Rehydrating degraded landscapes in Iberia

Landcare Conference “Working with Farmers and Nature: Water-Smart Agroecology and Landcare in Action”

21–22 September, 2026

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ALQUILER
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Educating, connecting, and empowering

Building knowledge, skills and local leadership















Learning together	Sharing experience, local knowledge and science
From understanding to action	Turning knowledge into practical solutions
Building capacity	Strengthening local skills, confidence and leadership
For landscapes and communities	Healthy landscapes, resilient communities



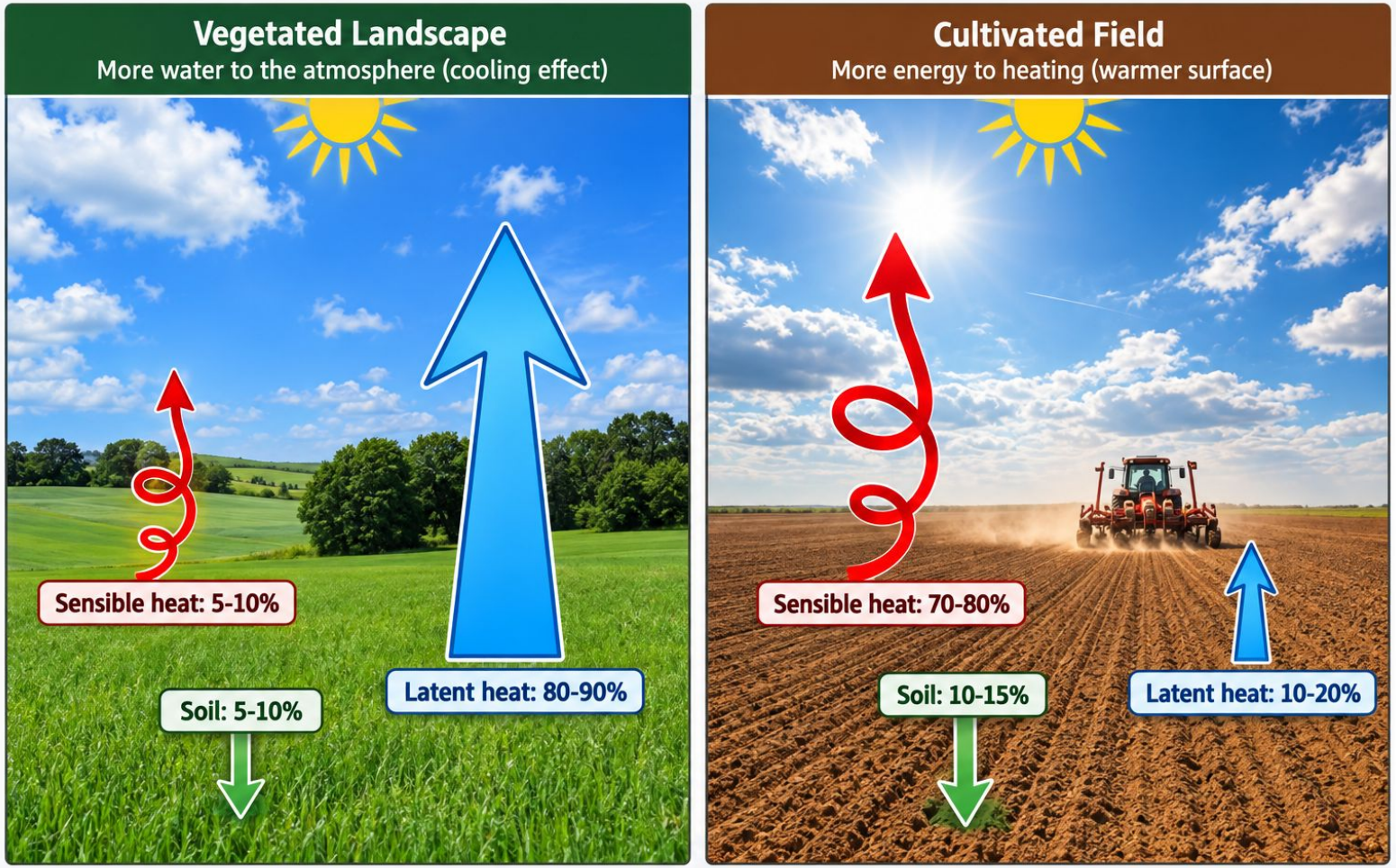
Together, we restore water, soils and community resilience.











Pokorny, J., 2019. Evapotranspiration. In: Encyclopedia of Ecology, Elsevier, pp. 292–300.

Spain’s ancient water techniques



Terraces



Acequias de careo





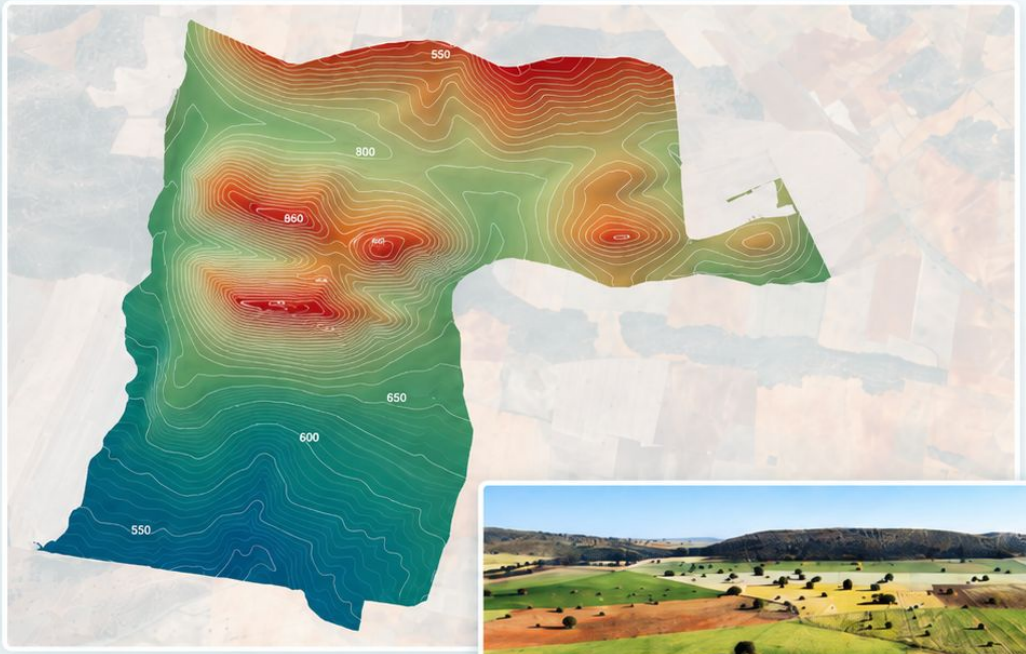
FUNDACIÓN INTERNACIONAL PARA LA RESTAURACIÓN DE ECOSISTEMAS

FIREC

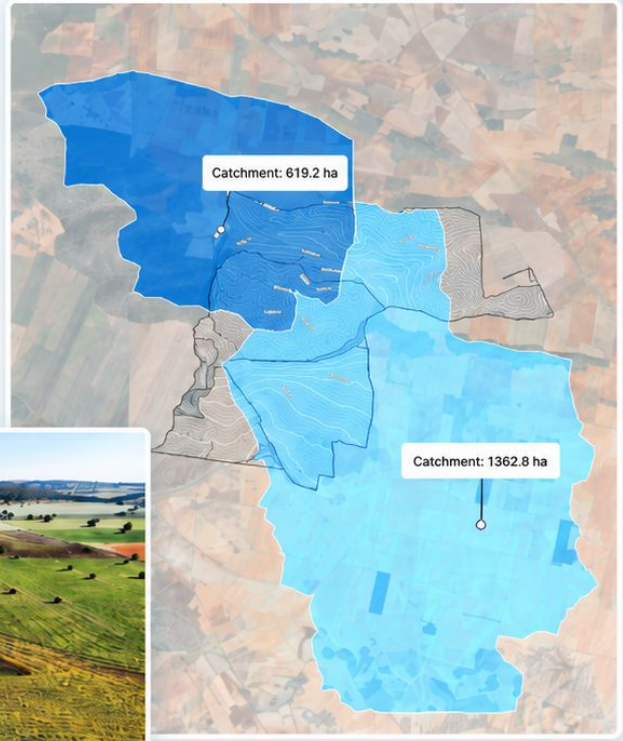


La Nava del Conejo

demonstration farm
Castilla la Mancha







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FUNDACIÓN INTERNACIONAL PARA LA RESTAURACIÓN DE ECOSISTEMAS

FIRE

Reading the Clues of a Lost Wetland

1956



1997



2025



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80cm









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CAMPO DE MONTIEL

Ruidera Wetlands

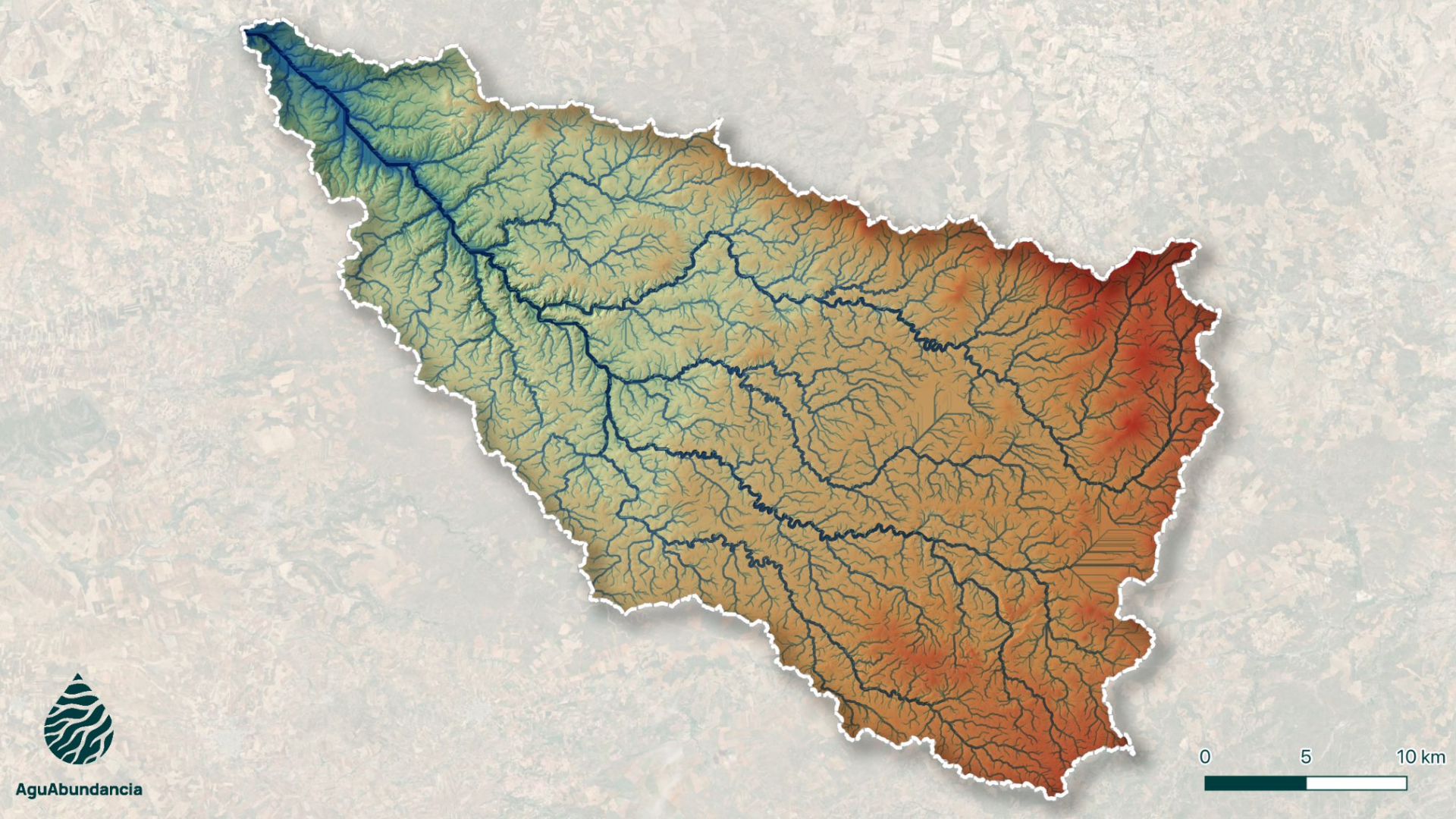
Larger Landscape Design Goal:

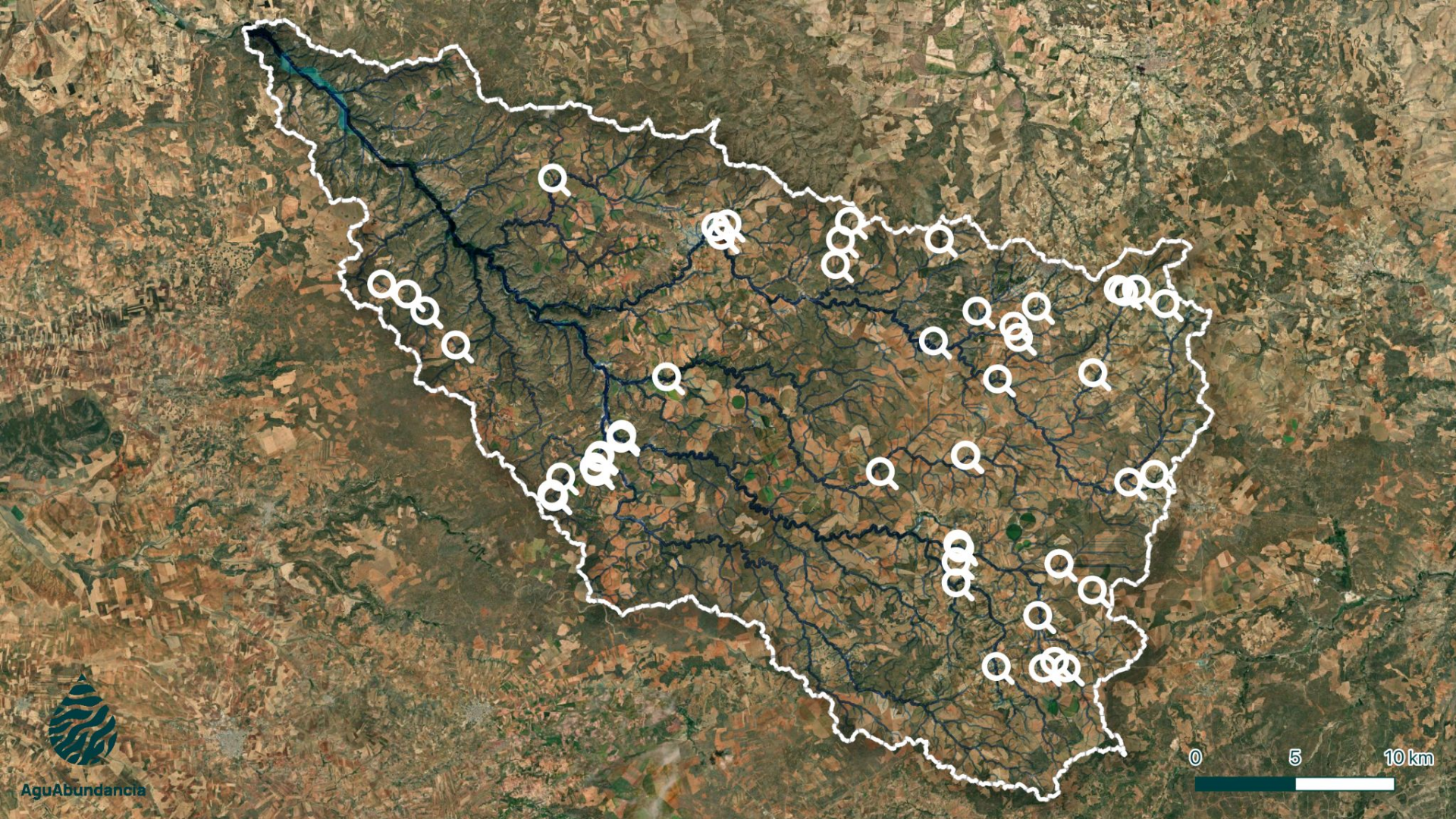
REHYDRATE LANDSCAPE AND RECHARGE OVEREXPLOITED AQUIFER

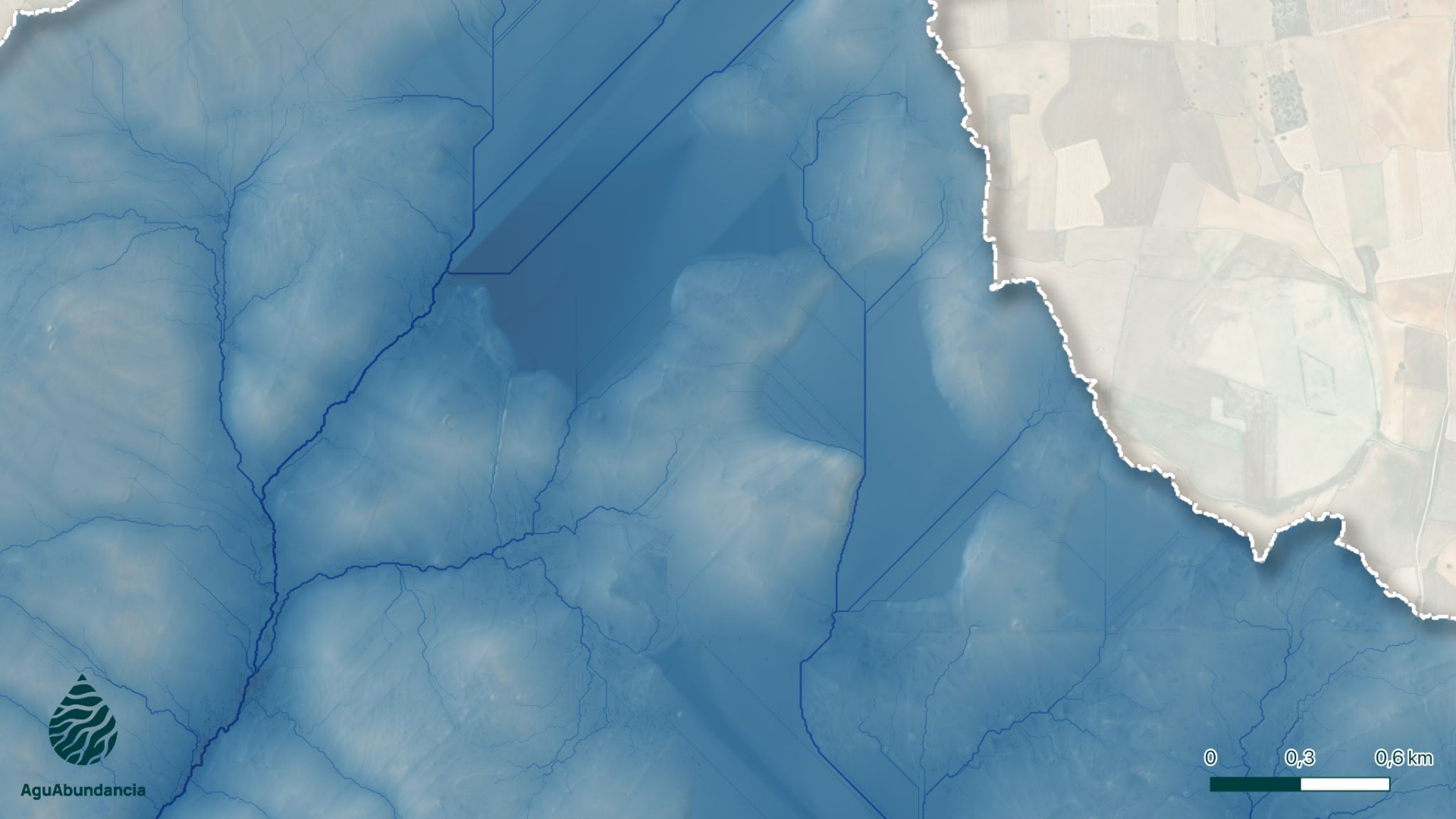




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AguAbundancia
0
5
10 km


AguAbundancia
0
5
10 km


AguAbundancia
0
0,3
0,6 km


AguAbundancia
0
0,3
0,6 km





shared logic



Two places, one restoration logic: communities reading water and rebuilding the landscape's capacity to hold it.

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What Muga Valley and Valle del Quípar teach us



1. Organise at watershed scale

Use the catchment as the working unit for restoration, governance and coordination.



2. Start with trust, not plans

Food, informal conversations, village events and one-to-one relationships create participation.



3. Make participation visible and useful

Festivals, youth engagement, women's groups, local grants and practical action turn interest into momentum.



4. Link action to institutions and finance

Municipalities, basin authorities, water funds and downstream beneficiaries help sustain long-term work.

Sponge Communities

A bottom-up model for Mediterranean hydrological restoration

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CLIMATE FARMERS ACADEMY





From community organisation to catchment-scale restoration.

What happens on the ground


Check dams


Infiltration basins


Wetland repair


Road runoff capture


Soil biology

100+ people trained

Low-tech NbS

Farmers • municipalities • local communities

Practical Challenges & How We Overcame Them

Permitting & Regulatory Limits

THE HURDLE

Water authorities restrict slowing flow in seasonal runoff channels within the **100m stream domain.**

ADAPTIVE ACTION

- **On-Site Consultations:** Invite water board technicians directly to the field to show exact plans and align on precise wording.
- **Scope Realignment:** Gauge achievable permits early and shift heavier retention measures **outside the 100m zone** where possible.

Farmer Skepticism & Land Risk

THE HURDLE

Hesitation to surrender productive cropland or risk adopting unproven retention structures.

ADAPTIVE ACTION

- **Targeting Quick Wins:** Repair washed-out farm tracks and degraded gullies first.
- **Building Trust:** Demonstrating topsoil retention on problem areas builds confidence without risking cash crops.

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“The climate emergency demands unimaginably labor intensive tasks for hundreds of years.”

— Cory Doctorow, writer and journalist.



Train the trainers for catchment-scale restoration.



<5% of DANA recovery funds can finance a full regenerative transition.

Public recovery funds

Water utilities

High water users

Insurers

Polluters & beneficiaries

“more than 776,000 L per hectare — or 212 billion litres total — of extra water absorbed and retained within the soil”

— EARA, Valencia case study

Shift money upstream: from repair to prevention.


Thank you!
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