

Dear Sir
Ministro das Cidades, Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente

The Sabor is the only river in northern Portugal with no dams, presenting vegetation communities with unique characteristics in the country. One of the peculiarities of this valley is its floodplain vegetation, which includes the main populations of *Buxus sempervirens* (70-75% of total for Portugal) and associated species. This plant community, once common around the Douro River and its tributaries has disappeared from these localities due to the building of the Douro electricity producer system, their most important populations now remaining around the Sabor River. The particular geomorphology of the region allowed numerous plants to take refuge in this valley during successive glacial periods and was responsible for the appearance of plant biogeographic disjunctions (e.g. *Petrorrhagia saxifraga*, *Piptatherum paradoxum*, *Arabis alpina*, *Allium roseum*, *Notholaena marantae*, *Pistorinia hispanica*, *Sideritis hirsuta*, *Trisetum scabriusculum*, *Medicago doliata*) that are considered living relics. These aspects demonstrate the great interest of the Sabor valley for the preservation of genetic diversity, which is also attested by the presence of important populations of wild grapes and olives, which present a potentially valuable genetic stock for improving agricultural varieties and fighting its plagues. The Sabor valley is also home to the most extensive and well-preserved holm oak and cork oak woodlands of northeast Portugal. The presence of calcareous and ultrabasic substrates allows the occurrence of a great number of endemisms in this area.

The diversity and richness of the habitats and a low human disturbance favour a diverse animal community with numerous species protected by International Laws. Several endangered cliff-nesting birds, such as the Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) inhabit the important scarps of this valley. This region is classified as a SPA (Special Protection Area), and as an IBA (Important Bird Area) following BirdLife International criteria. Furthermore, the Sabor is the main place for spawning and nursery for the fish community of a large area. Also for its rich terrestrial fauna (which include the wolf, the water mole, the river otter, wildcat and roe deer), this valley is extremely important as a refuge and ecological corridor, cutting all northeast Portugal from north to south.

Subscribing this, I manifest my deep preoccupation concerning the possibility of creating the Baixo Sabor dam, and on the consequent destruction of an extremely valuable ecosystem. So, I ask for all your support for maintaining the Sabor River without any dam, and avoiding the destruction of a unique natural heritage whose importance is assumed not only in Portugal but also at an international level.

Sincerely

Signature

Name:.....

Position:.....

Institution:.....

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