



UNISECO



European Union's
Horizon 2020
Programme
GA N° 773901

Innovative policy tools and grassroots initiatives to foster the agroecological transition of a market-oriented winegrowing area (Chianti, Italy)

Photo: A. Povellato

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

POLICY BRIEF

To solve the dilemma of how to promote the agroecological transition while maintaining the profitability of farming, Chianti farmers have promoted a “Biodistrict”, a grassroots initiative grounded in agroecological principles, the success of which depend on the commitment of local actors and adequate policy support.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The main barriers to address the dilemma are the lack of food chain development for products other than wine, the difficult access to abandoned land by interested farmers, and the limited coordination among farmers and other local actors. The research has developed a stepwise, evidence-based, participatory process with members of the Chianti Biodistrict to define an agroecological transition strategy that address such barriers by promoting:

- Key agroecological practices that can reduce the environmental impacts of vineyard monoculture, i.e. green cover, composting, pest monitoring;
- Crop diversification and creation of new food chains, which can reduce the share of abandoned land.

The success of this strategy depends on:

- Farmer cooperation during production (e.g. collective composting, shared machinery, shared weather stations to forecast pest outbreaks) and marketing stages (e.g., jointly supplying local markets with diversified and locally grown food);
- Coordination of actors of the regional Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System to facilitate the diffusion of knowledge and know-how about agroecological practices among farmers, advisors and consumers.

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Country:
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Related to UNISECO case study:

[Chianti Biodistrict](#)

Languages:
EN

Year of release:
2021

Publisher:
UNISECO project

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The participatory research process.

Participatory mapping workshop to describe the governance network and identify the needed improvement to ensure the agroecological transition

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The diffusion of agroecological practices requires the integration of Rural Development Programme measures with local policies and initiatives, i.e.:

- Pilot projects, where small farmers cooperate to supply local restaurants and school canteens with locally grown food;
- A regional coordination centre for the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System, able to link research with farmers, while considering farm and territorial diversity;
- Specific measures to support Biodistricts, that could be strategic also to reach the Farm to Fork and other Green Deal targets.

Considering the EU Farm to Fork strategy, the Chianti Biodistrict has already gone beyond the target of 25% agricultural area under organic farming, with a dramatic reduction of chemical inputs. Market and policy instruments can support the agroecological transition, such as:

- Innovative policy tools that ensure stronger support for the development of local farmer networks;
- Private schemes and value chain initiatives that facilitate interactions between different food chain actors and foster the redesign of the local food system.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Chianti Biodistrict website - <https://www.biodistrettodelchianti.it/index-en.html>

UNISECO project website – Case Studies – Italy - <https://uniseco-project.eu/case-study/italy>

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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Project timeframe: 1 May 2018 – 30 April 2021

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

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

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 773901. This policy brief represents the views of the authors. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.