



Review of activities 2014

“Captain Vassilis” Foundation



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

In 2014, through a series of successful initiatives and open events, and by directly approaching producers, the Foundation established itself in the area, gaining the trust of organizations and producers. Nowadays, it is a point of reference in the whole region, in regard to developments in the local agricultural sector. The Foundation operates with a permanent staff of three; it is based in Pylos, and also keeps an office in Athens. What follows is a detailed review of 2014.

The actions in more detail:

Section 1: Agricultural sector development SUBSECTION A': IMPROVEMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS

1. Agricultural development workshop – Presentation of IOBE (Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research) survey and AUA (Agricultural University of Athens) results

Participants: 150 producers and agricultural professionals
Description: An open workshop titled “Sustainable Agricultural Development in Messinia” took place on Friday, May 16, at the “Elite” hotel in Kalamata, with the participation of more than 150 producers and agricultural professionals from Messinia. Within the framework of the actions that aim to establish Messinia as the prime example of sustainable agricultural development, the “Captain Vassilis Foundation” presented the complete plan carried out by IOBE. Moreover, the AUA had previously carried out a detailed recording of Messinian local varieties, and these results were also presented at the

workshop. Both these actions were sponsored by the Foundation. In addition, the Secretary General of Agricultural Policy and International Relations of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Mr. Dimitris Melas, presented the direction, focus and measures laid down in the new Common Agricultural Policy, and the General Director of the bank of Piraeus spoke about the potential of contract farming. This overall approach offered the producers and agricultural professionals of Messinia useful insight into the developments and prospects of the agricultural field, and also provided the relevant services with useful information. Moreover, it opened the gate to new collaborations based on contract farming (there are 5 confirmed cases).



IMPROVEMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS



2. Collaboration with the Agricultural University of Athens, local varieties, phase 2

Partners: The Agricultural University of Athens, Costa Navarino
Description: After the completion of the first phase, during which the designated specialists recorded information on the wealth of Messinia's local varieties in annual and perennial cultivations, and also collected seeds, it is now time for the study to enter its second phase. In order for some of these varieties to be put to commercial use, they must be produced at a larger scale, and their commercial qualities have to be recorded. For that purpose, Messinian varieties were selected—for which there is evidence of commercial potential—and are now being cultivated. By the end of March we will have the first results of the cultivation, as well as information on the germination potential of those seeds. At the same time, the process for a complete recording of Messinian varieties continues. The goal is for them to be put to commercial use.

3. “A Place Branding Strategy for Regional Growth” – A study

Partner: The University of Stockholm
Description: The study carried out by researcher Mikael Andéhn of the University of Stockholm, which centered on the evaluation of the current situation concerning the promotion of Messinian products, was completed in August. More specifically, the study examined the opportunities that lie with the branding of Messinian products, and the problems surrounding it, and concluded with solutions aimed at the development of the area and its connection with its quality products, particularly olive oil. It is, in essence, a significant element in every endeavor to create a Messinian brand name or a targeted plan to market products from the region of

Messinia. The collaboration with the University of Stockholm will continue in 2015, aiming to convey in the best possible way these results to the local producers and organizations.

4. Practical training for university students

Description: The “Captain Vassilis” Foundation covers the travel, accommodation and food expenses of the two AUA students working on the program for the cultivation and reproduction of Messinian seeds, the aim being to eventually put those varieties to commercial use.

SUPPORT & UPGRADING OF HUMAN RESOURCES

SUBSECTION B': SUPPORT & UPGRADING OF HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Agronomic meetings

Participants: 70 people (so far)

Description: As part of the plan to increase the Messinian producers' technical expertise, a new cycle of open discussions has been introduced, in the regions of Messinia that rely predominantly on agriculture. In each meeting, the guest specialist briefly introduces specific practices or issues (soil fertilization, processing, olive tree diseases, etc.), followed by a Q&A session with the producers and the audience. The aim of these educational meetings is to provide information to professional farmers, new farmers, agricultural products' processors and other professionals in the field. So far, two meetings have taken place, the first in Gargalianoi, titled "Olive crop processing and olive oil quality," and the second in Diavolitsi, titled "Rational fertilization of the olive."

2. Educational Seminars for Olive Growers

Partners: The Institute of Olive Tree and Subtropical Plants in Chania, the International Olive Council

Participants: 125 producers and agricultural professionals

Description: The "Captain Vassilis" Foundation and the Institute of Olive Tree and Subtropical Plants in Chania have co-organized an educational seminar for olive growers, titled "Sustainable management methods for olive growing." The seminar took place on November 17, 18 & 19 in Kalamata, and was addressed to producers and other agricultural professionals.

The seminar brought together more than 120 producers and agricultural professionals from various areas in Greece. It involved theory and practical training, and analyzed topics such as rational irrigation, fertilization, and complete plant protection of the olive grove, the management of olive mill waste, the certification, trade and promotion of olive oil and table olives, and various other important agricultural issues. The visit to the farmland included pruning, proper irrigation and fertilization demonstrations, and the participants had the opportunity to examine from up close problems that might arise both with the trees and the soil. During the last day of the program, the participants and the designated bodies discussed and analyzed issues pertaining to the area, and tabled proposals with the aim of composing a local strategic plan for the development-improvement of olive growing in Messinia.



SUPPORT & UPGRADING OF HUMAN RESOURCES



3. “Books on wheels” (Mobile Libraries by PYRNA)

Participants: (approximately) 2,500

Description: As part of this program, large amount of books on a specific topic “travel” to schools across Messinia. With this opportunity, the teachers can monitor the lending process, and focus accordingly on the specific theme of the books. After about a month, the books travel to another school. The Foundation has sponsored five book “loads” on the following topic: “Western Peloponnese: History, Art and Culture.” The books have been sent together with the relevant educational leaflets referring to the archaeological sites in the area (original material). So far, they have reached ten schools. In addition, as part of this program 6 visits of 50 schoolchildren have been arranged to Ancient Messini, 2 to Vasses, Figaleia, and 2 in Olympia.

Moreover, 4 more dispatches have been sent out, on the purely agricultural topic “Gardens, orchards and products of our land.”

4. “Prospects & challenges of Messinian olive oil” - A workshop

Partners: MATAROA, the American Farm School, the American Embassy

Participants: 70 producers and agricultural professionals

Description: The Foundation, in collaboration with the aforementioned bodies, invited the Director of the UC Davis Olive Center, Dan Flyn, to Kalamata, as well as researchers from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (Prokopis Magiatis, Eleni Melliou), and a professor of the American Farm School (Thanassis Gertsis), in order for them to present research studies and good practices that can increase the value of the Messinian olive oil. Moreover, the following day, olive oil professionals had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the speakers, posing questions mainly about the research on oleacein and oleocanthal.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

SUBSECTION C: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Green Entrepreneurship

Partner: The University of Stockholm

Description: The “Captain Vassilis” Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Stockholm, organized the program titled “Green Entrepreneurship – A Course for Sustainable Development.” The aim of this endeavor was to pinpoint and analyze agri-environmental issues in Messinia. Within this framework, 7 undergraduate students of the University of Stockholm visited Messinia, collected information and wrote their dissertations, which were then posted on the Foundation’s website.



2. Beach & creek cleanups in the wider Messinia region

Partners: The Municipality of Pylos-Nestor, the Pylos Association of Enterprises for Tourism Development, the Professional Association of Gialova

Description: The residents of the Municipality of Pylos-Nestor took part in the voluntary cleaning activity organized on June 15, 2014, by the “Captain Vassilis” Foundation, the Municipality of Pylos-Nestor, the Pylos Association of Enterprises for Tourism Development, and the Professional Association of Gialova. This collective effort aimed at increasing the residents’ environmental awareness. The goal was to clean some beaches and creeks that have been especially burdened by agricultural waste. This action is to be repeated in 2015.

EXAMINING MARKETING AND OUTREACH OPTIONS

Section 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY

Subsection: Examining marketing and outreach options

1. Gastronomy seminars 2014

Partner: The Messinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Participants: 150 food service professionals

Description: For the second consecutive year, the "Captain Vassilis" Foundation and the Messinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have co-organized the Educational Gastronomy Seminars, aimed at food service professionals. The seminars took place at Navarino Dunes, in Costa Navarino, on May 5, 6 and 7, under the auspices of ATHINORAMA magazine and the "Chrysoi Skoufoi" (Golden Caps) awards. The aim of the seminars was to promote and establish Messinian cuisine and to support local products. The three-day seminar gave the opportunity to more than 150 food service professionals to become acquainted with chefs such as Nena Ismyrnoğlu, Lefteris Lazarou, and Doxis Bekris, and to note down examples, practical instructions and suggestions. The three chefs cooked alongside the participants, presenting local dishes and giving practical advice.



2. Virtual Museum of the Messinian Diet

Description: The Virtual Museum of the Messinian Diet aims at introducing the traditional Messinian diet to people from various parts of the world, through a virtual tour. The Museum will provide information to anyone interested in issues such as alimentation, production techniques, and the use of the best traditional Messinian staples in today's diet. It is expected to run until the end of April 2015.



EXAMINING MARKETING AND OUTREACH OPTIONS

3. Second workshop for exports, 2014

Partners: The George and Victoria Karelias Foundation, the Panhellenic Exporters Association, the Messinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Participants: 150 producers, exporters and agricultural professionals

Description: With more than 150 participants—professionals and producers of Messinia—and 343 B2B (business to business) meetings, the two-day informational workshop for the support and promotion of Greek agricultural product exports concluded successfully. The workshop took place on December 8 and 9 at the “Horizon Blu” hotel, with the organizational support of the Panhellenic Exporters Association and the Messinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food. There were 21 talks, by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by buyers and exports’ specialists, who offered the participants their expertise, knowledge, and also important practical information. During the theoretical part of the workshop, the participants were informed about strategy, legal framework, and ways to ensure successful export marketing, as well as effective product promotion in the USA, Australia, China, and France. During the two-day workshop, 343 B2B meetings took place between Messinian export

businesses and buyers from abroad, which led to four confirmed trade agreements.



PROCESSING STANDARDIZATION

Section 3: OLIVE-GROWING Subsection: Processing, Standardization

1. Investigation of the properties of oleacein and oleocanthal

Partners: The National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, the University of California, UC Davis

Description: The “Captain Vassilis” Foundation, in collaboration with researchers from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens and UC Davis, have funded a clinical research on the effects of Messinian olive oil on American citizens, with the aim of emphasizing the benefits of specific substances on human health. The results of the research will be published in the following months, and ways to better utilize and promote them will be examined.

2. Olive cultivation and olive oil tasting - An educational program

Partners: The International Olive Council, Olive Oil Tasting Workshop (the Technological & Educational Institute of the Peloponnese)

Participants: 250 high school students in Messinia (1st phase)

Description: The educational program titled “Promoting the sensory quality of olive oil,” aimed at high school students in Messinia, is taking place for the second consecutive school year. The program was an initiative of the “Captain Vassilis” Foundation, in collaboration with the International Olive Council, with the support of the Technological & Educational Institute of the Peloponnese’s tasting workshop. More than 250 students from Messinia have participated in the

program during its two-year course.

The main purpose of the program is to teach students how to link the quality of olive oil with all life stages of the olive tree and olives. Through this activity, they became familiar with all these stages, from cultivation methods to processing and standardization. Particular emphasis was placed on the tasting method as a tool for obtaining reliable information. The tasting process has been adjusted to the students’ educational needs. The educational program will run until the end of the school year, in the hope that it will educate as many students as possible on the value and the production process of olive oil.

The aim is for the program to take place in a different area each year—last year it took place in Kalamata, this year in Pylos—with the aim of facilitating more schools from the wider Messinia region to attend.



PROCESSING STANDARDIZATION

3. Financial support for the presentation of the SAGE 10 program results, “recording the footprint of olive growing on the environment.”

Partners: The Benaki Phytopathological Institute

Description: Financial aid was provided for the presentation of the results of the SAGE program, whose purpose was to build and operate a platform where the ecological footprint can be recorded. This was a very important program, not only because it evaluated the current situation, but also because it created a tool for the environmental certification of olive products in Western Messinia.



B. SOCIAL ACTION

Through the Management Committee, the Foundation processed 77 incoming requests in 2014, which centered on social and other issues. At the same time, the Foundation coordinated and supported a collect-and-donate activity to aid various organizations and charities.