



UNISECO



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Connecting farmers to foster the adoption of agroecological practices



Photo: S. Ipsum

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

To initiate the agro-ecological transition, actions must be taken at several levels: plot/farm, territorial and food system.

The winegrowers involved in UNISECO project are both conventional and organic farmers, but all are already implementing agro-ecological practices: reduction of pesticide doses (for conventional farms), use of green manures (inter-row), use of associated crops, mechanical weeding on the row...

DIFFERENT BARRIERS

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

- 1) **Economic barrier.** Except 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, 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)

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Related to UNISECO case study:

Viticulture and agroecology
Languages:
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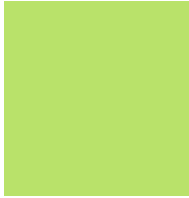
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A grassed vineyard

It helps to prevent erosion, favors auxiliary insects and keeps the soil moisture (in a conventional farm)

A SYNERGY OF ACTIONS

In order to be more effective and consistent, support policies must address both:

- 1) Agroecological practices and conversion/maintenance in organic farming, training in biocontrol techniques (farm level)
- 2) Projects and collective organisations (e.g. composting, landscape measures, sharing knowledge (territorial level)...
- 3) Differentiation and promotion of products based on agro-ecological practices (food system level)...

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

The implementation of these measures will have beneficial effects on:

- Water quality, landscapes and biodiversity (insects, birds, flora);
- Genetic diversity of cultivated species;
- Production and sharing of knowledge and innovations;
- The economic dimension, with lower input costs and better prices for agro-ecological products.

KEY POINTS FOR FUTHER DEVELOPMENT

- Target policy measures towards deep changes in farming practices
- Include environmental expectations of consumers in purchasers' requirements
- Collective action to empower innovative farmers
- Test new instruments to enable cooperation between farmers and non-farming stakeholders (ex local authorities...)

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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