



FUNDAÇÃO
TERRA AGORA

A Visionary's Briefing

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The Portuguese version of this document is the binding version.

Co-Creating Permanent Land Guardianship in Portugal

What We Do, in One Sentence

Terra Agora Foundation secures land that matters and holds it in permanence, under a perpetual legal mechanism, entrusting it to vetted local Guardians who live and work it, so that care continues across generations, monitored by the Foundation, and never dependent on any one owner.

Why Now

This is a call to a particular instinct: the one that wants to protect something because it matters, and not for its immediate financial return. The current trend in land ownership concentrates land rather than spreading it. In the United States, 79% of rented farmland is already owned by people who do not farm it, and about three quarters of the households receiving today's great wealth transfer are already in the top tier when they receive it.¹

Land is changing hands, or falling out of care, faster than models exist to hold it permanently. If you already feel that instinct, about land and about securing the care of land worth keeping, this call is for you.

What Being a Visionary Means for Us

Land conservation, in permanence

European legal structures were not designed to carry a conservation purpose across time. Common law has land trusts and conservation easements in some countries; civil law mostly does not. Some countries have created their own instrument by legislation, as Chile did in 2016. In Portugal we use the strongest tool the law gives us, the perpetual *Direito de Superfície*, and we are pioneers on that route.

A rural ecosystem worth rebuilding

Only 4.9% of Portugal's farm managers are under 40, and 51.9% are 65 or older, a pattern common across southern Europe. Rebuilding that skill now, food production and care of the land as one living, paying way of life, is a real experiment and not a reenactment of the past.³

¹USDA, Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land survey, 2024; Cerulli Associates, 2025; Visa Business and Economic Insights, 2026.

²Chile, Ley n.º 20.930 of 2016, establishing the *derecho real de conservación medioambiental*.

³Eurostat, «Farmers and the agricultural labour force, statistics», Statistics Explained, based on the 2023 Farm Structure Survey. On rebuilding the rural economy, see Izquierdo Vallina, J. (2021), «Una nueva economía para la aldea del siglo XXI», *Mediterráneo Económico* 35, pp. 105 to 120.

Regenerative skill, in the hands of those who build

We ask every Guardian for their own vision of what that land can become, and then help them build the skill to design and carry it out, through the Learning Pathway now being built. That transfer of skill, rather than conservation imposed from outside, is what brings land back to life.

A different way to measure success

Most generosity like yours is measured one way, by financial return. Here that is only one of four kinds of value weighed together: inspirational, social, natural and financial. What a place gives back counts alongside what it earns, measured over the cycles nature itself works on rather than a single financial year.⁴

A model that already interests others

Our first Patron, Tobias Rihs, named in the statutes as Membro Benfeitor, and others who recognise the importance of a long term framework for land conservation, are exploring whether something similar could be built in Brazil. Nothing is established: any vehicle in another country would need its own legal and governance design before it could be described as more than an intention.

We are proving this model first on land the Foundation already holds in central Portugal: the first, we hope, of a network of Projectos Guardiã, and of the value they create, across the country.

Patrons

A model like this needs someone willing to move first, before there is any proof to point to. Tobias Rihs did that: he endowed the Foundation with 1,600 hectares in Portugal as a first project, and still funds the work there directly. What we are looking for now are Visionaries who join us and him: people who want to build something that outlasts them.

That is the legacy we offer. Not a gift that disappears into a budget line, but land, innovation, entrepreneurship and a model that still stands in a hundred years because of decisions made now.

The Foundation

Complete.

Recognised by Despacho n.º 396/2024, de 7 de dezembro de 2023, published in the Diário da República, 2.ª série, Parte C, n.º 12, de 17 de janeiro de 2024, page 31. The Foundation was endowed with €254,000 in cash and land valued at €2,956,120.45, a valuation verified by a Revisor Oficial de Contas in September 2023.

Underway.

The first Projecto Guardiã for the 1,600 hectares, after several years of preparation, presenting its vision for the land, one that looks seven generations ahead, and the plan to carry it out; the Learning Pathway, which teaches Guardians the skills their land needs; the application for environmental patronage status, in preparation; and stronger legal safeguards at state level.

Planned.

Full monitoring and impact reporting from 2027, tracking the four returns for every Guardian, and building out a network of hubs around the Foundation's lands.

⁴The Four Returns are the work of Willem Ferwerda, developed by Commonland.

How It Works

Land is secured with the Foundation under a permanent mechanism, so that it cannot be sold or fragmented. Local Guardians care for it under long term agreements linking care to outcomes.

None of this rests on one person. A Conselho de Administração, a Conselho de Curadores and supervision by the State hold it accountable. Under article 9.º, paragraph 16 of the statutes, membership of the Conselho de Curadores is unpaid, and the Foundation has been built, to this day, almost entirely on unpaid time.

2026: The Founder's Year

2026 is our Founder's Year, with a first public fundraising of €100,000 toward core, unrestricted costs. Contributions now support the institution while it builds the track record that unlocks broader funding later.

The Next Few Years

The real ask, for a Visionary, runs longer: contributing to an operating backbone of €150,000 a year for three years, the runway this model needs to find its footing. We want to build a core group of visionary supporters, and that takes time, the way building community, Guardians and restoration always does.

As we go, we pass from a first project to the next, and set the standards, training and governance that let a second Guardian follow the first, then a third, until permanence and paid stewardship are how land changes hands rather than the exception to it.

The land itself does not depend on this funding. Once held by the Foundation it is protected in permanence, whatever any year's fundraising looks like.

What depends on the funding is the institution around the land: the people, the standards and the governance that make that permanence real, and that let it be repeated elsewhere.

What This Is Not

The Foundation does not hold utilidade pública status, the Portuguese public benefit status. It is a recent foundation, access to that status depends on conditions not yet met, and we do not expect to hold it for some years yet. There is a second route: the environmental patronage status under artigo 62.º of the Estatuto dos Benefícios Fiscais, which requires a joint decision by the members of Government responsible for finance and for the environment. The Foundation is preparing the application and does not expect a formal decision before 2027. Until that decision exists, no donation to the Foundation carries a fiscal advantage, and nothing in this document should be read as suggesting one.

The full framework for measuring impact is being built. Contributions are given freely and carry no obligatory reciprocity beyond what is agreed in writing: no favours, and no influence over how any piece of land is cared for. That independence is part of what the Foundation guarantees, not a limitation of it. The best decisions are made on the ground.



Start a Conversation

I spent twenty years building companies and chasing the version of success everyone recognises, with little time to think about long term conservation. When I tested my own farm against the standard we ask of Guardians, whether what I do here serves a greater common good and not just my own soil, I came up short.

That is the work of being regenerative: it is made of learning and of mistakes, and it does not arrive finished. Neither do I. What comes next is not mine alone to build; it already belongs to everyone building it with us.

If this speaks to you, the next step is a conversation, and ideally a visit to the land. Seeing it says more than any document can. Reach out through the Foundation, or write to me directly.

Ivan Sellers • President, Comissão Executiva