

ITALY

Biodiversity restoration, preservation and enhancement

Location

Bari

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P4 – Ecosystems
management

Measure

M10 – Agri-environment-
Climate

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 1.6 mil
RDP support 1.6 mil

Project duration

2015 – 2018

Project promoter

Università degli Studi di Bari
"A. Moro"

Contact

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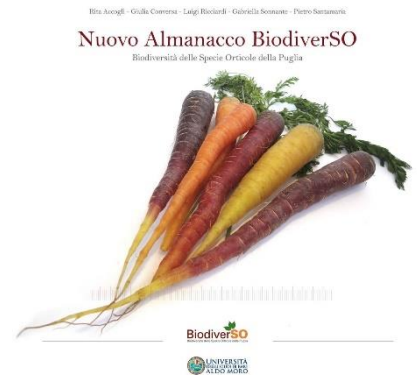
Website

<https://biodiversitapuglia.it/>

Protecting and promoting traditional vegetables can lead to increased incomes for farmers and environmental benefits for society.

Summary

Vegetable cultivation has always been an asset of Apulian farming, whose products have been also exported to other regions of Italy. In the last two decades, farmers tended to rely just on a few commercial varieties, abandoning older and typical ones. This was a cause for concern for public bodies of the region that started a process to rediscover and protect the agricultural biodiversity of the vegetable sector, identifying and improving the varieties at risk.



Results

Engaged 20 farmers who produced old varieties on their farms.

Genetically improved 10 artichoke varieties.

Registered 34 old varieties in national registers;

Established contacts with HORECA, the catering sector supporting association, to promote these old varieties.

Set up and maintained a website as well as a Facebook page with 13 500 followers.

Organised the 'Week of Apulian Biodiversity' in May 2017 and in May 2018.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Agricultural biodiversity can be successfully protected once strong efforts and concentrated actions are implemented on a regional and local scale.
- Cultural factors attached to 'regional identity' can play a role in this success, but this can be seen as a positive outcome of the project.

Context

From an economic point of view, the loss of local vegetable varieties may result in increased sales from other regions/countries, which are more efficient in producing well-known, commercial varieties. Nevertheless, promoting traditional, local varieties would be an interesting marketing strategy that sells vegetables to people that care about higher quality food.

Moreover, there was the risk of losing valuable genetic material that might be used in the future to enhance the nutritive qualities of vegetable types.

This situation was mainly due to the fact that small and medium size horticulturalists were not adequately informed about the potentials and the qualities of old, traditional varieties and therefore did not properly promote them.

Objectives

The project aimed to rediscover and exploit the market potential of local, traditional varieties of vegetables. It included several actions to prevent further decline in the use of old vegetable varieties and raise awareness on the issue.

Activities

A number of activities were carried out, including:

- Identification of old vegetable varieties, which were most valuable as genetic resources and have market potential or were at risk of extinction in the region, through a series of visits to fields and farmers;
- Tracing their genetic profile and stocking seeds in a genetic bank;
- Studying the varieties' properties and their growing potential, especially for species such as artichokes, onions and carrots;
- Improving genetically the varieties of those vegetable species that were in higher demand, for example, by increasing their capacity for resisting to pest attacks;
- Enrolling the recovered varieties in national registers; and
- Awareness raising among the farm sector and the public about these efforts and actions through the project's website and communication actions.

Main results

The project managed to achieve all of its foreseen objectives. In particular, it:

- Engaged 20 farmers who produced old varieties at their farms;
- Genetically improved 10 artichoke varieties;
- Registered 34 old varieties in national registers;
- Established contacts with the HORECA the catering sector supporting association to promote these old varieties;
- Set up and maintained a website as well as a Facebook page with around 13 500 followers;
- Organised the 'Week of Apulian Biodiversity' in May 2017 and in May 2018.

Key lessons

The main lesson that the project delivered was that agricultural biodiversity can be successfully protected once strong efforts and concentrated actions are implemented on a regional and local scale.

The most valuable outcome of the project is that dozens of farmers and one co-operative have adopted some of the recovered varieties for cultivation, and that several public initiatives have been built on their history and qualities.

Cultural factors attached to 'regional identity' played a role in this success, which can be seen as a positive outcome of the project.

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Additional sources of information

n/a