

Organic & agroecological cases in AgriSpin project: an overview

Introduction

The AgriSpin¹ Project aims at creating space for agricultural innovations through amplifying good examples of innovation support systems and through multi-actor learning about ways to stimulate innovation and remove obstacles. The project has tried to achieve this aim by exploring a number of selected innovation cases during 13 [cross-visits](#) in the project partners' countries. Participants in each visit endeavoured to gain a deeper understanding of innovation processes and inspiration for improvements of the services being offered, finding a method for exploring innovation practices and the role of support service providers and contributing to the creation of a professional network of innovation support agents.

This document is a compilation of cases with an organic and agroecological focus explored throughout the cross-visits. The list and description of other cases that were part of cross-visits in various countries is available in the [synthesis report](#) compiled by the AgriSpin team. The tools used in the cross-visits as well as the lessons learned during the project are outlined in the [inspirational guide](#). A more detailed analysis on the innovation support practices of based on the studied is [available online](#). To stay up-to-date with the final project recommendations, visit [AgriSpin website](#) and its social media.

Kirkkokallio Agroecological Concept

Location: Finland

Objectives

The actors in the area formed an integrated system where water, nutrients and energy circulate. The actors make use of each other's side products. The solution improves eco-efficiency of the cluster which includes a processing meat factory, greenhouse vegetable production plant (heated on waste products), organic tomato farm, biogas plant and others. The basic idea is that industries waste a lot of energy and produce by-products that could be utilized more intelligently. Clusters of companies could benefit from these energies and by-products. An ecological cluster where suitable industries are situated near each other enhances the total efficiency of its members. Industries that use agricultural materials have a good opportunity to utilize these principles. There is a lot of usable energy in biological materials and their by-products are mostly suitable for recycling. An agroecological industrial cluster is also a business opportunity.

Innovative point

The innovation is an integrated value chain. It is a process innovation. The concept is an example of how to complete local resources with the needed ones to form a harmonic ecological system. The concept can be applied in similar situations where there are enough excess heat and wastes available.

Results/outcomes

Kirkkokallio has been growing continuously since the 1980s. Currently, the solution includes a local cluster of over 10 companies. The by-products and waste heat are utilized in making biodiesel, biogas, and heating green houses. Wind energy is also produced. The efficiencies of material and energy use are improved because of the concept. Total revenue of the companies has reached around 100 million euros. The cluster employs more than 200 people directly and indirectly. It attracts a growing number of business and environmentally-oriented visitors yearly.

Funding

RDP funds were applied to develop the cluster. These together with the R&D funding paid by the companies

¹  AgriSpin is a multi-actor project that received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 652642. The goal of the partners has been to identify and recommend best fit practices for innovation processes and innovation support services. More info about AgriSpin project: agrispin.eu

and the National Fund for Innovations (TEKES) were crucial for the development. During the years 2001-2014 the cluster grew quite intensively. New investors were found and new companies joined. Eventually, as wind power subsidies became available, also windmills were built and foreign money got more involved.

Link to cross-visit report http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Finland_Cross-Visit-Report.pdf#page=18

Website/video <http://tiny.cc/71ksly>

Feed Wall System development at Tikka Farm

Location: Finland

Objectives Technological innovation where the idea of a young architect was turned into a sellable product using full-scale farm testing. It is a new barn wall design for an organic dairy farm that reduces width and building cost of barns. It also reduces the risk of contamination and enhances animal health. The Feed Wall System means that the cows are fed through the specially designed wall of the barn. The barn is narrow and the feeding wagon is not driven inside so that the building is lower and there is less risk of contamination. The quality of feed is better and cows eat more.

Innovative point The innovation is a new building and an innovative wall design. It is a technological innovation.

Results/outcomes Now there are ca. 170 Feed Wall barns in Finland (2000-2016). The present version is patented and sold to several countries including SWE, DEN, FR, NO, D, RU and NL.

Link to cross-visit report http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Finland_Cross-Visit-Report.pdf#page=11

Website/video <http://tiny.cc/z2ksly>

Socio-economic innovation at Hofgut Oberfeld farm

Location: Germany

Objectives The farming family acts as employee of a citizens' driven foundation in close economic and social linkage and cooperation with on-farm micro-enterprises for food processing, direct selling, on-farm-shopping, catering, on farm-restaurant and social enterprises for care-farming with handicapped children.

Innovative point Social economic on-farm-innovation with strong integration of local citizens as shareholders and co-workers. This Farming is in the framework of CSA, community supported agriculture embedded in a warm network of local and regional actors for bio-dynamic farming, micro-enterprises for processing, direct selling and on-farm services.

Results/outcomes Farming family Kathrin and Thomas Goebel started July 2006 as a Demeter farm with dairy cattle, seeds, nursery, bakery, dairy and direct marketing. The farming business was set up as SME-limited company. Numerous Darmstadt families and individuals became shareholders of the new micro-stock company in agriculture under Demeter and organic farming directives since 2009.

Link to cross-visit report <http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CV-Report-Germany.pdf>

Website/video <http://tiny.cc/tjlsly>

Training young professionals for the job in the organic sector

Location: Germany

Objectives The trainee program for the organic sector was initiated in the wake of the German federal program of organic farming, which aimed at raising the area of organically farmed land in Germany. To cope with this aim, more well-trained organic advisers were needed. the trainee program was set up to qualify them. Nowadays, the program is open for trainees from the whole sector, which gain an understanding and a network of the whole organic food chain. Each year, 25 trainees from enterprises and organizations all across Germany are qualified within the program.

Innovative point The case is a unique example for the power of participatory approaches within a sector. On company alone would be too small to set up an own trainee program, but the collaboration within the sector allows to qualify young professionals according to the demands on the job. On top of that, it helps to strengthen networking within the sector.

Results/outcomes	Since the first steps in 2002, 325 trainees were qualified within the program; every year between 70 and 85 % are taken over or stay in company after the traineeship. More than 100 companies participated until now (companies that apply for the first time are preferred). The Trainee programme is very known and highly appreciated by the enterprises; graduates of the program have a good image (based on a survey in 2015). Meanwhile graduates of the program are found in responsible and leading positions all over the sector (a survey is planned).
Funding	The program is co.-funded by the German federal program of organic farming and by the participating companies.
Link to cross-visit report	http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CV-Report-Germany.pdf#page=14
Website/video	http://tiny.cc/20ksly

EFKARPON-HELLENIC SUPER FOODS	
Location: Greece	
Objectives	Efkarpon-Hellenic Super foods is a new generation cooperative (NGC) involved in the cultivation, processing and marketing of four innovative (for Greece) agricultural products (gojiberry, black chockberry, blueberry and sea buckthorn) following organic farming standards. Efkarpon responded to the needs of innovative smallholders (including new-entrants who joined farming due to the economic crisis) facing financial and land constraints (small and fragmented land ownership) by creating the conditions for its members to participate in a vertically integrated production scheme.
Innovative point	The innovation concerns an initiative that pioneered the introduction of super foods, esp. gojiberry, in Greece and Europe. It invested at the peak of the financial crisis and contributed to the revival of collaborative schemes in the Thessaly region, setting an example for other smallholders. Its endeavour contributed to the revival of collaborative schemes in the Thessaly region, setting an example for all smallholders.
Results/outcomes	Efkarpon has attracted the interest of both individual consumers and food companies. Nowadays it collaborates with supermarket networks operating at national level. During 2015 its processing unit in Mataraga was completed and thus in 2016 the coop is going to launch new products in the market. The coop plans to engage in both wholesale and retail marketing as well as to operate its processing unit throughout the year (through contracts with non-members). Furthermore, it aspires to contribute to the development of rural tourism in the area.
Funding	The processing unit was included in the local Leader Programme and funded with 209.500 euros (accounting for 1/3 of its total cost; the remaining amount was obtained through self-financing). The overall cost of the investment exceeds 2 million euros and – except from the Leader financing – it has been covered by self-financing
Link to cross-visit report	http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Report- CV Greece.pdf#page=13
Website/video	http://www.efkarpon.com/portal/index.php/en/ ; http://tiny.cc/r0ksly

ORTI ETICI: Orticulture, Economy, Technique, Innovative social inclusion	
Location: Tuscany, Italy	
Objectives	The project Orti ETICI was started in 2008 and is aimed to promote “responsible innovation” in the field of agricultural production and social inclusion. The project combines sustainable farming and social rehabilitation through the employment of persons belonging to vulnerable groups and with low contractual capacity.
Innovative point	It is an example of social innovation (social farming): this experience mobilizes the resources of a territory in order to provide innovative services to the local community through a partnership between farmers, social cooperatives and local authorities. People with disability produce vegetables that are sold directly to local consumers.
Results/outcomes	This innovation is now implemented at local scale (Province of Pisa) but it is potentially repeatable in other territories. By far, 60 people with disability have been included in the project and among them around 40%



developed a good technical competence; one of them is working stably in the organic farm partner of the project.

Link to cross-visit report	http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Report-Cross-Visit-Tuscany-March.pdf#page=9
Website/video	www.ortietici.it

ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY CHAIN FOR OLD WHEAT VARIETIES – FLORIDDIA FARM

Location: Tuscany, Italy

Objectives	The innovation proposed consisted in a process of rediscovery and cultivation of old wheat varieties and progressively the production of bread and pasta. Started in one organic farm in the province of Pisa (Pratini Family Farm- Floriddia), this process gradually involves researchers (genetists of the University of Florence), other farms, advisors of the Tuscan coordination of Organic farmers (CTPB-Coordinamento Toscano Produttori Biologici) and international networks and associations. It is an example of a collaborative approach aimed at the setting of cultivation techniques of old varieties of wheat in order to optimize yields in an organic production system.
Innovative point	This experience can be considered a radical, social innovation in the context of bread supply chain because of different reasons, such as: the collaborative approach in creating a network among different actors (farmers, researchers, extensionists, consumers, associations) around the same sustainability principles; the valorization of peer to peer exchange of knowledge in order to share and spread sustainable farming and production practices; the impact it has not only at local community but also at a broader level, because of the involvement of national and international network working on preservation and exchange of seeds.
Results/outcomes	This social innovation has produced different effects. At the farm level it has offered opportunity to become part of a wide international network and to consolidate their role within the local community. An expected future effect is a stronger farmer's engagement with the seed reproduction since so far it has been considered the main weakness of the process. The success of the collaboration with the researchers of Florence University is strongly linked to the ways through which the researchers and the farmer interact, grounded on a tacit acknowledgment of the equal dignity of knowledge and skills, which are pooled to achieve shared goals (the conservation of biodiversity, the spreading of organic farming, the production of healthy food).
Link to cross-visit report	http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Report-Cross-Visit-Tuscany-March.pdf#page=14
Website/video	www.ilmulinoapietra.it

Bio-district: innovative territorial governance involving organic producers and local stakeholders

Location: Campania, Italy

Objectives	A bio-district is a bottom-up organisation where farmers, citizens, tourism operators, associations and public authorities enter into an agreement for the sustainable management of local resources, based on organic production and consumption. Examples of activities within the bio-district are short food chain, purchasing groups, organic canteens in public offices and schools. In bio-districts, it is a must to link the promotion of organic produce with the promotion of the land and its special characteristics. This way it can fully realise its economic, social and cultural potential.
Innovative point	The key point of this bio-district model is that, instead of helping individual farms through measures, AIAB, the organic farmers' association, brings together a variety of local actors. So, public administration, restaurants, canteens, tourism business and so on worked out a common strategy for the development of organic food & farming in Cilento and the area itself, based around organic principles. The idea behind this approach is to create and reinforce links that benefit everyone involved: organic farmers get better market access and exposure, consumers benefit from transparency about the origins of their food and enjoy fresh, organically grown local products, the tourism operators offer new sights or destinations (eco trails and agri-tourism farms), and public authorities ensure food security, i.e. define the ways of meeting food needs of local communities.
Results/outcomes	Bio-district Cilento now includes 33 municipalities and 450 organic farms (23% of tot. organic producers in



Campania). 14 more bio-districts were set up across Italy and several more in other countries. The impact for the area of Cilento is diverse. In the last 2 years a 20% increase of turnover of organic farmers and companies was registered. The bio-district created a network of 20 restaurants promoting local produce. Finally, the share of organically managed land has increased.

Link to cross-visit report http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CV_report_Campania_final.pdf

Website/video <http://www.biodistretto.net>; <http://tiny.cc/14ksly>

KARABELEKO, AGRO-ECOLOGICAL & SOCIAL FARM

Location: Basque country, Spain

Objectives	<p>Karabeleko is an agro-ecological farm created by the collaboration of three different entities from different sectors that decided to create a common project combining organic farming with psychological therapy. The project was started with certain common objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop a pioneer research in organic agriculture.• To develop rehabilitation, therapy and inclusion work for people with mental illness.• To promote and disclose the values of the project through biodiversity, local participation, knowledge and culture. <p>For this purpose a network of economic activity has been created. The benefits are used to support the three objectives mentioned above.</p>
Innovative point	<p>Creating a space where farming, research, environmental protection, psychological support, raising awareness of mental illness and reduction of social exclusion come together is considered as the major innovative points in this case.</p>
Results/outcomes	<p>The creation of this innovative farm contributes to: Create new knowledge. Raise awareness about the mentally ill people. Shows to consumers new varieties of vegetables and how they can be cooked. It helps to solve the issues between users and professionals. It provides a service for professional and amateur farmers that demand new varieties. School visits are organised where the children can interact with farmers and mentally ill people.</p>
Link to cross-visit report	<p>http://agrispin.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Report_Cross_Visit_Basque.pdf#page=16</p>
Website/video	<p>http://tiny.cc/nzksly</p>