

Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns: The example of olive oil – INFOIL



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The LIFE+ Programme

INFOIL (LIFE08 INF/GR/000581) is a LIFE+ Information and Communication project. The aim of the project is to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns using the example of olive oil aiming at the minimization of the environmental impacts related with olive oil production, especially in regions with very high yield. INFOIL will also promote the importance of life cycle assessment (LCA) during the production and consumption process contributing to the environmental impacts identification and prevention.

Partners:

- Technical University of Crete Department of Production Engineering and Management
- National Agricultural Research Foundation (NAGREF) - Institute of Olive Tree and Subtropical Plants of Chania (ISPOT), Laboratory of Oliviculture and Postharvest Physiology
- ILEIAKI S.A. - Development Company of Ilea Prefecture (ILEIAKI)
- Musuron Municipality Development Enterprise (MUDE), (Chania)

The LIFE+ programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment (continuation of the LIFE programme). The legal basis for LIFE+ is the Regulation (EC) No 614/2007. Its general objective is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation in order to promote the integration of environment into other policies fostering sustainable development. LIFE+ supports the implementation of the 6th Environment Action Programme and its thematic strategies (Decision 1600/200/EC). Life+ co-finances projects with European added value.

Life+ has 3 components :

1. Life+ Nature and Biodiversity
2. Life+ Environment Policy & Governance
3. Life+ Information & Communication relating to communication and awareness raising campaigns on environmental, nature protection or biodiversity conservation issues, as well as projects related to forest fire prevention (awareness raising, special training).



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The Infoil Project

Olive oil cultivation and production has been a traditional agricultural activity maintained for centuries in Greece and other Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, etc. The production of olive oil is located mostly at the southern part of Greece and especially Crete and Peloponnese.

However, the process of cultivation and production of olive oil may have adverse effects on the environment in several stages during the entire life cycle, if not managed properly. This is partly linked to the use of fertilizers and pesticides during cultivation, irrigation matters, waste generation, and the processes taking place during olive oil production.

The aim of the project is to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns using the example of olive oil aiming at the minimization of the aforementioned impacts, especially in a region with very high production. The project is the continuation of a previous LIFE – Environment project (ECOIL, LIFE04 ENV/GR/110), implemented by the coordinating beneficiary, in the framework of which the environmental impacts generated during all stages of the olive oil life cycle were assessed and measures to prevent or reduce these impacts were proposed.



The proposed project seeks to communicate these results, educate the stakeholders on the measures they may take in order to reduce the environmental impacts related to their activities and generally promote the ecological olive oil production.

Additionally, the project aims to raise consumers' awareness on the benefits of choosing products that have been produced following environmental principles. This project seeks to fill in this information gap and promote the value for money and the environment from the consumption of ecological products, with the focus on olive oil.

Through the promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns, the project will promote the importance of life cycle assessment during the production and consumption process. This will allow the identification and prevention of the environmental impacts. The olive oil production environmental impacts include air emissions, wastewater, waste management techniques, etc. Additionally, through the dissemination activities such as training seminars and informational events the project will also promote several aspects regarding EU and Greek environmental policy and legislation.

For more information about the project please visit:

www.infoil.tuc.gr

Project Activities

The dissemination activities that will be carried out during the implementation of the project are in perfect line with the project objectives. In order to gather all the required data for the implementation of the awareness raising activities, preparatory actions will be carried out.

One of the core activities of the project is the establishment of an Informational Center focused on olive oil in Crete. The informational center will be a meeting point for olive oil supporters; information on olive oil will be communicated in many ways such as leaflets, brochures and knowledge exchange with project's experts. All the interested producers and consumers will also have the opportunity to register to the informational events that will take place. A library of collected data regarding olive oil and sustainable consumption and production will also be available.

An informational center will also be established in Ilea by ILEIAKI. Following the large scale forest fires that took place in August 2007, there are many producers who need to restore their crops. However, since this restoration will happen in the immediate future, it provides a great opportunity to develop dissemination activities in the area, promoting sustainable olive cultivation, which is one of the main elements of the project. The farmers have to develop their olive crops from the beginning. Therefore, via the activities and the Information Center foreseen in the project the environmentally sustainable olive cultivation will be made known to them in order to consider the principles and guidelines of ecological olive cultivation during the development of their crops.

In addition, informational events and training seminars will be organized during the whole project in Crete and Ilea. These events have an informational character combined with the educational character through the training seminars. Moreover, every year festivals will be organised for promoting sustainable products. These festivals will be called "olive days" and together with the informational events TUC will be responsible for their organisation. Finally, twice during the whole project, competitions regarding sustainable producers and consumers will be organised. The winners will be awarded in a special olive oil awards event. TUC will be also responsible for the organisation of these activities.

Electronic dissemination is also foreseen in the project. TUC will develop a web-portal that will contain an electronic database with all the registered producers and consumers enriched with statistical and sorting data, an electronic library that will contain data gathered during preparatory actions web based distance-learning material. Through the development of an e-forum people interested about olive oil and other biological products, will have the opportunity to exchange information, opinions and data related to sustainable production and consumption,. The e-portal will be available in Greek and English and will be regularly updated during the project.



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LIFE FOCUS – Good practices for improving the environmental performance of the olive oil sector

The main environmental impacts related to olive oil processing is the production of wastewater and olive pomace (solid waste).

These two waste streams are characterized by high toxicity and should not be discharged into the environment without treatment as they may cause negative impacts on soil, groundwater or surface water recipients.

In areas dominated by industrialized production, such as Spain, the largest producer of oil, investment in more expensive water treatment plants could be a viable alternative. In areas where production is still based on more traditional practices with smaller producers such as Greece and some regions of Italy, low-cost method could be applied. The adoption of greener technologies and production methods can be greatly enhanced by local authorities, which could require enforcement of eco-principles as a condition for licensing to producers.

In the late '80s and early '90s, the two-phase separation system, instead of three, was considered as the best approach for reducing the negative environmental impact of olive oil production. These systems had as result the reduction in water consumption and the production of less sewage.

However, the two-phase system leads to greater production of olive pomace, which contains toxic substances and requires proper treatment prior to disposal to avoid negative environmental impacts.

In the future, viable solutions, namely cost-effective methods and technologies, that could be adopted by smaller mills should be found. These new approaches should also take into account the seasonality of olive oil processing, which means that the mills do not operate continuously. The participation of local authorities and the creation of producer **groups** could contribute to the wider use of greener techniques

The growing environmental consciousness among olive growers and oil producers has become even more important because of the climate change. Although there is a remarkable increase in the demand of the products of olive industry (e.g. olives, olive oil, etc), global warming is a serious external challenge that could hinder future development.

The best practices regarding ecological production of olive oil that could also offset the negative impacts of climate change may be the legacy of the LIFE project in the specific industry.



For more information, visit the project's web portal

www.infoil.gr