

2nd Meeting of the Mediterranean Macro-regional Network Cluster

Wednesday 17th October 2012, Nicosia, Cyprus

Summary of the discussions

Scope of the Meeting

The national Rural Networks of Italy, Greece, France (represented by the regional rural network of Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, one of the three French Mediterranean regions), Spain, Portugal and Cyprus agreed to meet for the second time to address quality schemes looking into the results of the survey that was coordinated by the Italian National Rural Network on identifying key challenges to develop Mediterranean quality products.

In addition the meeting focused on an exchange of experiences about short food supply chains (SFSC) within the Mediterranean region with representatives from various NRNs, the academia and the private sector focusing on various issues linked to market structure, legislation, interpretation, key challenges and lessons learnt.

Opening of the meeting

The meeting started with a welcome statement from Dr. A. Georgiou, Director of the Cypriot Department of Agriculture, who kindly hosted the meeting. Dr. A. Georgiou stated the importance of Short supply chains and local systems in the food sector. SFSC have a great potential and have been included in the Commission proposal on Rural Development for the next programming period 2014-2020. Dr. A. Georgiou admitted that SFSC are at the inception stage and thus Cyprus is keen to learn and share experiences with the other Mediterranean NRNs and key stakeholders.

Results of the survey on Quality products

The Italian NRN presented the results of the survey which was carried out on quality food measures and that was a concerted effort by NRNs involved in the Mediterranean Cluster, with the participation of national authorities and other key stakeholders such as farmers groups, agro-food enterprises, etc.

The presentation highlighted the key findings articulating the common issues as well as keeping distinctly country specific issues. In a nutshell the main issues on RD measures 132 and 133 are as follows:

- Majority of NRNs agree to allow “Producers associations” to be eligible to apply for measure 132;
- Possible innovative solutions are required to improve the use of this measure and some practical proposals will be integrated in the final opinion.
- The maximum rate of support for measure 133 is 70% of eligible expenses. For groups of small farmers (i.e. mountainous areas or disadvantaged areas) rate may be too low
- In the new Proposal, the “adjustment costs” can be financed in investment measures, which, for limited amounts, are probably too complex to manage.
- Consideration to make it possible to cover “adjustment costs”, in the new quality scheme measure, in addition to "fixed costs", and for limited amounts (e.g. up to 10,000 €)
- Majority of NRNs agreed that specific “technical assistance” to farmers entering for the first time in a quality scheme is critically important;
- Importance to include as beneficiaries also other actors of the “supply chain” (different from farmers - i.e. using the “de minimis rule” for State Aid) or especially through partnerships - new forms of organizations envisaged by the new Article 36 Co-operation (e.g. networking, cluster of farms. etc.)
- Information is a strategic aspect of Quality food policy. The networks underline the fact that the support to information and promotion activities almost disappeared in the legislative proposal.

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) in the French context

As a starting point for the rest of the meeting, dedicated to SFSC, Aurore Leroux from the Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur made a presentation about the current situation for local food supply chains in French regions. First a brief explanation was made about the main points of concern that Mediterranean French Regions have regarding the draft legislative proposal on CAP in general.

MED AGRISLES and the co-operative on-line market of agricultural products

Alexandros Gavriel from the Department of Agriculture of Cyprus presented MED AGRISLES, (<http://www.agrisles.eu/en.html>) a project between all Mediterranean countries' islands (from Açores and Madeira to Cyprus) whose objective is the creation of a new frame of cooperation between islands, for innovation in agriculture, by the means of a network organized at regional and trans-national levels. Alexandros also informed the audience about the Cypriot project of co-operative on-line market of agricultural products and the advantages of e-business that emanated as a result of this project.

The characterization of Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs)

Dr. Moya Kneafsey from the Coventry University presented the insights from a research project funded by the European Commission in 2011-12 which title is "Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU: A state of play of their socio-economic characteristics". The aim of the study was to gather evidence justifying (or not) the introduction of a "Product from my farm" EU label for local products and direct sales.

The results of this exploratory study revealed the following interesting aspects;

- Labels are most useful to consumers who are not buying direct from producers
- A Label can be used to signal certification and prevent mis-selling – but needs to be regulated
- 2 elements are important in the case of SFSCs:
 - Origin of the product – does the consumer know who made it?
 - Was the product sold at a fair price? Affordable for the consumer and guaranteeing a living for the producer
- Despite strong consumer interest, there is often lack of access to products
- Need solutions around logistics, marketing, public procurement
- Start-up phase is particularly important
- Given strong social agenda of many SFSCs, this should be valued and supported

The "Local agriculture and short food supply chains" Conference

Rosa Nunes dos Santos from the ENRD Contact Point made an overview of the results of the conference organised by DG AGRI on 20 April 2012, on "Local agriculture and short food supply chains". She concentrated on the discussion points regarding an appropriate legislative framework for SFSC and small farming and wrapped up with highlighting the provisions of the draft legislative framework for the next programming period.

Case studies on SFSCs from Cyprus

Costas Isaias (organic farmer and Secretary of Cyprus Organic Farmers Association) focused on the strengths and weaknesses of organic farming in a SFSC context in Cyprus. His recommendations for that economic sector were linked with cooperation with producers who produce different products and the establishment of better delivery practices.

M. Kleopas (producer/processor of pomegranates) explained how his company developed around the multiple usages of pomegranates, a product that is grown in Cyprus despite various challenges and harsh competition.

State of play on SFSC in Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus

Representatives from these NRNs delivered presentations and information on the legislation and commercial circuits which exist in their respective countries regarding SFSC.

Next steps – Common actions

Regarding the outcomes of the survey on Quality food, it was agreed that the Greek NRN would collect all the results and that it will issue a draft “common paper” on the topic by 5 November 2012. Collection and discussions will be made via a dedicated forum created on “MyENRD”.

The following timeline was agreed:

Timeframe	Activity
26 Oct.	Creation of forum on My ENRD
29 Oct.	Feedback on survey results
5 Nov.	Drafting of paper and circulation for feedback
19 Nov.	Feedback by NRN (MA)
30 Nov.	Finalisation of a draft version
7 Dec.	Presentation of findings and recommendations

Once the draft “common paper” is circulated, it will be discussed by NRNs via a forum on MyENRD until 19 November 2012. After that, the document will be finalized by the Greek NRN and will be presented to all stakeholders during the successful programming workshop which will take place in Brussels on 7 December 2012.

On SFSCs, the production of a common paper reflecting the Mediterranean dimension was proposed. However, the French NRN made a point that, the three French regional Mediterranean rural networks wonder whether there are SFSC specificities requiring special policies or measures in this macro-region. They instead underlined the specificities of Mediterranean agriculture (e.g. water supply, pasture and land pressure...). The other NRNs did not share this view and expressed their willingness to work on identifying common Mediterranean aspects related to SFSC.

The French network announced that they have been working to develop a survey on SFSC and that they will circulate it for feedback to all NRNs. After considering this proposal the other NRNs agreed to see the type of questions built in the survey and try to add specific common questions that would allow for a better focus on Mediterranean specificities. A forum on MyENRD will be created as a platform for further exchanges between the NRNs.

Annex 1: List of participants

Name	Country	Organisation
Adamides Marios	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture, NRN
Antoniades Makis	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture, NRN
Antoniou Anastasis	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Aquilina Donald	Belgium	ENRD CP
Cardini Giulio	Italy	NRN
Christodoulou Christina	Cyprus	Pancyprian Bee Keepers Association
Christodoulidou Eleni	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Varnava Maria	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Constantinides Savvas	Cyprus	Evroagrotikos
Correia Custodia Maria	Portugal	NRN
Demetriou Chryso	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Demetriou Manolis	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Elia Yiannakis	Cyprus	Cyprus Institute
Ellinas Spyridon	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Gavriel Alexandros	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Georgiou Androula	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture, NRN
Giannakopoulou Marianthi	Cyprus	Agricultural Research Institute
Giannouris Epameinondas	Cyprus	MA
Gregory Michael Peter Robert	Belgium	ENRD CP
Houzé Mathilde	France	NRN
Iacovou Iacovos	Cyprus	CAPO
Iacovou Thoukidides	Cyprus	CAPO
Ioannou Stavroula	Cyprus	Agricultural Research Institute

Iordanou Alik	Cyprus	Ministry of Commerce Industry and Tourism
Isaias Costas	Cyprus	Syndesmos Viokalliergiton Kyprou
Kailas Andreas	Cyprus	Pagypria Organosi Sitiroparagagon P.O.S Dimosia LTD
Karyos Nektarios	Cyprus	Panagrotikos Syndesmos Kyprou
Kleopas Michalis	Cyprus	
Kneafsey Moya	Great Britain	Coventry University
Kordatos Charis	Cyprus	Cyprus Union of Communities
Leroux Aurore	France	
Loizou Myrianthi	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Maliotou Neocleous Maria	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Marathefti Agathi	Cyprus	Veterinary Services
Marinou Marigianna	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Martínez Lucía	Spain	NRN
Michael Christodoulos	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Mili Eleni	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Mytilineou Eleni	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Neophytou Elena	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Nunes Dos Santos Rosa	Belgium	ENRD CP
Orphanidi Antia	Cyprus	Cyprus University of Technology
Papachristoforou Phivos	Cyprus	NRN
Papantoniou Antonis	Cyprus	Pangypria Organosi Agroton "Agrotiki"
Papamichael Makis	Cyprus	LAG Larnaca
Passero Riccardo	Italy	NRN
Petrides Stelios	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Potamitou Georgina	Cyprus	NRN
Savva George	Cyprus	Health Services

Selearis Andreas	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Silva Ana Pires	Portugal	NRN
Shimis Antonis	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Snow Efi	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture, NRN
Spanashis Constantinos	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Therecse Maria		Cyprus Institute
Thrasivoulou Evaggelia	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Ttikkou Anthi	Cyprus	EKA
Tzika Ioanna	Greece	NRN
Zannetou Kyriaki	Cyprus	Federation of Environmental Organisations of Cyprus
Zanos Michalis	Cyprus	Anaptyxiaki Etaireia Larnacas
Manaquin Julia	France	NRN
Georgiades Marios	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Kyrris George	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Melifrinidou Anthemis	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Georgiadou Irene	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Konnari Marilena	Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Hambas Panicos	Cyprus	EKA
Fili Katia	Cyprus	