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## FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOP DATA

<b>Country</b>	Greece
<b>Date</b>	April 2, 2014
<b>FG Start</b>	12:30
<b>FG End</b>	14:00
<b>Inviting Organisation</b>	HAU-Militos
<b>Moderator</b>	Georgia Dede-Georgia Micheli

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## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

### Educational content area: BUSINESS PLAN

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

It was considered as an important element of the training material. However, it is expected that traditional farmers would not be easily persuaded to use it. The local agriculturist provides most traditional farmers with important data of the business plan (i.e. what kind of product can be produced, what production methods should be used, what is the market price for such products, etc).

The business plan would be ideal for new, and most probably more educated, farmers or people who want to get involved in agribusiness

OTHERS

### Educational content area: PRICE STRATEGIES

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

The topic was considered important, but there was a big discussion on how much can a small farmer or business really affect the price of the product. Furthermore, the percentage of the final product price that stays as income to the producer is much lower today than it used to be.

OTHERS



**Educational content area: PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

Farmers should be urged to be keen to adapt to changing market needs, to always be aware of what kind of products or species of products the consumer asks for and to produce them (an example given by one of the participants was the black tomato instead of the traditional tomato)

Product development should also be part of the needs analysis in the business plan.

OTHERS

**Educational content area: PROMOTION**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

Innovative promotion methods could attract young farmers or people who wish to get involved to agribusiness. The social role of the farmer should be stressed: the farmer is not just a worker of land, but a carer of the environment.

OTHERS

**Educational content area: DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

Direct distribution options should be highlighted. Contractual farming, where the contractor is not a company but the consumer himself is one option.

OTHERS



### **Educational content area: MARKETING COOPERATION**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

Social skills, interpersonal relations and principles of the social economy should be included in this topic.

The material should go beyond the traditional marketing principles and include also the management of natural resources and the opportunities that derive of it.

OTHERS

### **Educational content area: BRANDING**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

There was scepticism over this concept for established small farmers, who might not have the theoretical background or financial ability to apply it. It would make sense for farmers-to-be, who want to start fresh in agribusiness.

OTHERS

National and international standards, such as the protected geographical indication, the protected designation of origin, the traditional specialties, Agro, bio, etc. should be stressed.

### **Educational content area: LEGISLATION**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

EU subsidies was a main issue of concern for the farmers for many years. There should be an effort to highlight other issues of CAP and to stress the new options for doing agribusiness (i.e. agritourism, social agriculture) given by new laws and regulations Europe-wide.

OTHERS



Issues like good agricultural practice and waste management (i.e. managing pesticides and residues of pesticides) should be included in this unit.

#### **Educational content area: INTERNATIONALISATION**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

Traditional small farmers would not be interested in the topic. New farmers, or farmers-to-be would probably get involved more easily.

OTHERS

#### **Educational content area: TRACEABILITY OF PRODUCTS**

Input/suggestions regarding CONTENT

This issue was considered very important, as there are very few farmers who can understand what it means, or what kind of systems they could use for traceability in all production stages. Importance must be given to the basic notions of the term and the possible ways for traceability of products.

OTHERS

#### **GENERAL DISCUSSION: In your opinion, which learning formats are more useful to farmers?**

Field days, farm and study visits, participation to fairs and conferences were the first choice for training delivery among the FG participants.



Games, role playing and comics were the second choice for training delivery.

Participants were very much in favour of internships as well. They see a new farmer learning more if he/she works together with an experienced one. Such internships would be highlighted and strengthened if they were subsidized by Erasmus for Entrepreneurs or other programs.

Web-based training, blended learning and classroom training were rejected on the grounds of: individuality versus the much needed social interaction; low educational background in many cases; no access to a computer or no knowledge of using a PC for training.

### General noteworthy comments and observations

We were lucky to host a diversified group of participants in the Greek focus group; and to discuss the issues of concern from different points of view (the farmer, the agriculturist, the reporter of agriculture-relevant news, etc). We are also happy to report almost equal gender representation (5 male, 4 female).

During our focus group discussion a number of important issues were raised:

1. We need to clarify the objectives of our training material, as well as the people that the material is intended for. New and traditional farmers, established producers and farmers-to-be, have very different needs and examine most of the topics in a very different way, according to most FG participants' opinion.
2. Agriculture is usually associated with low status professions, something that needs to be reversed through training, in order that more young people see farming as an attractive and viable professional option (generational renewal).
3. A "**farmers' school**" was proposed by a number of FG participants. Such a school is totally absent in Greece. A farmers' school could train young graduates, as well as people who are currently unemployed but have fields as part of their family property, how to make a good living out of farming. Courses could include business plans, marketing, production choices and ways, etc.
4. There was a debate on the core idea of our course and project in general. Some participants suggested that aiming at the development of the primary sector is a totally different thing than trying to turn farmers into business people. In market terms, a farmer-business person would prefer to import and trade agricultural products from countries with much lower production cost than anywhere in the EU instead of cultivating their own products. This would probably result to the person's financial development but not the primary sector development. The same participants suggested that traditional small farmers and agribusinesses will never be able to complete equally with big corporations in the globalized market. It is therefore better to aim at local, manageable markets. On the other hand, other participants were in favor of the idea of our project, stressing that farmers, like all other professionals, need



to be flexible and adjust to new societal and market conditions, if they want to stay in business. Overall, we can trace some resistance to change even from the team of the FG participants; we should probably expect such resistance from our main target groups. We need to clarify the objectives of the course and the benefits for the trainees. The final report of the WP3 should precise the training objectives together with the training outcomes for the trainees summarizing the points of all FG.