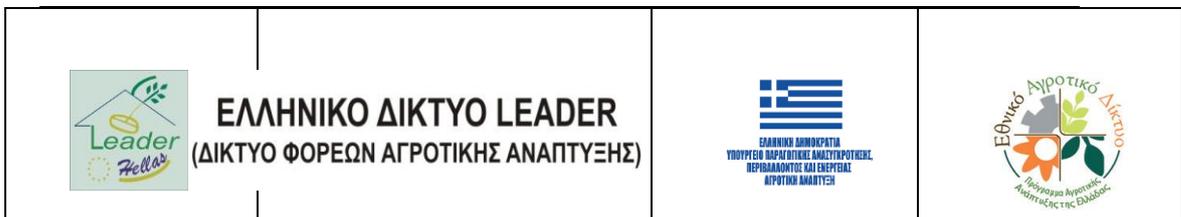




European Rural Parliament 2015
National Report from Greece

prepared by

Greek LEADER Network, represented by LAG "ACHAIA SA"



1. Introduction

1.1. The European Rural Parliament 2015

The initiative of the European Rural Parliament 2015 (ERP 2015) was launched by the European networks ERCA, PREPARE and ELARD, and has the following objectives:

- a. To strengthen the voice of rural communities in Europe and ensure that their interests and welfare is effectively reflected in national and European-level policies.
- b. To promote self-help, common understanding, solidarity, the exchange of good practices and cooperation between rural communities throughout Europe.

The ERP identifies itself as "the voice of rural residents." The ERP 2015 campaign is driven by the conviction that the interests of rural communities (i.e. all people who live or work in rural areas) are under-represented in national and European discussions as well as in the formulation of policies and development programmes that concern them; that rural people themselves have better knowledge and understanding of the strengths, needs and opportunities in their areas; that rural communities should be encouraged to take action to achieve the objective of prosperity; and finally, that rural communities can be constructive partners of governments in achieving common goals.

The EU-wide ERP 2015 campaign is already associated with national campaigns in approximately 40 European countries. At national level, an organization is established as national coordinator, who performs a series of information campaigns during the first half of the year in order to adopt a National Report for ERP 2015 on how rural communities perceive their future. Following this, the ERP 2015 Gathering, an EU-wide conference, will take place on 4th-6th November in Schärding, Austria. There, all ERP 2015 representatives from all countries will be met in a high-level event with a view to adopting a European Position Paper (*Manifesto*) on the future of the European countryside.

1.2. The design of the Greek ERP 2015 campaign

In Greece, the role of the national coordinator was assumed by the Greek LEADER Network, with the active contribution of the Greek National Rural Network (NRN), with which there was close cooperation throughout the Greek campaign.

In the frame of the Greek ERP 2015 campaign, the Greek LEADER Network proceeded to the establishment of a Steering Committee, which consisted of the following bodies: a) Greek LEADER Network, b) National Rural Network (NRN), c) ELG "Dimitra" (Greek Agricultural organisation), d) Agricultural University of Athens, e) Panhellenic Association of Young Farmers (P.E.N.A.) and f) WWF Hellas.

Given the limited time available, the Steering Committee decided that the Greek ERP 2015 campaign would :

1. Focus on the organization of four regional events and a central event (for final results / approval of the Greek National Position Paper).
2. Focus on the following three topics in the interest of increasing the effectiveness of dialogue in ERP 2015 events:
 - a. Entrepreneurship and market access;
 - b. Quality - Innovation - Knowledge transfer;
 - c. Quality of life in rural areas.

In relation to the above-mentioned issues, members of the Steering Committee were tasked with formulating basic position papers (rational) with sub-thematic structure and related questions, which were consequently used in the organisation of respective workshops in the planned ERP Meetings and Events.

To realise these events, the following were deemed necessary:

- a. Activation of members of the Greek LEADER Network, i.e. the Local Action Groups (LAGs), which in May undertook to conduct information and education campaigns on the ERP 2015 in their areas in order to inform, raise awareness and promote the idea and objectives of ERP at local level.
- b. Support and financing of National Rural Network (NRN) actions; in particular the NRN undertook to finance the organization of:
 - Meetings - open gatherings with parallel workshops,
 - Uniform printed material for the Greek ERP 2015 campaign,
 - Creation of a link between the sites of relevant stakeholders (e.g. Greek NRN, LAGs, etc.) and the main ERP 2015 website.

Regional Events were planned to be organised on the following dates:

- 05/06/2015 in **Larissa**, with the support of LAGs from the regions of Thessaly and Central Greece,
- 18/06/2015 in **Patras**, with the support of LAGs from the regions of Western Greece, the Ionian Islands and the Peloponnese,
- 01/07/2015 in **Heraklion** for rural areas in islands, with the support of LAGs from the Crete, North as well as South Aegean,
- 03/07/2015 in **Thessaloniki**, with support of LAGs from the regions of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia and Epirus,
- 09-10/07/2015 in **Athens** (final/central event), with the support of the Greek NRN, and the participation of all LAGs as well as agencies and organizations that have expressed their interest during regional events.

Unfortunately, the events in **Thessaloniki** and **Athens** did not take place due to the imposition of "capital controls" in late June by the Greek government, in the context of negotiations for the country's new bailout agreement with the Eurozone member countries.

1.1 Workshop 1: Entrepreneurship and access to markets

Over the last thirty years, the global system of production, trading and marketing of agricultural products/food is undergoing a restructuring process, which is characterized, among others by: the industrialization of agricultural production and recurrent economic crises in various parts of the world.

As a result of these trends, we are seeing: a) increasing segmentation of markets, b) elimination / merging of the levels of the food supply chain, c) competitive pressures for increased added value in food products, d) strategic alliances and partnerships as the main means of survival and success, e) need for reducing the cost of transactions, etc.. At the same time, and since the 1990s, we have observed the establishment of numerous Alternative Structures Supply Chains, such as Short Supply Chains (SSC). The establishment and successful operation of such Chains depends inter alia on producers' and consumers' access to appropriate logistical and electronic platforms as well as to other infrastructure.

According to the European Commission's proposal for Rural Development, the term SSC refers to a supply chain that includes a limited number of economic operators, who have committed to cooperation, local economic development and close geographical and social relations between producers and consumers. The SSCs include various mechanisms which allow producers of agricultural products, food and beverages, to circumvent intermediaries. Such mechanisms may take one of the following organizational forms:

1. Direct sales in the farm or, in general the place of production, including sales to tourists.
2. Sales by mail order.
3. Internet sales.
4. Producers' stores.
5. At home delivery.
6. Sales in local restaurants and taverns.
7. Direct sales to enterprises.
8. Sales in bazaars, fairs, street markets, etc.
9. Sales from the same producer, on a separate stand, in local supermarkets.

The key questions posed for discussion were the following:

I. Networks and supply chains

1. Which is the role of networking for the competitiveness and profitability of farms and other actors in the food & beverage logistics chain?
2. Which are the methods of creating and encouraging effective participation of producers in the food and drink chain?
3. Which are the critical issues for the organization of short food & beverage supply chains?
4. In which networks do inhabitants of rural areas participate? Pros and cons?
5. How do producers see their participation in food & beverage logistics chains?

II. Creation and receipt of value added

6. In what ways can producers of primary agricultural products enhance the added value of their products to their advantage?
7. What are the problems faced by agricultural producers in the creation and collection of added value from their products?
8. Do existing policies (CAP and others) help towards the creation and collection of added value?
9. How other actors in the supply chain (except farmers-producers) see the establishment and collection of added value from their products?

10. In what ways do producers already generate and receive added value from their products?
- III. Collective entrepreneurship
11. Are producers aware of the existing 30+ alternative models for collective agricultural entrepreneurship?
 12. Do producers consider collective productivity useful, feasible, or necessary? Why?
 13. Obstacles (institutional, civil, economic, social, etc.) to the organization of traditional agricultural cooperatives or other forms of rural collective entrepreneurship?
 14. Do producers perceive agricultural cooperatives as their own businesses? Why or why not?
 15. What benefits do producers already have from their participation and investment in agricultural cooperatives and other forms of collective entrepreneurship?
- IV. Financing
16. Funding problems for new businesses faced by producers?
 17. What works positively as regards the financing of rural farms and other rural businesses?
 18. Subsidies, agricultural policy and implications for entrepreneurship?
 19. Special aid for young farmers-entrepreneurs? Problems and prospects?
 20. Initiatives of producers to secure funding for new business ventures? Problems, advantages, outlook?
- V. Infrastructure
21. Entrepreneurship and infrastructure in rural areas: What is there, what is lacking? What are they waiting for?
 22. What would inhabitants of rural areas like to change / improve, in terms of infrastructure (roads, services, transport, healthcare, education, etc.)? In relation to the support of local entrepreneurship?
 23. What "worked" and what did not work in the past, in terms of investment for the building of infrastructure in their area?
 24. How happy are the people in rural areas from their participation in defining priorities and designing investments in infrastructure in their area?
 25. What type of infrastructure was deemed necessary to support rural entrepreneurship?
- VI. Interface industries and services
26. Do producers know what clusters are and, if so, what do they think about them? Can they have a positive impact on agricultural production, rural incomes and consumer benefits? What do the participants think?
 27. Agricultural research: what do producers expect from it?
 28. What services which could support the entrepreneurial efforts of farmers and other residents of rural areas are in shortage?
 29. What kinds of partnerships for interdisciplinary interface already exist? Problems, advantages, outlook?
 30. Exports, entrepreneurship and services: What interfaces do producers and other actors see and how can things improve?

1.2 Workshop 2: Quality - Innovation - Knowledge transfer

It is a fact that the primary sector in Greece is facing the new challenges of the times. Economic, environmental and regional challenges are further aggravated by the continuing economic crisis, and play a key role in the growth of Greek agriculture. The aim once again is to formulate a development strategy for the primary sector with a

view to restoring the competitiveness of Greek agriculture, with respect to the sustainable management of natural resources and balanced regional development.

In designing a policy for the primary sector, we ought to answer four basic questions: What do I produce, how do I produce it, who do I produce it for, and where do I produce it?

As a criterion for the answer to the first question, the trade balance may be used. I produce products that will mitigate the negative trade balance of agricultural products, which until 2008 maintained a negative trend with increasing pace, and only in recent years shows signs of recovery – probably mainly due to the sharp decline in imports and secondarily due to the increase in exports. Alternatively, the criterion of employment of human resources and / or the creation of new jobs in rural areas could be used. Therefore, I produce quality products with high added value.

Although we know what to produce, production is decreasing mainly because of high cost of basic inputs. For Greek products to be competitive in conventional markets, they have to satisfy the rules of a) low cost b) compliance with standards and c) recognized quality, while in niche markets they should additionally have a spatial or environmental advantage and sustainably produced (environmentally responsibly).

One way to reduce costs is to implement innovative practices both in the production and distribution of agricultural products, as well in the organization of production. Innovation is an important tool for development and comparative advantage. Under the centralized innovation index for 2011, Greece is characterized as a moderately innovative country, below the European average. The role of Advisory Services is deemed essential.

The system of provision of Advisory Services to farms was a key element of the 2003 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and should have been implemented from 2007. The objective of the Advisory Services system is to contribute to the awareness of farmers of material flows and agricultural processes relating to the environment, food safety, health and welfare of animals. The Advisory Services system is aimed at supporting farmers for cross-compliance obligations in order to meet the standards of high quality modern agriculture.

The establishment of Advisory Services in the primary sector and their interdisciplinary support from Directors of universities and research centres is deemed essential for the proper functioning of the agri-food system. The connection of the Ministry of Agriculture with the Universities and Innovation Brokers is also considered a necessary prerequisite.

The key questions posed for discussion were the following:

I. CAP and the agri-food sector

1. Does the definition of active farmer create the basis to achieve more efficient allocation and use of direct aids under Pillar I?
2. Can coupled payments play a determining role in the production of quality products?
3. Does the regionalization of direct payments complement the structural instruments of Pillar I?
4. Will greening of the CAP through crop rotation enhance the operation of the agri-food sector and the improvement of the trade balance?
5. Does the strengthening of Producer Groups through both Pillars constitute a prerequisite for the production and promotion of high quality products and the improvement of farm income?

II. Innovation

6. What would be the best way to connect trainers and trainees with recent research results?
 7. To what extent do you consider that certain priorities concerning knowledge transfer and awareness should be put in the new Rural Development Programme?
 8. If such priorities should be set, what could they be? (E.g. business start-up aid for young farmers for non-agricultural activities in rural areas and for the development of small holdings).
 9. Improving the quality of products, access to new markets and negotiation with buyers of products are some very important innovations, which can also be promoted through Producer Groups. To what extent are you willing to actively participate in such groups?
 10. Are you willing to create a new Producer Group? If yes, in which sector?
 11. If you are already a member of a Producer Group but do not participate actively, why does this happen and how could it be changed?
 12. In the new programming period Operational Groups aimed to achieve certain innovations and concrete results will be established. How would you see your participation in such groups, which will actively involve farmers, along with several other stakeholders?
- III. Advisory Services
13. Should the Advisory Services provided consulting be differentiated on the basis of farm level?
 14. If so, under what criteria?
 15. What do you think is the best way to provide Advisory Services? [E.g. only at the individual level, only with a visit to a training hall, with visits to demonstrative fields, with visits to other farms which apply best practices, etc.]
 16. Would you be willing to create a team to get expert advice?
 17. Should expert advice be combined with any agricultural education or training?

1.3 Workshop 3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas

An improved quality of life in the countryside, including the revitalization of economic activity in mountain and hill areas, the implementation of infrastructure projects and support to the business climate, should be a major strategic priority for the coming years. Particular emphasis should be given to the support of additional tourist activities in conjunction with integrated interventions for rural tourism, as well as to the strengthening of administrative structures and the promotion of the endogenous development potential of rural areas through cooperation. Building the capacity of LAGs, strengthening farmers setting up for the first time, promoting valuable environmental and cultural assets of rural areas as well as the sustainable use of the natural and cultural environment, enhancing the promotion and sale of local products and the creation of information centres, should all constitute key priorities.

In this context, emphasis should, inter alia, be placed on policies that seek to:

- Improve the built environment of rural areas by supporting public investment so as to create more attractive places for living, increase population retention, and attract economic activity and job creation.
- Implement interventions for the management and promotion of traditional elements in order to preserve our cultural heritage and natural wealth.
- Build the skills of public-private partnerships in the preparation and implementation of local development strategies.
- Improve health care, education, and specialisation of services provided.

The key questions posed for discussion were the following:

1. Is it possible to improve life in the countryside, without the intervention of the State?
2. Can rapidly growing rural functions provide a solution to the issue of unemployment as well as of local development in general?
3. Can there be coordination between the various ministries in the development of policies for rural areas, so as to enable Local Government to design and implement the necessary development plans for improving the quality of life in each region?
4. Are the policies of the European Union moving in the right direction for the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas?

Section 3, below, presents the results of consultations with local stakeholders, as they were recorded during the workshops.

2. Consultation results per theme

THEME	SUGGESTIONS / CONSULTATION RESULTS
1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ACCESS TO MARKETS	<p>The consultation discussion focused on the development of Short Supply Chains (SSC) and the main conclusions / recommendations of the participants are grouped into the following sections:</p> <p><u>1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving the institutional implementation framework ▪ Establishing the agricultural profession - professional license ▪ Register of active farmers ▪ Oil price reduction for farmers ▪ Simplification of procedures for setting up collective schemes (producers groups) ▪ Demographic policy based on tax capacity <p><u>2. COOPERATION DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting development partnerships with major companies – super markets ▪ Promoting development partnerships between producers – setting up producer groups, networks of farmers / consumers ▪ Supporting pilot producer groups ▪ Promoting private initiatives for the development of collaborations at local level (producers – restaurants, hotels etc.) <p><u>3. ADVISORY SERVICES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of advice by experts, specialised in technical issues ▪ Ensuring collaboration between researchers and producers ▪ Setting up small local advisory teams advising all levels – creating core teams in each village - providing information through newsletters <p><u>4. POLICY DESIGN</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of national plan for training in specific sectors (production-oriented) ▪ Linking agricultural products with tourism and culture (linking primary production to secondary and tertiary sectors) ▪ Technical-economic analyses at local level - creating research infrastructure ▪ Product mapping <p><u>5. AWARENESS - TRAINING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information – awareness-raising – animation at local level ▪ Changing the culture of cooperation and networking, focusing on young farmers ▪ Raising awareness of young people – school visits to museums such as the Olive Museum and others ▪ Training farmers on the benefits of partnerships

THEME	SUGGESTIONS / CONSULTATION RESULTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building partnerships between Greek agronomic universities for education / training of advisors ▪ Establishing centre for sustainable development ▪ Utilisation of research results <p><u>6. OTHER</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harnessing agricultural-forestry production residues for energy generation ▪ Utilization of investments for the use of alternative energy sources ▪ Use of under-utilized parcels ▪ Citizen workshops on the development of new products ▪ Continuous monitoring of production and implementation of warning systems for cases of product unavailability to the market
<p>2. QUALITY - INNOVATION - KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER</p>	<p><u>1. QUALITY - INNOVATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determination of product quality features ▪ Quality control ▪ Provision of education / training ▪ Integrated management (technical and organisational innovation) – system of preventive measures in peach production ▪ Update of producers’ knowledge on certification procedures ▪ Establishment of quality agreements ▪ Promotion of product identity ▪ Establishment of strict quality control framework ▪ Development of incentives for development of innovation / product certification <p><u>2. STRENGTHENING PRODUCER GROUPS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resolution-simplification of bureaucratic processes for setting up producer groups ▪ Corruption control <p><u>3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN TRAINERS-TRAINEES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-farm provision of advisory services ▪ Research that is tailored to producers’ needs ▪ Active involvement of municipalities and local government ▪ Stimulation of professors-researches for publication of research results ▪ Development of demonstration farms ▪ Development of programme for the employment of unemployed person on agricultural holdings ▪ Encouragement of private initiative following direct transfer of research results into the production process ▪ Establishment of research institutes at local level ▪ Creation of experimentation fields ▪ Development of structures for the provision of expert advice

THEME	SUGGESTIONS / CONSULTATION RESULTS
	<p><u>4. PRODUCT PROMOTION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connection of agri-food sector with culture and tourism (e.g. sale of agri products in ports, cruise ships, hotels, restaurants etc.) ▪ Introduction of traditional Greek breakfast in hotels ▪ Advertising of local products' added value ▪ Development of strategies at regional level for the advertising – promotion – distribution of products <p><u>5. OTHER</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilisation of resources
<p>3. QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS</p>	<p><u>1. INFRASTRUCTURE - BASIC SERVICES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of basic infrastructure ▪ Creation of infrastructure for the reception of young people in rural areas ▪ Provision of basic services in rural areas (education, social care, health care, internet) ▪ Water sufficiency / efficiency ▪ Special treatment of islands – development of infrastructure for processing <p><u>2. HUMAN RESOURCES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of incentives for the relocation of young people into farming ▪ Information – awareness-raising of young people living in urban areas <p><u>3. NETWORKING – AWARENESS-RAISING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collective actions by producers–consumers ▪ Embedding of the role of innovation brokers ▪ Creation of support groups for collective schemes ▪ More active role for the NRN <p><u>4. ADVISORY SERVICES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of agri advisory systems with the participation of: the Agricultural University of Athens, Municipalities, LAGs, Financial Institutions and others ▪ Decentralised provision of advisory services ▪ Provision of expert advice aimed at building links between agricultural production, culture and tourism sectors <p><u>5. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simplification of framework rules for on-farm product sale ▪ Legislation for accessible farms <p><u>6. TRAINING - EDUCATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consumer Education