

AN IMAGE WORTHS MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS



Film Showing for women after a lecture on home economics in Villamelle. Monforte de Lemos, 1961, Author: Mr. Quiñones

The Ministry of Agriculture owns a worthy documentary, photographic and audio-visual patrimony. Being aware about the challenges raised by the new information and communication technologies, the Ministry is making a big effort to add value to this important documentary fund in the current knowledge society. The Library and the Digital Mediatheque are some of the outcomes of this action.

Currently the digital library, integrated into the agriculture and rural environment knowledge platform, provides through the MAPA website more than 10.000 complete documents. This website has a powerful and dynamic search system.

A new project to valuate its historic photographic documentary funds and to create new photographic and audio-visual products in digital format has also been carried out.

Since the beginning of the last century, the Ministry of Agriculture has generated a significant cinematographic and photographic documentary production very interesting to know the agriculture, society and agricultural policies evolution. It is also very interesting to the rural development agents.

The historic photographic fund owns more than 100.000 documents. These documents are in different formats and supports and they come from the actions of several Ministry Organisms, mainly the National Colonisation Institute, National Service of Land Consolidation and Rural Planning, the National Reform and Agricultural Development Institute, the Agrarian Extension Service and from a national agricultural, forest and cattle photographs competition announced by the Ministry from 1951 to the end of the 70's.

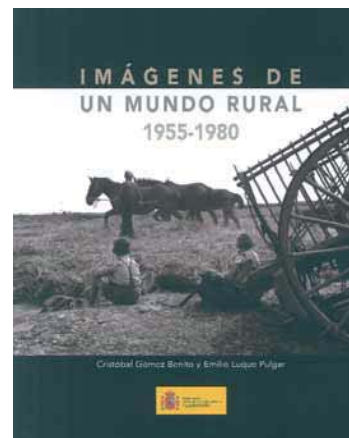
These funds have a great historic, sociologic and sometimes aesthetic value. They are very interesting to understand the agriculture and the Spanish traditional rural society.

The publication *Imágenes de un mundo rural* (1955-1980) (Images of a rural world), from Gómez Benito and Emilio Luque, published by MAPA in 2007, uses this powerful photographic fund to explain the features of the rural society from this period. It also explains the Agrarian Extension Service involvement into the agriculture and rural society modernisation.

Another exhibition of this photographic fund can be seen in the books *Figuras en el paisaje* (Forms in the landscape), published by SAECA, and *Agricultura y medio rural. Oficios para el recuerdo* (Agriculture and rural environment. Trades to remember, from Valeriano Heras, edited by MAPA, that is reviewed in this magazine.

A restoration and recuperation process of the MAPA's cinematographic production has also been initiated.

This way, part of Pascual Carrion's works can be seen as part of a new serie called Fondo documental histórico cinematográfico del Ministerio de Agricultura (Ministry of Agriculture cinematographic historic documentary fund)



The photographic batch of the Ministry of Agriculture has made possible to illustrate works as "Pictures from the rural world (1955-1980)"

The documentary *La ciudad y el campo* (The city and the countryside) has been restored and digitalised as part of this already mentioned historic cinematographic documentary fund recuperation project, collaborating with Spanish Film Library. This documentary was made by Fernando Mantilla and Carlos Velo in 1934 by order of Livestock General Directorate. More than 2000 audio-visual minutes have been restored as well.

D. Jesús Francisco González de la Riva y Vidiella, Marqués de Villaalcazar with his vision about the importance of the cinematography as documentary gender and training instrument; his professionalism; dedication; vocation and technical knowledge about direction, screenplay, broadcasting, music and animation was very important at this period. Without a doubt, he made possible the most prolific documentary cinematographic era of this Ministry.

From 1941 to 1955, more than 40 films in 35 mm and 16 mm were made by the Cinematographic Department. 11 of them were translated into French and 23 into English. *El barbecho* (The fallow land); *Abonos y semillas* (Fertilizers and seeds); *Seda en España* (Silk in Spain); *El corcho* (The cork); *Bosques amigos* (The friendly forests); *Jerez-Xeres-Sherry*; *Trigo en España* (Wheat in Spain); *Lanas de España* (Wool from Spain); *Algodón en España* (The cotton in Spain); *Reforestación forestal* (Reforestation); *El olivo* (The olivetree); *La aceituna de mesa* (The olive); etc. are some of the films directed by the Marquis of Villa-Alcázar.

The Agrarian Extension Service was created in 1955. Its main function was to spread the innovations and knowledge about agriculture and rural environment. Its creation strengthened the utilization of audio-visual means, especially the cinema, by this Service in its training activities.

This Service produced with its own means documentaries about crops technical advances, communal development, cooperative movement; young farmers; etc. These films were shown abroad the nation.

Since Agrarian Extension Service disappeared in 1991, the Ministry stopped making documentaries with its own means although it promotes the making of documentaries related to its agricultural, food and fishing competencies.



Still from a film documentary about fresh olives (1956)



The Marchess of Villa-Alcázar, head of the Film Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, favoured the most prolific period for its own film collection production in this Ministry



Officers from the Agricultural Training and Home Economics Services get ready for a film showing. Monforte de Lemos, 1961, Mr. Quiñones

Without a doubt, this photographic and audio-visual production has an undeniable social and cultural value. This production is very useful to rural development initiatives related to the Historical Memory recovery.

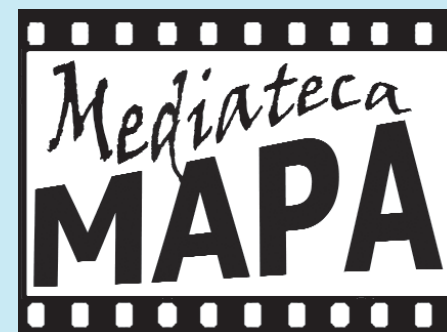
José Neches played, also, a very meaningful role in the Ministry of Agriculture cinematographic production. He was a very creative person with a great imagination and capacity to direct the cinematographic documentary production.

Diógenes (1966), starring by Luis Prendes, describes in a funny way the actions carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture inside a Rural Planning Area. *La conquista de una vega* (1971) tells of the social and economic transformations at Vegas Bajas del Guadiana (they even used air means to illustrate the territorial transformations). *Antes y después* (1963) (Before and after) describes in a pedagogical way the social and territorial transformations carried out by the Land Consolidation in Spain.



Mr. Valentín Sánchez Morcilo and Mr. Francisco La Calle, members of the Film Service, filming in a slaughter house, Place, date and author unknown.

The Digital Mediatheque



The Ministry of Agriculture, through its Chief Administrative Office, has initiated the Digital Mediatheque Creation Project in 2006. This project has already enabled to recuperate and digitalise a very important part of the valuable photographic and cinematographic patrimony already mentioned. At the same time, new audio-visual productions in digital support have been initiated with both own and external means.

This way, consulting these cinematographic documentary funds in a digital support, whose demand is growing, has been made easier. It has been foreseen to incorporate a sample of these cinematographic documentary funds produced by the Ministry to the Department's website.

At the current image society, the Digital Mediatheque, carried out by MAPA, is an answer to the growing information demand of photographic and audio-visual documentation related to the agriculture and rural society past and to the need of communicate by images the changes that are happening at the food and agricultural system and at the Spanish rural society.