# European Network for Rural Development

# Zacharias Symeou Sheep Farm

**EAFRD-funded projects** 

# **CYPRUS**

# Renewable sources & waste management

**Location** Larnaca

Programming period 2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P5 Resource efficiency & climate

#### Measure

M04 – Investments in physical assets

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 816 420 EAFRD 259 621 National/Regional 230 230 Private 326 569

# Project duration

2017 - 2019

#### Project promoter

Zacharias Symeou

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#### Website

n/a

A family farm used investment support to set up a state-of-the-art sheep farm for the production of high-quality sheep milk.

#### Summary

The Symeou family has a long history, spanning over four generations, as sheep farmers, dairy farmers and in large scale grain production. Until recently, the farm had focused solely on grain production, however, given the increasing demand for sheep milk products the family decided to take advantage of this trend. The farm thus returned to producing sheep milk to be used in the production of Halloumi cheese and other sheep milk products.



As part of the investment project, a completely new farm unit was built. The modernised farm is now equipped with an electronic system for monitoring the sheep and includes a milk production building which can accommodate around 700 milk producing sheep. The sheep pens are fully equipped with the necessary drinking and feeding troughs, manure cleaning paths and ventilation.

#### Results

A new farm unit was constructed using state of the art technology ensuring the production of high-quality milk.

The introduction of modern feeding belts has made sure that food is always available with no food waste, reducing costs and increasing utilisation. The automation of the farm ensures that labour costs are kent to a minimum

#### Lessons & Recommendations

- ☐ Without the EU's support this investment would not have been possible, or would have taken a lot longer to become a reality, thus using up valuable time and funds.
- ☐ Good cooperation and interaction between the many different stakeholders was a key factor in ensuring the successful transfer of knowledge and experience.

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### Zacharias Symeou Sheep Farm



#### Context

The Zacharias Symeou Sheep Farm is located in the Aradippou Municipality, in the District of Larnaca, Cyprus. A brand-new family project, the farm was started in 2015 with the introduction of a few sheep and gradually grew into a modern, fully mechanised state-of-the-art sheep farm with around one thousand milk producing sheep.

The farm dedicates 4 hectares of land to produce grain that is used to feed its livestock: it focus on the breeding of Assaf sheep for milk production. The farm is market oriented and strives to find ways to continually increase both its milk production and the quality of its milk in response to the increasing demand for Halloumi cheese both domestically and abroad.

The Symeou family has a long history, spanning over four generations, as sheep farmers, dairy farmers and in large-scale grain production. Even though in the recent years, the Symeou family had focused solely on grain production, in 2015 they decided to start this project to produce sheep milk to be used in the production of Halloumi cheese and other sheep milk products.

The milk producing sheep were introduced in this conventional grain producing farm which underwent a drastic conversion. The farm undertook a voluntary five-year commitment under Measure 11 Organic farming of the Greek Regional Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020. In 2017, the family also applied for financial support for investment under the RDP Sub-Measure 4.1 Investments in agricultural holding.

## Objectives

Some of the key objectives of this investment project were:

- Improving the competitiveness of the farm;
- Introducing new technologies to contribute to the sustainability of the sheep's health;
- Introducing new technologies to increase the milk production per sheep; and
- Introducing new technologies to increase the quality of milk produced.

#### **Activities**

As part of the investment project, a completely new farm unit was constructed with a 1 x 30 cell model with a quick exit. This means that all the animals in a row are released at the same time after milking. Furthermore, an electronic separation door was installed allowing the livestock to be separated automatically into different groups after milking, relating to their milk production. Provisions are in place to allow a second 1 x 30 cell model to be installed, which would accommodate an increase in livestock. The farm is also equipped with an electronic system for monitoring the sheep. The system helps the beneficiary to better organise the livestock to improve milk production.

The modernised farm now includes a milk production building which can accommodate around 700 milk producing sheep. The sheep pens are fully equipped with the necessary drinking and feeding troughs, manure cleaning paths and ventilation. Feeding is achieved through the introduction of modern feeding belts that ensure food is always available, whilst making sure no food is wasted. It also has an individual locking system which makes it easier and faster to check and vaccinate animals.

A four silo mixing mill was installed, this stores and mixes food ingredients in such a way as to ensure that the animals are fed the highest quality of food. To improve the animals' genes artificial insemination, with high quality sperm from Spain, is used.

The investment was supported by the Farmers' Association which provided information and assistance. A consultant was hired to develop the business plan and help the farmer to prepare the report and meet all the commitments during the monitoring period. A supplier and a designer offered technical advice and recommendations on the selection of the equipment and the building of the farm. A veterinarian provided advice on the sanitary and hygiene requirements needed and local authorities issued the necessary permits. Finally, a bank provided financial support for the implementation of the project.



#### Main Results

A new farm unit was built, and state-of-the-art technology installed, to produce high-quality milk. The introduction of modern feeding belts has made sure that food is always available with no food waste, reducing costs and increasing utilisation. The automation of the farm ensures that labour costs are kept to a minimum.

The new technology allows only the best milk producing sheep to be kept on the farm, thus improving the overall quality of the milk produced. All of the above have made the running of the farm much easier and cost effective.

# Key lessons

The project demonstrates that EU support facilitates the development of sustainable farms. As this example shows, the RDP can support investment in innovative technologies to encourage the development of sustainable and competitive agriculture.

Without the EU's support it would not have been possible to implement the project, or it would have taken much longer thus using up valuable time and funds.

Good cooperation and interaction between the many different stakeholders was a key factor in ensuring the successful transfer of knowledge and experience.





Additional sources of information

