

CAP funds help raise awareness about innovative organic farming practices in France

France

Agri-food chain
integration & quality
/ Water use
efficiency

Summary

The PimAB project promoted financially viable organic agriculture in the SUD PACA Region in France. Through technical training and field visits, the participants (farmers, trainers and agricultural students) could explore and learn about the diversity of innovative practices in organic farming.



© PrimAB

Location

Sud PACA region

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P3- Food chain & risk management /
P5 - Resource efficiency & climate

Measure

M01 – Knowledge transfer &
information actions

Funding

Total budget 70 076.98 (EUR)
EAFRD 56 061.58 (EUR)
National/Regional 14 015.40 (EUR)

Project duration

2019 – 2021

Project promoter

Bio de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Email

contact@bio-provence.org

Website

www.bio-provence.org/Projet-PimAB-Pratiques-innovantes-en-maraichage-en-Agriculture-Biologique

Project Results

25 half-day field visits and demonstration activities with between 10 and 20 participants per visit

An online resource library of technical fact sheets, videos, and practitioner profiles.

Lessons & Recommendations

- A project like this requires a strong central coordination capacity.
- It was challenging for many of the participants to find time to attend the training programme during harvest time, but their feedback suggests that a full-day field visit itinerary would have been preferable to the half-day offer.

Context

The SUD PACA Region is the fourth region in France in terms of the number of organic farms. At the end of 2020, there were 4 479 in the Region, where organic farming is of high strategic importance. This project emerged out of a recognition that active and future farmers could benefit from ongoing training opportunities to make better use of innovative organic farming practices.

The 'Bio de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur' regional network provides technical and administrative support to local organic farmers. Through this project, they provided organic farmers with the opportunity to discover local, concrete examples of new practices and to be supported as they adapt and experiment with them on their own farms.

Objectives

The project aimed to promote financially sustainable organic farming practices via:

- Offering information about current organic farming practices to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Improving skills of farmers who wish to adopt these practices, enabling them to be more autonomous in their work.
- Gathering individual experiences and sharing methodological resources between organic farmers.

Activities

Through the 'Bio de Provence' network activities, field visits were organised across the Region. Each visit addressed a specific topic defined according to the needs that were identified by participants during the project design phase.

Technical field visits gave participants the opportunity to discover low-cost and self-assembly/do-it-yourself farming practices. These covered topics such as phytotherapy, flower strips, seed self-production, equipment self-building, permanent beds for organic vegetables, composite hedges, water-saving irrigation methods, and soil fertility diagnosis. Each session was open to a large group of stakeholders (including farmers, experts, technical workers in agriculture or agricultural school students and teachers) and gathered between 10 and 20 participants. They included a presentation from a farmer who uses the given practice, accompanied by input from a technical expert. Sessions ended with time for questions and open discussion.

Field visits were followed up with methodological resources to reinforce learning which were available via the project website. These provide a technical presentation of specific organic practices (*How to develop it? With which tools?*) as well as a testimony from a local farmer who uses the technique, and links for further reading and useful resources. These resources are all freely available on the 'Bio de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur' website: <https://www.bio-provence.org/Projet-PimAB-Pratiques-innovantes-en-maraichage-en-Agriculture-Biologique>

Main results

- 25 half-day field visits and demonstration activities were organised.
- 6 resource files were produced.
- 6 videos were produced to illustrate and explain some of the practices presented during the project.
- 16 info sheets were produced, presenting the local producers and farmers who were involved in delivering the field visits and giving key data about each business (cultivated area, type of production, soil features, working hours, income, etc.) and a detailed technical description of the innovative organic farming practice in question.

No formal quantitative follow-up or impact measures were established, but the 'Bio de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur' network and its five 'Agribio' partners have maintained contact with the field visit participants to see if, further down the line, the trainings will have helped them to launch their organic agriculture activity or to develop new practices.

Key Lessons

This project required a strong central coordination capacity, as the different activities were managed by local branches of the regional network. According to the project coordinators, more time should have been allocated to overall coordination, as the organisation of field visits and participant follow-up is time-consuming.

The field visits were organised during harvest time

because that is when the demonstrations and explanations are the most interesting. However, it is also a busy time for working farmers, so it was very challenging for them to find time to attend the training programme, even though they were motivated to take advantage of this free offer.

Despite this, the half-day technical visits and demonstrations were deemed to be too short to allow for fruitful exchange and deeper learning. A full-day itinerary would have been preferred.

Where the publication of resources is foreseen as a project output, it is important to allocate adequate resources to the task of gathering input, drafting, and editing them. In addition, it may be helpful to produce at least part of them in advance of the field visits to provide pre-reading support materials to the participants.

“Our main ambition through this project is to support eco-friendly practices that are also financially sustainable for local producers.”