



Deliverable 5
Proposal to national authorities
of an environmental policy and
sustainable use of rural area
framework, based on the
implementation of GAPs.



This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme – Partnerships of the European Commission. The contents are the sole responsibility of GAP4D project partners and can in way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



Sustainability is about respecting nature, but also about respecting ourselves and the very foundations of our wellbeing and economic prosperity. Building green economies is one of EU's global strategic approaches to the pressing need for equitable development and economic activity that provide for sustainable livelihoods, within the finite boundaries of our planet.

For decades, modern economies have been built on standards that ignore the natural basis of our production and consumption practices and lead to mounting deficits – both economic and ecological. We need to rethink the predominant development paradigm that has driven our natural capital, societies and economies to this global crisis. Now more than ever is the time to turn to truly sustainable models of green, living economies.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Europe, pressures on the environment have grown – impacting primarily the most troubled countries, like Greece. Although the situation in Greece may seem unique, the political response to the economic crisis has been similar to that in many other countries facing mounting sovereign debts around the world. Sadly, in the majority of cases, the sustainability agenda is sidelined for short-term gain.

Modern economies are based on standards that structurally ignore the natural basis of our productive and consumption practices. In its modern history, humanity has perceived the

natural environment as a sub-system of economy and has treated ecosystems as endless sources of materials and waste disposal. However, as already mentioned, the opposite is true: economy depends on nature.

Development needs to be redefined on the basic principles of ecological sustainability and social equity.

Nature offers visible, but also “invisible” to many people, services and resources. The most important of these ecosystem services are:

- Provisioning, i.e. products obtained from natural ecosystems, such as crops, water, wood, minerals, energy, biochemicals and pharmaceutical ingredients, food.
- Regulating, such as climate regulation, pollination, protection against floods, etc.
- Supportive, i.e. services that are vital for the conservation of life on earth, such as nutrient cycling and photosynthesis.

All ecosystem services depend on biodiversity.

Healthy ecosystems are areas of dynamic development of life. The loss of a single species may have a serious impact on other species and even result in ecosystem collapse.

PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Primary production (agriculture, livestock farming, forestry and fisheries) accounts a big part of the national Gross Value Added (GVA) for the EU-15 average. Agriculture constitutes the most significant activity and it also plays a vital role in the conservation and management status of the countries natural environment and the development of their tourism product.

The problem

Main concern is the weak link between the relatively more developed sectors, i.e. agriculture, livestock and fisheries (including aquaculture), with the conservation and management of natural resources. Although the benefits provided by the natural capital remain largely untapped, the impact of production on the environment, primarily in areas of intensive production, remains high.

From a macroscopic viewpoint, the current state of primary production creates a number of serious issues, which need to be addressed in the context of an integrated and sustainable reform policy.

The distorted system of subsidies has led to the concentration of agricultural activity in intensive farming and its encroachment over natural space. It has also caused the abandonment of high

nature value farming practices²⁵ and the loss of valuable landscapes and important local seeds and livestock breeds.

Directions

1. KNOWLEDGE: Completion of the necessary knowledge and decision making tools (forest maps, cadastre, soil cultivation register, marine and terrestrial habitats, high nature value farming areas etc), which are necessary for the planning and organisation of primary production.
2. PLAN: Integrated planning based on inter-sectoral development plans should focus on:
 - ✓ Sustainable spatial planning of activities, in order to defuse the pressures on local resources, ease the conflicts with local communities and achieve the right combination of productive activities with natural capital conservation and management needs.
 - ✓ The competitive advantages, through the best use of local breeds and varieties and marketing their special gastronomic and environmental characteristics, standardisation and certification of local products and promotion of small-scale production.

3. MANAGEMENT: Management of inputs, residues and waste, with the aim of improving product quality, reducing costs and tapping new sources of profit.
4. SUPPORT: Reform of the subsidies system, in order to support processes and areas that add clear competitive advantages or environmental benefits and discourage the opportunistic involvement with production. Despite the fact that the structure of subsidies is to a large extent given through “historic data”, the CAP and rural development measures offer opportunities for sustainable diversification of the support policies.
5. CERTIFICATION: Product labeling and productive method certification strengthens competitive advantages and needs to be encouraged. The main types of certification focus on the following:
 - ✓ Integrated management, which certifies the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices and monitors the product through the entire processing-marketing chain.
 - ✓ Sustainable forestry (FSC, PEFC) and fisheries (MSC) are important certification tools for integrated and ecologically sustainable management. The implementation of internationally accepted sustainability certification tools in aquaculture should also be promoted as a matter of priority.
 - ✓ Organic farming, which certifies the implementation of strict ecological standards in agriculture, livestock farming and aquaculture, including processing.
 - ✓ Special labeling, which certifies particular qualities, gastronomic or geographical, thus capitalising on specific consumer receptions. In this context, it is important to focus on the development of a certification system for protected area products.
6. CONNECTION: The connection between activities and sectors requires robust political planning, in order to achieve economies of scale and increase the economic and ecological sustainability of holdings, ease the pressures on natural resources and strengthen the marketability of final products. Priorities in this direction are the following:
 - ✓ Multi-purpose utilisation of space and resources, through measures such as the combination of livestock farming and tree plantations, the point development renewable energy infrastructures in farmlands in ways that do not undermine their character, grazing in forested lands under specific plans that also serve sustainable forest management purposes.
 - ✓ Inter-sectoral connection: emphasis needs to be placed on farming and tourism, with the dual aim of offering high

quality services and local products, while creating short local supply chains between producers and tourism enterprises.

- ✓ Multi-purpose utilisation of infrastructures and labour force, aiming at the systematisation of multiple employment and income stability, particularly in vulnerable groups (youth, women) and population groups depending on seasonal employment.
7. VOCATIONAL TRAINING: Although the primary sector plays an undoubtedly crucial role in economy, the human capital employed is rather weak and requires support. The following interventions are vital:
- ✓ Human capital development and continuing support, with emphasis in business planning and development, best practices in quality management.
 - ✓ Strengthening of decision making structures, through the training of administrative personnel, development of local and central consultation and decision support schemes.
 - ✓ Support to local producers groups in knowledge exchange and development of collective holdings, such as animal farms, standardisation and processing cooperatives and collective infrastructures for efficient waste management (e.g. fuel production from olive mill wastewater).

Apart from the aforementioned priorities, a series of other interventions are also needed:

- ✓ Realistic and effective planning for the implementation of the agri-environmental measures during the next CAP period.
- ✓ Revision of the specifications of forestry management plans, which will include all forest products, and implementation in at least five pilot areas.
- ✓ Pilot implementation of fisheries improvement practices and certification in at least five medium-scale fishing fleets.
- ✓ Immediate establishment of five fishery reserves (i.e. areas closed to fishing activities), with the aim of allowing the natural recovery of fish stocks and also of developing mild recreation activities, such as diving tourism.
- ✓ Establishment of a framework for the support of producer groups with activities for the development of innovative products and implementation of environmental and quality management systems.

- ✓ Setting up of a certification scheme for protected area products.
- ✓ Further development of seed banks and creation of a national register for local breeds and varieties. Linking of the use of local genetic material with the financial support system.
- ✓ Establishment of framework for local agreements between producers and tourism businesses and connection with support measures.
- ✓ Implementation of three, at first phase, integrated management plans for livestock farming, which include ecological measures for grazing management, establishment of livestock parks linking livestock farming with agricultural activity and development of social schemes for labeling, processing and marketing.

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