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PROLOGUE

NextFood is coming to an end

by **Martin Melin**, [NextFOOD](#) coordinator, [SLU](#)

NextFOOD was initiated in 2018 as a collaborative project bringing together 19 partners in an international network with the aim of designing a research-based learning strategy to enhance learners' understanding of complex situations and develop the competences needed to drive the transition towards more sustainable agri-food and forestry systems. The results of NextFood were intended to help overcoming some of the barriers presented to learners, teachers, and institutions who would like to engage in action-oriented and learner-centered education.



Through an inventory of skills, we explored the needs of the agricultural and forestry sector in the transition towards sustainability; from future professionals the industry is expecting more of higher order competences such as systems thinking, being able to integrate various types of knowledge and solving problems in collaboration with others. These are the kind of competences often mentioned in the literature on sustainability education. By applying an informatics approach, we were able to identify the big gap that exists between what the industry needs and what the universities are currently providing.

This gap calls for more action-oriented and student-centered approaches in education, and in several case studies we showed that this kind of education do deliver the learning outcomes that is needed in the sustainability transformation. We also showed that the educational approach conveyed by NextFood may be applied in various contexts, where learners come from different backgrounds and have different amount of previous training.

Needless to say, change does not always come easy. We identified a vast number of obstacles on the road towards action-oriented education that needs to be addressed. In particular, the necessity of students, teachers, and institutions to accept new roles in the learning situation were challenging to many. Obstacles were also found in the policy environment, and NextFood developed new policy instruments in order to support the development of education.

We also learnt the importance of including stakeholders in research and education, and how they can be a part of the whole research and educational process, from planning to implementation. We have seen many good examples on mutual benefits when long-term relationship between academia and extra-university stakeholders were successfully developed.

To support initiatives at other universities, the NextFood team developed a number of tools and methods that is freely accessible online. For example, on the project website teachers will find a master manual and a toolbox for anyone who want to test action-oriented education in their classes. There is also an audit tool that can help course leaders and educational managers to assess the sustainability content of courses and programs. Moreover, the twelve case studies that have been presented in various forms can serve as an inspiration and best practice for others who want to drive the change.

Research outcomes and the experience of cases studies formed the basis for a roadmap that may serve as a guide for transforming education in agriculture and forestry. The roadmap is supposed to support teaching practitioners as well as decision-makers in education to introduce action-oriented and student-centered learning approaches. We chose the roadmap as a metaphor, with the current state of education as a starting point for the journey and the NextFood approach to education as the future vision. The roadmap presents various checkpoints that can be helpful and sometimes are necessary to consider to avoid major obstacles on the road. The NextFood roadmap is a good place to start for anyone who wants to initiate change but don't know where to begin.

During the past four years, the NextFood consortium developed a spirit of creativity and collaboration, which resulted in good project outcomes despite the challenges we faced during these four years. I wish to thank everyone in the consortium for their devotion and their time spent in the project.

Best wishes and take care!

Martin Melin

NextFood coordinator



The final consortium conference in Bari, Italy, April 2022.

NEWS FROM NEXTFOOD PROJECT

NextFood Greek case – Action Learning Agriscapes

by *Elisavet Papadopoulou, Anna-Maria Krooupa, Georgia Zafeiriou and Vicky Krystalidou, AFS*

Contemplating the NextFood Project experience we are left with a sense of richness and fulfillment considering the knowledge and insights gathered through 4 cycles of action-based learning. For the Greek case – Action Learning Agriscapes, the NF project signified a change that was very much needed and valued by all participating actors.

Starting in 2018, the AFS team was faced with a significant challenge: An educational system that was entirely based on traditional teaching methodologies and with significant restrictions on time and material resources and infrastructures; a number of real economy actors that were suspicious or unwilling to collaborate with academia in a meaningful way; a great number of students and teachers who were never before in touch with the engagement involved in multi-actor, action-based learning. On the other hand, we found inspiration in the visions of the NextFood Project and the people we met and started collaborating with who gave us great motivation to begin this effort. We collaborated with professors at IHU who had the will to change things in the educational system and who had been giving a great teaching example in their organization in the past. With a strong vision of the changes that we were aiming at, we started working on involving and engaging real economy stakeholders, on developing the concepts of competences and action-based learning and on understanding and mapping the challenges and the supporting forces that we needed to build on.

We started out by piloting our ideas on effective multi-actor communication and teaching methodologies and by gathering the views of participants. We made our first attempts with what we called the “Action Learning Sets” during the first year and yielded encouraging results. These were true multi-actor settings, where a small number of students together with their teachers, visited farms and other agri-food businesses and engaged in real working conditions. Then, we realized that, for lasting change to become possible, we needed to train teachers and their students in action-based methodologies and the core competences. So, we spent the next two cycles involved in re-designing and enriching curricula and in active in-class involvement. We collaborated in designing and implementing action-based activities and saw how “thirsty” students were for this kind of learning and how positively it impacted them on an academic and on a personal level. At this time, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and we were challenged to turn action-learning in an on-line learning environment. By the time the final learning cycle had come we decided it was time to embed the Action-learning Set methodology within the courses. During this cycle, we formulated 5 multi-stakeholder groups (student(s), teacher, advisor, farmer(s), facilitator and observer) who would form the Action learning Sets. Each group would meet multiple times in the duration of 6 months with the aim of working on a real farm issue that would lead to the completion of a research thesis by the students. The final cycle that just finished further demonstrated the potentials of good communication on learning, motivation, engagement and knowledge and experience exchange.

During our experience with the NF project, we learned the true value of connecting and communicating. Both with our colleagues within the project and with our connecting stakeholders, we practiced our own competences on reflecting, on sharing our visions, on exchanging our knowledge on sustainability issues and on teaching methodologies. We also learned the importance of active listening, delaying our judgements and remaining flexible. It was also remarkable to see how resilient and flexible people can be in the face of the pandemic challenges that hit the NF Project at a critical point in the midst of its activities.

With the final reflections of our experience, we are faced with the question of how to further the impact of the NextFood Project. Since its beginning it has created a momentum with the people that were involved that we are very eager to maintain and multiply. From the part of the AFS, we will actively seek to retain all the connections made through the project with the IHU. We will encourage and actively support these and further changes in the Institution's curricula that are made in the direction of action-learning and sustainability. The seeds for this were already set with the introduction of new courses on sustainable plant protection and the use of precision technologies in farming.

At the same time, the NF project momentum can be maintained outside IHU based on our experience. While seeking new connections and opportunities, the AFS has signed a memorandum of understanding together with the University of Patra, the Hellenic Ministry of Education, the Hellenic Ministry of Agricultural Development & Food, ELGO Dimitra and the Captain Vassilis & Caren Konstantopoulos Foundation. The organizations involved have agreed to participate in scientific knowledge and experience sharing activities and to support a just and sustainable model of rural development. In this context, applying its NF heritage, the AFS will conduct a local agricultural education and skills needs assessment for the University of Patra and will compound new innovative educational programs designed for the future of farming.

In closing, we hope that the visions of the NF project and the lessons learnt between the partners will serve as steppingstones for developments in educational systems on a larger scale. The need for such change is pressing throughout the world and we feel privileged to have been part of it.

Useful links:

Nextfood educational platform: <https://platform.nextfood-project.eu/>

Case 5 / Greek case: <https://www.nextfood-project.eu/case-5-action-learning-agriscapes/>



**Next
FOOD
PLATFORM**

Get access to NextFOOD's experience.

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HORIZON 2020

NEWS ABOUT EDUCATION & TRAINING

Entrepreneurship Program 2021 – Cycle 3 and Demo Day (Sekem case study, Egypt)

by *Reham Fathey Ali, Alaa Elhawwary, Adel Khaled, Karim El Mallawany, Ibrahim Fathey Zalat, [HU](#)*



Entrepreneurship Program 2021 (Cycle 3) of NextFood project (Sekem case) started on 23rd of December 2021 and run for 3 months till 15th March, 2022. This cycle focused on providing support and developing of 5 start-ups that attended the Nextfood training in agribusiness and agroindustry into independent enterprises prepared to scale up. The graduating start-ups will be able to develop their Minimum Viable Product (MVP),

learn how to manage their finances, how to market their products, reach customers, and how to develop their sales. During this monitoring period in cycle 3, they become as final 4 start-ups.

The start-ups were early-stage cofounders and university students with business ideas in the sector of food and agriculture business. The incubated start-ups that reach to final stage were Chito Tech (manufacturing of nano chitosan and premium organic fertilizers from the recycling of shrimp shells in agricultural field), MicroFert (developing eco-friendly bio-products that are designed to boost crop productivity and enhance soil fertility), Farawla Tech (manufacturing soilless cultivation systems using agricultural waste) and the last start-up Myshrooms (cultivating organic healthy fresh mushrooms). During cycle 3, the start-ups receive different types of support such as technical assistance from field experts, business mentorship program, fabrication facilities and laboratories, agriculture lot, networking opportunities with potential clients, suppliers and financiers in addition to prototyping grants for top-performing social start-ups and access to investments and financing entities. The incubation cycle duration was 48 hours of mentorship, 1000+ hours of field-work, 6 progress reports and in the end 4 graduated promising start-ups. Finally, we completed Cycle 3 of Entrepreneurship program NextFood Project successfully, by presenting the final Demo day on Wednesday 23rd March 2022 at Entrepreneurship centre, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development.



The four start-up projects represent their work after fruitful period of mentoring and follow-up and implement positive steps of development in agribusiness and agroindustry.

End of the Demo day, the judge committee announced the final ranking of the winning projects. First prize for the start-up ChitoTech, second prize for MicroFert, third prize for Frawla Tech, fourth Prize for Mymashrooms.

Nextfood Project gave the opportunity to grow and provided four startups with incubation services, professional trainings and workshops in different fields, supporting their development after raise the level of the participant and enhance their performance.



Final moments from the NextFood project Demo Day Entrepreneurship Program 2021 cycle 3 after the participants gave their presentations of their project's idea at Entrepreneurship Center for Social Impact, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development.

The announcement of the Demo Day on the 23rd of March 2022, to join Nextfood team to attend the competition among the four start-ups and to see how far they become at Entrepreneurship Center for Social Impact, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development.

ECSI X NextFood
🔍

NEXTFOOD
INCUBATION CYCLE
DEMO DAY

Mar. 23rd
stay tuned

ECSI offers incubation services to support the development and growth of 4 start-ups who attended the Nextfood training in agribusiness and agroindustry.



The final four start-ups in the Demoday, First prize for the startup **ChitoTech**, second prize for **MicroFert**, third prize for **Frawla Tech**, fourth Prize for **Mymashrooms**.

Team Ag Economists for Local Food Access wins FoodFactory-4-Us competition with their solution to supporting and developing short food supply chains

by *Line Lindner, Katherine Flynn and Christoph Knöbl*, [ISEKI](#)

The winning team of the [FoodFactory-4-Us 2021/2022 competition on Supporting Developing Short Food Supply Chains](#) was Ag Economists for Local Food Access with their project “Enhancing Local Food Access in Kentucky Through Collective Action in Partnership with Nonprofits”.



The team from the University of Kentucky (USA), composed of Savannah Columbia, Alex Butler and Thomas Pierce and guided by Leandra Forman from FoodChain, gave their presentation outlining the challenge of sourcing local food to underserved

communities through the development of a collective action strategy to assist in the distribution and transportation of products.

5 teams from India, France and the USA (19 students) participated in the 4-month online FoodFactory-4-Us competition (NextFood Case#4) with the aim to finding solutions to support and develop short food supply chains. Teams identified a specific problem in collaboration with an industry mentor, then designed and developed an industry-exploitable solution. An Advisory Board of academic and industry experts evaluated the projects, including at the Final Conference where team members answered audience questions. All teams that completed the competition had excellent projects and only a few points determined the winners.



Winners to present at the NextFood Final Project Meeting in April 2022

Members of the winning team won a cash prize of EUR 300 sponsored by the [ISEKI-Food Association](#) and were invited to give their winning presentation to project partners and other invited stakeholders at the NextFood Final Project Meeting to be held early April 2022. The FoodFactory-4-Us compe-

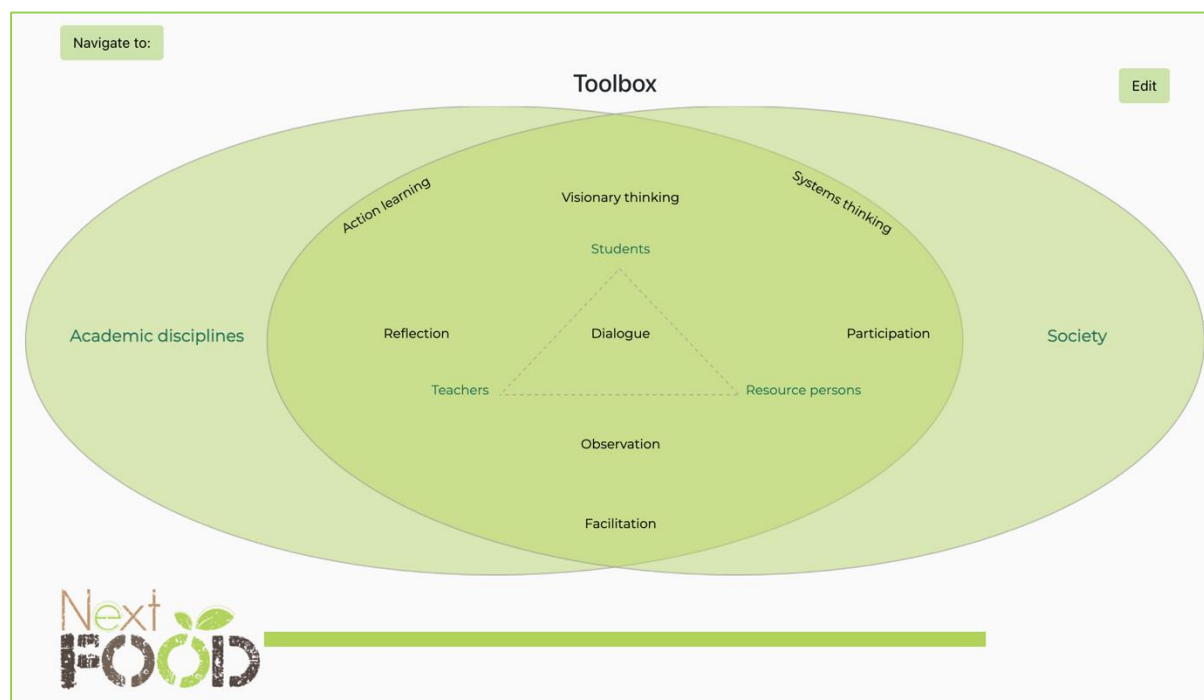
tition is one of the [case studies of the NextFOOD project](#) organised by ISEKI-Food Association. Students gain experience on participating in an innovative, learner-centric environment based on active, action-oriented learning to develop a project including a specific objective/target exploitable at the industry level and with the aim of contributing to innovation in sustainable food systems. Visit the [FoodFactory-4-Us](#) site for more information.

The Nextfood Toolbox – for teaching practitioners

by Marie Henriksen Bogstad and Kristiane Brudevoll, [NMBU](#)

During the final year of the Nextfood project the NMBU team has further developed the Nextfood toolbox for teaching practitioners, based the deliverable “D3.4: A Toolbox for teaching practitioners”. In this work, the Nextfood cases have contributed with invaluable feedback through email communication and in several interactive on-line sessions.

The Toolbox is filled with educational materials, resources, and examples from the Nextfood cases, available for a wide audience of teaching practitioners and others who want to try out an educational approach based on action learning. The most recent updates concern both graphics and content, and the Toolbox is made available for everyone to access on the Nextfood project website. In collaboration with the WP6 design team we have also made aesthetic updates to the Toolbox interface as well as navigation on the site. The Toolbox frontpage now includes instructions for how to use the Toolbox, a vocabulary, and a video that introduces the Nextfood project.



Toolbox interface

Other updates include:

- More tools and resources for implementing the Nextfood educational approach, e.g., exercises for training the core competences, workshop guidelines, example schedules and videos.
- Theoretical background information on Action learning, Systems thinking and other concepts central to the approach.
- Examples from the Nextfood cases in terms of lessons learned, practice abstracts and links to relevant deliverables.

In December 2021, the Toolbox was also presented as an example of resources for working towards sustainable development in a collaborative event with the project SDGs Labs, called “Sustainability matters - novel tools to transform education and businesses”. This was a good opportunity to create some traction for the Toolbox and the Nextfood project.

We hope that many people will find the Nextfood Toolbox useful, and we encourage everyone to spread the word; the Toolbox is up and running!

You will find the Toolbox on the Nextfood website: <https://www.nextfood-project.eu/> under the tab ‘Deliverables & Tools’.

The course has come to an end, but curiosity has just begun

by **Malin Juter**, [Skogforsk](#) (the Forestry research institute of Sweden)

We ended our last course in case 6 in the beginning of this year. It was a group of 8 private forest owners, 2 officials and 4 members from the team at Skogforsk in Sweden.

The course is based on an ecological and biological theme. Focus is on how to manage production forests in a way that benefits economy as well as nature conservation.

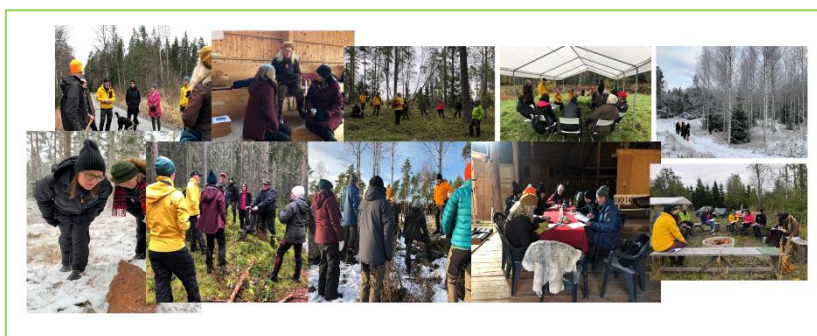


In this cycle our learners were interested in finding strategies and methods to increase quality and number of micro-habitats in their forests.

We learnt a lot during the course and here are some tips and lessons learned:

- Start planning early. Getting a diverse group of people together, with different occupations and employers, requires time and planning.
- It was a big advantage to be able to go out and physically visit the participant's respective forest. This made everyone more engaged, and we got closer to their real challenges. We could have good dialog standing in their own forest about practical things and about future visions.
- Many of the private persons we worked with also had another day job, so we couldn't take up too much of their time (it would most likely have reduced the number of participants). Each session took around 4 to 5 hours and we meet 5 times for 5 months.
- We used an app to keep the conversations going between the sessions. Everything from reports to the everyday work as a forest owner was shared and made it easier for the group to learn each other's perspectives.
- Collecting the documentation was best done during the sessions where we met in person to make sure that everyone's thoughts and reflections was noted. The documentation that required a bit more thought was made digitally to make it easy for the participants to comment and edit.
- It is important to think about food, coffee and shelter from wind and rain when out in the field so that participants can concentrate on learning from each other and not having to focus on getting through the day in a sometimes cold and windy Sweden.

Some pictures from our sessions:



Students Speak: Certificate Course on Agroecology, University of Calcutta/Welthungerhilfe

by **G. S. V. Vinyasa**, **Antara Ray** and **Md. Aminul Haq Bratto Amin**, [University of Calcutta, WHH](#)

G. S. V. Vinyasa. Agroecology course started on 6th Dec 2021 and on 5th Dec. 2021 night, I almost decided to not join because of psychological tensions or an oscillating mind and wished it wasn't organized at such times when there is so much disturbance in my head, lol! Somehow, I braced myself, started fresh the next day, and the facilitating group, on the very first day itself proved that it was worth enough to join and gave me a hope to look forward to. It was a unique first day. Not everyone can pull that off well with a cool ice-breaker.



So, not just this one time but there were unfortunately many such hurdles that made me almost quit, of which I think twice, strongly. It was only for the respect the team had given to this course, their dedication, the effort they are taking, the facilitators they came up with amongst which some are top notch, and all kinds of learnings happening, makes me go back daily and learn something new. Hoping to continue like this.



'Agroecology', when I read the term, I was only in the opinion that it was about agriculture and practices in integration with the environment and felt like an opportunity to learn about the two things, which the organization where I work, focuses on. I am glad to share that it was during the first two days of the course when I realised and understood the other verticals related to this concept like our food system, its history, nutrition, political aspect, socio-cultural angle, market system, global trade and then of course, different types of ecology. I guess I can go on and on.

The journey so far has been an insightful and an incredible one. More than the subject knowledge, what I find myself attracted to the course is the diverse connections getting formed, well-organised course structure, their choice of facilitators and the way they

communicate with us. The course designers very well know how to keep their students engaged. Maria Montessori talks about 'practical life experience' as one of her philosophies, which I learnt

during my Montessori Diploma and I see myself applying that during this course. Hoping to apply the formula post the course also.

Though there is subject knowledge in the course, as an individual, I expect myself to grow as a person, which I mentioned during our very first rich picture assignment. I am already re-learning about myself, trying to observe and perceive things the way they are and be the change that I want to see (even if it's a slow process, because it's a slow process. Lol!). It is a good way to reassure myself what and where I can work myself out.

Antara Ray. History of man's development is the history of food. Ecology concerns on one organism is being food to another and maintaining a balance in nature. Sociology concerns about making food equitable to one and all. Religion and ethnic cultures celebrate ways of respecting energy, resource and food systems and preserving its cultivation and preparation. Politics of man at its core is all about who has more energy, resources, fertile land, and life sustaining food. Ecofeminism is about bringing focus to the diversity of human capital needed for the preservation and perpetuation of environments and food systems. Businesses deals with the system where food and its precursors and derivatives are exchanged in their temporally perceived values.

Agroecology as a subject that concerns them all. This multi-disciplinary course makes us aware that environment and ecology, farms and food systems, people and communities, market and businesses are complex systems to manage and need multiperspectives to handle.

The course teaches the micro-factors of the integrated farms management systems and macro-factors which can encourage ethical agriculture and business towards a balanced circular economy of zero waste and no excess.

Md. Aminul Haq Bratto Amin. It was really exciting to me to know that the 'Certificate Course in Agroecology' is going to start from December 2021! We as a group from Bangladesh Ecological Network have applied, waited for selection, and finally got selected! We were eagerly waiting to start, and finally it has.

Actually, I didn't think that this course would be so serious at first! Thought, I could do something else parallel during the online lectures. But I was completely wrong, and I couldn't shift my focus or willingness to go somewhere else! Whenever, I was bound to be absent, I thought, I missed a lot! That means as a seeker, I was engaged all the time with this course so gladly. Almost every class was so interesting and interactive. The most interesting thing was, never had I felt that I was in an online class!



I liked the course design very much because it was a 360 degree. Not only in terms of content, but also in terms of facilitator or teacher. I learned a lot and got some connection with lovely like-minded people.

How to prepare an agricultural engineer with a sustainable thinking mind who is able to support his community? (Sekem Case Study, Egypt)

by *Salma Nour El-Deen*, Contributors: *Reham Fathey Ali*, *Alaa Elhawwary*,
Karim El Mallawany, [HU](#)

How to prepare an agricultural engineer with a sustainable thinking mind who is able to support his community?

As a new Teaching Assistant in Faculty of Organic Agriculture HU, I was so delighted that I had the opportunity to join the Biodynamic training course for the first time. The training targeted the fresh students of Organic Agriculture in November 2021 for two weeks that takes place at SEKEM Farm, Belbis, Sharkia, Egypt.

We both, the students and me, attended the training for the first time with no background of the principles of sustainable development, organic agriculture, and biodynamic preparation. We did not understand the complete idea of faculty courses connection with this course. However, during the training we found out that all the team accomplished very fruitful scientific activities based on observing, interacting, dialoguing, discussion and taking multiple notes about all details belong to the farm we have seen.

One of the interesting topics has strong impact on the students and me was the relationship between soil, plants, and living organisms. Studying the nutrition of plants in the environment, soil health, livestock husbandry and biodiversity were interesting topics for improving the students' background about organic agriculture. The training includes visiting factories belong to SEKEM farm that made us see clearly the manufacturing of food products and using organic cotton for men clothing.

By the end of the training, each students including me has clear vision of the importance of sustainable development and green solutions using all what he/she has learned in the training at the Farm. This training achieves the purpose of learning in agricultural courses in gradually phases, in an orderly manner, and to achieve its goals for the students. The training started with Soil Science, Botany, and plant nutrition, then livestock husbandry, and at last Human Nutrition.

Through this training, we are looking forward to preparing a great generation of Agriculture Engineers with sustainable vision and effective minds able to get the benefits all these natural resources.



Students of Organic Agriculture, Heliopolis University while accomplish training activities in the Biodynamic training at Sekem, Belbeis, Sharkia governorate, Egypt.



Students of Organic Agriculture, Heliopolis University in their field visit following the activities of Organic Livestock Husbandry in the Biodynamic training at Sekem, Belbeis, Sharkia governorate, Egypt.



Facilitators of Sekem farm continue teaching through field visits to students of Organic Agriculture, Heliopolis University in the Biodynamic training at Sekem, Belbeis, Sharkia governorate, Egypt.



NEWS ABOUT CONFERENCES/EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

Meet today for the professionals of tomorrow: outcomes from a round of workshops in Task 4.2

by **Giacomo Rinaldi and Yaprak Kurtal**, [Unibo](#)

The English verb “to meet” can mean both “to come together with someone” and “to do something necessary to deal successfully with a situation” (Macmillan Dictionary), and this double meaning well summarizes the meetings organized within Task 4.2. Indeed, to identify local educational and training governance perspectives on one hand, and, on the other, to listen to the main actors involved in the educational process, a round of workshops has been organized by the WP4 partners, coordinated by the University of Bologna (Unibo) team.



The main goal of the workshops was to allow participants to frame the problems and the policy needs and strategies in the educational context, referring to the [New Green Deal](#) and [European Farm to Fork](#) (FtF) Strategy, raised by the European Commission. In this sense, the workshops were held as part of WP4 that aims to identify policy instruments that support the transition towards action-, and practice-oriented learning methods.

However, thanks to the precious collaboration of all NextFOOD partners from all WPs, between August and December 2020, nine workshops have been conducted in as many different contexts (Austria, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Greece, India, Italy, Norway, Sweden), giving us the opportunity to listen to the ideas and suggestions of

55 stakeholders from 12 different countries in three continents and this enriched the entire discussion with valuable contents and different perspectives.

After the analysis and the synthesis of the outcomes from the country-level workshops, a final EU-level workshop was organized in March 2021 to present the local results and to widen the perspective from a local point of view to a European one. In this EU-level workshop 20 experts (academicians, advisors, and officers from a variety of organizations, associations, and universities) took part in the discussion.

Although it was challenging to synthesize the vast amount of reflections, information, and advice that came from all the workshops, it was very interesting to note that some themes and issues were widely discussed in-depth, and were cross-cutting across countries and different contexts. In this sense, we can outline some buzzwords that will be milestones for the development of a new educational and training pathway: sustainability, skills and competencies, practical learning, collaborations and dialogue, just to cite the most relevant.

More in detail, sustainability comes up as an important keyword and the origin of any further discussion. Indeed, sustainability is seen both as challenging, but also the means to develop both new policies and new curriculums for stakeholders, independently from AFF. In this vein, the need to integrate the topic of sustainability in education starting from early age was stressed. It is important to underline that the concept was widely understood as the balance of the environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

In the framework of sustainability, updating skills and competencies is deemed necessary, mainly by enhancing critical and systems thinking, problem-based and multi-disciplinary approaches. Furthermore, hard skills are required, such as knowledge of the English language, entrepreneurship, or marketing. The most urgent, however, are the digital skills, considered fundamental for all the professionals of the future, from farmers to advisers, from teachers to technicians.

However, the discussions focused not only on what is missing but proactively tried to indicate how to develop these skills and competencies. Hence, in all workshops, a common argument was transversally – but with different shades – that for AFF professionals a new balance between theory and practice should be found. In other words, to date, the education and training systems are too unbalanced towards theory and a new season of practical- and action-learning is actually in demand.

Nevertheless, the development of the skills is only a part of the education process that helps to face future new challenges that cannot be foreseen today. For this reason, lifelong learning is reputed necessary to tackle the long-term challenges and help the AFF sectors to grow sustainably.

Finally, a general request for closer collaborations and dialogue between all the AFF actors (practitioners, academicians and researchers, policymakers, industry, advisers, organizations, associations, and NGOs) was made. In particular, the main demands are about: collaborations to update curriculums and traineeships; to develop new forms of practical learning and their recognition to get the diploma – i.e., develop a certification system; to harmonize policies and policy tools at different levels – i.e., European, national and regional level – in order to lower the bureaucratic pressure.

About this last point, a closer collaboration between states, especially at the European level, is seen as very important to create a common language, common goals, and shared innovation and knowledge.

To meet all these challenges and the proposals made during the workshops, Deliverable 4.2, and the following task (T4.3) together, will aim to develop concrete guidelines for policymakers and education managers towards the improvement of policies in the European AFF sectors. In this direction, a conceptual framework and specific policy design options with links to best practices will be defined.

And we hope that, when the pandemic will be over, we will meet again to discuss and share opinions and contents for the AFF professionals of tomorrow, because we strongly believe in the power of meetings.

For more information on Deliverable 4.2 visit: <https://www.nextfood-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/d4.2-identification-of-strategies-for-improvement.pdf>

NEXT FOOD Legacy - Innovative Science & Education for Sustainable Agriculture

by *Daphne Kapsala*, [ACRCM](#)



Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region Central Macedonia organized on 22nd of November 2021 in Thessaloniki, Greece, a blended conference on dissemination of results of the “[NEXTFOOD](#)” project. The event have reached significant participation both live and digital, in the framework of the 4th Women Entrepreneurship Week -an official forum of the World Small and Medium Business Week.

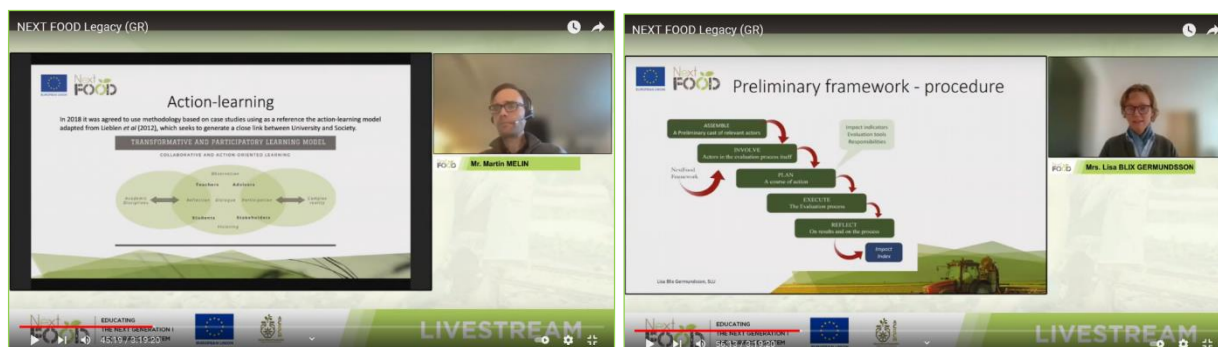
The scope of the event was to mark the milestone for the Advancement of Rural Women Entrepreneurship as a tool for Women's Economic Empowerment in Europe. ‘After all, highlighting actions with the dimension of promoting gender equality is now a priority within Horizon Europe’.

This year the Forum focused on the Restart of the Economy, with topics such as the section entitled Smart Agriculture - Crops - Agri-food, where "Horizon 2020| NEXTFOOD: Transition to more sustainable and competitive agri-food practices" took place. The discussion was opened by the President of ACRCM, Mr. Konstantinos Kiltidis who stressed the need to solve the problems facing Greece in the field of agri-food and support of Greek quality products, while among other things he stressed the need for the central administration to support people in the primary sector and especially women, saying "We live in the dismantling of the countryside."



In a very interesting presentation Mr. Martin Melin, project manager at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), developed the philosophy of *NextFood collaborative and action-oriented learning model*, which aims to educate future generations of farmers, building a new model diffusion of knowledge, supporting the transition to "*student-centered education*". Emphasis was placed on the analysis of the professional skills needed by the farmer entrepreneur, as well as on the acquired ability of the farmer entrepreneur of the future, where they were presented in detail in the NextFood project. Finally, he added that the project, which is an initiative of the European Union, consists of 19 partners from 13 countries and 3 continents.

Furthermore, an analysis of the educational strategy and the experiences they have gained from NextFood, made Ms. Lisa Blix Germundsson (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences), who referred to the [case study of Sweden](#).



For their part, Messrs. Anna-Maria Kroupa and Georgia Zafeiriou from the American School of Agriculture presented the implementation of [the Next Food approach in Greece](#). Special attention was given to the Action Learning Set (ALS) methodology that the AFS is currently using for the implementation of the NextFOOD approach.



Then, Mrs. Maria Papageorgiou, professor at the International University of Greece, stressed the need for sustainable economic and social development in rural areas, with initiatives that include environmental, social and economic dimensions aimed at enhancing regional cooperation through the synergy of NEXTFOOD and [LOC-FOOD](#) projects, as in the next post,



which belonged to Mrs. Apostolina Tsaltabassi of ACRCM, where she referred to the synergy of NEXTFOOD and [SMART FARMING 4.0 ALL](#) (a project that also hosted action in the framework of the 4th Women Entrepreneurship Week).

In addition, through the presentation of Ms. Despina Loannidou by the Women's Cooperative "Agios Antonios Thessaloniki", the role of women in the agri-food sector was analyzed and how the appropriate skills can be developed for the Agricultural Entrepreneur of the future.

In closing, after the exchange of views of the attendees, but also from the scientifically substantiated opinion of the participants, an optimistic climate was cultivated for the future of the agri-food sector and for how it can reach the desired levels, where at this point everyone agreed that cooperation is required, networking, development strategy and negotiation, which should focus mainly, if not exclusively, on sustainability.

NEXT Food Workshop Greek Translation live video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVjcpMV4w4Y>

NEXT Food Workshop English Translation live video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zw9blz-JAhw>

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Working with stakeholders from agroecology: a way to inspire and promote students' participation and engagement in their learning experience

by *Claudia Rojas, Francisco Nájera, Ricardo Pertuzé, Andrés Muñoz-Sáez, Gabriela Lankin, Osvaldo Salazar, [University of Chile](#)*

One of the main learning outcomes of the UCH course “Linking agroecology with society” was to develop a diagnosis and proposal for improvements in an agroecological system through participatory research in two different case studies. The faculty team invited stakeholders from agroecological farms willing to participate in the case studies.

Students and stakeholders met and built a relationship based on respect and horizontality that allowed the engagement and compromise of the learners with the course project. They demonstrated their commitment in the assignment through active participation, group meetings, and integration of the challenges of the case studies from their own voices. The real-life case studies motivated the students to do their best to help the stakeholders. The last demonstrated their social responsibility and professionalism.



The interactions with the stakeholders inspired the students, which motivated them to participate actively during the case study. The “*farmer's ability to deliver their knowledge, with the best disposition to teach from humility*” and “*agroecology is difficult but possible, as a way of life*” were the quotes that stayed in their minds over the whole process.

So, working with stakeholders can teach us:

- Engagement can be encouraged by inspiration given by stakeholders
- Inviting stakeholders into traditional courses gives dynamic to the learning experience, and it can lead to learning outcomes like social engagement
- It is vital to count on the continuous support of the stakeholders during the development of the learning experience.

How can a cooking video teach about observation and holistic understanding of agroecological systems?

by *Claudia Rojas, Gabriela Lankin, Francisco Nájera, Andrés Muñoz-Sáez, Ricardo Pertuzé, Osvaldo Salazar, University of Chile.*

During the UCH course “Linking agroecology with society,” there was a session about holistic understanding of agroecological systems. The primary aim of the session was to co-create guidelines between learners and facilitators about what to observe and ask in the agroecosystem. The session was centered on the core competence of OBSERVATION: How a motivational activity can be adapted to online sessions? The “Observation walk” exercise of the NextFOOD Toolbox was an excellent starting point, so it was adapted for a virtual lecture. Facilitators showed the students a video where the famous chef Jamie Oliver cooked a *Healthy South American Brunch*.



After watching the video, facilitators asked some quick questions such as “*how many botanical families were in the recipe?*” or “*What colour was the kitchen bench?*” Then, facilitators asked: *what captured most of your attention and why?* The responses were diverse, and each participant focused

on different aspects or parts of the video, understanding that OBSERVATION involves different senses and different perspectives. When the conversation turned into what to observe and ask in the field, participants highlighted the importance of sharing their observations with the others to understand complex systems. Each participant’s disciplinary

background influenced the chosen measurement and observation instruments and the questions to be asked in the field. Therefore, participants concluded that it is key to build interdisciplinary working teams. The video was an excellent introductory exercise to understand that OBSERVATION needs time, focus, and no judgments, OBSERVATION need to be shared, to gather different visions for a robust and integrative diagnosis of reality.



Download the Practice Abstract [Here](#).

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Terms

This is the last issue, thank you for reading!

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