

MINECROP

WP2 - Raising awareness of sustainable crop farming techniques

AGRO VERDURAS 2000 - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

We own an agriculture business with over 3,000 square meters of facilities for receiving and marketing products. Located in the Polígono Era Alta de Almoradí, Alicante, our specialty lies in the cultivation and sale of a variety of fruits and vegetables such as artichokes, broccoli, cabbages, broad beans, potatoes, tomatoes, celery, oranges, melons, etc. We sell to exporters and various horticultural product traders through auctions and direct sales, serving markets from Alicante, Murcia, Madrid, Barcelona, and extending throughout Spain.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

Agro-Verduras 2000 was established in September 2000 by a group of fruit and vegetable producers and traders from the Vega Baja de Alicante region. Over ten years, we have expanded our production areas (Alicante, Albacete, Murcia) and opened our market to the entire European Union. I personally do not have an educational background in agriculture but have gained extensive experience in farming through practical involvement and continuous learning within the industry.



ORGANISATION

- AGRO VERDURAS 2000

COUNTRY

- SPAIN

CITY

- ALMORADÍ, ALICANTE



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

The Green Deal principles are ingrained in our farming practices as a result of our concern for the environment and commitment to sustainability. We strive to minimize negative impacts on the environment in every decision we make, focusing on practices that promote biodiversity, reduce emissions, and conserve resources.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

Our motivation to make green changes stems from our upbringing and lifestyle rooted in rural areas, where we learned to appreciate nature from a young age. It's a personal commitment to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same environment as we do, driving us to adopt environmentally friendly farming practices.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

Despite our dedication to implementing the Green Deal, we have faced persistent barriers, primarily due to the lack of support from government authorities. There's a prevailing emphasis on foreign products over domestic ones, and authorities seem more focused on environmental regulations without providing adequate support or solutions. Additionally, there's a lack of awareness and education among older generations of farmers, who may be resistant to change due to their adherence to traditional methods.



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CASE STUDY - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

"Live healthy with Agrofresh" is our slogan. The company owns in the agricultural holding 3 ha of land according to APIA (Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture) 2017. On the 3 ha of the owned ecological system we have two greenhouses whose total area is 1.26 ha. Our land is certified ecologically by SRAC according to the certificate of conformity.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

SC AGROFRESH ECOLOGIC SRL was established as a limited liability company in April 2017, being registered at the Trade Registry. I worked in the field of agriculture from a young age, but at this company I perfected myself in organic and sustainable agriculture for the cultivation of tomatoes and cucumbers.



ORGANISATION

- Agrofresh Ecologic

COUNTRY

- Romania

CITY

- Sag (Timis County)



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

Our organically grown vegetables are safer to eat. Today, however, everything that means agriculture has turned into an entire technological industry, it has become intensive, the soils have become poor in micro and macronutrients, they are polluted chemically and biologically. In order for our vegetables to carry the organic label, they are carefully monitored also in terms of green practices. In the certification process, important aspects are monitored such as the quality of the soil, water, air, the use of any type of synthetic chemical solution, thus the use of fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics etc.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

Our vegetables are grown in solariums, being protected from bad weather, heavy rains and strong wind. Pollination here is done by bumblebees and without pesticides and chemicals.

Saving energy, adopting a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle and cultivating sustainable and ecological products were the motivating factors to make green changes.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

It is not at all easy to grow organic vegetables because there are many decisive factors such as the soil, the water source, the land, its size, the growth potential through green and natural processes. Productivity achieved in organic crops is lower, but studies show the nutritional superiority of organic food. Organic vegetables contain less water than "classic" vegetables. They do not contain any chemical fertilizers or pesticides, so harmful to our health.



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CASE STUDY - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

We are engaged in the cultivation of cereals, leguminous plants and plants producing oil seeds such as: wheat, barley, rapeseed, corn, soybean and sunflower. Our activity is oriented towards the processing and marketing of agricultural products obtained on the farm. These are capitalized on the domestic market, based on contracts concluded with professional economic agents

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

I have been working here for many years, the company being founded in 2012, registered at the Timis Trade Register. At the beginning of 2015, the management of the company decided to develop its strategy by exploiting the purchased goods, respectively by starting the activity in the cultivation of cereals, on its own lands. We all have experience in agriculture.



ORGANISATION

- L GREY AGRICULTURE

COUNTRY

- Romania

CITY

- Timisoara



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

"The company stores in accordance with European grain storage standards. This is done by creating new efficient and competitive production capacities, by building the collection, storage, conditioning and marketing base of grains that will be purchased from third parties, but also own production a minority part of the entire storage capacity of 7,480 tons. By complying with green and environmental standards, we ensure and protect the biodiversity of the exploitation area. We also want an improvement in workplace safety and hygiene conditions.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

A healthy culture is a rich culture, that is why we try to apply as many green practices as possible. We have very large crops and that is why it is not always easy to switch to the "green area" of cultivation and harvesting. The technological flow begins with the agricultural work performed in the field, from cultivation to harvest. After harvesting, the grains are transported to the farm using trailers.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

Implementing green deal is all the more challenging as the cultivation and harvesting process is more complex. For example, after weighing, an analysis of grain quality (moisture, density, etc.) is done by taking samples and analyzing them in the laboratory. Once the quality indicators are established, the beans will go through the cleaning and selection phase, after which the beans will be separated from waste, dried with the help of the burner dryer and stored in the storage hall.



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CASE STUDY - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

I am the owner of a 10 ha organic farm, certified for over 20 years. Biodiversity is the basis. There are about 40 products on the certificate. Cereals, legumes, grasses, various types of vegetables, herbs. There were always cattle, pigs, poultry and rabbits on the farm. This is currently being restricted.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

I have been involved with agriculture since I was a child, but I never planned to become a farmer. I graduated from high school with an economics profile. However, 34 years ago I took over the farm from my parents and it became a way of life. I gained knowledge about agriculture from my parents and through independent learning - participation in training, agricultural articles, consultations with other farmers



ORGANISATION

- Ecological Farm Słoneczna Zagroda Lucyna Gawęł

COUNTRY

- Poland

CITY

- Wola Batorska



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

I introduced the green deal on the farm in 2003. Changes were not a problem, because production had been done in a similar way since ancient times. On the farm, we focused mainly on biodiversity, appropriate rotation and animals on the farm, which is the basis for managing and living in harmony with nature. The first step is the proper selection of plants and sowing. We focus on appropriate natural fertilization adapted to the plant's nutritional requirements. Appropriate rotation helps enrich the soil with beneficial microorganisms. Through appropriate rotation and cultivation procedures, as well as the use of natural fertilizers, we increase the humus content in the soil, which is beneficial for the development of plants. On the farm, we only use registered agents approved for organic farming.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

An unexpected life situation and the desire to help others resulted in the decision to register the farm for organic certification. We started agricultural production taking into account green practices to produce healthy food that is the basis of a balanced diet. The awareness that what we eat directly affects our health was the basis for implementing green activities in the production of healthy food.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

"Running an organic farm involves a lot of daily physical work. The use of permitted ecological products is helpful, but most of the work, such as weeding, must be done manually (mainly in the case of vegetables) or mechanically, which involves visiting one field several times. The main problem is therefore the need to employ workers (year by year the number of people willing to do physical work in the season decreases and the financial requirements increase).





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CASE STUDY - FARMER 2 - NL



WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

“I work for a dairy farm focused on livestock agriculture. The size of the farm is approximately 20 hectares. The primary focus of our agricultural activities is the production of dairy products, specifically cheese and milk. We recognize that for a short time we are only stewards of the land. We work hard to protect our lands and forests and protect our water sources. We utilize regenerative and no-till methods and work closely with local Natural Resources and Conservation Services to continually evaluate and update our practices with a focus on environmental quality and sustainability. Our farm is an original charter from the King of England before the American Revolution. It has been farmed continuously for over 300 years and we want to make sure it continues to be farmed for another 300 years.”

ORGANISATION

- Dairy Farm

COUNTRY

- Netherlands

CITY

- Beets, Edam-Volendam

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

“The farm is on business from 1997 and I am a part of it for 6 years now. I do not have an educational background to the field, I just share the same passion for nature with the owners of the farm who imparted me everything I know regarding farming. We strive to care for the health of animals and ecosystems.”





GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

“To achieve a “Green Deal” is indeed challenging, but we are committed to addressing it by adopting a comprehensive approach to sustainable farming practices. This means implementing specific strategies to control waste, such as composting manure and minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers, to promote environmental stewardship. Water conservation measures have been introduced to reduce consumption, and responsible efforts have been made to manage water runoff. Prioritizing biodiversity involves habitat preservation and avoiding harmful pesticides. Continuous improvement efforts, staying informed about green technologies, and leveraging government incentives contribute to a holistic approach aligning our mission with the principles of Ecology”

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

“The first reason was the demands of the market for more sustainable and green products. Moreover, adopting these eco-friendly measures, can result in cost savings through efficient resource management, while simultaneously contributing to the long-term viability and resilience of the farm. There is also a positive effect regarding the community relations as the farm becomes a responsible steward of the environment. Ultimately, by preserving natural ecosystems, green tactics contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future for dairy farming on both local and global scales.”

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

“Limited access to advanced technologies, especially in smaller operations, and the scale-dependent cost-effectiveness of certain sustainable practices further complicate implementation. Weather and climate variability, market access complexities, and the dependency on external inputs such as organic fertilizers add layers of challenge. Overcoming these barrier, necessitates a multifaceted approach, involving educational initiatives, financial support, regulatory clarity, and industry-wide cooperation to ensure the successful integration of sustainable practices in dairy farming.”



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CASE STUDY - FARMER 1 - NL



WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

“As a farmer from Wageningen owning a private company specializing in vegetable production, my agricultural business focuses on sustainable and innovative farming practices. The farm is moderate in size, covering approximately 80 hectares of prime agricultural land. The primary emphasis is on cultivating a variety of high-quality vegetables using advanced and environmentally friendly techniques. Livestock is not a primary focus of my agricultural enterprise, as the main emphasis lies in vegetable production. However, the farm may collaborate with nearby livestock farmers for integrated farming practices, such as incorporating cover crops and organic matter into the fields. Agriculture causes large greenhouse gas emissions, food production can be more efficient in terms of energy, water and raw materials. We can solve these problems by using more sustainable sources such as legumes, aquatic crops and insects.”

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

“I’ve been immersed in the world of farming for over two decades, dedicating my career to cultivating vegetables and embracing sustainable agricultural practices. My journey into farming began with a strong passion for agriculture and a commitment to contributing to the local and global food supply. I am a graduate of the Agriculture University of Wageningen so I have a background on this sector which was enhanced by the need of green tactics in Agriculture.”

ORGANISATION

- Private Company - Vegetables Production

COUNTRY

- Netherlands

CITY

- Wageningen



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

“Achieving the Green Deal has been integral to our operations. We prioritize sustainability through the implementation of precision farming technologies, embracing Agro-Ecological practices like crop rotation and integrated pest management, and optimizing water use with drip irrigation and soil moisture sensors. Renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, contribute to reducing our environmental footprint. In our greenhouse operations, we employ energy-efficient technologies and collaborate with research institutions like Wageningen University & Research to stay at the forefront of sustainable agriculture practices. Additionally, efforts to minimize food waste involve strategic harvesting and collaboration with local food banks. Our commitment to achieving and exceeding relevant sustainability certifications underscores our dedication to a more environmentally friendly and socially responsible farming approach, aligning with the goals of the Green Deal.”

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

“Motivated by a deep commitment to environmental responsibility, consumer demand for sustainable products, and the long-term viability of my business, I have implemented green changes in my operations. Recognizing the relation of agriculture and the environment, we try to minimize the ecological footprint of the farm’s activity by reducing synthetic inputs, preserving soil health and embracing innovative technologies. Inspired by Wageningen’s academic and research environment, I collaborate with experts to stay at the forefront of sustainable practices. Compliance with regulations, personal values, and a vision for a healthier planet further drive my dedication to making environmentally conscious choices, ensuring my farming activities contribute to a sustainable future.”

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

“The implementation of the Green New Deal brings both opportunities and challenges. Keeping up with the evolving technical expertise required for precision and organic farming is an ongoing challenge. As consumer demand for sustainably produced vegetables continues to grow, market uncertainty and changing preferences pose risks. Regulatory compliance, unpredictable weather conditions due to climate change and the integration of sustainable practices throughout the supply chain also present obstacles. Despite these challenges, our farm is committed to overcoming these obstacles by working with research institutions, participating in farmer networks, and leveraging existing resources to successfully transition to greener ways of growing vegetables.”



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CASE STUDY - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

I own a farm that includes a 12-acre field of almond trees and a 10-acre field dedicated to tobacco plants.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

I've been running my own farm for 25 years, but my experience in farming dates back to my childhood, working in the fields. My formal education in agriculture comes from a vocational high school, supplemented by numerous national training programs and courses over the years. However, I consider my hands-on experience in the fields as the cornerstone of my agricultural knowledge.



ORGANISATION

- Local farmer

COUNTRY

- Greece

CITY

- Ellassona, Thessaly



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

To achieve the Green Deal on our farm, we prioritize using biofertilizers that are environmentally friendly, and we've sought out sustainable packaging options. Additionally, we encourage our customers to bring their own containers to purchase the quantities they need, reducing packaging waste. Our irrigation system is powered by solar energy, highlighting our commitment to renewable resources. Plus, we employ traditional farming methods that don't rely on mechanical equipment, further minimizing our environmental footprint.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

My daughters initially nudged me towards more sustainable practices. Their perspective opened my eyes to the benefits these methods could bring. After doing personal research, I became convinced of the positive results, both environmental and economic, that sustainable agriculture could bring. This combination of family influence and empirical evidence fueled my commitment to green changes on our farm.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

Initially, the Green Deal seemed theoretical to me, and I didn't realize I could actively participate. Lack of specific information and guidance was a major barrier. Through personal research, I discovered how to implement these practices. Another challenge was building trust with our customers towards our new techniques, which initially met with skepticism.



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WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

As a farm owner, my primary crop is carrots, occupying 18 acres of land. However, our agricultural activities are dynamic, with the cultivation of various vegetables varying according to the season.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

For the past decade, I've been managing my farm. While I have a background in financial studies, my upbringing alongside my father, who is also a seasoned farmer, instilled in me a deep-rooted understanding of agriculture, shaping my practical knowledge and approach to farming practices.



ORGANISATION

- Local farmer

COUNTRY

- Greece

CITY

- Tanagra, Boeotia



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

In achieving the Green Deal goals on my farm, I've focused on sustainability across all operations. This includes using energy-efficient equipment, implementing a water recycling system to reuse water, such as for cleaning carrots, thus reducing waste. Collaborating with an agricultural cooperative has optimized shipping, using larger n larger batches to decrease the number of delivery trucks needed. Unsellable carrots are repurposed as animal feed, contributing to a circular economy. Additionally, fertilizing is done on calm days to prevent dispersion into the atmosphere, minimizing environmental impact.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

My main motivation was caring for the environment and ensuring our farm remains sustainable for the future. The land gives me a living, so I feel it's my duty to take care of it for those who come after us.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

The implementation of the Green Deal has presented several obstacles, including the significant amount of personal research required to identify applicable green practices, as in the past information was not as accessible. Funding these initiatives has also been a challenge due to limited financial support for sustainable practices. Additional barriers included adapting existing farms to new, environmentally friendly methods and addressing concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of green practices.



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CASE STUDY - FARMER

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO YOU OWN? SIZE, TYPE (NUMBER OF HECTARES, TYPE OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK SPECIES OWNED)

Toomas Leppik operates a small, traditional farm in Võru, Estonia. He primarily grows cereals such as barley, and rye in his farm. He also has a small vegetable garden where he grows potatoes, carrots, and onions for his family's consumption. He has always been focused on maintaining traditional farming practices.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING? DO YOU HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN THIS FIELD?

Toomas has inherited this farm from his parents, and he has been working the land ever since he was a young boy. His family has been farming in this area for generations, so you could say it's in his blood. As for his educational background, he doesn't have any formal training in agriculture. His knowledge comes from years of hands-on experience, learning from his elders, and a deep passion for the land and its cultivation.



ORGANISATION

- Toomas' local farm

COUNTRY

- Estonia

CITY

- Võru



GREEN DEAL - HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS IN YOUR FARMING?

His focus has always been on traditional farming methods that have been passed down through generations. However, he does his best to be environmentally conscious in his practices. For example, he avoids excessive pesticide use and tries to maintain the natural balance of the ecosystem on his farm. While he may not be actively participating in programs like the Green Deal, he believes in doing his part to protect the environment for future generations.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO MAKE GREEN CHANGES?

Toomas' main motivation for making green changes is a deep-rooted respect for the land and the environment. In fact, he has always felt responsible for ensuring the health and sustainability of the land. While he may not be actively involved in large environmental initiatives, he believes that every small change he makes on his farm can have a positive impact. Additionally, seeing the effects of climate change and environmental degradation has reinforced his commitment to adopting more sustainable practices.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE YOU FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREEN DEAL?

Toomas is a traditional farmer and he has found that the main barriers are often financial. Upgrading his equipment or trying new techniques can be costly, and as a small farmer, he has limited resources. Additionally, he states that it can be challenging to learn about new technologies at his age. However, he does his best to make small changes whenever he can, like reducing pesticide use and caring for the soil.

