

Heineken's Canaveral Project, Spain

Description

This project has been carried out by the Heineken Spanish¹ subsidiary in Valencia (Spain). It is an initiative developed within the framework of a strategy focused on protecting water sources in the places where Heineken operates. Some areas of the Mediterranean region are suffering high water stress so Heineken aims to achieve a neutral water balance². This is achieved by reducing water consumption and developing water compensation projects in the basins of the rivers that supply water to its factories: Doñana, Olivo and Cañaveral. Given that beer is made up of 95% water, water is an essential natural resource for the company.



The Cañaveral project took place in the Rambla del Poyo or Barranco del Poyo (Rambla or Gully of Poyo), which supplies water to one of the most important wetlands in Spain, Valencian Albufera. Heineken Spain committed to give back to nature all water contained in Amstel beers brewed in the Valencia plant.

Common cane is an invasive species that increases water loss in river courses, increases the risk of fire, causes the erosion of soil and limits drainage capacity. Heineken Spain aimed to compensate 350,000 m³ of water, in the Jucar basin, through the eradication of the common cane and restoration of the tributary using native vegetation. Heineken implemented restoration activities over the course of three years in collaboration with several different institutions.

This project allowed Heineken to improve the ecological processes of the ecosystem. The interventions developed, using native species, promoted the increase of riverine ecosystems surface area, connectivity between different existing habitats and its associated biodiversity. The collaboration with NGO's and local authorities also contributed to the improvement of the area's conservation status. Overall, the restoration project increased the landscape value of the area for the benefit of tourism and other recreational activities.

As a result of the restoration, a total of 428 million litres of water were compensated annually. This quantity represents 1.5 times the water used to produce beer in the Valencian brewery. Heineken allocated more than 300,000 euros for the restoration of the ecosystem.



Methodology and tools

In collaboration with NGO Common land³, an approach was used to combine and connect natural and economic landscape areas by implementing “the 4 Returns” model. This model seeks to give people hope and a sense of purpose; bring back jobs, business activity, education and security (social capital); restore biodiversity; soil and water quality and carbon capture (natural capital) and recognise financial capital. Ultimately, this is intended to restore the degraded riverine ecosystems.

Heineken carried out different actions that allowed the restoration of the local ecological processes. These actions were based on the elimination of *Arundo donax* from the riverbanks through a mechanical procedure, as well as the cleaning of the riverbed, and removal of waste from the surroundings. Therefore, the restoration of the riverbank area created a habitat suitable for the recovery of local biodiversity, as well as improving the aquatic ecosystem as a whole.

Impacts achieved by the study

By eliminating 7.3 hectares of common cane along 2.7 km of the riverbank, a total of 12,800 m³ of biomass (cane) was extracted and water consumption in the restored area was reduced by 76%. This optimized the hydraulic capacity of this section of the riverbed and contributed to riverbank vegetation restoration with native species, avoiding and minimizing fire risk, erosion processes and water loss.

As a result, the habitat created will sustain local biodiversity and restore ecological processes. The work carried out contributes to an increased diversity of habitats, species of flora, water quality and quantity, and helps establish both aquatic and terrestrial fauna.

Lessons learned

This project focused on the natural resource “water” – a focus of the many of the Mediterranean’s most pressing issues - with the objective of providing Nature-based Solutions⁴ to solve water-related issues in a specific ecosystem. Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by companies that depend on or impact the environment is key to achieving social and environmental sustainability. Improvements to nature benefit the company and society’s wellbeing, as it contributes to the reduction in environmental risks (such as water scarcity), encourages sustainable economic development in the area and results in better water usage and management. However, as demonstrated with this project, collaboration is necessary to achieve these objectives.

Cooperation with public administration and stakeholders has allowed effective development of the project. The participation of NGO’s and public institutions was key to achieving the project outcomes. The Government of Valencia supported the initiative to eliminate the invasive alien species *Arundo donax* and provided scientific knowledge about the project and biological resources, specifically about native genotypes for repopulation. The Polytechnic University of Valencia also contributed to the measurement of the environmental impact of water compensation, creating a reference for future work. The Ministry of the Environment of Spain joined this public-private collaboration, providing a tree species resistant to diseases, in collaboration with the local municipality, the Quart de Poblet Town Hall.

Mauricio Dominguez–Adame, RSC Director, Heineken Spain said: “The public-private collaboration, besides being essential since we have acted in public channels, has had a multiplier effect, since it has allowed an enrichment of the project itself. This type of approach in this and other projects, serves to establish new partner relationships between the administration and companies, in benefit of the environment and society, which are framed within the ODS 17”.



Having a water protection strategy, Heineken achieved a milestone with regards to public and private cooperation, collaboration and development of Nature-based solutions focused on water rehabilitation to achieve this project. The multidisciplinary participation will help the provision of a continuity strategy in the medium and long term that guarantees permanent environmental and social benefits for the region, such as; an improvement in the state of conservation and human well-being, an increase in biodiversity and the possibility of enjoying the restored ecosystem.

This project is a clear example of how companies can develop projects for the conservation and promotion of biodiversity and the improvement of natural resources. Moreover, this project has provided a real added value to local communities by improving biodiversity, as well as water quality and quantity in the area. For the company, the new strategy on water stewardship⁵ has been successfully implemented, the project overcame the replenishment objective set and involved and raised awareness among all stakeholders.

¹ <https://www.heinekenespana.es/>

² <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/our-sustainability-story/our-progress/case-studies/balancing-our-impacts-water-stressed-spain>

³ <https://www.commonland.com/>

⁴ IUCN defines Nature-based Solutions as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”

⁵ <https://www.heinekenespana.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/heineken-sostenibilidad-2018.pdf>

The campaign is being led by the [Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales](#) alongside the [World Business Council for Sustainable Development](#), [IUCN](#) and [Oppla](#).



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