



The Formentera Council has presented a text in which the institution's own observations and comments are made regarding a draft bill for the new agricultural law of the Balearic Islands. Santiago Juan, councillor of agriculture, fishing and livestock, explained that “this proposed bill does not promote a return to the countryside, by this government's criteria. We are still waiting to see proposals that incentivise a return to abandoned land parcels, measures that promote eco-friendly agriculture, favour traditional farming practises and boost production of local products.”

Juan stated: “The Statute of Autonomy of the Balearic Islands places agriculture and farming within the domain of the local island councils. We do not agree with the decision by the Govern to accord itself law-writing authority on such matters.” Neither does the councillor of agriculture agree with “the decision to take the legs out from underneath any decree requiring attestations of benefit to the general public interest as a condition to instating primary or secondary agricultural activity. We find it upsetting that these changes – defended as being part of a move toward administrative simplification – are made at a time when the regional Balearic administration itself is requiring its own interior departments to provide ever greater quantities of documentation.”

Councillor Juan contends that the draft bill “gives more preference to land speculation than to use of it for agrarian purposes” and that “it fails to adapt to the territorial particularities of Formentera. On Mallorca or Menorca, where farming industries are relatively stronger than here on Formentera, there may exist a certain number of under-developed municipalities with an over-supply of farmable land, and these would be areas where the proposed law might make sense.”

Juan noted, “Despite its demonstrably poor adaptability to our reality here on Formentera, if this draft bill were to go through, it would be applied on Formentera as well, which could have negative effects. It would favour urbanisation of rural areas; the proposed law has considerable implications on town planning.”

The councillor noted that the new farming and agriculture law's drafted text “takes no heed of the fact that agricultural affairs fall within the jurisdiction of the island councils. Thus, the

proposals overlook current, highly-important restrictions that exist – like the Green Spaces Law, the Rural Land Law, territorial land-use directives and even the 2010-adopted Subsidiary Norms.

Other issues of consideration for the Council when drafting its comments on the proposed legislature was the complete “lack of mention [in the bill] of the traditional property regime of Formentera and Eivissa.” Noted Councillor Juan, “The text does nevertheless consider the traditions particular to Menorca.”

The omission is of no small importance. “Our principle, traditional uses of the land here on Formentera, our manner of calculating parcels and of dividing terrain in the Pitiüses,” states Juan, “would be all but ignored.”