Enhancing cooperation and capacity building to maintain arable land protection on organic dairy farms in the Czech Republic

Photo: A. Hrabalová

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

ISSUE BRIEF

Organic dairy farmers in the case study region of Czech Republic need enhanced cooperation to carry out actions to overcome economic fragility stemming from the immature organic milk market and price uncertainties.

The focus of the case study was to look for solutions to the key dilemma: how to maintain sensitive arable land management on organic dairy farms (no inorganic fertilisers and pesticides, introduction of perennial crops, minimal cash crops) while being economically viable in a cooperating group of farms.

SALES AND PRICE PREMIUM UNCERTAINTY

Farmers introduced agro-ecological farming practices in order to feed organic cows. Due to the immature market of organic milk and dependency on milk sales, it led to economic fragility (with the risk of farmers dropping beneficial farming practices), despite farmers having created a sales cooperative to get a price premium.

COOPERATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Actors realised there are gaps in knowledge on how to farm more efficiently, which could be solved by targeted advice provision and knowledge sharing. Common actions are needed to act more strategically on the market (e.g. attracting value chain partners) and potentially invest to get added value. These actions need increased cooperation between farmers, so it is worth for farmers to overcome the difficulty in initiating it.

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The manure spreader - the main assistant in the care of soil fertility in organic farming

Photo: RUBELIT farm

And our experience in the case study shows that farmers are already aware they should strengthen the way they cooperate, which creates a positive environment for the next steps.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

When farmers are able to agree on common long-term strategy, they would be able to attract new partners from the value chain, strengthen and acquire new contracts, and potentially invest together to get more value added and thus address identified reasons for their economic fragility.

Thus current beneficial farming practices will be secured, with potential to expand, and such success could be a good example to other farmers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Case study page: https://uniseco-project.eu/case-study/czech-republic
Improvement of soil properties on arable land (Story map): https://arcg.is/PbLLG2

Start page of case study story map.

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