



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture



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**farmsUp!**  
**Fostering the emerging agro-entrepreneurial  
culture through dynamic training solutions**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

**farmsUP!** is a an Accompanying Measure of the LLP LdV-Program with a twofold aim:

a) to foster an entrepreneurial mind-set and stimulate agricultural entrepreneurial thinking;

b) to showcase over 22 LLP projects, existing training material and tools that support and enable farmers to become (better and more successful) entrepreneurs.

At a time of economic crisis and record unemployment, the Greek agricultural sector offers great prospects for economic growth and job creation that - especially when combined and infused with a sense of entrepreneurship - can greatly contribute to boost exports and investment opportunities.

To this aim, farmsUP! has promoted the underdeveloped concept of agro-entrepreneurship to the Greek agricultural community. During the 12 months of the project duration, under the coordination of Militos, highly experienced partners (Copa-Cogeca, mscomm, 3L Research Institute) have planned and implemented an enormously effective communication campaign, that encourages to explore and learn about the potential of agricultural entrepreneurship. Through a set of interlinked and highly innovative communication activities and events (e.g. animated interactive game, a photo competition, four rural agro-entrepreneurship workshops and a European conference), and the development of a creative website vortal, farmsUP! has achieved extremely high visibility in Greece and Europe, taking advantage of innovative communication mechanisms and partners' communication channels on national and European level (over 13 million contacts in the European agricultural community).

Consequently, farmsUP! has contributed immensely to the strengthening of entrepreneurial skills and competencies in the agricultural sector, stimulating innovative agricultural entrepreneurial thinking. In Greece, it has evolved into a significant stakeholder for agricultural entrepreneurship and prepared the ground for a long-lasting and sustainable impact, reaching far beyond national borders. farmsUP! constitutes a successful and inspiring project for the promotion of Lifelong Learning and vocational training, especially based on former LLP project, as it signalled a change in still deep-rooted beliefs that agriculture cannot mix with entrepreneurship. It has successfully managed to awaken minds, involve and engage a wide range of stakeholders, as well as highlight new possibilities and opportunities for a successful agricultural development.

On December 9<sup>th</sup> 2013, farmsUP! has been awarded with the **CAP 2013 Communication award (Special Prize of the Public)**, and has been selected on **3<sup>rd</sup> place in the category "Innovative Communication"**, out of a total of 118 submissions.

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-communication-network/awards/winners-2013/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-communication-network/awards/winners-2013/index_en.htm)

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# 1. Project Objectives

farmsUP! aimed at fostering the emerging agro-entrepreneurial culture through dynamic existing training solutions and at triggering farmers in seeking more information on agricultural entrepreneurship, by illustrating existing training solutions which could help them into that direction. farmsUP! has had therefore two main themes:

A) “This Farm is Your Business!”

One central aspect was the promotion of entrepreneurship to explain the potential dynamic and benefits of agro-entrepreneurship. The vast majority of agricultural businesses are SMEs, most of which are family owned. farmsUP! has reached out to those farms and businesses to promote the idea and necessity to invest in new markets and to apply entrepreneurial aspects.

B) “Knowledge is free and available”

The second main objective was to present LLP projects that aimed at developing tools and training solutions to foster agricultural business development. farmsUP! presented in its events publications and a database of more than 22 EU projects covering fields such as: marketing, branding, Organic Agriculture, Agro-Tourism, gender aspects, etc.

Main project objectives were consequently:

- Encouragement of farmers’ entrepreneurial mind setting, culture and sustainable activity;
- Showcase the available training tools through the promotion of 22 LdV projects that will assist farmers into becoming better entrepreneurs by developing or/and improving their entrepreneurial skills and competencies;
- Encourage farmers, regardless of age and origin, to learn what LLP can do for them, by offering them a personal advantage for development and operations effectiveness through the implementation of entrepreneurial principles;
- Enable farmers to acquire knowledge and know-how on ways to brand and market their products, on how to increase sales and profit;
- Inform farmers on how to better manage their business and on the market opportunities that exist for them.

The promotion of over 22 EU projects focusing on agricultural entrepreneurship has given farmers the opportunity to explore projects that have already addressed their existing needs in agricultural entrepreneurship and offer already developed and piloted training and educational material. These projects will provide farmers the chance to capitalize on the already existing material, which has been previously developed and implemented, in order to eventually become better entrepreneurs.

According to the data provided by EU Commission in the “Statistical and Economic Information Report 2010”, the performance of the agricultural sector in Greece is dropping (4.3%, decrease in 2010) compared to the average within the EU (12.3%, increase from 2010). The European environment shows that the agricultural sector

will grow in the years to come and the price of the agricultural products will increase (EC Agriculture and Rural Development, Statistical and Economic Information Report 2010). This is a clear opportunity for Greek farmers to establish and operate sustainable agro-entrepreneurial structures that could be profitable and competitive at a national, European and international level.

Greek sustainable agro-business practices and increased exports are expected to be beneficial for an economic recovery and growth in Greece, as they could be a way out of the current severe financial crisis, especially as there is great potential for the Greek agricultural sector if it becomes more business oriented, more efficient and more competitive.

## 2. Project Approach

farmsUP! was based on the specific objective to inspire and stimulate an entrepreneurial mind-set and to encourage entrepreneurial thinking in farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs by making use of (already existing) knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development and competitiveness in the European agricultural market. A main aspect was therefore the promotion and presentation of the 22 European LdV projects through the project website and vortal and by conducting several workshops all over Greece. By promoting these outcomes and learning material and facilitating the understanding that better knowledge and skills can help farmers improve their personal and professional development by becoming better entrepreneurs.

The inventive, interactive and positive approach, using a mix of engaging traditional and new actions, distinguishes farmsUP! as a highly innovative communication and contributed to its vast success. The diverse blend of attractive, user-friendly, creative communication elements (vortal, animated game, personalised search), interactive events (workshops, conference, photo competition), combined with a massive communication campaign, has led to the enormous promotion of agro-entrepreneurship.

The key to the successful implementation of farmsUP!, was the ongoing engagement and involvement of the target groups throughout the project. The close cooperation with the local stakeholders was a highly effective way to ensure interest and support. In order to keep the interest and engage the target group, the project has implemented the following three main activities:

### **A) Innovative communication and dissemination campaign**

The **dynamic vortal** including an **innovative online game** to playfully test the entrepreneurship mind-set, an **agro-photo competition & exhibition**, a **sophisticated project database** with **custom search options** to find the right European project that fits the corresponding profile and request, and related functions that help users to think and act more agro-entrepreneurial. Furthermore, the project partners have invested heavily in an engaging and interactive social media presence, developing catchy and promotional material, and involving the national and European media.

### **B) Implementation of a series of dynamic regional workshops all over Greece**

In four workshops, throughout rural Greece and in collaboration with local farmers' unions, the consortium presented farmers with the existing tools and available training material to strengthen their skills and entrepreneurial competences, thus offering practical training and learning experience on the spot.

### **C) Organisation and implementation of a European Conference**

All activities were designed and implemented in a way to build the final extremely successful European conference titled "This Farm is Your Business", held in an agricultural and cultural city of Greece, in Nafplio. Nearly, 1000 participants followed the conference and its various sessions (physically and virtually) and left the conference with new knowledge!

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

Overall, farmsUP! has contributed immensely to the strengthening of entrepreneurial skills and competencies in the agricultural sector, stimulating an innovative agricultural entrepreneurial thinking. In Greece, it has evolved into a significant stakeholder for agricultural entrepreneurship and prepared the ground for a long-lasting and sustainable impact, reaching far beyond national borders. farmsUP! constitutes a successful and inspiring project for the promotion of Lifelong Learning and vocational training, especially based on former LLP project, as it signalled a change in still deep-rooted beliefs that agriculture cannot mix with entrepreneurship. It has successfully managed to awaken minds, involve and engage a wide range of stakeholders, as well as highlight new possibilities and opportunities for a successful agricultural development.

The consortium is very proud that the European Public and a jury of communication experts have awarded farmsUP! with the CAP 2013 Communication Award. On December 9<sup>th</sup> 2013, farmsUP! has received the **Special Prize of the Public Award**, and has been voted on **3<sup>rd</sup> place in the category “Innovative Communication”**, out of a total of 118 submission.



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What the award jury had to say about the project:

**‘An excellent project which presents the farmer as an entrepreneur, not just a food producer. It shows the true breadth of farmers’ day-to-day responsibilities. This is an innovative concept which will inspire future farmers.’**

The main outcomes and results of the farmsUP! project are:

#### **1) Innovative communication and dissemination campaign**

The catchy, smart and well thought & designed interlinked set of communication measures - where the one activity gave lead to the next one, capitalizing on work done, with an obvious sense of learning experience - triggered interest and ensured from the very project start the farmers’ engagement. This way, the farmers were acting as multipliers of all campaign content, distributing not only the material but also the central motto “This farm is your business!”.

The campaign made use of modern and traditional tools, exploiting existing dynamic networks of farmers and stakeholders and speaking the language of the target group. The main outcomes were:

- An innovative and attractive project image
- Printed material to be handed out or presented at events (i.e. leaflets, posters, booklets, banners)
- Publications (e-booklet)
- Media strategy that enable wide-spread and numerous appearances in national and European media (TV, radio, news blogs, agricultural blogs, newspapers, etc.)



Through the use of the partner's networks, farmsUP! has achieved a massively successful awareness raising campaign:

- Over 13 million contacts reached
- Nearly 1000 participants followed the conference
- 100 workshop participants
- Over 170 online media appearances, 9 TV, 5 radio appearances
- Over 30 newspaper publications
- Over 6000 website visitors with over 27.000 page views
- Over 415 social media contacts
- Participation in more than 25 agricultural events and fairs
- 59 submission in the photo competition



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## II) The farmsUP! vortal

The 'farms Up!' vortal (sector specific portal) and website has been a major tool for the engagement of the target groups, the conference and in general for the dissemination and promotion of farmsUP! It hosts and combines several central activities of farmsUP! which are presented below in greater detail.

The guiding idea was not just to create another static project website, but to offer a portal for agricultural entrepreneurship in Greece where one can find in an innovative way information about training and skills needs. This is why the website provided not only general project information, news and updates on the progress at all times, but was the host also for an innovative animated online game, the photo competition and the conference website.

Through the dynamic vortal and its integrated activities farmers are being encouraged and challenged to being exposed to and confront themselves with various aspects of entrepreneurial applications and thinking in their everyday practises, while at the same time offering the needed information on how to improve the way they have been operating in the market. Therefore, the vortal seeks to make farmers see how easy it is to think more entrepreneurially and encourage them to apply every day practises that can help them become more competitive in a growing European market.

Key to the success are the catchy and easy-to-understand language and activities that meet the agricultural stakeholders eye-to-eye:

### a) The farmsUP! game – How much of an entrepreneur are you?

Undoubtedly, this creative, positive and highly likeable animated game is one of the most innovative approaches to promote entrepreneurial thinking in the agricultural sector in Greece. It challenges the user to follow a character through multiple



scenarios that agricultural entrepreneurs are most likely confronted with in their professional activity. After each episode the user is asked to choose a solution/answer to a specific question. Based on the given answer the game is proposing a few of those EU LLP project out of the integrated database, that the user could benefit the most from it. The graphics are hand-painted and offer a high-quality, aesthetic and playful image that attracts user attention and is fun to play, while being educational at the same time.

### b) The database and search tool



The searchable and integrated database offers a great opportunity to search and find related EU LLP projects that provide training solutions for specific skills related to agricultural activities. Interested stakeholders can adjust their search through the use of the customizable search by entering and/or selecting key words and/or themes. The results linked to the available projects and options. The vortal dynamic database is being continuously enriched with more Lifelong Learning Programme projects and has great sustainability potential for future use. <http://farmsup.eu/en/page/search>

### c) The photo competition

The consortium has organised a photo competition to increase participation and visibility, but even more so to challenge farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs to reflect on the issue of what best depicts a successful agricultural entrepreneur.

The photo competition was open and free to all citizens of the EU Member States and the winner was determined based on the number of votes their photograph receives from the public. The photo that received the most votes has been selected as the winner and was presented at the final conference in Nafplio and won a weekend with paid accommodation in the Eumelia Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse.



The overall theme that photographs should present was agricultural entrepreneurship, rural life, agriculture, everyday moments in the farm, products, establishments, agricultural and farming activities, processes, tools and the people involved or anything else that can express the idea of agricultural entrepreneurship.

In total 59 photos were submitted.

### III) Implementation of a series of dynamic regional workshops all over Greece

In four regional workshops, farmsUP! presented directly to over 100 farmers the existing tools and available training material to strengthen their skills and entrepreneurial competences. The four workshops enjoyed great success among the attending participants. Especially, the presentation of existing projects and the available material, but even more so the following discussion on the outlook and chances of agricultural entrepreneurship in Greece, provided a great basis for the preparation of the final conference. To ensure a wide outreach the workshops were organised in agricultural centres of Greece:



- Workshop 1 // Aliartos, Viotia // 17/5/2013 // Education and training in agricultural entrepreneurship
- Workshop 2 // Kontariotisa, Pieria // 10/6/2013 // Research and development in farming practices and the EU Common Agricultural Policy
- Workshop 3 // Serres, Serres // 12/6/2013 // Ways and practices to support agricultural entrepreneurship
- Workshop 4 // Skala, Lakonia // 5/7/2013 // Branding, marketing and promotion of agricultural products

#### IV) Organisation and implementation of the European Conference

The highly successful implemented European Conference, entitled “**This farm is your business!**” (15/10/2013 Nafplio, Greece), had the ultimate aim to discuss among a wide audience the **innovation potential** of entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector, as well as to **promote and present the useful results of 22 European projects** under the Lifelong learning Programme 2007-2013. The conference was the peak of a series of project activities aiming to promote the Lifelong Learning Programme, and innovation in the Greek agricultural sector.

Four workshops as part of the conference addressed the need to upgrade the level and quality of VET at large and address to the farmers’ needs to acquire knowledge and know-how on ways to brand and market their top quality products, get the recognition they deserve, increase their sales and as a consequence earn higher profits. More specifically, the onsite participants were able to participate in one out of the 4 parallel effective workshops which offered practical knowledge and a learning experience on **1** basic principles of agricultural entrepreneurship, **2** marketing and branding agricultural products, **3** developing products for agro-tourism, as well as **4** mentoring for women so they can develop and/or better their agro-entrepreneurship activities.



Consequently, the conference was a unique opportunity for participants to be informed, updated and trained on the practices and projects which enhance the entrepreneurial skills and competencies of the Greek and European farmers.

In total, the conference was followed by **approximately 1.000 participants**, 380 of which were physically present at the conference and 605 who watched the conference online (through web streaming in Greek and English).

A wide range of national and European agricultural stakeholders were present, e.g, high-ranking officials of the Greek ministry for Agriculture and Development, as well as representatives of the EU Commission and European Parliament.

farmsUP! undoubtedly constitutes a good-practice example for the innovative and blended approach in its communication, as it effectively employed creative methods and products while reaching a targeted yet broad European audience. Despite its limited budget, this endeavour resulted in a total outreach of over 13 million farmers across Europe. Critical role for this success, was the consortium's composition, as it brought together partners and actors from the fields of agriculture, research and communications, ensuring direct and effective communication and contact with the target audience. Thus, farmsUP! assured that its main message and objectives were communicated to a wider audience guaranteeing the project's success and sustainability. Main target audience includes farmers and their unions and associations; agro-entrepreneurs; entrepreneurship institutes/ associations; VET institutions and trainers; Policy makers and Social partners. These target groups are direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project outcomes as well as potential event participants and vortal users.

The inventive, interactive and positive approach, using a mix of engaging traditional and new actions, distinguishes farmsUP! as a highly innovative communication and contributed to its vast success. The diverse blend of attractive, user-friendly, creative communication elements (vortal, animated game, personalised search), interactive events (workshops, conference, photo competition), combined with a massive communication campaign, has led to the enormous promotion of agro-entrepreneurship.

## 4. Partnerships

The ‘farmsUP!’ partnership is in itself a ‘good practice’ as it is the sustainable result of the Pro-Active Network that was established during the Agricultural Conference “CAPture the Moment” (2011) organised by Militos as a key information measure for the promotion of the EU CAP.

More specifically, farmsUP! has been implemented by a consortium with complementary expertise from 2 EU Member States (Greece / Belgium), however, offering the widest possible European dimension. All partners provided their unique skills in VET, agriculture, entrepreneurship promotion, marketing and branding, advanced knowledge of ICT tools and intercultural communication.

Militos, the Project Applicant, has a unique expertise in EU project management, as well as in dissemination, information campaigns and organisation/management of large-scale events and media networking. Militos stands out for the organisation of successful events and its imaginative, targeted and successful mass info campaigns. It delivers mentoring to entrepreneurs with an emphasis on women, acting also as the National Coordinator of the European Network of Mentors for Women Entrepreneurs. Militos has also provided an access and relationship with the Academy of Entrepreneurship and the Federation of Hellenic Associations of Young Entrepreneurs, which have a combined outreach to over 10.000 contacts. Militos has established a close contact to the different 32 legally recognised regional Young Farmers Associations all over Greece. Throughout the project Militos worked closely with farmers from all parts of Greece and established a direct and effective channel of communication to them.

COPA-COGECA’s network and outreach to over 13 million farmers across Europe, magnified the project dissemination and exploitation activities. To date COPA has over 70 Member Organisations. COPA has a great knowledge input to bring into the project in regard to agro-entrepreneurship growth. COPA played a key role in spreading the project key messages and disseminate the results throughout Europe through its active press and communication department.

The Lifelong Learning Research Institute (LLRI) has been able to significantly enhance the project by linking VET with the world of work and farmers. Given their expertise with entrepreneurial practices, and solid experience in corporate restructuring, adapted to the current entrepreneurial needs, LLRI has played a role in the decomposition and transmission of the knowledge material derived from the 22 LdV projects to the farmers. Its proven extensive work has allowed the improvement of managerial tools and methods used within and among the EU Members States organizations.

mscomm’s has brought in its strong expertise in the branding of food products having worked with dominant food companies on their products marketing and branding, effectively raising their brand and product visibility. It also has previous experience on marketing traditional farming products such as olive oil and eggs, and through its effective focus on promoting product quality, it managed to earn those products awards and global distinctions..

## 5. Plans for the Future

The main future challenge lies in identifying innovative ways, practices, measures and policies that will substantially support agricultural entrepreneurship and are at the same time do-able considering the dire economic conditions currently faced. What is therefore needed, is to re-brand the image of entrepreneurship in specific and the raise awareness of the necessity of the private sector in general, as a much needed engine of the Greek economy.

farmsUP! has contributed immensely to the strengthening of entrepreneurial skills and competencies in the agricultural sector, stimulating an innovative agricultural entrepreneurial thinking. In Greece, it has evolved into a stakeholder for agricultural entrepreneurship and prepared the ground for a long-lasting and sustainable impact, reaching far beyond national borders. farmsUP! constitutes a successful and inspiring project for the promotion of Lifelong Learning and vocational training, especially based on former LLP project, as it signalled a change in still deep-rooted beliefs that agriculture cannot mix with entrepreneurship. It has successfully managed to awaken minds, involve and engage a wide range of stakeholders, as well as highlight new possibilities and opportunities for a successful agricultural development.

The network orientation of the project facilitated the engagement of a significant number and variety of stakeholders that have already shown a genuine interest in the project and its outputs, even beyond its lifecycle, to ensure its further existence and expand its outreach and impact. During the implementation of the project, but also after the end, the use of a variety of media/channels and dissemination/liaison with other initiatives, projects and networks is expected to achieve a considerable multiplier effect.

More practically, the game and the connected database will be further used and enhanced. The more project are integrated into the database, the more useful the game and its result will be for the target groups. The partnership has already agreed to further disseminate and support the existing tool and activities. Militos is planning to further adapt the game and adjust it to the collected projects and tools of the database, if needed.

farmsUP! has already inspired another EU LLP proposal: "Farm Inc.: Introducing Marketing Principles in the Agricultural Sector" (2013-1-IT-LEO05-03986). The idea to address the issue of branding and marketing as well as internationalisation has been the results of the initial discussion with project partners of the farmsUP! initiative (i.e. Copa-Cogeca). Certainly, Militos will include the results and feedback of the farmsUP! project and its related activities into the new, recently started Farm Inc. project.

## **6. Contribution to EU policies**

farmsUP! has contributed greatly to the general aims of the Lifelong Learning Programme: to improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning available within Member States and on European level, but also to promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit.

Furthermore, the project and its activities and partners have addressed the strategic objective 4 of the Education and Training 2020 Work Programme by enhancing the image of entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training and by fostering and promoting the acquisition of transversal competencies. The project supported the promotion of a more entrepreneurial culture and fostering entrepreneurial attitudes by showcasing successful examples of how to improve the business by using available training tools. Consequently, farmers are more and better informed about the available opportunities for economic development offered by the presented projects while new skills and key competencies have been promoted.

Stimulating an innovative entrepreneurial sector is also a key goal of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). farmsUP! has promoted creative tools to increase the economic competitiveness of agricultural farms and businesses. It has addressed the needs of farmers to stay competitive and increase the attractiveness of the professional environment, to become a more prestigious alternative for employment. It promotes EU funded projects, displaying how the EU assists farmers with training programmes and services, amongst other measures.

