



TERRA AGORA

FOUNDATION

Regeneration Alignment with Portugal's National Goals

2026



How long-term guardianship responds to Portugal's ecological, social, and territorial challenges

Executive Summary

Portugal faces a convergence of long-term challenges: ecological degradation, demographic imbalance, rural decline, and institutional limits to long-horizon care. While national strategies for climate, biodiversity, water, and territorial cohesion are robust on paper, their success depends on **who holds land, for how long, and under what incentives**.

Fundação Terra Agora (FTA) aligns with Portugal's national goals by addressing a structural gap: **the absence of durable, non-speculative land stewardship mechanisms capable of operating across generations**. Through land protection, trained guardianship, and long-term governance, FTA creates conditions in which public objectives can be realised on the ground — not as short projects, but as enduring commitments.

Portugal's Context: Structural Realities We Must Address

Portugal's national strategies operate within a set of constraints that are now widely recognised:

- **Only ~0.17% of Portuguese territory is under strict long-term protection**, far below European and global targets¹
- **Over 50% of farmers are older than 65**, with very limited generational renewal²
- **Fewer than 3% of farmers are under 25**, weakening the future of land stewardship
- **Rural populations continue to decline**, leading to abandonment, fire risk, and loss of local knowledge
- **Water use is increasingly unsustainable**, under climate stress and fragmented management
- **Soil fertility and structure are deteriorating**, undermining food security and ecosystem resilience

These are not failures of intention or policy. They reflect **a mismatch between short-term ownership models and long-term ecological processes**.

FTA's Core Contribution: Holding Land for Time

FTA's model is designed to complement — not replace — public policy by providing what policy alone cannot:

- **Perpetual land protection outside speculation**

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320725002861?via%3Dihub>

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Farmers_and_the_agricultural_labour_force_-_statistics



- **Institutional continuity beyond electoral, funding, and ownership cycles**
- **Prepared human stewardship tied to place**
- **Accountability mechanisms that persist even when people change**

By separating:

- ownership from use
- funding from control
- care from speculation

FTA creates a stable platform upon which national goals can meaningfully unfold.

Alignment with National Climate Goals

Portugal's Climate Law and National Energy and Climate Plan (PNEC) require land-based solutions that endure beyond project cycles.

FTA contributes by:

- Holding land under **permanent asset-lock**, preventing carbon-rich ecosystems from future conversion
- Supporting **long-term soil regeneration**, carbon sequestration, and water retention
- Enabling regenerative land use that remains viable over decades, not grant periods

Regeneration under guardianship is not a mitigation project — it is **a long-term climate infrastructure**.

Alignment with Biodiversity Strategy (2030)

Portugal's Biodiversity Strategy depends on **connectivity, continuity, and stewardship**, not only designation.

FTA advances these goals by:

- Protecting land **in perpetuity**, including outside formal protected areas
- Supporting **landscape-scale ecological recovery**, not isolated plots
- Embedding biodiversity care in **daily livelihoods**, not external enforcement

Where public protected areas are limited, guardianship offers a **parallel pathway to durable biodiversity protection**.

Alignment with Water and Soil Policy

Water scarcity and soil degradation are systemic risks in Portugal's future.

FTA's approach:

- Treats **water, soil, and land as interdependent systems**



- Supports regenerative practices that restore infiltration, fertility, and resilience
- Holds land long enough for **slow ecological processes** to recover

Short leases and speculative ownership cannot restore soils. **Time is the missing ingredient.**

Alignment with Territorial Cohesion & Rural Renewal

Portugal's territorial strategy recognises the need to:

- Revitalise rural areas
- Support livelihoods rooted in place
- Reduce abandonment and fire risk

FTA contributes by:

- Enabling **new generations of stewards** to access land without ownership
- Supporting viable, place-based livelihoods under long-term agreements
- Re-embedding land in community, culture, and shared responsibility

This directly addresses demographic imbalance without relying on inheritance or land markets.

Why Governance Matters for Public Alignment

FTA's alignment with national goals is not only thematic — it is structural.

Key safeguards include:

- Statutory asset-locks preventing resale or speculation
- Separation of powers between landholding, guardians, and funders
- Independent oversight bodies (Trustee, Administrative, Technical, Fiscal)
- Audited accounts and public reporting
- Legal provisions ensuring land remains protected even if the Foundation dissolves

This ensures that **public interest is protected even under financial, political, or human stress.**

Complementing — Not Replacing — the State

FTA does not substitute public authority. It:

- Acts where the State cannot easily operate (long time horizons, non-market logic)
- Provides stable partners for municipalities and agencies
- Translates national strategies into **lived, local practice**

Guardianship is a **civil infrastructure for long-term care**, aligned with public purpose.

Conclusion: Regeneration as National Capacity

Portugal's challenges are not primarily technical. They are temporal.



FTA contributes a missing layer in the national ecosystem:

- **Institutions that can hold land for generations**
- **People trained to care, not extract**
- **Governance designed for continuity, not speed**

In this way, Fundação Terra Agora aligns regeneration with Portugal's national goals — not as a project, but as a **durable public good held in trust for the future**.

Fundação Terra Agora

Regeneration held long enough to matter