



# FOCUS

- Strengthening competitiveness of agri-food SMEs  
through transnational Cluster

## “FOCUS” 4TH STC&PM AND 3RD FOCUS GROUP MEETING, NICOSIA, CYPRUS

On **May, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2019**, in Nicosia-Cyprus, the **Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry \_CCCI**, in the framework of FOCUS Balkan-Med project, organised with the collaboration of the project partners the fourth project & steering committee meeting, the third focus group meeting and the Transnational Agri-Food Matchmaking Fair.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May all the project partners, covering the Balkan-Mediterranean area, attended the 4<sup>th</sup> Project & Steering Committee meeting in order to discuss over the progress of the FOCUS project and its activities. Late afternoon, in the same day the 3<sup>rd</sup> Focus Group took place aiming to enhance the Agri-food innovation services mix offered within the project under the operation of the four Regional Agri-food Clusters that have been established in the 4 partners countries in Balkan med area: Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania exchanged views and suggestions from the experts. Experts from the Cyprus University of Technology, Professor Dimitris Tsaltas, and from the Federation of the Hellenic Food Industry, Dr Fotini Salta, briefly presented their organisations and best practices of innovation services in Agri-Food sector and specified the case for Cyprus and Greece. A discussion was contacted in order to identify and capitalise specific options and improvements in terms of the platform and the exploitation of the innovation services that the FOCUS project provides thoroughly to its Clusters’ members.



**CULTIVATING  
INNOVATION**

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**NEWSLETTER**

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## “FOCUS” TRANSNATIONAL AGRI-FOOD MATCHMAKING FAIR

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May the **FOCUS Transnational Agri-Food Matchmaking Fair** was organised with the participation of more than 45 stakeholders of the project who explored the growing challenges of the Agri-food mixed innovation services provided through project outputs. The end beneficiaries of the project the 22 transnational Regional SMEs from Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Cyprus were also participated in the event, being members of the FOCUS's 4 Regional Agri-Food Clusters. The representation from the academia, public sector and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN Cyprus) had a significant contribution in the event, during the presentations session, the working session of the business to business and networking. Welcoming remarks delivered by Mr Leonidas Paschalides, Deputy Secretary General, who emphasised the value of the project outcomes in Agri-Food industry in Cyprus and abroad. Demetris Tsaltas, Associate Professor in Agriculture Microbiology and Biotechnology in the Cyprus Technology University, elaborated in his keynote speech on efforts that was made the last years in the research and development of Agri-Food sector in Cyprus, provided examples of best practices and innovation services in the specific sector. Other speakers included Ms Nadia Karra from KiNNO Consultants Ltd, the external expert of the Region of Peloponnese for FOCUS project, Sofia Karma on behalf of the National Technical University of Athens, Stalo Demosthenous from the Enterprise Europe Network Cyprus and Constantinos Loizou from EMBIO Diagnostics Ltd. The successful B2B working session brought tangible results for instance between the two companies – S & S Tria Enniaria Trading Ltd that has found a new business partner and has diversified their products range and Aroniada - Agro Ltd has found a new market for their products.



## 5 TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

During this period, the organization of 5 out of 8 Technical Capacity Building Workshops in total were organized by the partners from Cyprus, Bulgaria and Albania. The aim was to help cluster SMEs approach new markets, strengthen their networking with other companies, consider new technologies and processes, obtain new products' ideas. The content of each workshop was decided by the responsible partner cluster in collaboration with the scientific support partner of the consortium.

### BULGARIA

**1ST TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WS THAT TOOK PLACE IN RUSE, BULGARIA ON 31ST JANUARY 2019.** The event was organized by the Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises – Ruse. The workshop was aimed at SMEs and individual producers from the agri-food sector, to be trained on successfully looking for sources of funding for their projects, finding partners abroad, introducing innovative practices and technologies into their production. 31 participants took part in the 1st workshop, 12 out of them not involved in the other FOCUS project services. Among the topics that the agenda of the event covered were International standards ; open and foreseen measures under Rural Development Programme, access to foreign markets with the assistance of the Enterprise Europe Network.



### CYPRUS

**1ST TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON THE DAIRY SECTOR ENTITLED "DAIRY LINE PRODUCTION AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS" HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2019, THE FILOXENIA CONFERENCE CENTRE IN NICOSIA**

The purpose of the event was to inform the agri-food sector about the current prospects of the dairy industry and its focus in the technical, legal and marketing aspects of the industry as well as current trends and ideas for innovation of the Cyprus dairy sector. The conference was attended by representatives of local food organizations of the Cypriot dairy industry and parallel food entrepreneurs and the academia. The event brought closer traditional local products in dairy sector its developments, quality standards, the preparation of haloumi cheese CYS 94:1985 and the development of its exports. Also, there was a presentation in innovation and traditional local products, best practices to excel and future developments in the dairy products. An interactive discussion took place at the end of the 2nd part to what extent can mature local cheeses can find a way in the production lines of local producers and compete with mature cheeses from abroad.

**2ND TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON INNOVATION IN THE AGROFOOD SECTOR UNDER THE NAME "RESEARCH & INNOVATION IN AGRIFOOD CREATING NEW ALLIANCES" HELD ON 15 APRIL 2019, LONDA HOTEL IN LIMASSOL**

The purpose of the event was to inform the agri-food sector about the prospects for strengthening the networking and cooperation structures of Cyprus with the EU in the fields of research and innovation. Also, exploring the possibilities of business collaboration with the academic community through an interactive dialogue with the aim of finding common points of cooperation. This enhances business's ability to innovate and extroversion, making it more competitive. The conference was attended by representatives of European food organizations as well as by Cypriot agri-food entrepreneurs. Conclusions reached that there is an immediate need for cooperation between the industry and the academia in building bridges for innovation projects. Functional foods is a key differentiation driver for the agri-food industry and offers high potential for R&D projects. The need for innovation incubator techniques is of utmost importance for turning ideas into actual projects with realistic deliverables and objectives.



**PARTNERS**

Greece - **Region of Peloponnese**



Greece - **National Technical University of Athens**



Greece - **Agriculture University of Athens**



Cyprus - **Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry**



Albania - **Local Economic Development Agency of Vlora**



Bulgaria - **Business Support Centre for SMEs, Ruse**



Bulgaria - **Agriculture University of Plovdiv**



## ALBANIA— 1ST TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

The 1st Capacity building Workshop entitled ‘Innovative services to SME-s’ took place in Vlorë. Auleda on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 near the "Center of Agriculture and Technology Transfer", Vlorë, in another collaboration with the "Center of Agriculture and Technology Transfer", the Institute for Social Politics and Development, in the organization of a workshop to introduce initiatives in Vlorë Region for farmers, agro-producers and agro-processors. Organic farming and the European legal context for it, access in finance for the subsidy schemes from the "Agency of Agriculture and Rural Development", the services offered from public institutions and intermediaries in the support of target-group, were subject of the presentations and discussions from the representatives of the "Center of Agriculture and Technology Transfer", "Institute of Social Politics", "Auleda" - Local Development Economic Agency, Vlorë, "Council of Albanian Agribusiness", "Risi Albania" program, "Albinspekt". "Auleda" - Local Economic Development Agency, presented the services that will be offered to the target-group in the framework of financial support from the "Risi Albania" program and the FOCUS - MED Balkan Project, which created the cluster, the possibility of inclusion in the international clusters of agro-producers and agro-processors.



More Information for the project and related events

<http://www.focuseuproject.com>



The Project is co-funded by the European Union and National Funds of the participating countries



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## - Strengthening competitiveness of agri-food SMEs through transnational Cluster

### “FOCUS” 5TH STC&PM, CAPITALISATION WORKSHOP, FINAL CONFERENCE ATHENS, GREECE

On **December, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2019**, in Athens, Greece, the **National Technical University of Athens** \_NTUA. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December all the project partners, covering the Balkan-Mediterranean area, participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Project & Steering Committee meeting, the final one, as the project closure is due to end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2020, in order to discuss over the progress of the FOCUS project; remaining deliverables and its outcomes.

**On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December the FOCUS Capitalization Conference** was organised by NTUA with the participation of project partners and external experts, who were informed on the FOCUS project and the provided services to SMEs of the four clusters. Representatives from four cluster leaders described the selection of cluster members, the structure of each cluster, as well as the offered services.

**On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December the FOCUS FINAL TRANSNATIONAL AGRIFOOD CONFERENCE** was organised by NTUA with the participation of 40 stakeholders from industry and academia. Keynote speakers presented Innovation Challenges in the Agri-food sector. Welcoming remarks were delivered by Prof. Magdalini Krokida who emphasised the value of the project outcomes in Agri-Food industry in a European level. Dr. Mirela KOCI, Executive Director in AULEDA presented the best practices and challenges and policies framework in the agri-food sector of Albania. Mr. Stefanos Stefanakis from CHIPITA SA referred to the critical role of food safety and product quality on the design of processes and product development. Mrs. Stalo Demosthenous, and Mrs. Cristiana Siambekou from Enterprise Europe Network Cyprus emphasized on the actions of EEN to enhance the innovation and internationalization of agri-food companies and presented specific examples. Mrs. Eugenia Karamouzi and Mr. Panos Panopoulos from REZOS BRANDS SA presented the innovation strategies in the sector of functional foods, the changes of the profiling of food consumption, and the turn to personalized health and nutrition. Following, Mr. Petar Chernaev the owner and manager of VIP SOFTWARE Ltd gave basic points for the creation of integrated solutions for agribusiness in the whole range of the management of agricultural and processing plants. Dr. Eleni Gogou from NFA -Natural Food Additives presented the current need for functional foods production, the new sources of functional ingredients, as well as their positive effects on several applications. Mr. Marios Chronis from ASPIS SA presented the key challenges and drivers for innovation in the food sector, from growth of population, need for convenient food, health and natural food, personalized and customized products, as well as sustainability. Finally, Dr. Evangelia Karvela from JOTIS SA presented innovative colloidal ingredients that give unique properties to various food products.

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“FOCUS” 5TH STC&PM



FOCUS CAPITALISATION WORKSHOP



FOCUS FINAL CONFERENCE



## FINAL TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

GREECE

THE REGION OF PELOPONNESE, LP OF FOCUS PROJECT, ORGANIZED IN THE 1ST OF JULY 2019 THE FINAL TECHNICAL CAPACITY BUILDING workshop entitled **“Innovative Entrepreneurship in Agrifood sector”** in Tripoli that was mainly addressed to SMEs of the agrifood sector. The WS was very successful thanks to the 14 persons that participated and to the highly experienced speakers in issues related to functional food, gluten free crops, stevia cultivation, new technologies etc; the WS took place at the Chamber of Arcadia during the afternoon. The WS was foreseen by the “Innovative entrepreneurship in the agri-food sector” project work package and aimed at training local agrifood SMEs and independent producers on topics related to innovation and new technologies in agrifood sector. The seminar was mainly addressed to SMEs, startups and independent producers of Agrifood sector interested in adopting to their businesses new technologies and innovative processes

The organized WS involved 7 local and regional entrepreneurs, businesses and SMEs as well as representative of local authorities and chambers. The participants had the opportunity to be trained on, exchange ideas and pose questions to the speakers concerning all the topics discussed such as Functional foods, New trends and technologies, Gluten free crops, Exploitation of food industry by products and sustainability, carbon footprint recording.



**PARTNERS**Greece - **Region of Peloponnese**Greece - **National Technical University of Athens**Greece - **Agriculture University of Athens**Cyprus - **Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry**Albania - **Local Economic Development Agency of Vlora**Bulgaria - **Business Support Centre for SMEs, Ruse**Bulgaria - **Agriculture University of Plovdiv****'FOCUS' AGRI-FOOD PLATFORM & INNOVATION**

The web-based collaboration platform has been designed to support the members of the innovative clusters of the FOCUS project. The platform hosts web-based services including catalogue of members and clusters' members profiles, available marketplaces, funding opportunities, etc. that the users have the ability to search in order to be informed for practices, innovations, potential cooperation on the agri-food sector, as well as the cluster members to promote / disseminate their products and services. Depending on their role, there are several access levels to the users. In the framework of the FOCUS project, a training toolbox has been developed as part of the FOCUS platform. The aim of the innovation toolbox is to serve as an effective and efficient tool for the industry in order to solve real industrial needs of the cluster members.

The toolbox contains three pillars, including various key supportive tools for agri-food SMEs:

- the development of new food products
- the food processing & technologies
- the agrifood business development

where cluster members can find information on available novel and functional foods, market trends, legislation issues, innovative technologies, sustainability, as well as services for increasing the extroversion and improving marketing tactics of the participating companies. The toolbox is accessible to the clusters' SMEs and to interested stakeholders. More information can be found on the platform's link: <http://www.focusplatform.eu/>

NTUA is responsible, among others, for the development of the training toolbox of the FOCUS platform. Two key supportive tools of the toolbox include the presentation of new functional food products, as well as the valorization of food industry waste and by-products. The growing need for healthy products, the increasing rate of various chronic diseases, the increased demand for enriched food products, as well as innovations for expanding application capabilities and accelerating growth lead to the development of functional foods. In addition, the strict European legislation for the restriction of synthetic additives has turned the interest to the recovery of bioactive compounds from natural sources (herbs, plants, microalgae), as well as from the by-products occurred during food processing (leaves, pomace, kernels, etc.). Bioactive compounds include polyphenols, probiotics, vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids, etc. that offer health benefits and reduce disease risk. Through the various sections of the training toolbox, the users will have the opportunity to be informed for the various natural functional ingredients, their sources, as well as new ways of incorporating them in food products. The toolbox will also inform users on ways to holistically valorize food waste and by-products in order to develop commercial products.

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