



UNISECO



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Viticulture and agroecology (France) Cooperation between farmers to foster agroecological practices in viticulture

Photo: E Guisepelli

Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU

POLICY BRIEF

In viticulture, the general dependency on external inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides is high. How to reduce this dependency through agro-ecological practices while maintaining economic viability of farms ? The UNISECO project aimed at investigating this question with the help of a regional network of local cooperatives of farmers (CUMA, cooperatives for the use of agricultural equipment).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

To implement agro-ecological practices, five barriers have to be overcome :

- 1) Economic barrier. Excepted for organic farmers, there is no positive price premium for farmers engaged in agroecology.
- 2) Governance barrier. there is no link between (a) agri-food value chain actors ; (b) authorities and public administrations promoting AE transition; and (c) technical advice for farmers.
- 3) Technical barrier. Reducing the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers is not so easy and sometimes impossible particularly in tight row planted vineyard and/or in steep slopes that require specific and expensive machineries.
- 4) The insecurity related to an agro-ecological approach of vine diseases and pests. A management based on ecological services is more risky for the yield and the quality of grapes. There is no "turnkey" solution to ensure the success of this transition.
- 5) The last barrier is related to climate change (drought, hazards like hail, frost in spring)

A majority of interested farmers intend to start implementing practices such as: green manure to reduce external fertilizers use; using combined cropping and mechanical weeding to reduce pesticides use (wine shrubs and other crops); Testing specific materials for slopes (i.e. rotary spade) to prevent erosion and reduce water evaporation.

These emerging practices need to be encouraged and intensified.

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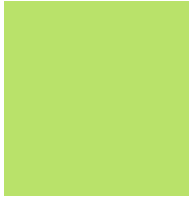
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Vineyard
Organic production
(DEMETTER Label)
Old grape varieties

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As the main barrier is an economic one, there is a need to support::

- ***New sustainable food systems based on agro-ecological practices;***
- ***Labelling policy including agroecological practices in product specifications***

Other policies will help to promote the adoption of agroecological practices.

Broadening existing policies

Agri-environmental measures : support to use of cover crops and green manure in vineyard; compensating the loss of income in the early years (3 to 5 years) linked with insecticides and fungicides suppression ; support for crop diversification.

Landscape management - Agri-environmental measures. The challenge is to promote agro-ecological practices at the landscape scale and not only at the field scale to amplify their impact.

Support to organic farming. (both for the conversion period and after this period).

Diversification of on-farm non agricultural activities Incentives for other income relevant activities (agro-tourism)

Creating new policies

-Support for vineyard restructuring - Payments for investments. Support should be targeted towards parcels where the planting of the vines prevents the reduction in the use of herbicides.

-Support of circular economy: collective composting platform, exchanges of organic fertilization and renewable energy generation, reintegration of distillery waste or other green residues into the vineyard plots.

ABOUT UNISECO:

UNISECO is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of socio-economic and policy drivers and barriers for further development and implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems.

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<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/773901>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/uniseco-h2020/>

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>

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