EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 / 2021

Contents.....

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 771738

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PROLOGUE

*by **Martin Melin**, NextFOOD coordinator, SLU*

In May 2018, NextFood set out with the ambition to make sure that learners in the agricultural and forestry sector are having the knowledge, skills, and values they need to act on the sustainability challenges. And that teachers and instructors are getting the tools and the necessary institutional support to teach about these complex issues in a way that empower their students.

In this issue of our newsletter, you can read about some of our case studies and how they have developed the education in order accomplish sustainability learning outcomes.

In Norway / Case 1, students in Agroecology are introduced to problem solving on farms already in the first week of the course.

In Greece / Case 5, students learn precision agriculture by action-oriented educational activities.

And in Egypt / Case 10, budding agricultural engineers experience real-life biodynamic farming practices through listening, visioning, and working by their own hands.

If you would like a deeper insight in the teaching methods developed by the Nextfood project, I can warmly recommend you to visit the NextFood On-line Platform where you will find teaching tips and teaching tools.

Nextfood will finish in May next year, and the months that remains we will focus on dissemination of research results. Please stay in tune with our social media channels to get the latest updates on publications and outcomes.

I hope you'll find the newsletter interesting to read!

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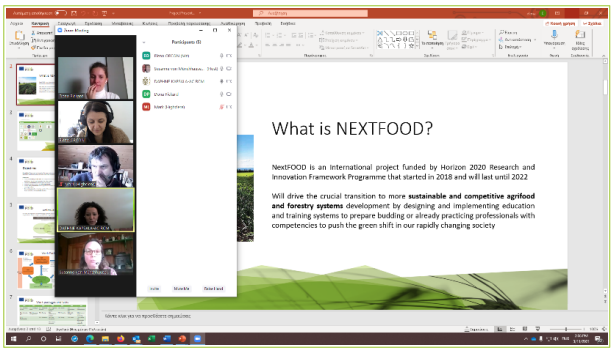
NEWS FROM NEXTFOOD PROJECT

Synergies of the Next FOOD project

*by **Daphne Kapsala**, Project Coordinator, ACRCM*

The synergies with other EU funded projects are important tool for elaboration of the project results over new audiences in other countries and to create possible tools for enhancement of effectiveness of the remaining project activities. ACRCM experts have arranged several inception meetings with the projects RUBIZMO, LIAISON and NEFERTITI.

We organized a virtual meeting with LIAISON 2020 project at 13 of February 2021, with main aim to explore the opportunities for cooperation among the two Horizon projects in terms of exchange of good practices, promotion of deliverables and interaction in the scientific implementation of their work. The LIAISON project aims to make contribution to optimizing interactive innovation project approaches and the delivery of EU policies to seed up innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas. During the meeting were identified several points of common interest at different levels such as common promotional tools and dissemination meetings.



The explored synergies with the project RUBIZMO were multi-level. The inception meeting was implemented at 16 of March 2021 and we planned to share and receive relative information material.

RUBIZMO is a European initiative working to foster sustainable growth and job creation in rural areas by discovering the vital ingredients for developing entrepreneurship and successful business models in high potential sectors such as food and agriculture, new bio-based value chains and services. It identifies business models with high potential for empowering rural communities to take advantage of the opportunities arising from improved value chain optimization. RUBIZMO have created the following results:

- Virtual Library of business cases and practices (Business Tool 1)
- Guidelines for support the business environment (Business Tool 2)
- Supply tool for improving collaboration (Business Tool 3)
- Online transformation tool (Business Tool 4)
- Online educational materials (Master class modules)

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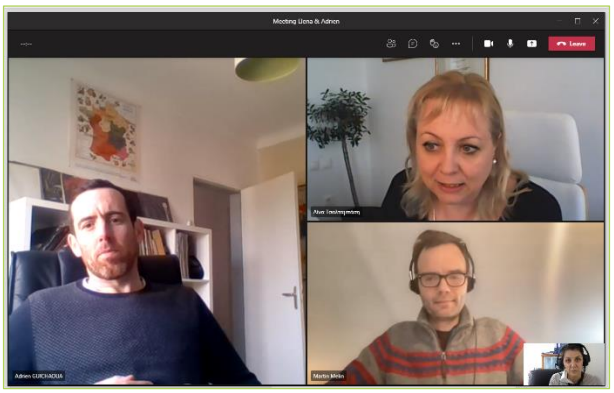
The second digital meeting was held on 17th of May 2021 with the participation of project managers of of RURITAGE, PoliRURAL, NEXTFOOD project. The Project Coordinator of RUBIZMO introduced the potential of holding a short joint virtual summer school with other EU projects focusing on rural enterprise/innovation to disseminate the training tools developed through this project and other similar projects to rural enterprise advisers, agricultural advisers, trainers, and stakeholders. We are exploring additional possibilities for collaboration among different partners part of both projects based on the specifical business models developed but also as part of the *RUBIZMO Café Talks* organized each month.

A third digital meeting was co-organized on 26th of May 2021 for the identification of synergies to speed up innovation in rural areas and particular in the agrifood value chains. Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region Central Macedonia has successfully promoted a fruitful collaboration between two key partners:
1. University of ORADEA, partner and leader of the Romanian Case of NEXTFOOD project: **Students and farmers taking food innovations from idea to market: A practice-oriented course in food innovation including all the steps necessary to bring a new product to the market** and
2. ARAD Association partner of RUBIZMO project which developed **"THE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS "CAMELINA OMEGA 3 PLUS", "Agrarian Economy and Rural Development-Realities and Perspectives for Romania".**
Apart of the dissemination of relevant information and the exchange of materials developed between the two projects the goal was the exploration of new ways of cooperation even after the end of the two projects on topics such as: biodynamic agriculture, viticulture, organic wines, bio-pesticides, local seeds bank.



The synergy among NEFERTITI and NEXTFOOD project was introduced during an online meeting at 1st of April 2021. The project managers of both projects presented the results achieved and indicated some possible tools for collaboration among them. The overall objective of NEFERTITI is to establish an EU-wide highly connected network of demonstration and pilot farms designed to enhance knowledge exchanges, cross fertilization among actors and efficient innovation uptake in the farming sector through peer-to-peer demonstration of techniques on 10 major agricultural challenges in Europe. They are representing a unique Network (selected for 4 years under Horizon 2020, Societal Challenge 2, RUR 12-2017 call) comprising 32 partners from 17 countries and coordinated by ACTA, the head of Network of the French Agricultural Technical Institutes.

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Additionally, were organized one2one workgroups with the Dissemination managers of the following projects and based on exchange of banners among the projects.:

- AGRISAFE under Horizon 2020.
- aGROBOfood under Horizon2020.
- Smart Farming under Erasmus+ Adult

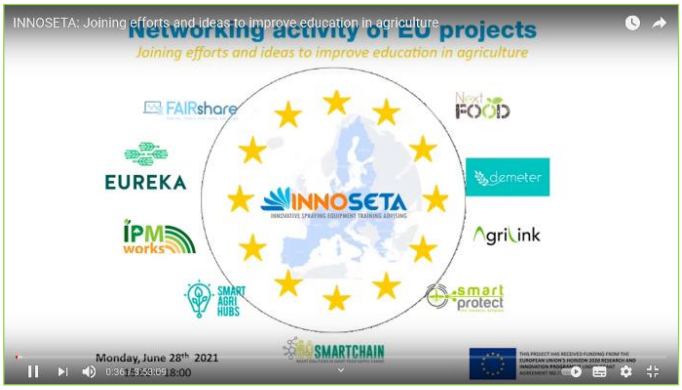
NEXTFOOD PARTNERS SYNERGIES with similar Projects:

The NEWBIE network will facilitate the development and dissemination of new business models, including new entry models, to the full range of new entrants – from successors to complete newcomers to the agricultural sector.

Med Food TTHubs project aims to establish and pilot operation of Trace & Trust Hubs focusing on Mediterranean food products as key points in the reform of tracing and authenticity procedures of traditional Mediterranean foods.

ORGANIC ECOSYSTEM offers multiple opportunities for the Mediterranean organic sector through concrete support to companies in order to strengthen value chains, create new commercial alliances and facilitate access to new markets.

INNOSETA A freely accessible repository of innovative spraying technology, training material, projects and papers tailored to the needs of the spraying community. During a networking webinar the following projects were presented. INNOSETA, NEXTFOOD, FAIRSHARE, EUREKA, SMARTAGRIHUBS, IPMWORKS, SMARTPROTECT, DEMETER, AGRILINK



Here you can learn about projects relative and/or interacting to the NextFood Project.

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NextFood Evaluation Framework A complex of three Pilots

by ***Jan Lehejček,*** *Bioinstitut*

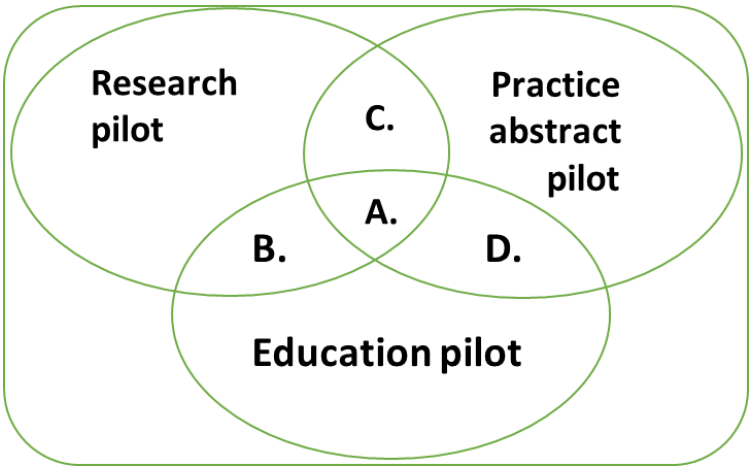
New challenges are always an adventure and NextFood project is full of them. Our Work Package five is not an exception.

How can you evaluate the success of actions within the future project that you never experienced? Our team managed to go step by step through the process of current projects to try to find patterns that can indicate desirable outputs of your future work. Yes, you need indicators as in any other evaluation.

Therefore, *three pilots are needed to be explore*. Users of the Framework will collaboratively assess the impacts of their work-processes and products. Work-processes were examining in applied research projects.

As you can see from the picture bellow, top left circle represents the ***Research pilot*** - operated in Sweden. One of the products of research projects are the practice abstracts. Those were the main object of ***Practice abstract pilot*** (top right circle) – operated in Czechia. Common findings from these two pilots (represented by the C. area) established the know-how for the ***Education pilot***. This pilot (represented by down circle) is now in replication/verification process operating in Greece. Both opening pilot teams are now in expectation of joint findings between them (represented by the B. and D. areas).

With all the new informations from every pilot separatly as well as together there will be the most challenging thing. The "birth" of the **NextFood Evaluation Framework** (represented by the A. area). Are you looking forward for the final result? You should be…



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The role of NextFOOD project's Social Media to the dissemination of the generated new knowledge necessary for a transition to more sustainable agrifood and forestry systems.

*by **Maria Soumelidou**, Communications Coordinator, AFS*

The NextFOOD project views dissemination, exploitation, and outreach (DEO) activities as processes that transcend the community and actors within the project's fields. The NextFOOD's WP6 team (AFS, ACRCM, BIOINSTITUT, ISEKI, MEKELLE, SEKEM, University of CHILE and WELTHUNGERHILFE) following the overall project's strategy intents to communicate the actions and disseminate the results of the project to a multitude of audiences. The project partners, even during the proposal preparation phase, have identified relevant target audiences and stakeholders, as well as appropriate channels to reach them.

NextFOOD utilizes the major potential that the various social media channels have in reaching out and engaging audiences both of the general public and the specific project stakeholders. NextFOOD's social media include a Facebook page, a Twitter account, an Instagram account, a LinkedIn group, and a YouTube channel. All of the above are linked to the project's website and platform.

The NextFOOD's aim is to engage the maximum audience from several demographic groups. Considering that different social media target different audiences NextFOOD utilizes all of the above-mentioned social media.

WEBSITE & PLATFORM

The NextFOOD website and platform additionally to the social media accounts serve as the main communication, dissemination, and exploitation tool. In this respect, they have been originally organized in a way that would serve the specific characteristics of both the general public and the targeted audiences of the project.

Website

https://www.nextfood-project.eu/

Since its development the website has been frequently re-organized and updated so as to facilitate new needs and to serve the specific characteristics of the multi-actor approach in the best possible way. The website has been equipped with a translation tool to allow for easier access to native languages.

Collaboration and networking with other Relative projects have been initiated and projected on the website.

The "case study" category has been updated and relevant enriched information (relative videos, educational material, articles, highlights of the cases' cycles, etc.), has also been included.

Ten flipbooks and printable pdfs in regard to the different case studies have already been created in a manner that can be easily disseminated through the user's fb, twitter, Instagram via the special key provided at the end of each category.

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Platform

https://www.nextfood-project.eu/nextfood-platform/

The website incorporates a platform with free subscription access. It is targeted to educators and practitioners in the field, serving as the operational and communicational tool to disseminate experience from cases, teaching tips and learning material to teaching practitioners.

The final MENU of the platform was reconstructed in April 2021 with most significant addition being the TOOLBOX. It has been developed to support teaching practitioners in successfully implementing education in line with the Nextfood approach. Special tools that can be used by the public and scientists as well, are presented in NextFOOD platform too.

Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/nextfoodinnovativescienceandeducation/

A NextFOOD Facebook page has been developed from the very beginning of the project under the name “NextFOOD”. Only the last 18 months 250 apx posts have been made attracting 3.495 apx followers in total.

The posts can be divided into various categories including material of general interest, such as posts of other Horizon 2020 projects, or news and announcements from the EU portal and of specific interest such as news and announcements from partners, summary of all abstracts, videos related to case studies and teaching tips, events (workshops, focus groups, partners’ meetings, etc.) thus providing information material for both scientists and public.

Twitter account

https://twitter.com/NextFood3

NextFOOD has additionally to Facebook page already created a Twitter account which is utilized to communicate and disseminate audio-visual material, links for public deliverables, news and announcements concerning the actions and outcomes/results of the project, though its main focus is to disseminate activities while they take place. Partners are encouraged to use their own tweeter accounts to follow, retweet or tweet actions about the project using the above-mentioned hashtag. There are currently 178 followers

Linkedin group

“NextFOOD_H2020”

LinkedIn as a social media focuses on professional networking therefore, the NextFOOD LinkedIn aims to develop a network of professionals, experts, organizations, policymakers and entrepreneurs that are more interested in specialized information such as about the results and outcomes of the case studies, scientific publications etc.

All stakeholders identified and engaged in local actions will be encouraged to become part of the NextFOOD LinkedIn project. Linkedin followers amount to 498.

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YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEjsZeXhtM_S3kju-iWLUww

The NextFOOD project already utilizes YouTube as the main audio-visual dissemination medium harvesting at the same time the potential that Tweeter, Instagram, and Facebook give to promote the content to larger audiences. It already hosts 32 videos. The page hosts a short promotional animated video clip about the project, short promotional and tutorial videos about the project platform and how to use it, videos presenting different case studies, videos about the project activities, events, focus groups, meetings, presentations etc., as well the Zenodo Tutorial video.

Instagram account

https://www.instagram.com/nextfoodproject/

The NextFOOD Instagram account is being utilized to reach out to younger audiences and has been based primarily in visual communication tools. Partners facilitating case studies are encouraged to upload photos, short videos, practices etc. that the project engages with, mainly of the same content as the Facebook posts. Current followers amount to 304 apx.

All the above accounts are linked to the project's website and platform and presented in dissemination material to make sure that all channels are communicated to the maximum possible audience.

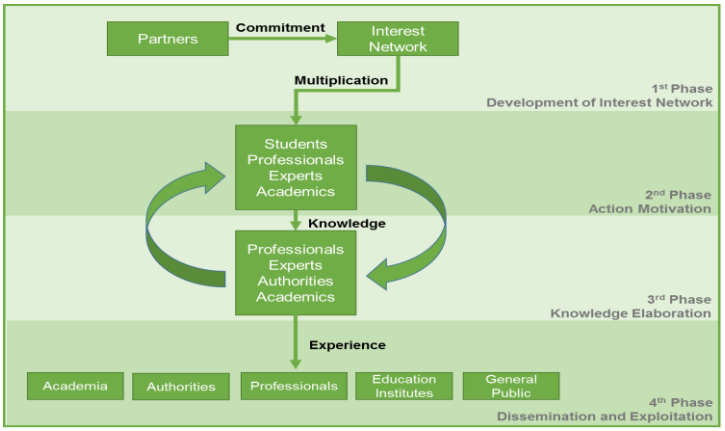
In conclusion

The NextFOOD's DEO strategy is based on a successive step approach, and it consists of four (4) different phases focusing on the development of an interest network, activation of participants in the project actions, iterative assessment, and elaboration of the produced knowledge and finally dissemination and exploitation.

The project's website and platform, the social media posts, and the audio-visual material along with the newsletters are all outputs of the 4th phase.

The following figure: a. illustrates the above-motioned relationships and,

b. the role of partners' engagement as the key to the success of the dissemination strategy and the achievement of the project's aims.



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NEWS ABOUT EDUCATION & TRAINING

New Action learning kick-start in Norway

*by **Marie Henriksen Bogstad, Kristiane Brudevoll,** NMBU*

At the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), the course that is the core of the Norwegian Nextfood case started in the middle of August. The ultimate goals of the one-semester course PAE302 Agroecology: Action Learning in Farming and Food Systems are to reduce the distance between academia and society, and to bridge the gap between knowing and doing in agrifood systems.

Moreover, the specific learning goals that guide the course activities are to:

- Acquire and internalize knowledge of farming and food systems,
- Link real-life situations and theory,
- Handle complexity and change,
- Become good communicators and facilitators, and
- Generate personal enthusiasm and become autonomous and life-long learners.

Figure 1: The students visiting a local farm on the second day of the Agroecology course.

Photo by Tor Arvid Breland

Already the second day, the students were out in the field visiting a local farmer. In the second week, they started their real-life open-ended casework, which entails participation in on-farm activities in four organic farms nearby the university.

Throughout the semester, the students will conduct two casework projects in groups of 5 students, one on a farming system and one on a food system. In these case inquiries the students will practice the core competences of observation, reflection, dialogue, participation, visionary thinking, and facilitation. The students will visit their respective cases three times during the case work and will in the first visit focus on gaining a holistic understanding of the present situation. Further, the students will develop a vision together with the farmers and other food system stakeholders, before concluding their case work by co-creating action plans for how to move towards a desired future state. To finalize the casework projects, the students will develop two separate stakeholder documents which are to summarize the case inquiries. In addition, the course activities are meant to provide opportunities for the students to reflect upon their learning process. As end products, they will write individual reflection documents to connect their experiences with theory and implications for their own personal development in the area of sustainable agriculture and agroecology.

The students come from a diversity of educational backgrounds and countries including Norway, Sweden, Kosovo, Austria, Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Burundi, USA, Jamaica, and India. Luckily, we were able to start off the semester on campus this year, and we in the NMBU Nextfood team look forward to following the students throughout their learning journey this fall. We hope to gain many insights valuable to the action research of the Nextfood project.

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New Developments in the curricula of the International Hellenic University

*by **Elisavet Papadopoulou**, AFS*

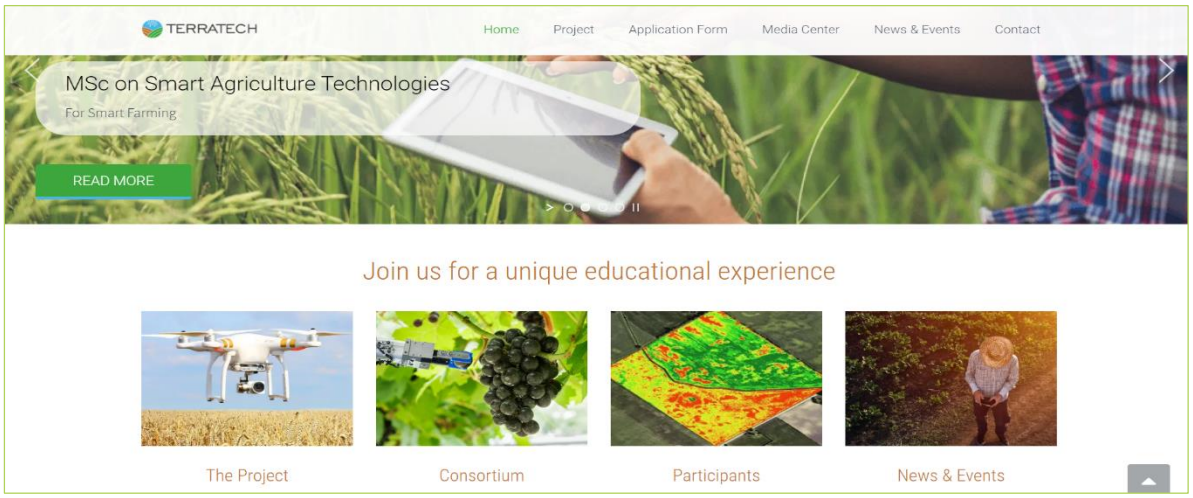
One crucial aspect of sustainable development is the adoption of precision Technologies and a shift to Precision Farming. We are very happy to report that there have been significant developments in the curricula of the International Hellenic University since their collaboration with the NextFOOD Project.

It has been an ongoing motivation for the Greek case to promote the use of precision farming technologies in the International Hellenic University and the promote training of students, professors and farmers on their importance and use. We started our efforts with installing a weather station in the IHU quarters and promoted awareness through the student projects and by organizing a very successful workshop for professors and students on the use of Precision technologies.

Recently, we had a very promising development in one of the NextFOOD desirable outcomes which is inter project collaborations and the introduction of curriculum changes that are in line with the shift to Sustainable Development and the NextFOOD project framework. During our collaboration with IHU professors Dr. Manolis Navrozidis and Aristotelis Lymperopoulos, we developed and introduced a new module to the Department of Agriculture. This is an undergraduate module on Precision Farming that is available to students as an elective.

Lately, we also encountered one of the professors that belong to an adjacent Department at IHU, Dr. Dimitrios Bechtsis from the Automation Mechanics Department, who is developing a postgraduate course, an MSc on Smart Agriculture Technologies. We have come to a close synergy with him in order to apply the NextFOOD action-learning and multi-actor principles to this MSc and establish permanent changes in the University's curricula and teaching methodology principles.

We are very happy with our collaboration and the motivation shown by these professors to develop their curricula in a way that is up to date and relevant to the ongoing technological and scientific developments in the field of Education and Agriculture. We hope that all our efforts will result in IHU students being endowed with all the knowledge and competences needed for leading the new generation to a greener and sustainable future.



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NEWS ABOUT CONFERENCES/EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

Biodynamic training Fall 2020 / Spring 2021 (Sekem case study)

by ***Reham Fathey Ali, Alaa Elhawwary,*** *HU*
Contributor ***Hend El Sawy,*** *HU*

In the academic year Fall 2020/Spring 2021, the students of faculty of Organic Agriculture, Heliopolis University for Sustainable development (FOA-HUSD) have explored the biodynamic farming principles at Sekem Farm at Sharqia governorate, Egypt (30°25'11" N 31°38'21" E) (Fig. 1) with participation of biodynamic consultants from Goetheanum (Switzerland) and the Egyptian professors, instructors, and teaching assistants from FOA-HUSD.

Figure. 1. Students and professors visit Gilvena village that belongs to 13 villages development project discussing the important points of organic agriculture.

Through the two weeks of the training in November/December 2020, a total of 36 students have been introduced to the concepts of biodynamic agricultural practices in addition to practical knowledge on how to design and establish a successful farm, cultivating economic crops, livestock husbandry, and understanding the principles of soil structure, texture, fertility, and microbiology as one holistic living entity.

While in March/April 2021, the students had deep insights on the landscape approaches and the economic importance of herbal medicinal plants, and additionally on the conceptions of agricultural economics and value chain.

One of the main challenges is working on the restrictions imposed by the government to face the global pandemic situation of Covid-19. One funny note that, especially for first-year students, they preferred to work either in male groups or female groups however, to overcome this distinction, the instructors have designed groups of mixed genders.

Through the period of training, the students start to understand the whole learning process and to put their hands on real-life biodynamic farming practices through listening, visioning, and working by their own hands. The target of the biodynamic training is to raise solid future agricultural engineers through the main five competencies such as observation, thinking and participation. In the end of the training, it had been noticed that the students had participated in productive ways through fruitful discussions, focus groups, asking multiple questions and participating in all the activities in the field. The students engaged more with the community of farmers and mimicked what they had received from practical courses in the field. The biodynamic training considers a comprehensive learning model to follow its steps and to apply the same concepts in other Community Development projects (CBL projects) of the university.

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Figure. 2. Students in the classroom and in the field in Biodynamic training at Sekem farm Sharqia governorate.

Community based learning activities 2021

As part of Heliopolis University vision to raise awareness for pesticide-free food and build healthy communities through disseminating the concept of Organic Agriculture and Biodynamic farming, a group of 16 students and 3 teachers from the faculty of organic agriculture have visited 7 conventional farmers in villages around SEKEM farm as part of Community Development project for 13 villages (project that focus on reducing the migration from rural to urban places) in Sharqia governorate (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the students have visited the Wahat farm in the Egyptian Western desert 360 km southwest of Cairo and 180 km west of the Nile valley (28°15'12.3"N 29°06'33.4"E) (Fig. 3).

The students have used the knowledge, skills, and competencies such as observation and dialoguing learned from the biodynamic training. This training is one of the two case studies for the NextFood project which prepares future young students and participants to be professionals in organic farming for sustainable food production.

Figure. 3. In Wahat farm, the students have planted 500 Casuarina trees to green and revive the desert.

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PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Motivations for farmers to participate in action learning course

*by **Manju S. Nair, Anupama Augustine,** UK*
*edited by **Katherine Flynn** and **Line Lindner**, ISEKI*

Farmers actively participate in the Certificate Course on Agroecology: Action Research and Education conducted at University of Kerala. Farmers join in the planning workshop prior to the course and act as facilitators in the course by guiding students during field stay. Based on farmers' experience, major recommendations are highlighted:

1. Participation in the course helps to interact with officials, academics and students which is otherwise impossible. It improves self-confidence and status of farmers.

2. Participation in the course is an opportunity to dialogue with students, the upcoming generation- relating to traditional agricultural practices and values.

3. From academics and students, scientific techniques can be learned, and a synthesis of traditional and modern techniques can be practiced in farms

4. The course provides an opportunity to familiarise with fellow farmers and learn from each other. It also helps to understand the contemporary farming techniques and marketing techniques in nearby farms.

5. Students participate in the farming activity which is a help for farmers. Students help farmers in ploughing, sowing, harvesting, and marketing activities based on the curriculum plan. Also, farmers can teach students farming practices.

6. Participation in the course can improve interpersonal skills, since it provides an opportunity to deal with a multitude of stakeholders.

7. Shared visioning and client documents can be used as a scientific draft to develop the farm. The comprehensive report prepared by students with the support of academics including farmers' vision includes practical tips to improve farms.

Download the Practise Abstract **here**

You can also find more interesting **Practice Abstracts** like this one **here**

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How to be a successful agroecology student (for students)

*by **Lutgart Lenaerts**, NMBU*
*edited by **Katherine Flynn** and **Line Lindner**, ISEKI*

To be(come) a successful agroecology student starts with a strong interest in the long-term sustainability of agrifood systems, an open mind, and eagerness to learn and act.

Firstly, to learn about sustainability of agriculture and food systems, you should be keen on understanding and solving complex problems. Moreover, you should be eager to work on these problems in international teams. If you want to make a difference in agrifood systems by linking knowledge to action, you have already one of the most important qualities to become a successful agroecology student.

Secondly, you should be open to multiple views and be (?) willing to learn individually and in groups (peer learning). Therefore, you should be(come) a good communicator and facilitator. Key to engaging in your own learning process is to train yourself in the competence of reflection. You should regularly take time to reflect. This will enrich your learning process and help you to become a life-long learner.

Thirdly, you should be keen on phenomenon-based and action-oriented learning. Do you like to start learning by observing what happens in the world out there? Do you like to learn how to take action that contributes to long-term sustainability of agrifood systems? If the answer is yes, then you have the right mindset.

To be a successful agroecology student means that you have all these interests, engage fully in your learning process, and enjoy the journey. Have fun!

Download the Practice Abstract Here

You can also find more interesting **Practice Abstracts** like this one **here**

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Terms

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For the next newsletters:

Issue 10/2021 will be published in December 2021

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