



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 33

AUTHOR(S):

Eleni Zarokosta  
Agricultural University of Athens

CONTACTS:

elenazarokosta@aua.gr  
koutsouris@aua.gr

COUNTRY/REGION:

Karditsa, Greece

KEY WORDS:

#new crops, #innovation support services, #new generation cooperatives, #participatory experimentation

The introduction of the cultivation of stevia in Karditsa, Greece

The introduction of stevia in Karditsa derived from the efforts of traditional arable crops' farmers and the local society to deal with severe competitiveness problems of crops, such as tobacco, cotton and sugar beet on the basis of scientific evidence. In the framework of projects co-funded by the EU, the Tobacco Research Centre and the University of Thessaly had carried out research on alternative crops concluding, among others, that stevia is well adapted in Karditsa. Their projects' outcomes were disseminated through the press and seminars targeting specific farmers' groups.

In 2012 a local group of citizens in Karditsa, being aware of these outcomes, organised such a seminar and invited academic researchers to provide information on stevia cultivation and a new stevia processing method. During the seminar participants became also aware of a preliminary market research depicting a growing interest for stevia. Afterwards, 21 professional farmers established a new generation cooperative (ASYST) - membership increased over time to 64 - engaged in the cultivation, processing and trading of stevia. Under the guidance of an academic professor the cooperative ran a number of pilots, before its members established their stevia plantations.

The main challenges farmers faced are related to the supply and the treatment of planting material as well as the process of drying the plant material (leaves), which required special and expensive drying facilities. ASYST dealt with these challenges through self-organised participatory experimentation, self-financing of equipment and holding frequent meetings/training to disseminate knowledge among its members.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the case of ASYST participatory activities enhanced the involved farmers' knowledge not only in relation to the cultivation of stevia but with reference to other crops as well. Nevertheless, this was an internal activity among the members of the stevia cooperative that did not create enough space for developing long term interactions and synergies with other regional/ national AKIS actors. Consequently, these activities did not generate changes affecting the regional advisory landscape.

More information at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUCHoErVJIQ>.



## ABOUT AGRILINK

AgriLink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

### DISCLAIMER:

"This practice abstract reflects only the author's view and the AgriLink project is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains".



[www.agrilink2020.eu](http://www.agrilink2020.eu)



[twitter.com/agrilink2020](https://twitter.com/agrilink2020)



[pierre.labarthe@inrae.fr](mailto:pierre.labarthe@inrae.fr)

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 727577.

All the Practice Abstracts prepared by the AgriLink project in the EIP-AGRI common format can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/agrilink-agricultural-knowledge-linking-farmers>