

# ORGANIKO LIFE+

## NEWSLETTER

September 2015 - February 2016

### Editorial

The ORGANIKO LIFE+ project started on September 2015 and its duration is 4 years. The aim of the project is to demonstrate the comparative advantages of organic versus conventional farming and their products, using indicators of mitigation efficiency to climate change, agronomic and environmental quality and decreased children exposures to diet-based pesticides.

Actions will involve the mapping of all relevant stakeholders from producers to retailers and assessment of consumer attitudes towards organic products using questionnaire surveys. Model crops will be cultivated in three specific districts of the Republic of Cyprus, covering a wide geographic area. Both organically-grown and conventional apples and barley will be produced in order to allow their comparative assessment with respect to climate mitigation and agricultural performance characteristics. The performance of these pilot farms will be qualitatively assessed using specific bio-indicators and environmental metrics. Additionally, a health intervention children's study (10–11 yrs old) will be implemented to showcase the reduced chemical (pesticides) body burden for those consuming an organic diet. Children will be alternatively fed with organic and conventional diets and a mixture of selected pesticides will be analyzed in children's urine. Periodic monitoring of the performance of indicators will be conducted. Communication and outreach events in both Cyprus and Italy will diffuse project findings and provide international networking opportunities among interested stakeholders.



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The project is coordinated by the Cyprus University of Technology jointly with three main partners: the Agricultural Research Institute, the Department of Environment in Cyprus and the Kyoto Club from Italy.

In this newsletter, you can find information about the project activities during the period September 2015 – February 2016.

## 1st Italian Legislative and Technological Workshop

The 1st Italian legislative and technological workshop was organized on January 26th 2016, in Rome with participants from a number of organisations such as MATTM, ISPRA, FREE, Itabia, Legambiente, ENEA, ANEV, Azzeroco2, GBC Italia, CIB, IP Srl and Kyoto Club. During the workshop, the 129th meeting of the Committee on Organic Production and the EU Regulation 2015/2345 were presented and discussed. All participants evaluated positively the new regulation, arguing that it improves quality guarantee for non-EU imported organic products and indirectly steers for greater quality sensitivity also in the EU organic market. Regarding technological updates, the 17 November 2015 European EGTOP final report on wine was discussed and the relevance it may have for both Italian and Cypriot organic wine production was underlined. Moreover, Marco



Pezzaglia presented the new technology patented by his company, called Biogasdoneright, that deals with anaerobic digestion and soil carbon sequestration and he elaborated on possible organic farming uses.

## Workshop: Organic farming and climate change

A workshop regarding “Organic farming and climate change” was held at Latsia Municipal Theatre in the framework of the project on December 18, 2015. The Agricultural Research Institute, the Department of Environment and the Cyprus University of Technology organized the workshop. The aim of this event was to communicate the significance of organic farming products for human health and the environment to children aged from 9 to 12 years old. Three primary schools were participated and totally 290 students attended the workshop. The basic principles of organic farming practices were presented while the impact of agricultural activities on climate change and vice versa was interactively discussed with the students. Finally a questionnaire about the benefits, the characteristics and the properties of organic farming products and practices was answered.



## 1<sup>st</sup> Study Visit in Rome, Italy

The first study visit in Italy was organized by Kyoto Club on 01–02 December 2015, in Rome. During our visit a number of important meetings took place, including our meeting with the Vice Minister of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture on issues of organic products market and climate change mitigation efforts, as well as with public and private institutes and associations. Below you can find more details.

### Meeting with the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy

The ORGANIKO partners had a thorough meeting with the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy Senator Andrea Olivero, his technical secretariat's co-workers and ministry's staff working on organic farming. The Italian Agriculture Ministry expressed their support towards the project ORGANIKO and proposed an organic farming Memorandum of Understanding between the Cyprus and Italian Agriculture Ministries. The discussion was focused on the importance of increasing the organic farming production across all over Europe with the development of a European network supporting organic agriculture. It was highlighted that research along with training are important components in order for organic farming



to contribute substantially in the climate change mitigation.

### Involvement of farmers, consumers and researchers in organic products certification – AIAB, FederBio & Bioagricert

We met representatives of the AIAB (Italian Association for Organic Agriculture), FederBio (Italian federation of organic and biodynamic agriculture) and Bioagricert (Private certification and control body). AIAB promotes a participatory approach in organic farming, since it connects researchers with farmers and consumers and the AIAB president, Mr. Vincenzo Vizioli stated that organic farming can contribute to both climate change adaptation and mitigation. Moreover, social aspect of farming is promoted, since they are doing efforts to include marginalized people (people with social exclusion problems successfully entering the local society) in organic farming. It is important that AIAB is a partner of the SOLMACC project, which aims to promote the wider adoption of innovative practices that can contribute to reaching the EU's climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives in the food and farming sector and the idea of a joint meeting/workshop of ORGANIKO with SOLMACC was proposed.

Mr. Roberto Pinton, the secretary of processing and trading group of FederBio, introduced the integrity platform, which shows all steps of a product from production to consumption; so that it is certified



The idea of potential Cyprus-Italy non-governmental co-operation projects was proposed.

Mr. Donato Ferucci, the Head of Bioagricert Lazio followed, with a presentation on the control and certification system of organic agriculture in Italy and he noted that the certification is a regulated, product- and production chain-oriented procedure based on authorization principles.

### Successful business stories of organic farming in Rome – La città dell'altra economia & Il Trattore

We visited two successful market initiatives within the Rome city. "The city of the other economy" (La città dell'altra economia-CAE) is located in Rome centre at the restored place of Campo Boario in Testaccio. Events, exhibitions, markets and meetings are organized there in order to promote social equality, fair trade, renewable energy, reuse, recycling and sustainability. Moreover, there is an organic shop, an organic bar, an organic restaurant, a library, a games room and other shops (bicycles, clothes, etc.). Also we visited "The Tractor" (Il Trattore), an organic city farm with large areas of crops and some animals. Social equality is promoted since marginalised people can work in the farm.



### Experience of organic food provision in schools – Maria Montessori Primary School in Rome

We visited the Maria Montessori Primary School and representatives of Rome Municipality's Educational and School Services Department (Office for food monitoring and control and Diet Office) provided information about organic food in schools. About 150000 meals are prepared in Rome per day and per meal, the municipality spends around 4.5-4.8 euros of which, about 2 euros are paid by parents. Most schools in Rome have kitchens (94%) and for the rest, the food is cooked in nearby buildings with the transport time being less than 15 minutes. Kitchens are managed by external companies with the use of tenders by the Rome municipality, with duration of 4 years. Besides the fact that children eat organic food, they are also informed about it through lectures and information sheets as well as through gardening and cooking. It is of note that Mr. Maurizio Sansuini, president of the CIMAS Ristorazione (food provider), expressed his support and interest towards our project and he is open for communication regarding the provision of organic food for the health study that is going to be conducted in Cyprus.

### Understanding Italy's role in climate change and organic production – ISMEA & Lazio Regional Government

We met with representatives from the public institute

ISMEA (Institute for agro-food market services) and the Lazio Regional Government. The role of ISMEA in the implementation of EU policies for climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as the contribution of agriculture to the reduction of GHGs was elucidated with a presentation from the Director, Mr. Zaccarini Bonelli. Italy's target on reducing the emissions by 6.5% compared with 1990 has been achieved for the commitment period 2008–2013, according to the Kyoto Protocol. In fact, during the period 2008–2012, the agriculture sector reduced its emissions with an average of 15.5% compared to 1990 and this was achieved due to economic crisis, with farmers changing and adapting their practices.



Even though in EU, there is a conflict about organic farming, the EU subsidies on integrated production have been reduced in order to support the development of organic agriculture.

## Communicating the benefits of organic-based lifestyle at the Mediterranean Science Festival

The 1st Mediterranean Science Festival took place from 3rd to 6th of December at the Lanitis Carob Mill Complex in Limassol and it was organized by the educational organization SciCo-Cyprus, the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation, along with the Cyprus Youth Organization.

Our participation consisted of an interactive seminar, carrying out activities for children aged 6–12 yrs old in the morning session and an informative presentation about the organic farming and the Organiko project for the general public during the afternoon. Around 40 children learnt and enjoyed our activities about organic products with the presentation, discussion, game and quiz, received activity books, comics and tried delicious organic apples and tomatoes.

During the afternoon session, the Organiko LIFE+ project was presented by Dr Konstantinos Makris.



## Workshop: Organic products – Climate change mitigation and health benefits

More than 90 people participated in the public info day of ORGANIKO LIFE+ on “Organic products: Climate change mitigation and health benefits” at Limassol City Hall, on Wednesday, September 16th 2015. The event was organized by the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), the Agricultural Research Institute, the Department of Environment, along with the European Commission Representation in Cyprus, Heart Cyprus and Europe Direct Limassol, under the framework of the ORGANIKO LIFE+ project. The conference started with greetings from the Deputy Mayor of Limassol, Mr. Stouppas who expressed his support to public information initiatives, the Vice Rector of CUT Financial Management and Development, Prof. Anagiotos, who stressed the need for training of organic farmers and consumers as well as the Environment Commissioner, Mrs. Panayiotou, who proposed the implementation of pilot organic farming programs with more support from the State.



Detailed presentations followed from Dr Konstantinos Makris, Dr George Zotos, Dr Michalis Omirou, Dr Andrie Panayiotou, Mr. George Kyrris, Mr. Vasilis Kyprianou, Mr. Giannis Makrygiannis and Ms. Christina Savva, who covered several aspects of the organic farming in Cyprus. During the conference, there was time for discussion and the audience showed interest by submitting several questions and comments.

### Key milestones achieved

- The advisory board has been formed and information about its members can be found at: <http://organikolife.com/en/advisory-board/>
- The literature review on organic farming with regards to health aspects and environmental aspects has been completed
- The mapping of the organic sector stakeholders in Europe and Cyprus has been completed
- The first pilot case studies for crops have initiated
- The study protocol for the children’s health study has been finalized
- The questionnaire for the consumers’ perceptions survey with regards to organic food has been finalized

### Next steps

- Implementation of the children’s health study
- Publication of articles in local newspapers with regards to organic products from members of the Advisory Board
- Implementation of protocols in crops of apples and barley
- Completion of report on the consumers’ perceptions and attitudes towards organic products

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