

Common borders. Common solutions.



1st NEWSLETTER

LOC Food-Local Development and Cross Border Cooperation
In the area of Agricultural Products and traditional Food



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Introduction to the LOC-FOOD project

WELCOME to the first newsletter of the LOC-FOOD project. In this issue we shall introduce the project and the partners and discuss the work that has been carried out so far.

Agriculture forms an important part of the economy of the regions and countries in which the project partners are located. Many high-quality traditional foods are produced that are not widely distributed, from indigenous varieties of crop plants and animal breeds to unique processed products and regional speciality dishes. Promotion of these traditional foods will help support the economy of these areas, help preserve rare varieties and traditional techniques, and help raise safety and quality standards.

The LOC-FOOD project is funded by the European Union's Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 with ≈0.8 M Euros. The full title of the project is "Local Development and Cross Border Cooperation in the area of Agricultural Products and Traditional Food". The project will run for two years, plus a small extension due to unavoidable delays caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. It is due to end in September 2022.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the economy relating to the agriculture and food sectors in the regions of intervention.

To achieve this objective, several different actions are being carried out.

1. A database of high-quality and traditional local foods is being created that will be accessible to all.
2. Files will be prepared for selected foods for inclusion in the EU geographical indications scheme.
3. Information on the current market situation in the region of intervention has been researched and will be disseminated as appropriate.
4. Information on the best practices in local food production in other European countries has been researched and will be disseminated as appropriate.
5. An information pack on the procedures for obtaining geographical indication will be prepared for producers and local authorities.
6. Guidelines on marketing of traditional foods have been prepared and will be made available to producers and local authorities.
7. Guidelines on the local food systems in each country have been prepared and will be made available to producers and local authorities.
8. Training events will be held for producers and local authorities.
9. Local foods will be promoted to the general public and to visitors by means of brief shopping guides and more in-depth culinary guides.



10. Networks of producers and distributors of local foods will be established together with a central information desk that will allow the exchange of information and encourage collaborative activities. This is an international project with six partners from five countries. The partners are presented on the following pages



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Meet the Partners

Partner 1 (lead partner). The Ministry of the Interior (Sector Macedonia and Thrace), Greece

The Sector Macedonia and Thrace is responsible for government policy in the north of the country. Its area of authority includes three administrative regions: Western Macedonia, Central Macedonia, and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, but only the latter two are included in the LOC-FOOD project.

The Ministry's tasks include the implementation of strategies for regional development of Macedonia and Thrace, the protection and enhancement of the natural, architectural and cultural heritage of the area and the promotion of cooperation with the Balkan and Black Sea countries on environmental issues, infrastructure projects, cultural heritage and tourism development. The Sector Macedonia and Thrace is located in Thessaloniki, the second largest city of Greece and constitutes a well structured organization with a separate department for managing European programs. It also has an active role in the implementation of the Development Policy Law for the region of Northern Greece, the industrial control of the market, and the protection of historic buildings and traditional areas.

The Sector Macedonia and Thrace is an outward looking organisation and actively participates in international programs in order to promote the comparative advantages of the wider area, to promote cooperation with European and international organizations, to develop cooperation with regions abroad, to create relationships with foreign counterparts in common interest areas and finally to exploit European funds for the benefit of the citizens of Northern Greece.

The LOC-FOOD project manager at MATHRA is Mr. Tasos Zafeiridis.
www.mathra.gr



Meet the Partners

Partner 2. International Hellenic University (IHU), Greece.



IHU is a multi-campus university in Central and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Its current form was created in 2019 following a restructuring of the Greek higher education sector and the merger of several academic institutes. The seven faculties are spread over six cities and cover pure sciences, health sciences, social sciences, economics and management, agriculture and environment, and design.

The Department of Food Science and Technology, part of the Faculty of Geosciences, is a large department (~150 undergraduate students per year) located in Sindos, near Thessaloniki. It is part of the former Alexandrian Technological Educational Institute. It has 19 permanent academic staff and several contract teaching and research personnel. The Department has research and teaching laboratories for microbiology, chemistry and physics, molecular biology, food processing, and new product development, as well as laboratories for particular food groups such as meat, fish, dairy, oils and fats, fruit and vegetables, and cereals.

In addition to LOC-FOOD, the Department is involved in several other international projects. Examples include: Sourdough biotechnology network towards novel, healthier and sustainable food and bioprocesses (Sourdomics), an EU COST project. Flat Bread of Mediterranean area; INnovation and Emerging process and technology (FLAT BREAD MINE), a PRIMA project. Study about food habits and knowledge about edible insects as sustainable foods (EISuFood).

The LOC-FOOD project manager at IHU is Prof. Maria Papageorgiou.

www.ihu.gr

www.food.teithe.gr

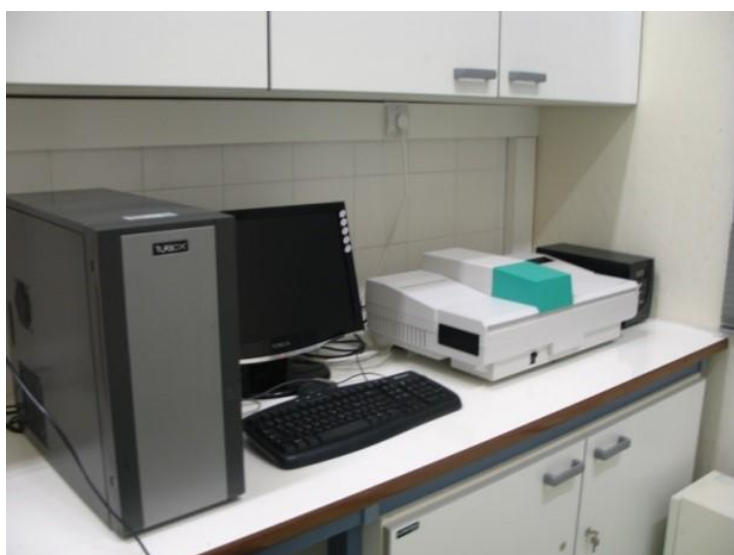


Figure: The Bioscreen C instrument, used for measuring bacterial growth, in the microbiology laboratory (left), and the food processing and engineering laboratory (right).

Meet the Partners

Partner 3. “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați (UDJ), Romania.

UDJ is a centre of academic excellence in South-East Romania which educates professionals in numerous fields. During its more than 70 years of existence, the university has expanded, modernized and gathered around it an academic community focused on performance in teaching and research and on transforming the institution into a modern, outward-looking European university. UDJ focuses on both fundamental and applied scientific research, and has developed excellent relations with local and regional businesses and community organisations.

Education, alongside research, development, and innovation is the main constituent of our institution’s academic activity. The 14 faculties with 71 undergraduate degree programmes, 41 master degree programmes, 4 Doctoral Schools and 16 doctoral degree programmes prove this. UDJ has an extension of the Faculty of Medicine in Enna, Sicily, Italy, and four cross-border faculty extensions in the Republic of Moldova and in Ukraine.

The Faculty of Food Science and Engineering has a modern infrastructure for fundamental and applied research in food science and technology. Students are trained to an advance level in various scientific fields related to food, and also in management and marketing to allow innovative ideas and entrepreneurial concepts to be realised.

Examples of other projects in which the Faculty is involved are:

ISEKI_Food 3 – Innovative Developments and Sustainability of ISEKI_Food.

ISEKI FOOD 4 - Towards the innovation of the food chain through innovation of education in Food Studies.

COST FA 1001 - The application of innovative fundamental food-structure-property relationships to the design of foods for health, wellness and pleasure.

COST CA 15215 - Innovative approaches in pork production with entire males.

ERASMUS +, POSTHARVEST - Best Innovative Approach to Minimize Post Harvest Losses within Food Chain for VET.

The LOC-FOOD project manager at UDJ is Assoc. Professor Gabriela Iordachescu.

www.ugal.ro

www.ugal.ro/facultati/facultatea-de-stiinta-si-ingineria-alimentelor



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Meet the Partners

Partner 4. The Association of Tourism Development in Moldova (ATDM).



ATDM is a non-profit organization that has contributed to the promotion of the tourism sector, tourist areas, the tourist image of national and regional destinations, and the conservation of natural and cultural-historical tourist resources since 2007. The ADTM team establishes and supports partnerships between the main social actors, promotes cross-border and international cooperation in tourism areas and the exchange of experience in the field of tourism. It provides support for the development of new tourist destinations, programs for efficient management of tourist areas, tourist planning, and diversification of tourist locations in the Republic of Moldova. It informs the general public by developing and publishing scientific and publicity materials about Moldovan tourist destinations.

Over the years, ADTM has supported and contributed to the organization of local events, including gastronomic events, to promote local producers. In 2018, ADTM provided methodological support in the implementation of the project “Promotion of Food Heritage in the Lower Danube Region (RiverFood)” by conducting the Study “Providers of hospitality services and gastronomic specificity in the south of the Republic of Moldova and developing 3 cross-border tourist routes specializing in gastronomic tourism. In 2019 we conducted extensive research in the Lower Dniester area, contributing to the collection and systematization of information about the ethno-cultural specifics of the region, including gastronomy. The LOC-FOOD project manager at ATDM is Ms. Marina Miron.



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Meet the Partners



Partner 5. Varna University of Management (VUM), Bulgaria.

VUM is an established business school specialising in social sciences and offering study programs in Management, Marketing, Administration, Tourism, Information Studies and Pedagogy. It also provides innovative education in Culinary Arts, Culinology and Hospitality as well as in Software Engineering. Research areas of its faculty include education management, sustainable development, service automation, social economy, cross-cultural studies, organizational behaviour, leadership and others. VUM prioritizes interdisciplinary education and research. Double-degree programs are offered based on strategic partnerships and accreditation by the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency and the British Accreditation Council. In addition, the university runs a Regional Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The academic and student community of VUM includes representatives of over 60 nationalities and countries around the world. The University's international outlook is also demonstrated through academic partnerships for exchange and mobility with over 100 universities in Europe, with mutual recognition of educational credits, exams and study periods. Since its establishment, VUM has striven to contribute to social and economic development of Bulgaria's North-eastern region through participation in decision making at the local level, maintaining various mechanisms for collaboration with civil society, educational institutions and public institutions, supporting student and staff volunteer initiatives involving the local community, and implementing projects tackling urgent regional development issues and sustainability.

VUM has participated in several initiatives that focus on the valorisation of agriculture, local food systems and rural tourism:

European Journal of Tourism Research, <https://ejtr.vumk.eu/index.php/about>

PRO EXTOUR - Promoting Heritage-and Culture-based Experiential Tourism in the Black Sea Basin, <https://proextour.eu/>

CULINART - Designing a Joint VET Qualification in Culinary Arts and Pilot Pathways for Continuing Training, <http://culinart-europe.eu/index.php/en/>

HELIX - Entrepreneurial Learning Exchange Initiative for Sustainable Hospitality SMEs in the Balkan-Mediterranean Region, <http://www.helix-balkanmed.eu/>

NTG - The Next Tourism Generation Alliance, <https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/>

The LOC-FOOD project manager at VUM is Mrs. Tzvetalina Genova.

<https://vum.bg/>



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Meet the Partners

Partner 6. Odessa National Academy of Food Technologies (ONAFT), Ukraine.



Odessa National Academy of Food Technologies is one of the largest multidisciplinary public higher education and research institutions in Ukraine. It has the highest level of accreditation and consists of 4 institutes and 10 faculties, as follows:

Institutes: Educational & Scientific Technological Institute of Food Industry; Educational & Scientific Institute of Applied Economics and Management; Educational & Scientific Institute of Computer Systems and Technologies; V.S. Martynovsky Institute of Refrigeration, Cryotechnologies and Ecoenergetics

There are more than 10 000 B.Sc. and M.Sc. students, 104 full professors, and 406 Ph.D. degree holders.

ONAFT has cooperation agreements with more than 60 foreign universities, and it is a Member of nine international organizations. Eight scientific journals are published in ONAFT, one of which is registered in the Web of Science scientific database and another in SCOPUS. From eight to 12 scientific conferences, five of which are international, are organized in ONAFT every year. "Black Sea Science", an annual contest of student scientific works, is hosted by ONAFT. ONAFT has participated as a full consortium member in the EFFORT Erasmus Mundus project in 2013-2017. During this time, 16 students and staff members of ONAFT studied and carried out research in universities in Greece, the United Kingdom, France and Portugal.

In 2017-2021, on the basis of the results of the academic mobility contest within the framework of the Erasmus + and other International programmes ONAFT participated in the following projects:

1. Erasmus + Modernization of Pedagogical Higher Education by Innovative Teaching Instruments (586098-EPP-1-2017-1-UA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP). (Direction of the Development of the Potential of Higher Education).
2. Erasmus + mobility project for 2017/18-2020 between Università Degli Studi di Padova (Italy) and ONAFT;
3. Erasmus + mobility project for 2017-2019 Estonian University of Life Sciences (Estonia) and ONAFT;
4. Erasmus + mobility project for 2018-2020 between the institutions of the Program and Partner Countries Ecole Supérieure D`agricultures (ESA) France and ONAFT;
5. Erasmus + mobility project for 2017-2019 with Poznan University of Life Sciences (PULS) and ONAFT
6. Erasmus + mobility project for 2018-2020 between ISA Yncrèa Hauts de France (Lille, France).
7. Erasmus + mobility project for 2018-2020 between Alexander Educational Institute in Thessaloniki (Greece) and ONAFT.
8. "Scientific art of healthy taste (SAHT)" project Number 2SOFT/1.2/68 in the framework of the Joint Operational Programme Romania - Ukraine 2014-2020.
9. "Local Development and Cross Border Cooperation in the Area of Agricultural Products and Traditional Food (LOC-FOOD)" in the framework of the Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation programme funded by the European Union.
10. Erasmus + mobility project for 2019-2021 with Politechnika Lodzka, Lodz, Poland and ONAFT.
11. "Promotion Black Sea Region as a Wine Tourism Destination (TheSeaofWine)" project in the framework of the Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation programme funded by the European Union.
12. Erasmus + mobility KA107 project for 2020-2022 with Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Portugal.
13. Erasmus + mobility KA107 project for 2020-2022 with University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca, Romania
14. Erasmus + mobility KA107 project for 2020-2022 with Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania.
15. Erasmus + mobility KA107 project for 2020-2021 with Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonia.

The LOC-FOOD project manager at ONAFT is Dr.Kateryna Khvostenko.

www.onaft.edu.ua



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Tasks Completed So Far

A study of the current situation of traditional products in each partner's region

The LOC-FOOD project has an overall objective of improving the agri-food economy in the regions of intervention. In order to do this, it is important to know the current situation in this sector. To this end, each partner prepared a report specific to their own area or country. Data on primary production was presented, including information on the main products, the scale of production, the size of farms, the farm ownership type (family, cooperative etc.) and the percentage of produce with special certifications such as organic labels.

Next, food processing activity was analysed by food category. Food products, both primary and processed, with EU geographical designations of origin were listed and described. Lastly, a selection of traditional recipes and prepared food products were presented to illustrate the main features of the region's gastronomy.

Tasks Completed So Far

Current situation of traditional products in Greece

In this newsletter we present summary data on the agricultural labour force and the main products produced in the area of intervention in Greece (the administrative regions of Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace). Summary findings from other partners will feature in future newsletters.

According to the most recent data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority agricultural census, in 2009 there are 154 000 agricultural operations in the LOC-FOOD project area of intervention, which covered a total of 989 000 hectares of land. A total of 262 000 people were working in agriculture as the legal owners of the businesses or as family members of the owners. Of these, 81.3% worked exclusively or mainly in the sector, while for 17.7% it was a secondary occupation. In addition, there were 8500 permanent employees and 204 000 seasonal workers. Of those exclusively or mainly employed in agriculture (apart from seasonal workers), permanent salaried workers made up less than 4%, indicating that agriculture is very much a small-scale family operation in the area of intervention. It is also an extremely important source of income for the large number of seasonal workers employed each year.

The main arable crops of the LOC-FOOD region in terms of tons produced are presented in the table (data from 2019). It is a major cereal-producing area, and produces almost all of the rice grown in Greece. Areas around the cities of Thessaloniki and Serres are particularly reputed for rice production, and much of Thessaloniki's rice is grown next to the four large rivers that drain into the Thermaic Gulf just to the west of the city. Tree fruits are also important to the region, particularly peaches and nectarines, for which the area around the city of Veria is famous. Cotton is the most produced industrial crop, followed by sunflower seeds. The area also produces almost all of the other seeds such as rapeseed, soya, and pumpkin seeds grown in Greece. Of the vegetables other than potatoes, tomatoes are the most produced but the quantity is disproportionately small compared to the country as a whole, while the cultivation of green vegetables such as spinach, cabbages and beans is proportionally high. This reflects the climate of the north of the country, which has a shorter summer growing season and colder winters compared to the south. Other areas of the country also have a more developed greenhouse production system which further extends their growing season. Comparing tomato production in greenhouses in 2019, Central Macedonia produced 14 000 tons and Crete 138 000 tons, nearly ten times as much. Potato production includes Nevrokopiu potatoes from the mountains near the border with Bulgaria, which are famous for their quality and flavour.

Animal husbandry is also an important industry in the two administrative regions. In the 2009 agricultural census, there were around 11 million chickens, 2.5 million sheep and goats, 222 000 pigs, 294 000 cattle and 2426 buffalo. The latter two are disproportionately high in the region, with 45% and 65% respectively of the total in Greece (compared to around 20-25% for most of the others). Buffalo, although relatively few in number, can be considered a speciality of the region. In addition, there were about 226 000 bee hives at the time of the census.



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Tasks Completed So Far

Table: Agricultural production in the LOC-FOOD project area of Greece (2019)

Product and main subtypes	Annual production (kilotons)	% of total of main category for area	% of total production in Greece
CEREALS	1500		
Maize	645	42.8	50.3
Durham wheat	314	20.8	38.3
Rice	215	14.2	94.2
Common wheat	177	11.7	57.9
TREE CROPS	1129		
Peaches & Nectarines	486	43.1	77.2
Kiwi fruit	157	14.0	61.5
Olives (for oil)	124	11.0	4.4
Olives (table)	99	8.7	22.0
Cherries	78	6.9	75.0
INDUSTRIAL	761		
Cotton	459	60.3	51.0
Sunflower seeds	191	25.1	88.4
Sugar beet	58	7.7	57.3
VEGETABLES*	295		
Tomatoes	63	21.5	8.4
Spinach	43	14.6	59.0
Peppers	25	8.5	18.2
Cabbages	24	8.1	39.6
Beans	20	6.7	43.5
GRAPES	169		
For eating	91	53.9	39.6
For wine	78	46.0	14.6
POTATOES	139	-	29.7

*Except potatoes

Tasks Completed So Far

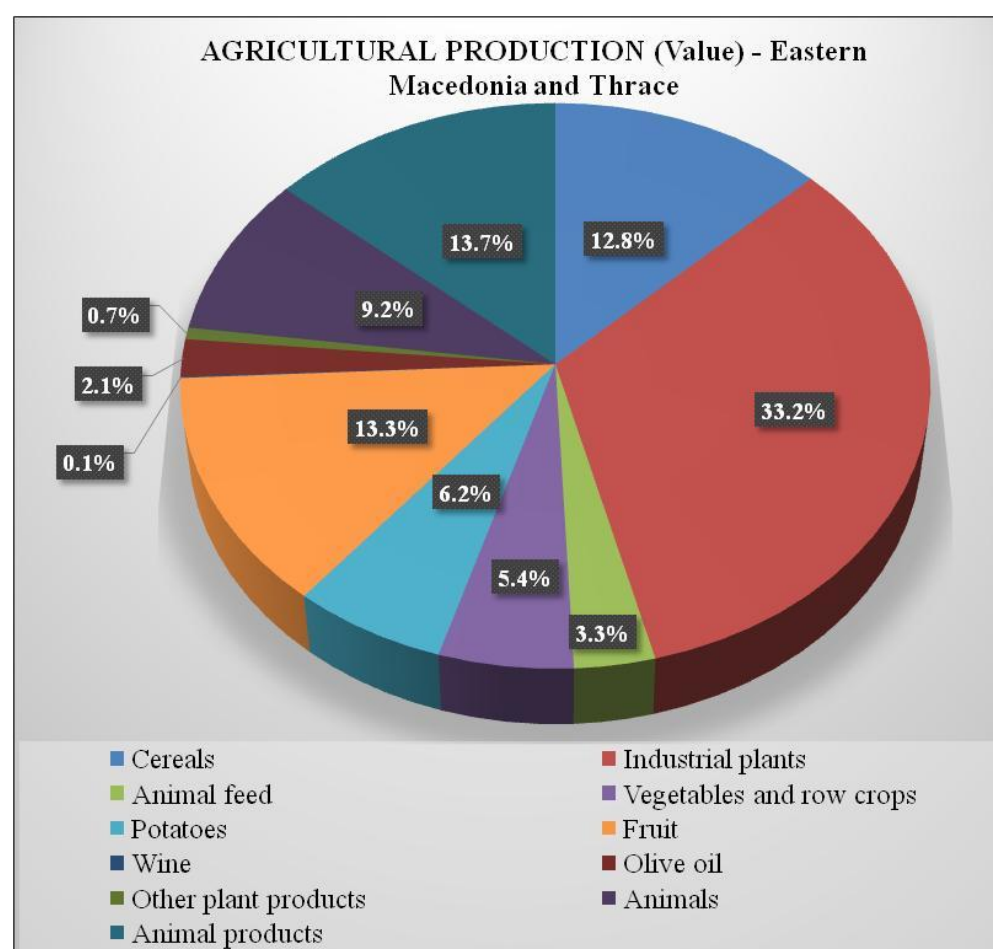
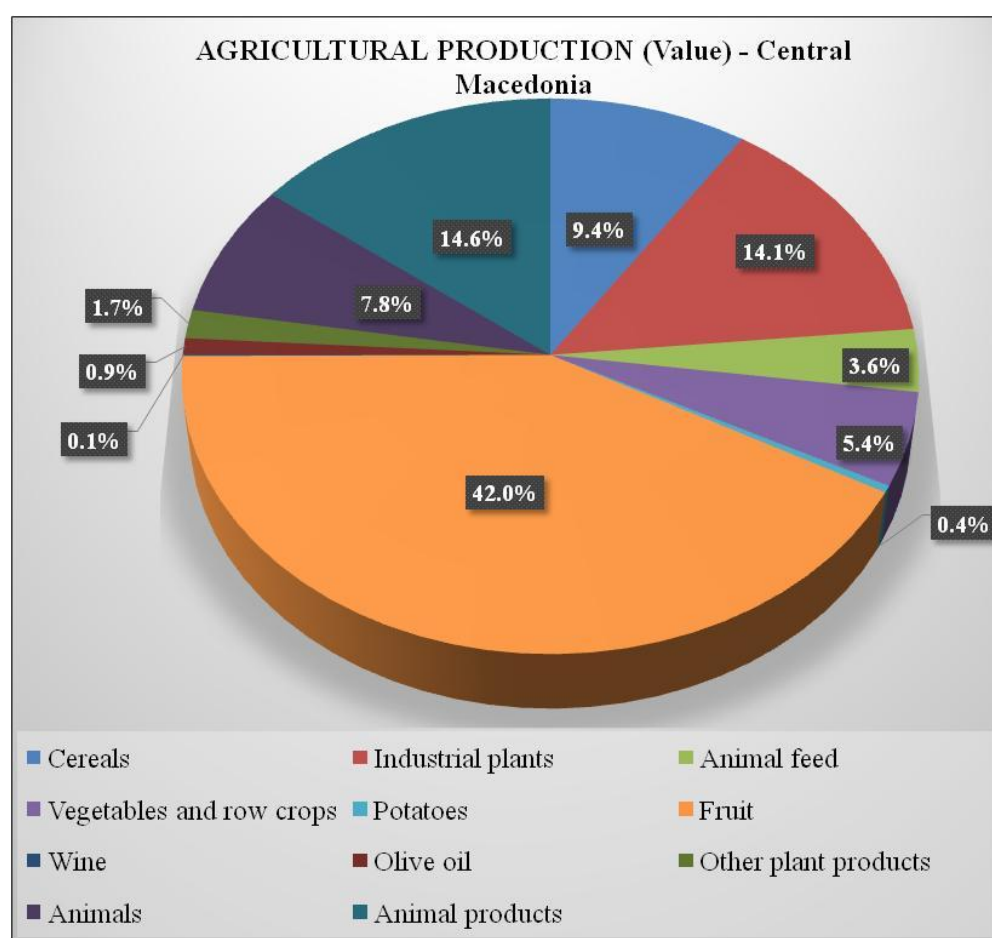


Figure: The market value of the production of different agricultural product categories in the Region of Central Macedonia and the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace expressed as a percentage of the total

Tasks Completed So Far

Apart from primary produce, the LOC-FOOD project is also concerned with prepared foods and restaurant dishes. Macedonia and Thrace have several products and dishes that are characteristic of the region. Many of these are influenced by significant number of people with descent from the Greek populations of Asia Minor.



Figure: From top left. Stuffed mussels, pita pispilita (leafy vegetable pie), tzigerosarma (chopped sheep or goat liver wrapped in intestines), sweet bougatsa (breakfast pastry with set custard).

Tasks Completed So Far

Report on the best practices for the promotion of regional foods and local food systems in Europe

A literature-based study of successful local foods and food systems in other parts of Europe was conducted in order to determine the main factors contributing to their success. Lessons learned from the study will help in the promotion of products from the LOC-FOOD area of intervention. The report was based on five case studies. Case study 1 was Comté cheese, a PDO cheese from eastern France which, despite being France's largest PDO cheese in terms of production, is produced by small village-scale dairies (mostly farmers' cooperatives). Case study 2 was Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese from Italy, an extremely successful local product with a €2.4 billion turnover at retail level and a large export market. Case study 3 was Val di Non apples, mainly a primary product but also an example of collaboration and joint marketing with food processors. Case study 4 was an entire local food system, the Garfagnana valley in Italy. An isolated region that was once in decline, the economy was improved by active local government, diversification of farm activities and the support of the local population. Case study 5 was the diversification of olive farming in Spain, in which the production of value-added products and the development of agrotourism are ways in which farms can survive in a competitive market.

In the next section of the report, five factors contributing to the success of the foods and food systems in the cases studies were discussed.

The active support of local government and institutions is extremely important, and the Garfagnana localised food system is a good example of this. Cooperativism is a means by which small producers can increase their market power and decrease their costs, although some operational freedom is sacrificed. Collaboration between producers to achieve specific objectives is mutually beneficial. Examples include joint production and co-branding of new products, collaborating to fulfil large orders, and joint marketing strategies. Diversification and multifunctionality allows farmers to add value to their products and to exploit new income streams on their land. Lastly, the PDO regulations for a product can be designed to safeguard the environmental and social benefits of the traditional production methods and to ensure that the income derived from the product stays within the local community. This report is in English and is available from the LOC-FOOD website.



Image credit: User Wittylama, Wikimedia Commons

Tasks Completed So Far

Traditional products questionnaire and database

An important part of the LOC-FOOD project is the creation of a database of local, high-quality foods that will be available to all via the website. In order to gather information on products, the partners in each country sent out questionnaires to local producers, food processors, and restaurants with questions about their business and their products. Those completing the questionnaire were also invited to suggest traditional products from their area. The next phase, which is currently underway, is the follow-up of the initial questionnaires with a request for more detailed information and photographs. Updates on the progress of the database will be published in future newsletters.

Other news

Thessaloniki becomes a UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy

Thessaloniki's rich and diverse cultural heritage has been recognised by UNESCO and the city has been designated a Creative City for Gastronomy. It is the first city in Greece to be given such a title. Thessaloniki has a long history of diverse populations. In the nineteenth century, the city was home to indigenous Greeks, Turks and Spanish Jews. In the 20th century large numbers of Greeks from Asia Minor arrived, bringing with them their own culinary traditions. All these groups have contributed to the excellent cuisine that characterises the city today.



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LOC-FOOD on the internet



The LOC-FOOD project has a new website, <https://locfood.eu/>, where lots more information on the project can be found. The website will also host the database and GIS map once these have been completed.

In addition, there is an official Facebook page for the project and separate Facebook pages for most of the partners. These are listed below:

Official project page: <https://www.facebook.com/locfoodofficial>

ONAFI, Ukraine: <https://www.facebook.com/LOCFOODONAFI>

UDJ, Romania <https://www.facebook.com/LOC-FOOD-UDJ-Romania-101970308339821>

VUM, Bulgaria <https://www.facebook.com/LocFoodBulgaria/>

ATDM, Moldova <https://www.facebook.com/Loc-Food-project-104479128360052>



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