that acknowledges production methods that are more environmentally friendly than previous methods and that comply with legal obligations. Farmers are compensated financially in return for produce of higher quality. Education, information and intermediaries play a vital role in this scheme. (see: [http://www.wwf.es/que\\_hacemos/donana/](http://www.wwf.es/que_hacemos/donana/))

### **Aims of the call for research:**

The research should focus on a subset (only 2-3) of the aims mentioned below:

- a) To describe the setting for nature conservation in South Western Spain, in the area of Donana; b) To describe the certification scheme and its particularities; c) To describe the institutional background of wetland management in South Western Spain; d) To evaluate why different elements of the value chain adopted the scheme and how it changed its organization and perceptions of actors involved; e) To evaluate the impact of the certification scheme on local agricultural practices; f) To evaluate the impact of the certification scheme on local actors, knowledge and their organization and exchange; g) To evaluate the impact of the certification scheme on the local and regional administrations; h) To compare the certification scheme applied in South Western Spain with other governance schemes applied to the provision of ecosystem services and GLOBAL G.A.P.

[http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front\\_content.php?idcat=9](http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front_content.php?idcat=9) .

### **Methods**

It is expected that a survey and/ or semi-structured expert interviews should be undertaken for the research. Data is to be analysed with the appropriate software means.

### **Relationship to partners and support offered**

The Division of Resource Economics has ample contacts in the region, in the research area, and with WWF Adena which will be put at the disposal of Master students that want to undertake this research. Nevertheless, Master Students will be in charge of all major decisions throughout their research. Close collaborative assistance on all stages of the research, incl. theory, framework, data gathering and analysis is offered. In addition, support in finding financial means, contacts during the research and for publishing the results of the study, if they are of sufficient quality, will be provided.

**Prerequisites:** Sufficiently good command of Spanish in order to maintain conversation.

**Starting date:** According to needs of the study programme. Time to receive funding for travelling should be allowed before the study is undertaken.

**If you are interested, please contact as “Advisor”:**

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