The councillor of rural affairs, Bartomeu Escandell, explained today that after six months in operation, the Cens de Terres de Cultiu programme (roughly translated as 'farmland reserve') has acquired 105 hectares for cultivation this winter by the Formentera farmers' collective. Escandell thanked Formentera residents for participating by donating their unused land, which will now serve for the further beautification of the Formentera countryside and —quite literally— bear the fruits that will revive the primary sector of the local economy.

The councillor encouraged other owners of unused plots to cede them for tilling by the farmers' cooperative. He noted that donated plots typically remain in the cooperative's possession for a period of three to five years and that, in addition to being cost-free for the owners, the process results in material returns — «including money saved on maintenance costs, improvements to the land and discounts on products and services from the cooperative».

Developing the agricultural sector

Councillor Escandell emphasised the goal of the cooperative is to «provide local products for the farmers' market, streamline the revival of Formentera's primary sector and supply the service sector». In 2015, the Formentera Council put forward €95,000 to fund the start of activity at the cooperative. The group also required an investment of €590,000 — a third of the money came from the Leader programme and the rest were provided by the Formentera Council — to fund construction of the group's warehouse space, which Escandell announced would be ready before year end.

For his part, Carlos Marí, the cooperative's head manager, explained that 46 property owners have signed up for the reserve, with the 105 hectares of donated land coming from a total of 68 different plots. Mr Marí explained that the cooperative is currently getting the land ready for sowing operations in November and December. According to the group's head, plans are to sow mostly local flora, including barley and wheat. He confided: «The objective is to supply local stockbreeders with the feed they currently must buy from non-local sources», thus reaching self-sufficiency for the island's livestock animal feed.