



CultiVETing

Cultivating Entrepreneurship in
the Agrifood Sector through VET



Deliverable 2.3

Peer Learning Activities Lessons Learned

Project number: 101129381



Co-funded by
the European Union

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Acronym	CultivETing
Project title	Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the Agrifood Sector through VET
Agreement number	101129381
EU programme	Capacity Building in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET)
Project website	

Prepared by

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Date	30/10/2024
Version	V1.0
Dissemination Level	Restricted to other E+ Programme participants (including EACEA, Commission services and project reviewers)

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Introduction

1. The Project

“CultiVETing: Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the AgriFood Sector through VET”, aims to bridge the gap between the VET sector and the labor market needs in the AgriFood sector in Western Balkans. In line with the general objective of the Erasmus+ program, it aims at enabling the environment for vocational clusters to boost local socio-economic development through social entrepreneurship, more accessible, inclusive, quality TVET-business and entrepreneurship-based provisions, responsive to emerging local labour markets in the Agri-food sector, which is strategic for both Europe and Western Balkans eco-systems.

Using a complete systemic approach, the project analyzes the important issues, regulations, services, functions, and bottlenecks that impede socio-economic development in the target areas, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations. Thorough assessments are conducted at the system level. Through the identification of these obstacles, the project aims to create focused interventions that can significantly improve the VET environment and its conformity to labor market expectations.

The project's specific goal is to close the gaps in the agrifood economy and sustainable production and consumption between VET and the commercial sector. This strategic focus is in line with the regional priorities of the Western Balkan area and is very relevant to the national strategies of Kosovo and Albania.

2. Objectives

The consortium has identified the following project specific objectives:

SP. OBJ. 1: Build the capacities of the key actors of the TVET Ecosystem to design innovative school-to-work transition and self-entrepreneurship schemes aiming to impact more relevant and green TVET systems.

The goal is to enhance the skills and abilities of key stakeholders within the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) ecosystem to create and implement innovative programs that facilitate the transition from school to work and promote self-entrepreneurship.

SP. OBJ. 2: Enable the environment for private sector effective engagement in sustainable local development economic processes through TVET and business development.

This objective focuses on creating a conducive atmosphere where the private sector can actively participate and contribute to local economic development. The goal is to ensure that vocational education and training (TVET) programs and business development efforts are aligned with sustainable practices and market needs, leading to economic growth and community development.

SP. OBJ. 3: Endorse continuous quality-based capacity development on strategic planning, policies, and of shared governance schemes for green TVET-business services in the agri-food sector.

This objective aims to foster ongoing improvement and development of skills, policies, and governance structures that support green (environmentally sustainable) TVET-business services specifically in the agri-food sector.

SP.OBJ 4: Co-plan integrated, joined-up TVET employable oriented and business development services in the agri-food sector.

This objective aims to create a collaborative and holistic approach to developing TVET programs and business development services that enhance employability in the agri-food sector.

3. Partnership

The CultiVETing consortium comprises thirteen (13) partners, located in six (6) countries. It includes EU partners (Greece, Germany and Italy) and non-EU partners from Western Balkans countries (Albania and Kosovo). The choice of partners aims at a consortium with a complementarity of knowledge and competences and guarantees a broad implementation of the project results that will be fine-tuned based on the different national settings. The partnership has been developed to provide the capacity and expertise to deliver the ambitious objectives of the project. The consortium includes partners with a strong record in the field.

	Partner name	Country
P1	European Association of Institutes of Vocational Training: EVBB EVBB provides a network of vocational training institutions across Europe, promoting quality education and training standards.	Germany
P2	AKMI S.A.: AKMI AKMI offers extensive experience in implementing large-scale education and training programs, particularly in the agrifood sector.	Greece
P3	Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo: VIS VIS specializes in international cooperation and sustainable development, focusing on vulnerable communities.	Italy
P4	Finanziaria Ligure per lo Sviluppo Economico: FI.L.S.E FI.L.S.E. brings expertise in economic development, financial support, and business incubation.	Italy
P5	BK Consult GmbH: BK-CON BK Consult provides consultancy services in project management, focusing on vocational training and educational initiatives.	Germany
P6	Don Bosco Center of Tirana: Don Bosko Center The center offers vocational training programs and community services, emphasizing youth empowerment and social inclusion.	Albania
P7	Albanian Network for Rural Development: ANRD ANRD focuses on rural development and sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local communities and businesses.	Albania
P8	Agricultural University of Tirana: AUT AUT contributes academic expertise and research capabilities in agricultural sciences and technology.	Albania
P9	APPK APPK promotes professional development and partnerships, enhancing vocational training quality and relevance.	Kosovo

P10	Network of Organisation of Rural Development of Kosova: NORDK NORDK supports rural development initiatives, fostering sustainable agricultural practices and community engagement.	Kosovo
P11	Bahri Haxha: BAHRI HAZHA Educational Centre of Vocational training that offers training programmes for more than 970 students.	Kosovo
P12	Ministry of Agriculture and rural Development of Albania: MARD MARD offers policy support and alignment with national agricultural development strategies.	Albania
P13	Kuvendi i Komunes Prishtine: KKP The municipality supports urban-rural linkages, promoting sustainable development and entrepreneurship.	Kosovo

Context

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the two study visits conducted as part of the CultivETing project's Task 2.3 Peer learning activities.

The study visits were organized in Athens (Greece) and Liguria (Italy), and the aim is to ensure that key public and private stakeholders, as well as policymakers from Kosovo and Albania, are well-informed about active labor market policies, effective governance of local development processes, and business development services within the agri-food sector.

The visits were designed for representatives of the partner organizations as follows:

The one hosted in Italy by **FILSE**, involving participants from **Don Bosco Center of Tirana, ANRD , NORDK and KPP** and the one hosted in Greece by **AKMI** involving participants from **AUT, APPK, MARD and Bahri Xaxha**. Both study visits lasted 5 days (including travel dates).

This initiative aims to enhance collaboration, share best practices, and ultimately improve the effectiveness of labor market policies and business development services in the agri-food sector.

Main Goals and Activities

1. Objectives

- To enhance the knowledge and understanding of active labor market policies, measures, and effective governance of local development processes within the agri-food sector among key stakeholders from Kosovo and Albania.
- To facilitate the exchange of best practices, experiences, and lessons learned in the implementation of active labor market policies and business development services within the agri-food sector.
- To foster collaboration and networking among public and private sector actors, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders from Kosovo and Albania in the field of agri-food sector development.

2. Expected Results

- Increased awareness and comprehension among participants regarding active labor market policies, measures, and governance mechanisms specific to the agri-food sector.
- Identification and dissemination of best practices and successful case studies in the implementation of business development services within the agri-food sector, leading to improved strategies and approaches for local development.
- Enhanced capacity of participants to design, implement, and monitor effective active labor market policies and business development services tailored to the needs of the agri-food sector.
- Strengthened partnerships and collaboration between key stakeholders from Kosovo and Albania, fostering sustainable cooperation for the development of the agri-food sector.
- Development of a network of peers committed to ongoing knowledge exchange, support, and mutual learning in the field of agri-food sector development, contributing to long-term sustainability and growth in the region.

These objectives were achieved with detailed planification of the two study visits and the activities included.

Alignment of private key actors and policy makers with active labor market policies, measures and effective governance of local development processes and business development services in the Agri-food sector.

1. Highlights from the Study Visit and its Discussions

The CultivETing study visits offered participants comprehensive insights into the agrifood sector, focusing on the integration of technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainable practices across different regions. Participants had the opportunity to explore innovative approaches, understood the importance of preserving cultural heritage, and emphasized on the role of education and mentorship in fostering entrepreneurship.

- In both study visits, the use of technology emerged as a crucial factor in transforming traditional agricultural practices.
- The visits to various agricultural enterprises in Liguria and Athens highlighted the importance of preserving cultural heritage while embracing modern technology
- The study visits in Liguria highlighted the significance of close collaboration between government bodies and private sector cooperatives in promoting sustainable agriculture.
- Participants observed the importance of local collaboration in driving both innovation and sustainability.
- A common theme across all study visits was the need to support small-scale producers, particularly those in remote or mountainous areas.
- Education and capacity-building emerged as key themes during the visits

2. Experiences and knowledge gained

- The approach of linking agriculture with tourism—a strategy that has effectively enhanced the valorization of local products and supported the development of rural areas and that could be easily implemented in Albania given the exponential growth of the touristic sector.
- New insights into active labor market policies and governance in the agrifood sector, particularly in Liguria. Understanding the role of cooperative associations and trade organizations in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- Enhanced understanding of business development services and local development processes within the agrifood sector.
- Practical knowledge from site visits to innovative agrifood enterprises and institutions.
- The different perspective on the importance of local collaboration and the role of cooperative models in fostering sustainable development in the agrifood sector.
- The realization that technology is not just a start; it is a necessity to keep agriculture alive and competitive in the 21st century.
- Understanding of the importance of preserving traditional cultivation methods
- Discussions on the role and social impact of the Sustainable Development Goals were inspiring. I realized that every entrepreneur who is supported is a step towards such an innovative future.
- A clear reflection on the importance of technology in agriculture, entrepreneurship and how essential digital solutions are for improving efficiency and sustainability in agricultural production.
- Learned more about the role of non-formal education in supporting entrepreneurship and the importance of helping young people develop new business ideas
- The importance of business development services for local economic growth and effective strategic planning.
- The sector's adaptability to Greece's unique climate and geography.
- Effective business support can drive significant local development

3. Highlights

- Visit to Pyrgos Vasilissis: Demonstrated the integration of traditional practices with modern technology in wine production. The winetasting in the end of the tour
- Markou Vineyards presentation: The story of one of the oldest vineyards in Greece, today produces one of the winery's most popular wines. This moment made me appreciate even more the connections between the solid earth, the history and the products it offers.
- The site visit at the factory of pol (la Fattoria di Pol) which is one of the most interesting and innovative way of doing agriculture by using aeroponics.
- The visit to Azienda Agricola “I Formaggi Del Boschetto” owned by Aldo Lomanto. This household family business produces cheese using old traditional methods, surprisingly; this does not make it old fashioned but unique.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Conclusions

- The critical importance of promoting public-private partnerships. Liguria's success in promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development is largely due to the close collaboration between government bodies and private sector cooperatives. This model could

be replicated in the Western Balkans to enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

- The importance of supporting small-scale producers, especially in remote or mountainous areas. The dedication of these entrepreneurs to preserving their traditions while embracing innovation is vital for the sustainability of rural communities. Providing targeted support and creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity building will be crucial in helping these businesses thrive.
- The importance of local collaboration and cooperative models in fostering innovation and sustainability. The visits and discussions highlighted the critical role of regional institutions and enterprises in promoting best practices in the agrifood sector.

Recommendations:

- **Encourage greater collaboration between local and regional agrifood enterprises and educational institutions to foster innovation.**
It is essential since it will foster innovation combining practical knowledge with academic research. While enterprises can offer real-world challenges educational institutions will give technical competence and support them to stay competitive through research-driven innovations.
- **Promote and support cooperative models that have proven successful in Liguria, as they offer sustainable and scalable solutions.**
Those models often support small producers, pooling resources to reduce costs, increase market access, and enhance competitiveness. Replicating this model in the Western Balkans can help foster inclusive growth and empower rural communities.
- **Future visits should include more hands-on workshops to further enhance practical knowledge and skills.**
Practical and experiential workshops deepen participants' understanding of techniques and technologies in agrifood production, ensuring they can directly apply new knowledge to their local contexts.
- **Promote technology integration in traditional agriculture to ensure a balance between modernization and heritage preservation.**
This approach ensures that rural farmers can improve productivity and sustainability without losing the historical and cultural value of their practices.
- **Expand mentorship and training programs for young entrepreneurs to drive sustainable growth and innovation.**
Mentorship and training programs can provide the guidance and resources necessary to help new agrifood businesses thrive in a competitive market, fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems in rural areas.
- **Support small-scale producers with targeted assistance to ensure their sustainability in a competitive market.**
Providing them with financial, technical, and strategic support can ensure their sustainability, which is critical for preserving biodiversity, local economies, and cultural heritage.
- **Utilize cultural heritage and regional branding to promote unique agrifood products and increase their market value.**
This approach differentiates local products in the global marketplace, helping small producers capture niche markets and attract tourism-related opportunities.

Peer Learning Activities Lessons Learned

The peer learning activities provided valuable insights and key takeaways for future actions and improvements in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkans. Below are the main lessons learned:

1. Importance of Public-Private Partnerships:

Successful collaboration between government bodies and private sector cooperatives, as demonstrated in Liguria, led to sustainable development and enhanced competitiveness of the local agri-food sector. This model of cooperation could be effectively replicated in Kosovo and Albania to strengthen the resilience of their agricultural sectors. [[World Bank Group, Exploring the Potential of Agriculture in the Western Balkans, 2018](#)]

2. Role of Technology in Agriculture:

Participants observed that technology plays a critical role in modernizing agricultural practices and increasing efficiency while preserving traditional methods. Innovations such as aeroponics and digital technologies were highlighted as key tools for improving productivity and ensuring sustainability. [[Sat Kumar Tomer, How Agri-Tech is Changing the Face of Sustainable and Industrial Agriculture, Global AG TECH Initiative, 2024](#)]

3. Support for Small-Scale Producers:

Small-scale producers, especially in remote and mountainous areas, are vital for preserving cultural heritage and maintaining the social fabric of rural communities. Providing targeted support through mentorship, training programs, and financial assistance is essential to ensure their sustainability in competitive markets. [[European Commission, Payments for small farmers, 2023](#)]

4. Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:

Ongoing knowledge exchange and capacity-building initiatives are necessary to empower local actors to implement active labor market policies and governance mechanisms. Peer learning activities fostered a deeper understanding of business development services and local development processes, which can be applied to improve policies in the region. [[European Commission, Building stronger Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems \(AKIS\) to foster advice, knowledge and innovation in agriculture and rural areas, 2019](#)]

5. Integration of Agriculture with Other Sectors:

Linking agriculture with tourism emerged as an effective strategy to add value to local products and promote rural development. This approach could be implemented in the Western Balkans, leveraging the growing tourism sector to enhance the visibility and marketability of agricultural products. [[Gálvez Nogales, E., Puntsagdavaa, A., Casari, G. & Bennett, A., Linking agriculture and tourism to strengthen agrifood systems in Asia and the Pacific, FAO, 2023](#)]

6. Value of Cooperative Models:

Cooperative models proved to be successful in supporting sustainable agricultural practices and economic development. Encouraging the formation of such cooperatives in Kosovo and Albania could lead to a more effective governance of local development processes. [[Marsh J., How Agriculture Cooperatives Increase Productivity, AGRILINKS, 2023](#)]

7. Preservation of Cultural Heritage:

Balancing modernization with the preservation of traditional cultivation methods is key to maintaining the authenticity and uniqueness of local products. Participants emphasized the need to promote regional branding and cultural heritage to increase the market value of agri-food products. [[Agnoletti M., Santoro A., Agricultural heritage systems and agrobiodiversity. Biodiversity Conservation, volume 31, pages 2231–2241, 2022](#)]

8. Focus on Youth and Entrepreneurship:

Empowering young entrepreneurs through tailored programs and resources will be crucial for driving innovation and sustainable growth in the agri-food sector. Providing opportunities for youth engagement can help bridge the gap between traditional agricultural practices and modern business strategies. [[FAO, Committee on World Food Security, Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in agriculture and food systems for food security and nutrition, 2021](#)]

Annexes

Liguria Study Visit

1. Attendance

The study visit in Liguria was organized by FILSE, involving 24 participants.

FILSE staff:

Maria Nives Riggio, Vice Director

Pietro De Martino, EU projects coordinator

Valeria Rainisio, EU Projects Manager

Sabrina Farnè, staff of the Imperia office expert in supporting agricultural companies

Federico La Torre, EU projects communication manager;

Paolo Tachella, social economy sector;

Erica Lombardo, social economy sector.

Speakers, representatives of local authorities, associations and agricultural companies involved in the study visit:

Laura Muraglia, Head of European and International Affairs Sector - Regione Liguria

Riccardo Jannone, Head of Agricultural Policy Sector - Regione Liguria

Daniela Minetti, Agriculture, Tourism, Training and Work Officer - Regione Liguria

Federica Crotti - CIA Agricoltori Italiani Liguria

Lara Servetti, Head of Agri-Food and Fisheries Sector - Lega Coop

Sofia Bodra, Coordinator of urban green maintenance - Il Rastrello Cooperativa Sociale

Augusto Comes, President - Confcooperative Fedagri Pesca Liguria

Luca Cappanera - Cooperativa di Comunità Borghi Sparsi

Pietro De Marinis, agronomist and researcher at the Agricultural University of Milan - PROGETTO OSA – Orti Sperimentali at Arena Albaro

Fabienne Moretta, GRUPPO FOS - Microcosmo Lab

Filippo Costa, Costa Edutainment

Paolo Gazzotti, owner of La Fattoria di Pol

Aldo Lomanto, owner of Azienda Agricola I Formaggi Del Boschetto

Patrizia Martini, phytopathology and defense – IRF - Istituto Regionale per la Floricoltura

Marcello Militello, cultivation techniques – IRF- Istituto Regionale per la Floricoltura

Serena Viglione, remediation and micropropagation - IRF- Istituto Regionale per la Floricoltura

Lucio Ferrari, owner of Azienda Agricola Il Colle “Yogurt puro”

Matteo Dalmasso, owner of Interra Agricola Bio e Natura

Giulia Zappa and Roberto Martini, owners of CORNUS Agri-fermentary

The Project Cultivating partners, represented by the following participants:

Don Bosco: Don Nyika

ANRD: Redi Asabella

NORDK: Teuta Jaha Hoxha

ABDYL FRASHERI: Almir Abdurramani

2. Activities

The Ligurian study visit was divided into two main sessions:

1) The morning of Day 1 was dedicated: to a workshop aimed to provide participants with an in-depth overview of the Ligurian agricultural ecosystem; meetings with institutions, policy-makers and the main associative and cooperative realities, which presented a picture of how agricultural activity works in Liguria, the public funds availability and management, the laws framework, who are the main actors in the agricultural regional and local ecosystem, the problems related to the territory and the actions/policies implemented in order to support the development of agriculture in Liguria in general.

The day started with a welcome and orientation session by Maria Nives Riggio, Vice General Director - FILSE and Laura Muraglia, Head of European and International Affairs Sector - Regione Liguria.

The morning workshop entered in the topic discussion with overview presentations on active labor market policies and effective governance in the agri-food sector and panel discussions with representatives from public sectors, sharing insights and experiences.

The speakers were:

- Riccardo Jannone, Head of Agricultural Policy Sector - Regione Liguria
- Daniela Minetti, Agriculture, Tourism, Training and Work Officer - Regione Liguria.

They explained the governance in the agri-food sector, how agricultural policies managed by the State and the Region. They also gave an overview of the Ligurian territory, the main agricultural sectors and business, including the close link with tourism, which allows an important valorization of the hinterland and of the excellent products of Ligurian agriculture (olive oil, flowers, basil, exc.).

The second part of the morning workshop continued with an interactive sessions on business development services and local development processes with representatives from private sectors (cooperatives and associations), sharing insights and experiences.

The speakers were:

- Federica Crotti - CIA Agricoltori Italiani Liguria – Italian farmers’ confederation,
- Lara Servetti, Head of Agri-Food and Fisheries Sector - Lega Coop and the success case of the associated agricultural enterprise “Il Rastrello Cooperativa Sociale” (Sofia Bodra, Coordinator of urban green maintenance),
- Augusto Comes, President - Confcooperative Fedagripesca Liguria and the success case of the associated agricultural enterprise Cooperativa “Comunità Borghi Sparsi” (Luca Cappanera).

2) From the afternoon of the 1st day, site visits took place to introduce the participating partners to best cases of Ligurian projects and companies in the agricultural sector, combining tradition with technology, starting from Genoa, and then focusing on young companies from Western Liguria.



CIA Agricoltori Italiani Liguria – Italian farmers’ confederation
Federica Crotti



Head of Agricultural Policy Sector - Regione Liguria
Riccardo Jannone



Visits to Biosfera, urban vegetable gardens and Microcosmo Lab

Site visits in Genova

In the afternoon of the first day, the guests embarked on a study tour of Genova that started on the green areas at Arena Albaro and then to the labs at SIIT PMI – Regional Technological District – Integrated Intelligent Systems, a research and innovation centre, adjacent to FILSE BIC Incubator in Genova. These stops were intended to showcase two different layers of the research project “Progetto OSA - Orti Sperimentali” which were presented by Professor Pietro De Marinis from University of Genoa and Milan and the IT industry Gruppo FOS.

At the end of the first study visit day, the participants visited the tropical plants and animals thrive in the protected environment of Biosfera, the most iconic and scenic botanical garden in Genoa thanks to its unique design by the archi-star Renzo Piano.

The speakers of this afternoon slots were:

- Pietro De Marinis, agronomist and researcher at the Agricultural University of Milan for PROGETTO OSA – Orti Sperimentali - Arena Albaro
- Fabienne Moretta, GRUPPO FOS for Microcosmo Lab
- Filippo Costa, Costa Edutainment for Biosfera - A botanical garden in Genoa - a "drop" of steel and glass.

Site visits in Western Liguria

With the 2nd day it started the two-days full immersion in discovering best practices in agriculture in the west coast of Liguria, connecting tradition and innovation.

- The visit started moving from Genova to “La Fattoria di Pol» - Innovative agriculture aeroponics startup settled in Borghetto Santo Spirito, focused on the construction of sustainable and zero-impact aeroponic systems, proposing it as a solution to the problems that agriculture has encountered in the last 70 years: consumption of soil and resources, pollution of land and aquifers, destruction of biodiversity and ecosystems. Aeroponics is innovative cultivation that allows plants to develop without soil, where the roots are sprayed with water and nutrients. La Fattoria di Pol is already in production with aeroponic systems for the production of basil and salads in a sustainable way. FILSE takes advantage of the visit to describe the entrepreneurial path SMARTCUP LIGURIA, the regional business plan competition managed by FILSE, as La Fattoria di Pol won the Clean Tech & Energy category with special mention Climate Change in 2022.
- The following stop of the study visit passed to the farm “I Formaggi del Boschetto” in Albenga, recognized in 2003 as the Slow Food presidium awarded by a well renowned Italian association that identifies and protects both quality and diversity of gastronomic products. This marketing leverage supported the traditional cheese production of the farm and opened to new fundings and also collaborations with other local industries. During this site visit, FILSE explained in detail how the Quality products valorization procedures work in Italy.
- Last site visit of the second day was in Sanremo, hosting by IRF - Regional Institute for Floriculture, an instrumental body of the Liguria Region aiming to promote the economic development and competitiveness of the Ligurian horticultural business system through the promotion, implementation and coordination of research and experimentation activities. IRF has a big cultivation area, for cultivation trials in the open field and in greenhouses (insect-proof greenhouses for the healthy conservation of varieties and for the creation of a basic stock of restored material, greenhouses for acclimatization of ex-vitro material, greenhouses for selection and cultivation trials with particular attention to energy saving, the use of renewable energy and sustainable phytosanitary management). Furthermore, IRF has a surface area of approximately 700 mq intended for laboratories and culture rooms (breeding capacity, approximately 10.000 plants in vitro). The experts at the Regional Institute for Floriculture in Sanremo provided us valuable insights into flower cultivation and preservation techniques that make Liguria, and this area in particular, be the unchallenged leader on the flower industry at national level. During this site visit, FILSE explained in detail how the path of Agri-academy, the business plan academy for agri-sector, managed by FILSE on behalf of Liguria Region Body.



Visit La Fattoria di Pol



Visits I Formaggi del Boschetto, La Fattoria di Pol

The third day was focused in the agricultural companies operating in the hinterland of Imperia, in an mountainous context.

- The first visit of the day was at the Azienda Agricola "Il Colle", close to Pieve di Teco village, which produces "Purø - essentially Yogurt". Always passionate about agriculture and breeding, the Ferrari family has decided to broaden its interest by producing a high-quality product. All production is guaranteed thanks to the herd of Jersey cows. Purø was born from the idea of

creating a yogurt in the most natural way possible without adding proteins and thickeners. The breeding is based on animal welfare which allows for a more limited but high-quality milk richer in terms of nutrients and flavor as well as a longer and more relaxing life for the cows. "Il Colle" company is an example of a family business, which has combined love for the territory, respect for the environment, tradition and innovation.

- Along the road from Pieve di Teco to Rezzo, climbing towards the mountains of Western Liguria in Alta Valle Arroscia, we met Matteo Dalmastro from Interra, who showed us the olive groves of his agricultural company, managed together with two other young people, who they moved to the countryside from the city due to their passion for agriculture. Interra is totally nature, environment and return to origins, fundamental values for a healthy and slow life. Through an exclusive short supply chain relationship, Interra offers foods from natural and organic farming in limited quantities; its secret is not quantity, which is impossible to obtain in this kind of territory, but quality based on sustainable development and biodiversity. During this visit slot, FILSE spoke about the opportunities and services for agricultural SMEs in Liguria.
- The last company we visited is called Cornus settled in the Rezzo village. CORNUS agri-fermentary - of the very young Giulia Zappa and Roberto Martini - is an agricultural company that was born in October 2022 thanks to the strong passion for the territory and for the times of nature. Their cheeses, produced with unselected ferments and starter culture, are made exclusively with the raw milk of goats and cows that live on pasture all year round, thanks to the unique climate of Western Liguria. The result is around twenty unique and difficult to replicate products, including fresh, matured and refined cheeses. Added to the dairy products are those made through the maceration of local raw materials using the lacto-fermentation technique, inspired by oriental processes. To complete the gastronomic offer, the farm also offers the meat of their animals at the end of their career, with a flexible menu that always follows the times of the seasons and the life of the animals.



Visit CORNUS agri-fermentary and Azienda Agricola Il Colle

Athens Study Visit

1. Attendance

The study visit in Athens was organized by AKMI SA, involving 16 participants.

AKMI staff:

Myrto Siarpadani, Head of Projects
Panagiota Papatsori, EU Projects Manager
Marievi Grets, EU Project Manager
Eleftheria Gravani, Communication Manager
Stavroula Tsigou, EU Project Manager

Speakers, representatives of local authorities, associations and agricultural companies involved in the study visit:

Maria Markou, Wine Producer, owner of Markou Vineyards
Andreas Stefanidis, President Academy of Entrepreneurship
Christina Simou, EU Project Manager, Smart Agro Hub
Giorgos Karipidis, CEO of "Bear's Honey" & Beekeeper
Rania Hintiridou, Agricultural University of Athens
Ioannis Baziotis, Associate Professor, Agricultural Museum
Katerina Papadoulis, InnovinAgri
Eleni Athanasiadi, Pirkos Vasilissis

The Project Cultivating partners, represented by the following participants:

APPK: Agron Hajdari
MARD: Albana Meta
Bahri Xaxha: Bashkim Kovaci

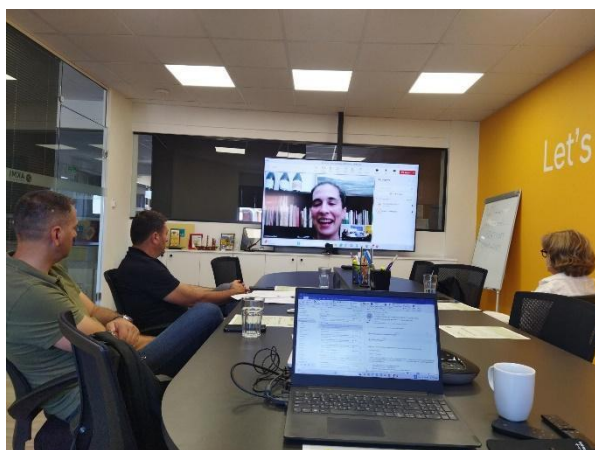
2. Activities

Day 1: The first day of the study visit started with a welcome and orientation session led by Panagiota Papatsori, the EU Project Manager. During this session, the agenda was presented in detail, providing participants with comprehensive information about all aspects of the study visit and the activities scheduled throughout the week.

- The first presentation was from Mrs. Markou Maria, Wine Producer and owner of Markou Vineyards. The Markou Vineyards Winery is one of the eldest artisanal wineries of Athens, fully operational without hiatus since 1908 and one of the first to found a contemporary wine-making and bottling unit in 1983. The Markou Vineyards Winery's portfolio is currently comprised of 12 labels, in their majority Greek varieties that are sold selectively, exported in several countries and awarded annually in international wine fairs and competitions. Mrs. Markou, a fourth-generation owner of the winery, provided an insightful presentation about the establishment and its rich history. She highlighted the various challenges the winery has encountered throughout its operations, including issues related to climate change, fluctuations in market demand, and competition within the agri-food sector. During the discussion, participants engaged in a thoughtful dialogue, exploring strategies the winery has implemented to overcome these challenges, such as adopting sustainable practices, diversifying product offerings, and enhancing marketing efforts to reach new customers. Mrs. Markou's personal experiences added depth to the conversation, fostering a greater understanding of the complexities of running a family-owned winery in today's competitive landscape.
- Following we had a truly engaging session with Mr. Stefanidis Andreas, the President of the Academy of Entrepreneurship, who delivered a presentation on business development

services and local development processes. He introduced us to the Academy of Entrepreneurship and the New Agricultural Generation, two organizations focused on creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the agri-food sector in Greece. Mr. Stefanidis highlighted their efforts to promote agriculture and food systems as appealing career choices for younger generations while actively supporting rural development initiatives. The session encouraged lively discussion and allowed participants to explore how these organizations are fostering innovation and sustainability within the sector.

- The 1st day finished with a visit at AKMI premises. This activity aims to introduce participants to the history and contributions of AKMI as a leading educational institution. The visit highlighted AKMI's commitment to innovative learning approaches and showcase effective practices adopted by various vocational education and training (VET) institutions. By sharing these best practices, participants gained valuable insights into successful strategies for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering collaboration within the VET community.



*Markou Vineyards Winery
Markou Maria, Owner*



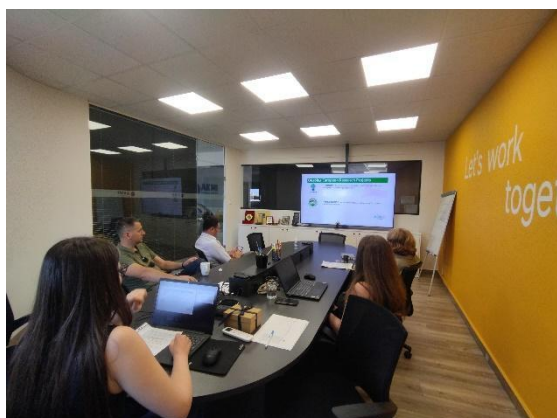
*Business development services and local development processes
Stefanidis Andreas, President Academy of Entrepreneurship*

Day 2: The 2nd day included 3 presentations and a site visit:

- It commenced with a presentation on Smart Agro Hub, a competence center specializing in smart agriculture. This ambitious and dynamic initiative is a collaboration between the Agricultural University of Athens and innovative Greek companies across various fields, including agrotechnology, supply chain management, circular economy, energy, and digital technology. The vision of the competence center is to play a pivotal role in transitioning Greek agriculture into the digital era while creating new business opportunities in the agri-food and agriculture sectors. By pioneering innovative approaches, Smart Agro Hub seeks to transform traditional agricultural practices and enhance sustainability and efficiency within the industry.
- Mr. Karipidis Giorgos, a beekeeper and CEO of Bear's Honey, delivered an insightful presentation on the family business, which has been in operation since 1953. He shared the rich history of the company and discussed the various challenges they have faced over the years, such as fluctuations in market demand, competition, and environmental factors affecting bee populations. Mr. Karipidis elaborated on the strategies the business has

employed to navigate these challenges, including diversification of products and a strong focus on quality. A key emphasis of his presentation was the importance of training and skill enhancement for both himself and his team. He highlighted how continuous learning and professional development have been instrumental in driving the growth and sustainability of their business. In 2003, Bear's Honey made a significant commitment to organic beekeeping practices to ensure the quality of their honey and secure certification. This strategic move has not only enhanced their product quality but has also distinguished them in the marketplace, leading to multiple international awards that recognize the excellence of their honey. Mr. Karipidis's experiences reflect the critical role of innovation and adaptability in the agri-food sector, particularly in maintaining high standards and achieving recognition on a global scale.

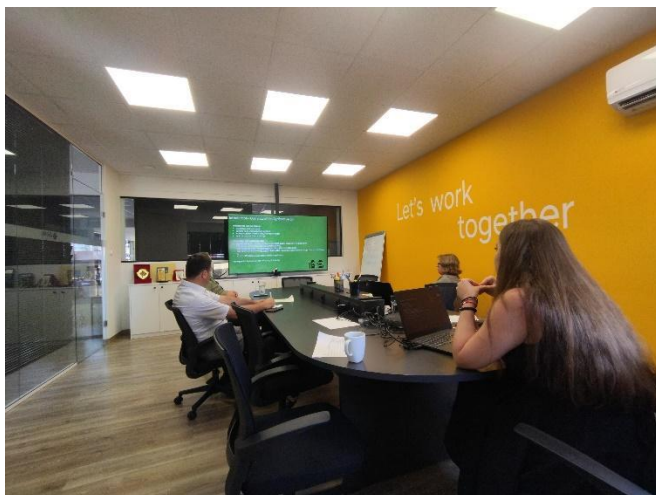
- An overview of the agrifood sector in Greece was presented, highlighting its critical role in the country's economy and its significant contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Mrs. Tsigou emphasized the importance of this sector, discussing key agricultural products, prominent companies, and major export markets. The presentation also identified the main agricultural regions and the challenges they face, such as climate change, resource management, and market volatility. In terms of digital transformation, Greece is actively adopting digital technologies, including precision agriculture, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, blockchain, digital marketing, robotics, and automation. These innovations aim to enhance efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness within the agrifood sector. We concluded that the agrifood sector in Greece holds significant growth potential, driven by quality products, export opportunities, synergies with tourism, the adoption of innovative practices, support from the European Union, cultural heritage, and a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. This combination positions Greece favorably in the global agrifood market, offering exciting opportunities for development and advancement.
- The day finished with the site visit to Queen's Tower Estate. "Pirgos Vasilissis was born out of Queen Amalia's vision of the establishment of a model agricultural facility, where innovative production methods were to be applied aiming to the modernization of the greek agronomy. A vineyard was one the first plantations of the estate. Concerning the formation of 18 hectares of the initial vineyard, experienced viticulturists coming from Megara, were hired. The personality of this model farm embed by its visionary, has been present to date. The tour included a visit to the winery and the organic vineyard, a tour around Queen Amalia and King Otto's Tower, which is a national heritage of recent Greek history, including the surroundings gardens, a tour in the stables with the horses and concluded with wine tasting.



Presentation Smart Agro Hub
Christina Simou, EU Project Manager



Case study Bear's Honey
Karipidis Giorgos, CEO & Beekeeper



Agrifood sector in Greece
Tsigou Stavroula, EU Project Manager



Visit to Pirgos Vasilissis



Visit Pirgos Vasilissis



Day 3: This day as dedicated to the site visit to the Agricultural University of Athens, the Agricultural Museum and the presentation of the InnovinAgri

- The Agricultural University of Athens is the third oldest university in Greece, after the University of Athens and the National Technical University of Athens (Metsovio). It was established by law in 1920 (Law 1844/1920) as an Independent Higher Education Institute with university status under the name of the Highest Agricultural School of Athens

(H.A.S.A.). We visited the campus, giving the participants from the different countries the opportunity to get to know the University in terms of facilities.

- The Agricultural Museum was founded in March 2005 with the aim of highlighting the contribution of the Agricultural University of Athens, for almost a century, to the modernization and development of Greek agriculture and the rural world of the country. We were guided in the Mineral and Rocks Collection, learning about the role of a country's soil composition in agricultural development.
- The final part was the presentation of InnovinAgri that aims to educate the AUA Academic Community in innovation and entrepreneurship matters-issues as well as to efficiently exploit research results of the Institute in the interest of the Academic Community, the Greek economy and society in general. It has 3 basic goals: i) Supporting the exploitation of research results of AUA ii) Supporting the collaboration and information exchange between the Institute, industry and other productive sectors iii) Supporting AUA's students' and researchers' education in innovation and entrepreneurial issues



Agricultural University of Athens – Agricultural Museum – InnovinAgri