

## ANNEX 1 – DOCUMENTS FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE CASE STUDY MATERIAL TO BE INCLUDED IN THE E-LEARNING COURSE (IO2).

### 1.A - Case-studies by country: Croatia

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## Case-studies on innovative development in Peripheral Rural Areas

### Part A – INTRODUCTION TO PRA – BASELINE ASSESSMENT

corresponding to Module 2 – e-learning course

#### Introduction to the Dalmatian islands Peripheral Rural Area

##### Part 1 / INTRODUCTION TO DALMATIAN ISLANDS

- The territory covers local action groups, LAG Škoji, LAG Brač and LAG 5 in central and south Dalmatia in the Split-Dalmatia and Dubrovnik-Neretva region. Specifically islands of Brač, Hvar, Šolta, Vis, Mljet, Lastovo, Korčula, Pelješac peninsula and the Dubrovnik West Coast municipality.
- More than 80% of the area is Natura 2000 sites, encompassing one National Park "Mljet and Nature park "The Lastovo islands" and many nature-protected landscapes.
- The area is highly touristic due to its natural and cultural heritage.
- The diverse landscape is composed of different types of land cover that are quite differently spatially organized. The majority of the islands is covered in garrigues, macchia and *Pinus halepensis*.



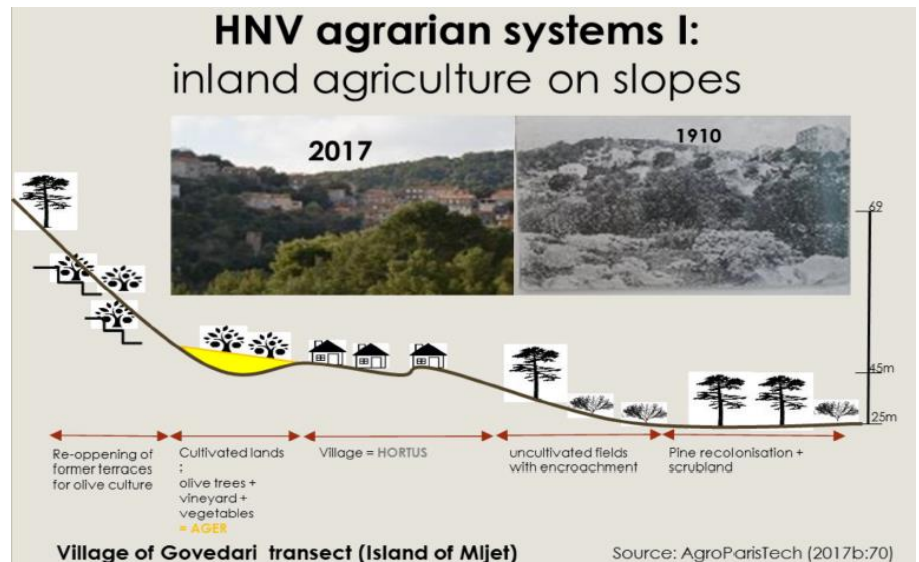
- This territory (185 824 ha) is characterized by a predominant HNV type 2, consisting of a mosaic of low-intensity farming composed of small fields of arable plots, vegetable gardens, orchards and vineyards, usually on a stone wall.

- We differentiate three zones of agricultural activity:

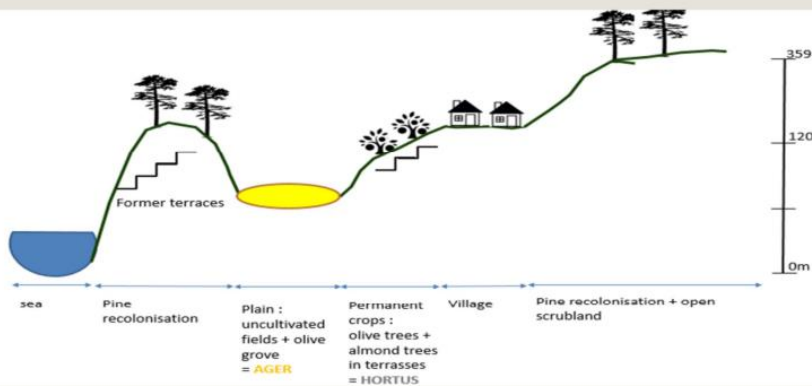
1. coastline,
2. mountain part
3. the central plateau.



- The HNV farming systems in the LA Dalmatian islands are linked to adapting the agricultural practices to the landscape.



### HNV agrarian system II: costal-inland agriculture on slopes



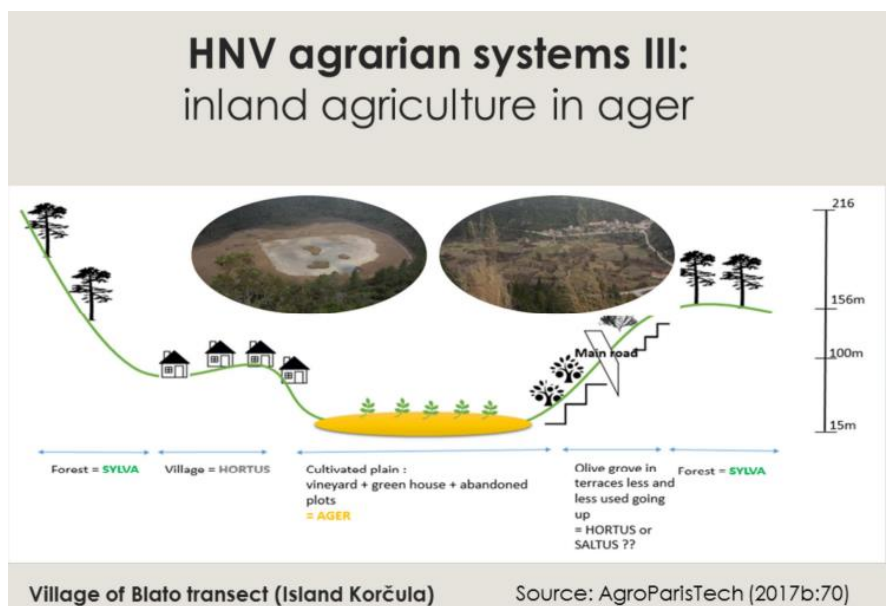
- Orchards and olive groves with large, old trees and a semi-permanent understory are distinct HNV type 2 in LA. The coastal villages are organized as "Huertas" with ager characterized by a highly diverse small scale agriculture.

**Village of Maranovići transect (Island of Mijet)**

Source: AgroParisTech (2017b:68)

### HNV agrarian systems III: inland agriculture in ager

- Based on the geomorphology and agricultural activities in the islands, the HNV farming consists mainly of a mosaic of low-intensity farming mainly composed of small fields of arable plots, vegetable gardens, olive groves, orchards and vineyards, usually on terraces or surrounded by stone walls.



## Part 2 / DALMATIAN ISLANDS FEATURES AND TRENDS

### Environmental values

- The landscape is defined by its components and position concerning the landscape (**ager**: cropped land; **sylva**: woodland; **Hortus**: gardened land; **Saltus**: uncultivated land) that are characteristics of the learning area islands.
- Due to the shortage of natural arable land in this karstic area, the susceptible landscape in Dalmatian Islands results from long-lasting efforts to create additional arable land and prevent erosion by cleaning stones and building *stonewalls*.

Total surface: 1.858,24 km<sup>2</sup> (3,28% RH)

Inhabitants: 57.566 in 2011 (1,34% RH)

Population density: 30,98 inh./km<sup>2</sup> (RH: 75,71 inh./km<sup>2</sup>)

More than half of the area is a Natura 2000 site

Common characteristics of the area:

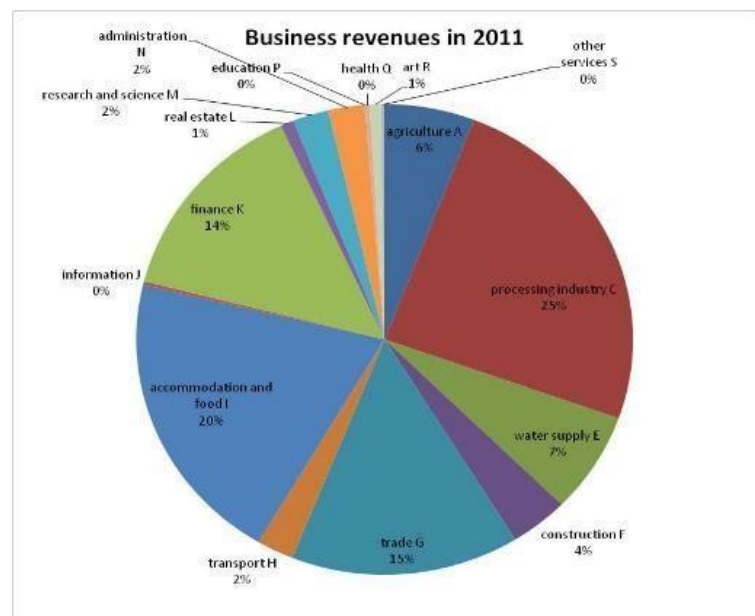
- *islands* (and one peninsula)
- *isolation* (difficult access)
- *karstic area*
- *lack of water*

### Agricultural values

- Its specificities on the scale of the island are seen in the distribution of agricultural practices where some of the islands have predominant olive groves, semi-natural habitats, some vineyards, some small scale livestock.
- The average size of a parcel is 0,27 ha, and there are more than 6 295 small scale family farms in the area. The area is characterized by a continuously decreasing population, small-scale agriculture, and on some islands, micro and some islands small-extensive livestock farming.
- Today agricultural land covers 10.802 ha or only 5,8% of the LA surface (Arkod, 2015), with the average surface of used agricultural land per household being 0,6 ha.

### Socio-economical values

- A natural environment has defined the economy of the LA Dalmatian islands, and therefore its structure was straightforward, with many areas of economic activity missing or weakly present (islands were highly dependent on agriculture production). The most important firms in the processing industry were established during the period before 1991.
- The largest share of revenues belongs to business entities (which do not include crafts and family farms) is realized in the service economy (accommodation, food, trade, transport, and finance). The processing industry plays a vital role on Korčula and Brač.
- 80% of the employed population of age above 65 is in agriculture, while the youngest population (15-29) is employed in the service sector. Agriculture is job intensive since it creates 6% of the local revenue and employs 15% of the labour force.



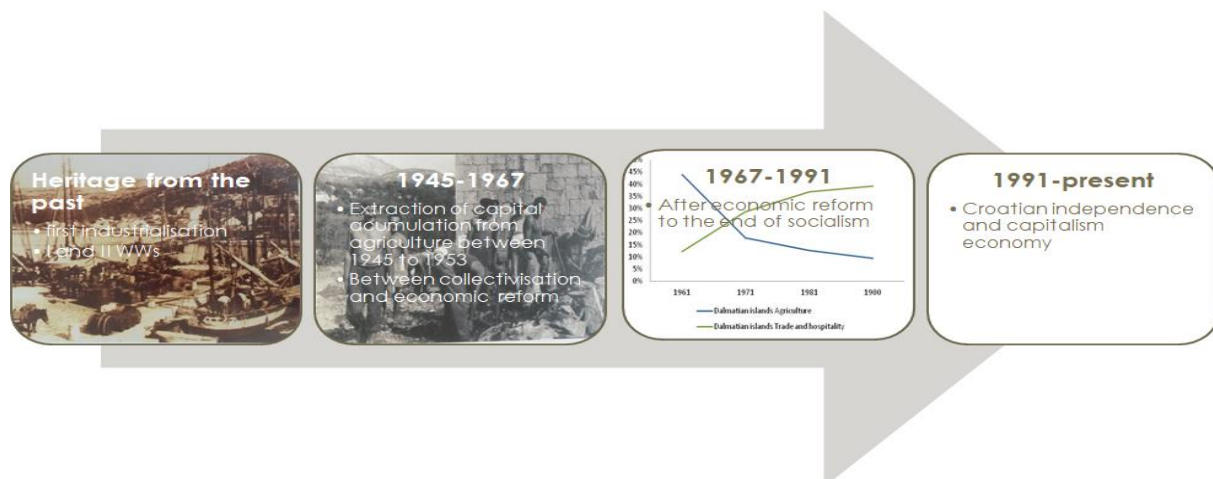


### Institutional values

- **Municipalities (Eurostat LAU 1 level).** The peripheral rural area covers 27 municipalities. Fifteen belong to Split-Dalmatia County, while the remaining 11 belong to Dubrovnik-Neretva County.
- **Local action groups (LAGs).** There are three LAGs: LAG Brac, LAG Skoiji, and LAG 5, implementing the community-led local development strategies.



- **Historical context.** Before WWII, the island was characterized by extensive monoculture production that was different from island to island.
  - ✓ For example, the phylloxera that destroyed vineyards in France in Italy in 1931, there was a strong demand for Croatian wines in Europe. Also, due to the extensive use of woods as the only energy source of the island, there was a strong impetus for island reforestation. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century identified the highest number of people ever since been in decline.

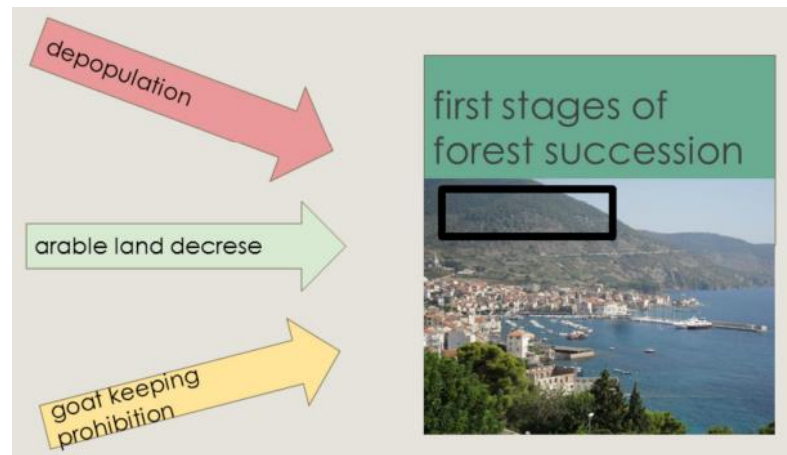


- From 1945 until 1991, LA Dalmatian Islands had been part of socialist Yugoslavia with a tradition of socialist self-management. LA Dalmatian islands were represented with usually one municipality by island. In this period most important agrarian policy measures (Law on agrarian reform and colonization, 23/8/1945) forced the establishment of peasant labour cooperatives (similar to Russian *kolhoz*) abandoned in 1953.
- In the period between collectivization and agrarian reform (1953-1967), family farms became involved in social reproduction by cooperation between family farms and cooperatives or social enterprises. Cooperatives became important economic and social institutions in rural areas. In this period, small farm units (less than 2 ha) still represent more than half of all farming units (Defilippis, 1997:155).
- The period since Croatian independence until today has been marked with the creation of many small local-government units. Such is the division of the island of Brač into eight municipalities and the creation of specific legislation and national development programmes for the islands (Stubs & Starc, 2007). Depopulation trends continue despite significant infrastructural investments (public utilities, transportation network, electricity, telecommunications).

### Part 3 / DALMATIAN ISLANDS PRA: Weakness and Challenges

#### Weaknesses

- Small agricultural parcels with unsolved land ownership reduce the possibilities of increasing the average farm size
- Lack of an integrated island management approach that would ensure the necessary infrastructure for agricultural and other economic activities
- Although there is a strong demand for local products by restaurants that want to offer a local menu to tourists, there is an excellent problem in obtaining local lamb as the Dubrovnik-Neretva county is located on the island of Korčula (Smokvica). On the Pelješac peninsula, there is no veterinarian, and the breeders need to pay for their arrival from the mainland (Metković). On-farm processing (e.g. cheese) and direct sales cannot develop due to rigid rules and bureaucracy.
- Agriculture in the Croatian Islands is susceptible to drought periods and extreme temperature shocks.
- Forest fires often in summer in Coastal Croatia degrade natural habitats, improve soil erosion, and contribute to the extinction of various species.
- Instead of oak regeneration, forest succession dominantly refers to the development of Pine forests, which are usually linked to a low level of biodiversity.
- Development of garigue and "makija."



#### Challenges

- The importance of agriculture on islands is not sufficiently recognized, so that uniform agricultural measures are not sufficiently adapted for island conditions (small parcels, mosaic agricultures, emphasis on preservation of stone walls and other agricultural heritages).
- Various EU funding schemes can be used for island development. LEADER program and LAG-s on islands represent the vital key for local development of islands.
- National and supranational institutions develop various types of certification programs suitable for promoting local agricultural products. Thanks to the Island act and efforts at the national level, a particular certificate, Hrvatski otočni proizvod, is developed for products composed mainly of local ingredients.



Therefore the main challenge is to acquire the governance capacity to design and implement, through a multistakeholder approach, a balanced and multifunctional area that will combine agriculture, pastoralism with service economy such as tourism and related.

## Part 4 / DALMATIAN ISLANDS PRA: Strengths and Opportunities

### Strengths

- Mosaic agriculture and agrotourism contribute to the balance between the need for preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the area's sustainable development.
- Conserving traditional mosaic farms that combine pastoralism, olive groves and tourism, and the restoration of stonewalls will help retain essential landscape features and the unique habitat of the Dalmatian islands.
- Since the Croatian EU membership, rural and fisheries LAGs have been set up in the islands bringing the EU policies and the possibilities closer to the islanders. These multistakeholder organizations work closely with island actors on building infrastructure for sustainable development and supporting HNV agriculture on the islands.
- Multiple initiatives are aiming to improve the marketing of the local products. Such are webshops of island products (<https://okupiotok.eu/>) or Slow Food Presidium Peljeski Varenik (<https://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/slow-food-presidia/peljesac-varenik/>)
- There is a demand by the local restaurant for local livestock and other HNVf products (honey, olive oil....)
- Beekeeping is increasing, and it is fostering the productivity of fruit cultivation
- Several already implemented investment projects in the PRA to modernize farms, introduce new technologies and production processes, train farmers, and create and modernize processing capacities.



### Opportunities

- EU funding to young farmers and the EU agrinvironmental measures represent an opportunity for the local actors to pursue an economic activity that is in line with the UN sustainable development goals
- Collaborative projects between the islands due to FLAGS, LAGs, National parks and islander NGOs facilitate inter-island exchange of practices and collaboration, which was previously on the island-mainland basis.
- Young farmers that are diversifying their activities through the development of new products such as island Trut Gin (<https://www.total-croatia-news.com/made-in-croatia/57381-opg-komparak>)
- LEADER organizations play an essential role in educating the farmers on available subsidies and helping them receive and administer those subsidies by implementing HNVf friendly projects such as buying livestock, building shelters for livestock, restoring extensive oil grove, restoring one-year crops on mosaic farmland and opening landscapes and planting local medicinal herbs.
- Slow Food Pelješac Convivium has organized several workshops and gatherings to promote and educate the local stakeholders on the importance of local cuisine, what we eat, and how it is linked to biodiversity.



## Part 5 / DALMATIAN ISLANDS Current and Future challenges

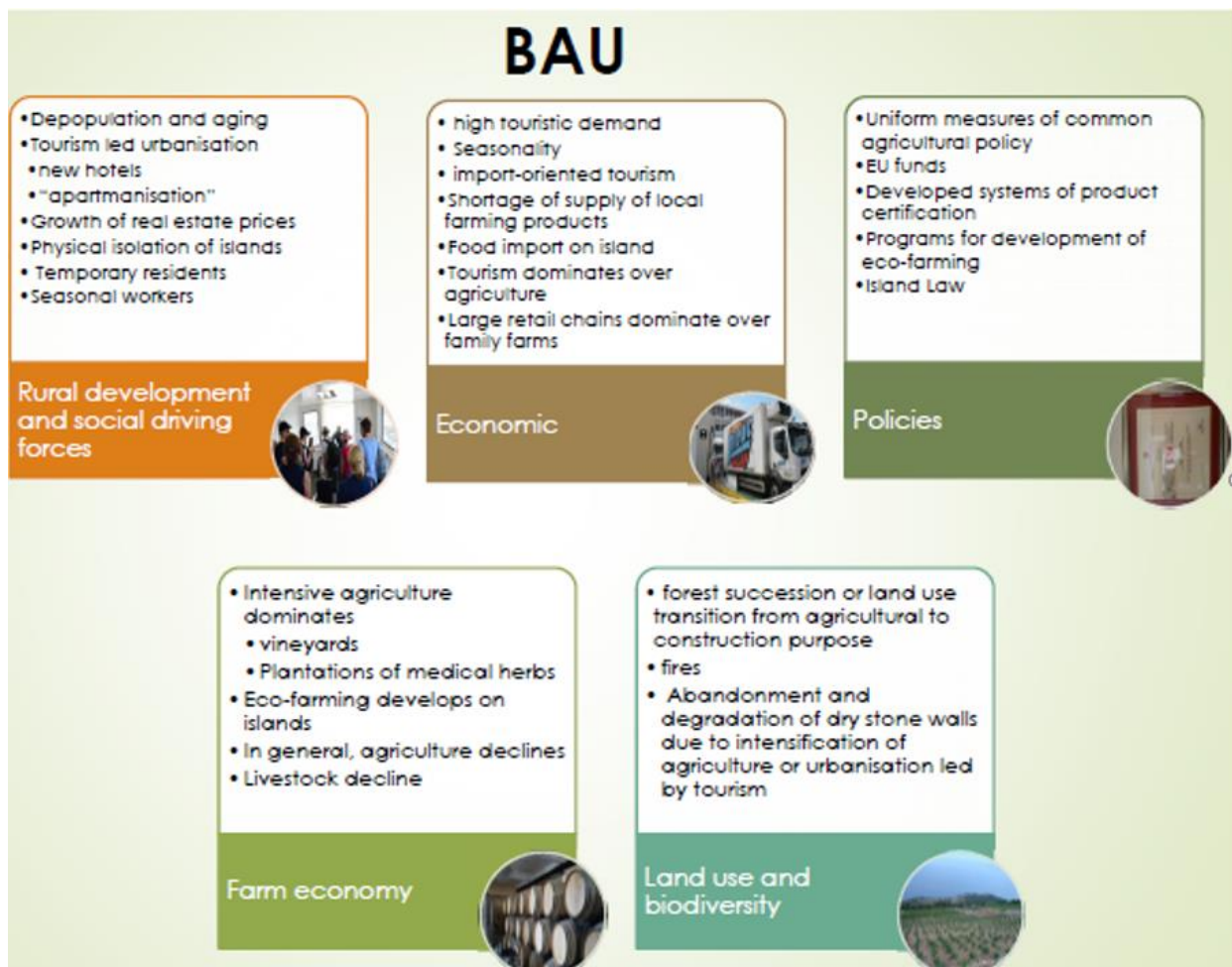
The main challenge for the development of the region relates to:

- Depopulation and outmigration of working-age population
- Lack of reliable and experienced labour force, e.g. shepherds/herders
- Ageing of farmers and no continuation between generations
- Overall low interest in agricultural activities - the workload is too high, and most HNV farming operations require manual work.

The main threat for the LA in the current situation is the development of tourism infrastructure that will intensify the urbanisation process and change the scarce agricultural land in the islands to building land.

An increase in large scale infrastructure will put additional pressure on the environment in terms of communal infrastructure management and foster a decline in biodiversity due to the reduction of the natural and semi-natural habitats.

As an alternative to the proposed business as usual scenario,



it is possible to envision environmental and economic equilibrium by:

- Putting forward agritourism to capitalize on the mosaic landscape while preserving the critical economic activity on the islands, tourism.
- Focusing on putting forward the natural beauty and social capital within the community manifested in rich folklore makes it possible to move from the seasonality representing significant infrastructural and environmental pressure during the summer months.
- In line with the below-mentioned strategies, "apartmanisation" characterized by the maximization of inhabitable square meters and the disparition of the mosaic landscapes could be replaced with the traditional infrastructure such as drystone walls and stone houses. An esthetic element that could serve as a delineation of the tourist destination serves as a fence from erosion and wildfires.
- The revitalization of the traditional landscape through the reconstruction of drystone walls would promote kast pastures, representing an opportunity for economic diversification by introducing domestic animals. Furthermore, such a strategy could present an opportunity for young families to settle in the islands where the year-long employment would go through touristic activities and agricultural ones. Such chain of events could offer strategic reorientation of the islands as import-oriented to self-sustained. A practice that is currently present at few agricultural holdings that engage in eco-tourism.
- The reintroduction of local markets and the creation of short supply chains would kick-start environmental, social and economic benefits. It would create a demand for new jobs, the demand for year-long versus rental housing, and the revitalization of the abandoned arable land.

#### Further information:



HNV-Link project sub-page on Dalmatian islands at:  
<http://hvnlink.eu/learning-areas/dalmatian-islands-croatia/>

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## Case-Studies on innovative development in Peripheral Rural Areas

### Template Part A – INTRODUCTION TO PRA – BASELINE ASSESSMENT

corresponding to Module 2 – e-learning course

#### Introduction to the East Croatia Peripheral Rural Area

#### Part 1 / EAST CROATIA PORTRAIT – INTRODUCTION TO East Croatia Peripheral Rural Area

The learning area of east Croatia refers to the rural area of Osijek-Baranja County (OBC) located in the east of Croatia in the micro region of Slavonia and Baranja. It covers an area of 4,155 km<sup>2</sup>. OBC is located by the rivers Drava and Danube (OBŽ, 2005). The county is an area with agricultural soil of high natural fertility (Grahovac, 2006). It is a distinctly agricultural region with 209,950 ha of total utilized agricultural area. In OBC, 50% of agricultural land is covered by the two most dominant soil types - wetland gley and leached soil. The specificity of the area is intensive agricultural production, cereals predominate, which is why this area is called the "granary of Croatia".



As opposed to that, there is also a large number of small family farms. Agricultural production of a large number of small family farms is marked by a large number of boundaries in the landed property, which makes it difficult to use mechanization. Their production is diversified, which includes vegetable gardens, orchards, vineyards, production of field and fodder crops, breeding of small and large cattle. The share of family farms in the total number of agricultural holdings is higher than 93%. In 2019, there were 12,790 family farms in the OBC, of which 6,247 (49%) with size to 3 ha. The total arable land is 211,854 ha, or an average of 16.6 ha per registered agricultural holding (OBŽ 2020; ARKOD 2019). It is a legacy of socialist management, and a transitional period hampered by the Croatian War for Independence.

PRA OBC abounds in protected areas in the Natura 2000. The area is intertwined with a network of watercourses and woodlands. The western and southern part of the county is surrounded by hilly landscapes with predominantly forest habitats. Forests make up 29.5% of the county's area. Significant areas of the county belong to floodplain wetlands, of which 17,700 ha belong to the protected area of the Nature Park "Kopački rit", which is known for its great biodiversity. This area is managed by a public institution. (pp-kopacki-rit.hr).



The climate is determined by a mixture of influences of the Eurasian mainland, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Low rainfall in the summer is the main limiting factor in agricultural production, both in terms of yield and in terms of the possibility of choosing the cultivated agricultural crop (OBŽ, 2005).

The area of Osijek-Baranja County is mostly lowland. The altitudes of the terrain of the floodplains are at about 93-94 m, while the lowest point at the confluence of the Drava and the Danube is at 82 m above sea level. Elevated areas of light plateaus (Đakovo plain, Baranja light plateau and Erdut hill) are the most agriculturally valuable areas, and therefore the areas with the densest population. The highest peak of the county is in the Krndija hills, in the area of Metrsko brdo, 606 m high (OBŽ, 2005). The County is composed of 42 local governmental units (LGUs), 7 towns and 35 municipalities. In the County lives 272 673 inhabitants (DZS, 2020), and the population density is 66 inh/km<sup>2</sup> that is below the national average of 72 inh/km<sup>2</sup> (DZS 2020). This is fairly multicultural County - 10,5% population is other nationality.

Analyses of data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020) indicate the process of depopulation in OBC, which lost almost 27 thousand inhabitants in the period from 2012 to 2018, with municipalities losing population faster than cities. In general, the Slavonian region as a whole has an average population reduction rate compared to other Croatian regions. The rate of natural increase is negative in both municipalities and cities in OBC: -7 ‰ for municipalities and -4.9 ‰ for cities, which is evident in the increasingly unfavourable age structure of the population. The Slavonia region does not have the worst figures for the share of young people (0-15 years) and the elderly (65 and older) in the total population, but the figures show the largest deterioration in the ratio of young people to the elderly in this area from 2012-2019 (Klepač 2021). The decline in the number of young people and the steady increase in the number of elderly people are consequently reflected in the increase in the aging index in the region from 110.6% to 139.7% (CBS, 2020). Croatia is an emigration country and since 2008 has again had a negative net migration, which marked Croatia throughout the 20th century. In general, compared to other Croatian regions, Slavonia is the region with the largest increase in emigration (2012-2018), especially abroad, and this also applies to the rural and urban population with a peak in 2017 (Klepač 2021).

Agricultural production has been stagnant for several years, among other things, due to the fragmentation of holdings and the low level of education of family farm owners; one quarter of family farm owners have (un) completed primary education, and only 7% have completed higher education or college (OBŽ, 2020).



## Part 2 / EAST CROATIA FEATURES AND TRENDS

### Environmental values

In the OBC, 18 areas are protected in 6 protection categories (nature park, ornithological and zoological reserve, regional park, significant landscape, monument of park architecture and nature monument). In addition, there are areas protected within the European ecological network NATURA 2000 And the UNESCO biosphere reserve Mura-Drava-Danube. Of the total area of OBC, under some form of protection is 20.5% (Agencija, 2013).

Nature park Kopački rit has an enormous environmental significance as it is a habitat of 293 bird species, 260 plant species with many rare species, 39 indigenous freshwater fish species, 11 amphibian species and 54 species of mammals, of which the Baranja deer stand out (LAG Baranja, 2021). Kopački rit is also included in the list of ornithologically important areas - IBA (Important Bird Area), and it was nominated for inclusion in UNESCO (World Natural Heritage).

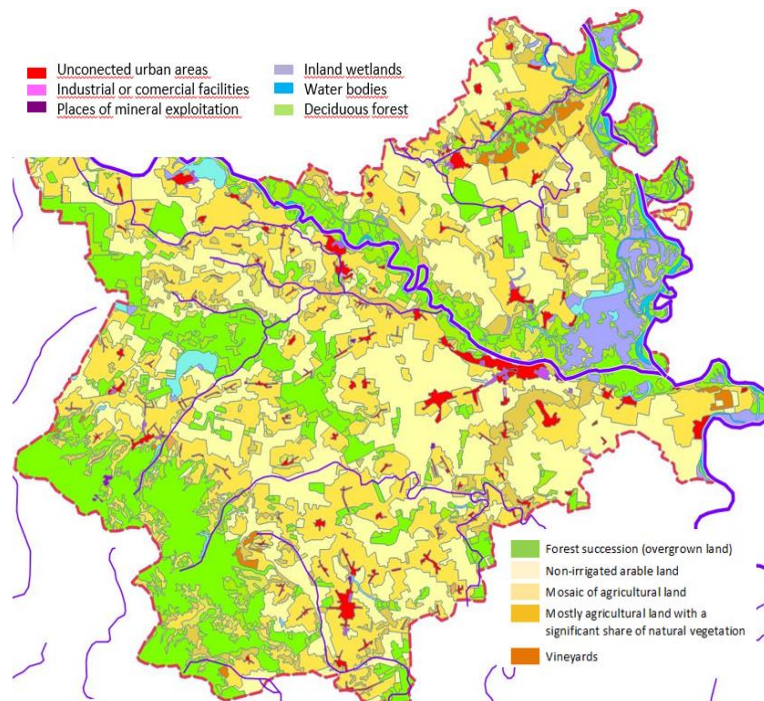


### Agricultural and socio-economical values

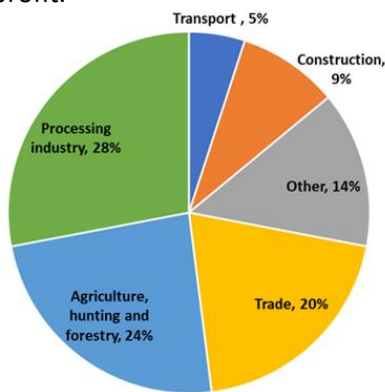
The value of agriculture in OBC is significant due to the large agricultural areas and large production of cereals, oilseeds and industrial plants, as well as livestock for processing industry. The special value of agriculture is diversity of small farms and organic farming. In OBC, despite the dominance of intensive agriculture, there is a large number of small farms looking for a way of subsistence through organic farming and agritourism activities, especially in the region of Baranja - a famous agritourism region due to its' large vineyard area and natural and cultural heritage (Demonja and Baćac, 2012).

OBC has a number of associations that promote the values of the natural environment and in this regard encourage farmers to switch to organic farming. Therefore, almost 10% of total agricultural land used is covered by organic production (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020).

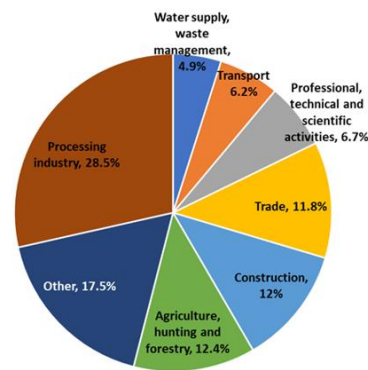
The agro-economical value of agriculture is assessed in relation to other economic activities. Processing industry is the most important economic activity in OBC according to total income, followed by agriculture, construction and tourism. The largest share in total revenues in 2019 (Graf 1) has the manufacturing industry with 28.4%, followed by agriculture hunting and forestry with 24.1% Graf. 1.



In 2019, the largest positive financial result was achieved by agriculture (+ HRK 407 million) i.e. 31.6% of total profit.



Graf 1 Total revenue in Osijek-Baranja county, 2019



Graf 2 Number of employees in Osijek-Baranja county, 2019

These industries also have the largest shares of the total number of employees in companies in OBC; 28.5% are employed in the processing industry and 12.4% in agriculture (OBŽ, 2020), Graf 2.

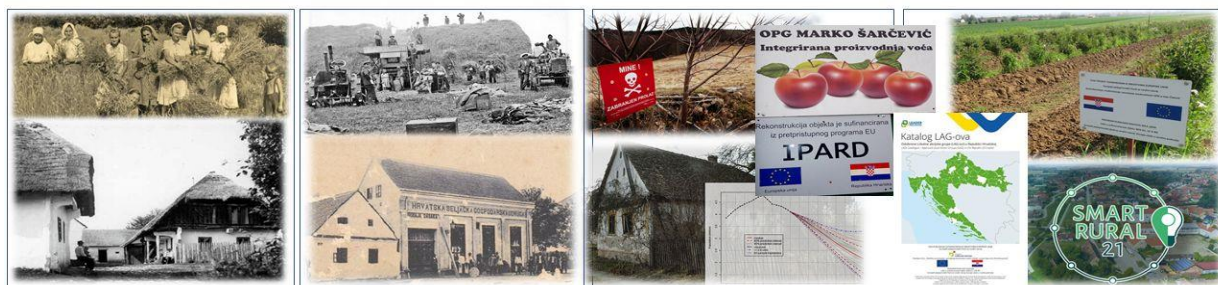
**Institutional values**

There are numerous civil society organizations in the County that are intensively implementing projects in order to raise the general environmental awareness of citizens about the high natural value of the county. Also, there are numerous cross-border cooperation projects with the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Hungary implemented by civil society organizations in partnership with the public and business sectors on this topic.

All local governmental units, except the city of Osijek, are members of one of the four LAGs that completely cover the rural area of the County. These are: LAG Karašica, LAG Baranja, LAG Vuka-Dunav and LAG Strossmayer. LAGs stand out for their great contribution to cooperation between the civil, public and private sectors, as evidenced by the numerous projects of LAGs and their members.

In the area of OBC, support to farmers is provided by various institutions: extension service as a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, food agency, paying agency in agriculture, fisheries and rural development, bodies for monitoring and certification of organic production, development agencies, business centers and incubators, etc.

**Historical context**



Underdeveloped agriculture  
Family cooperatives (*kućne zadruge*)  
Introduction of commodity-money economy

Intensified industrialisation  
Model of socialization of production  
Forced collectivization of land  
Limitations on size of AH  
Formation of peasant cooperatives and agricultural-industrial combines (*kombinati*)

Poorly implemented ownership conversion  
Family farms in focus of new agricultural policy but without adequate support  
Ecologization impulses  
War casualties and destruction  
Pre Accession EU funding

Diversification of agricultural production  
EU funding  
strengthening of family farms  
LAGs as important actors in rural development



### Part 3 / EAST CROATIA PRA

#### Weakness

- Small and fragmented family farms
- Insufficient interest in associating farmers
- Outdated equipment and machinery on small farms
- Agriculture in eastern Croatia is susceptible to long droughts period and temperature shocks
- Underdeveloped local market of agricultural products
- Low productivity of agriculture - especially small farms
- Poor management of state land
- unresolved property legal relations
- Underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture poor management of state-owned land, etc.
- Unfavorable demographic trends are the one of main vulnerabilities of OBC PRA
- Low level of agricultural education and declining interest in agricultural educations
- Existing innovations are too few in relation to the needs of agricultural development to achieve the objectives of the EU Green Deal
- Producers that support HNVf practices do not have enough technological and entrepreneur knowledge
- Expensive inputs for organic farming
- Lack of technologies in organic agriculture for small farmers (mechanization, plant protection, irrigation systems)
- Intensive agriculture is a threat to bees and for biodiversity
- Decay of buildings of traditional architecture, poor use of heritage elements in development



#### Challenges

- Representatives of county and local authorities, members of the academic community, representatives and members of LAGs, representatives of various associations, farmers and other relevant stakeholders are somewhat aware of the many social, economic, cultural and environmental weaknesses of their area.
- Numerous stakeholders are involved in various activities through a participatory approach to overcome these weaknesses such as research, development programming, project activities and others with an emphasis on innovation with the support of the University of Osijek,
- Croatia is a major importer of agricultural products and food for humans, which poses a danger of competition for small, market-disorganized producers in OBC PRA.
- Increasingly frequent long droughts and the absence of irrigation systems are threats to agriculture.
- continued emigration and aging of the working population
- inability to pre-finance EU projects and low credit rating of the private and public sectors

## Part 4 – PRA Strengths and Opportunities

### Strengths

- A multitude of small family farms and a rich variety of production
- An area rich in agricultural resources and agri-tourism offer
- Great interest in the use of measures of RDP
- Operative consulting services for farmers
- Organisations in the area that support HNVf practices and work on connecting organic and traditional producers
- Widespread practice of small family gardens by non-agricultural population
- A growing number of producers who produce in line with HNVf practice and positive examples
- Multiple initiatives aiming to improve production, marketing and sale of local products
- Numerous sales events with village products in Baranja
- Significant growth in the supply of local traditional, organic and beekeeping products
- Increase in the number of environmental and biodiversity projects
- Rich cultural heritage and traditional customs



Spring procession of queens or lilies from Gorjani, a protected intangible asset inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity from 2009.

### Opportunities

- Availability of EU funds for financing development projects in order to achieve EU development goals
- Collaborative cross-border and international projects, knowledge and experience transfer
- Collaborative and innovative initiatives between food producers and consumers are supported by new EU strategic framework
- Emergence of new multi-stakeholder organizational forms of cooperation and management of rural resources (rural incubators, short supply chains, etc.)
- Increasing demand for traditional and organic products
- CLLD-LAGs governance and good cross-sectoral cooperation in local development through joint strategic planning
- Tradition of fairs and village events



## Part 5 / EAST CROATIA Current and Future challenges

*“What would take place in my peripheral rural areas without innovation specifically addressing sustainable development?”*

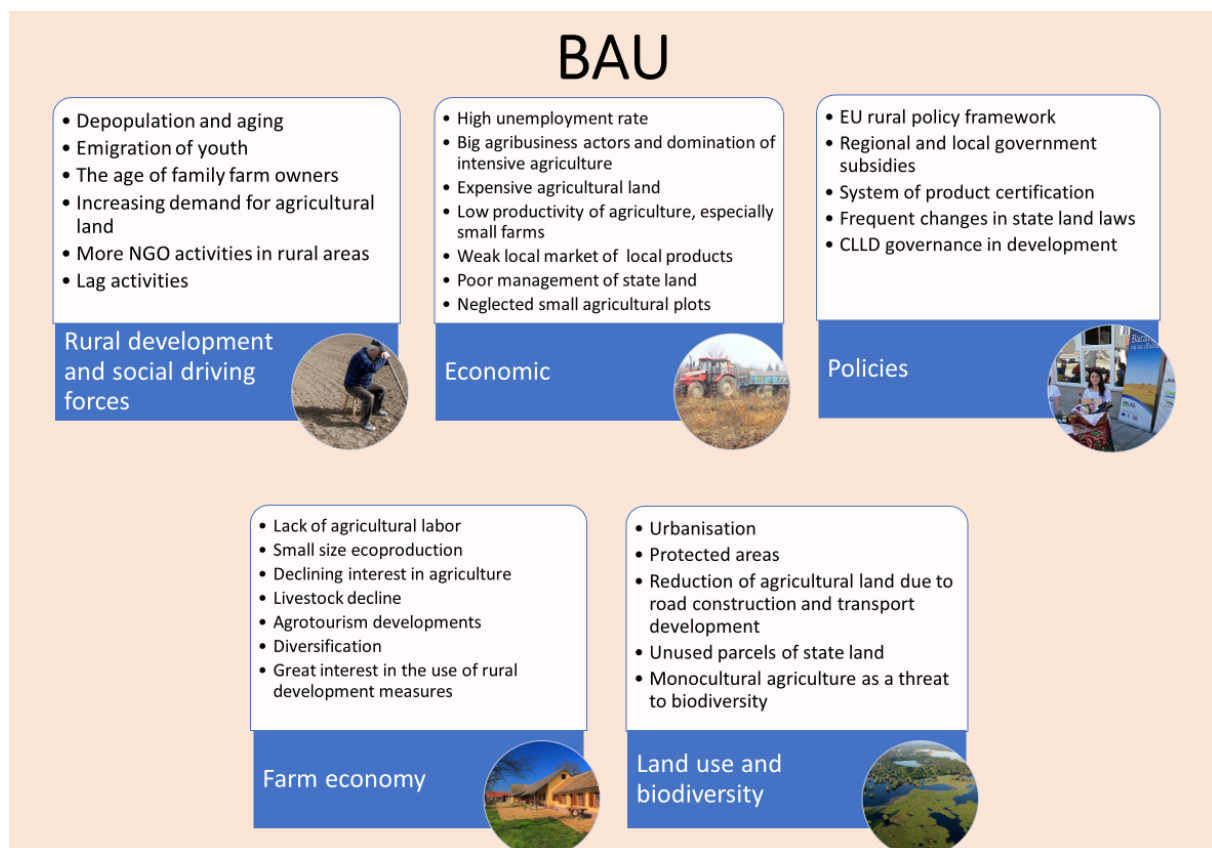
*“With what consequences on environmental, economic (agricultural), and societal (institutional)?”*

Continuation of BAU practice will cause further depopulation and departure of young people, loss of labor in agriculture, closure of small farms, neglect of agricultural land, environmental devastation, etc.

Current situation (BAU) is characterised by small number of big agribusiness actors and a large number of small individual farms. In general, monoculture and grain production predominate.

That dual agrarian structure with a small number of large holdings and a large number of small family farms is a result of turbulent historical events (Župančić, 2005). Joining the EU has finally recognized small producers social, environmental and economic value. In order to strengthen them economically, innovations are needed in the direction of their transformation towards organic production, i.e. towards higher value-added production. In recent times, small farmers are gradually accepting and developing different kinds of social, organizational, technological and other innovations in production, processing, marketing and services.

Great challenges for future are keeping the population in rural areas, motivating and empowering young people to engage in agriculture, encouraging small farmers to innovate in agricultural production and good governance, lifelong learning and knowledge sharing. It is also necessary to strengthen care for human and the environment health and greater development of organic agriculture and preservation biodiversity, which is specific to small farms and in line with the development needs of the HNV area.



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**Case-Study on innovative development in Peripheral Rural Areas**  
**Part B – BUILDING A COMMON VISION FOR THE PERIPHERAL RURAL AREA: THE**  
**PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND**  
**INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRA**  
*corresponding to Module 3– e-learning course*

## Building a shared vision for Dalmatian islands, Croatia



**Content:** This Part corresponds to Module 3 and will contribute to understanding the process by which a peripheral rural area moves from a finding (the territorial diagnosis) to a vision (for its sustainable development) through a participatory approach and how this "visioning" drives to joint reflection on own territorial challenges, difficulties to overcome and gaps to bridge, and on taking knowledge of the solutions and innovations needed.

A participatory approach is critical for drafting a realistic, feasible, and engaging road map for the territory and driving the PRA to effective, sustainable development. It makes the beginning of the process and is crucial for the participatory process for the visioning process.

In the end, the visioning process should contribute to a joint overall reflection on implementing innovative and sustainable solutions. It is about Identifying/characterizing own innovations (strengths) and identifying innovative and sustainable solutions.



### Part 1 / Mapping the Participatory Process

The Learning Area (LA) Dalmatian islands team was led by Marija Roglic from LAG 5 and the International Institute for Island Development "MIRO" in the South of Croatia. The project marked the beginning of the long-term collaboration between; LAG 5, LAG Skoji and LAG Brac on the one hand and more robust collaboration with the key stakeholders in the area of each LAG. In the case of LAG 5, these were in particular National park Mljet, Nature Park Lastovo islands, University of Split Faculty of Economics, NGO Sunce, local advisory services and many local businesses, such as small family farms (SMS) Komparak, SMS Trojkovic, SMS Eko Skoj, or nursery of indigenous species Anemona.

The overall objective of the LA is to catalyze the creation of a future network for sustainable development in the HNV area of Dalmatian islands, that will support the economic development of SMS and help them preserve the mosaic agricultural landscape.

These objectives were carried out via: (1) a detailed mapping of natural and social capital of the territory to identify the exact number of the actors, their production, feasibility of their economic development and alignment of these goals with the need of protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the islands; (2) development of projects that aim to support the development of local value chains, valorization and creation of added value to island products as requested by the islanders, (3) creation of a research institution that will be exclusively dedicated to supporting islanders in sustainable economic practices and climate change adaptation of the islands.



The LA team adopted a participatory approach to project implementation by creating: (1) a translocal alliance of actors from the University, administration, businesses and NGOs; (2) reaching out to other international institutions that have experience in participative research; (3) project proposals for the local actors that support HNV farming in the islands.



Various methods were used, including informal bilateral meetings, group discussions during field visits, workshops, and one-on-one consulting with the local farmers.

The participatory process was quite challenging as it was necessary to spend months in the field talking with the local actors. Firstly, to fully grasp their needs. Secondly, to find common points between farmers and organizations that had a habit of working individually and little experience in sharing experiences of best practices or worst mistakes between themselves.

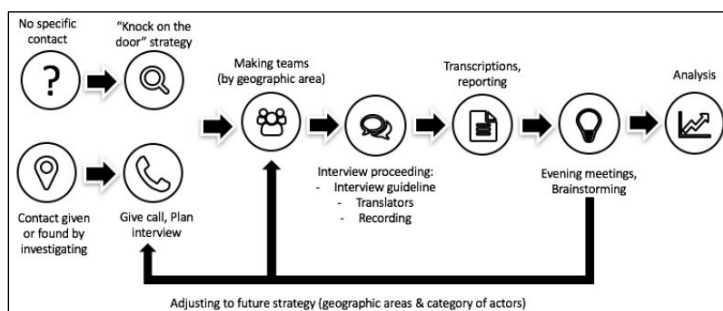


Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 3 Methodology used by the students for the surveys with the local population. Source Abdessater et al, 2017)

In order to tackle this challenge, the HNV-Link team members teamed up with students from the advanced master of AgroParisTech "Nature and Society Management at International level" from France. Agroparistech students and the Students from the Faculty of Economics Split carried out a three week long field visit to the LA, to perform a Strategic Environmental Management Analysis of High Nature Value Farming in the Dalmatian Islands. A team of 50 people conducted one-to-one interviews with over 200 people. The interviews were 15 minutes up to 1 hour in duration and allowed for the creation of an involved network of HNV actors.

	Internal	External
<b>Private</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional farmers and producers to whom this is a primary source of income</li> <li>- Farmers and producers to whom it is an additional source of income</li> <li>- Local entrepreneurs</li> <li>- Newcomers ( diaspora coming back and investing in tourism and agriculture)</li> <li>- Young people: the new generation of farmers that is highly educated and interested in pursuing more environmentally friendly agricultural practices using modern technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absentee landowners</li> <li>- Church</li> <li>- State</li> <li>- Investors in extensive farming, energy, tourist projects,</li> </ul>
<b>Collective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural associations (such as Kumpanija) that foster the protection of the overall patrimony</li> <li>- Slow Food Peljesac</li> <li>- Slow Food Presidium Peljeski varenik</li> <li>- Municipal authorities, specifically local boards that organize community activities in villages</li> <li>- Cooperatives for olive oil production and wine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Universities /Research institutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o International Institute for Island Development "MIRO"</li> <li>o The University of Dubrovnik, University of Split</li> <li>o Faculty of Agriculture Zagreb</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Regional authorities           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Agricultural authorities</li> <li>o Rural Development authorities</li> <li>o Forestry authorities</li> <li>o Environmental authorities</li> <li>o Regional development agencies</li> <li>o Local Action Groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Local Development Agencies (Agencies of specific municipalities, such as KORA, ORA, BLARA for the town of Korčula and municipalities of Orebic and Blato)</li> <li>- Management authority of National Park Mljet, Nature park Lastovo Islands and other public institutions that are managing protected areas in the LA</li> <li>- Environmental NGOs (NGO Sunce, NGO 4 Grada Dragodid, NGO Mala Sirena, NGO Dobra Dobricevic and other..)</li> <li>- Island social enterprises ( such as Aktiva Brac)</li> </ul>

Figure 4 Mapping of HNVF-relevant stakeholder groups in Dalmatian islands

The LA Dalmatian islands team also organized an innovation seminar in July 2017 to refine the vision of sustainable development for the HNV region and decide on the innovation priorities for the next phase of the project.

## Part 2 / Implementation and Assessment of the participatory process

To address local LA issues and the nascent implementation of agri-environmental measures, the team focused the participatory process on the local level end users and the national AKIS. Because HNV farming in the mosaic landscape with a network of dry-stone walls produces agri-environmental, economic and safety benefits (the latter in the form of forest fire prevention and improved water collection for fields), the team targeted communication activities to AKIS on multiple scales. It also collaborated with international organizations such as SMILO-Programme for the labelling process for small sustainable islands and has drafted the new Island Act.

Action	2018												2019				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
<b>1. Enable the cooperation for HNV innovative actions</b>																	
1.1. Meetings with the LA stakeholders						█											
1.2. Meetings with policymakers						█											
1.3. Building projects				█													
1.4. HNV Link follow up projects													█				
<b>2. Organization of regional meetings and cross-visits</b>																	
2.1. Regional meetings	█																
2.2. Cross visit to Romania										█							
<b>3. Communication and promotion of the project</b>																	
3.1. Participation at the SMART Islands World Congress						█											
3.2. Participation in the working group for drafting the new Island Act	█																
3.3. Present the project at regional and local radios and TV stations					█												

Figure 5 LA Dalmatian islands action plan calendar

The HNV-Link team's significant effort was to create a dynamic network of national actors that will foster the process of landscape restoration and maintenance of the mosaic landscape in the Dalmatian islands. The HNV vision, innovation, and innovation gaps are based on these aims.

The participatory approach, initiated at the preparation of the HNV-Link project proposal and currently ongoing, has kick-started new projects to solve specific problems common to the islands in LA.

Specifically for the development of island-based short value chains, establishment of islander producers' association, enhancement of the pastoral activities, and improvement of the national legislation.

The LA coordinator acts as a knowledge broker to translate the EU norms to the local context of the LA and as an active participant of the HNV farming network who brings in the perspective of the LA's HNV farming actors. With this process, LAG 5 has formed a network of scientific researchers, practitioners, farmer associations, AKIS, and the public authorities for the Dalmatian Islands LA.

Activities	Number of participants	Date
Presentation of the project on LA Dalmatian	50	June 7, 2016
Meeting of the working group LA	8	June 18, 2016
Workshop "mosaic landscapes."	21	August 25, 2016
Promoting the HNV landscape	130	September 3, 2016
Working meeting on Mljet	7	September 20, 2016
Linking the islands- MIC	5	September 21, 2016 September 24, 2016
Meeting with the	4	October 27, 2017
Network meeting in Ston	15	November 22, 2017
Evaluation meeting on how to bridge the gap between research and practice	17	January 16, 2018
Informal meetings- fieldwork	232	February- March 2017

Figure 6 List of crucial HNV-Link activities which together detail the participatory approach adopted in LA Dalmatian islands and its expansion to other islands in Croatia (up to April 2018)

### Part 3 /Identification of HNV Innovation Needs

#### a/ Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses

The LA Dalmatian islands main strengths are achieved through the partnership and participatory approach of the LEADER programme LAG 5, LAG Brac and LAG Skoji were implementing and the



projects that emerged as an aftermath of HNV Link such as "[DalmaTIMski otoci](#)". The main strengths and weaknesses have been highlighted in the [LA Dalmatian Islands Innovation Assessment report](#).

### Strengths

- Strong partnership and positive working relationship across a range of key stakeholders.
- Ongoing public funding for the delivery of public goods through payment for results/payments for ecosystem services approach.
- Individual businesses availing opportunities to develop new products (e.g. Island Product certificate), market food products, and create farm tourist experiences.
- Local "one-stop-shop" advisory services minimize bureaucracy for the farmer while providing guidance and support in LAGs
- Pride of farmers in producing biodiversity and landscape product.

### Weaknesses

- Under current regulations and member state implementation rules, many HNV features are ineligible for farm payments, creating negative perception of these areas' value.
- Despite current initiatives, farming is still a relatively low-income occupation considered financially non-viable.
- The attractiveness of farming as an occupation for the next generation.
- Overly dependent on public funds and need to diversify funding sources.
- A limited number of farm businesses benefit directly from tourism or sell products directly to consumers.

### b / Knowledge of the challenges

Islands face several challenges related to the ageing farming population, rural depopulation, farming viability, agricultural land urbanization, and land management problems due to non-resolved land ownership. See figure 7.



Figure 7 Tourism as a threat and an opportunity in the LA. (Excerpt from the HNV Link atlas, pg. 62)

### c / What needs to be done

Further work around the regulatory framework is required to enable and support local communities to create local solutions. Social infrastructure and community wellbeing initiatives are required to combat rural isolation and improve the attractiveness of farming as a career choice for the next

generation. Improved marketing, product development and diversification opportunities are needed to realize a vision of sustainable HNV farming in the Dalmatian islands. Innovations are outlined in Figure 5 under the themes.

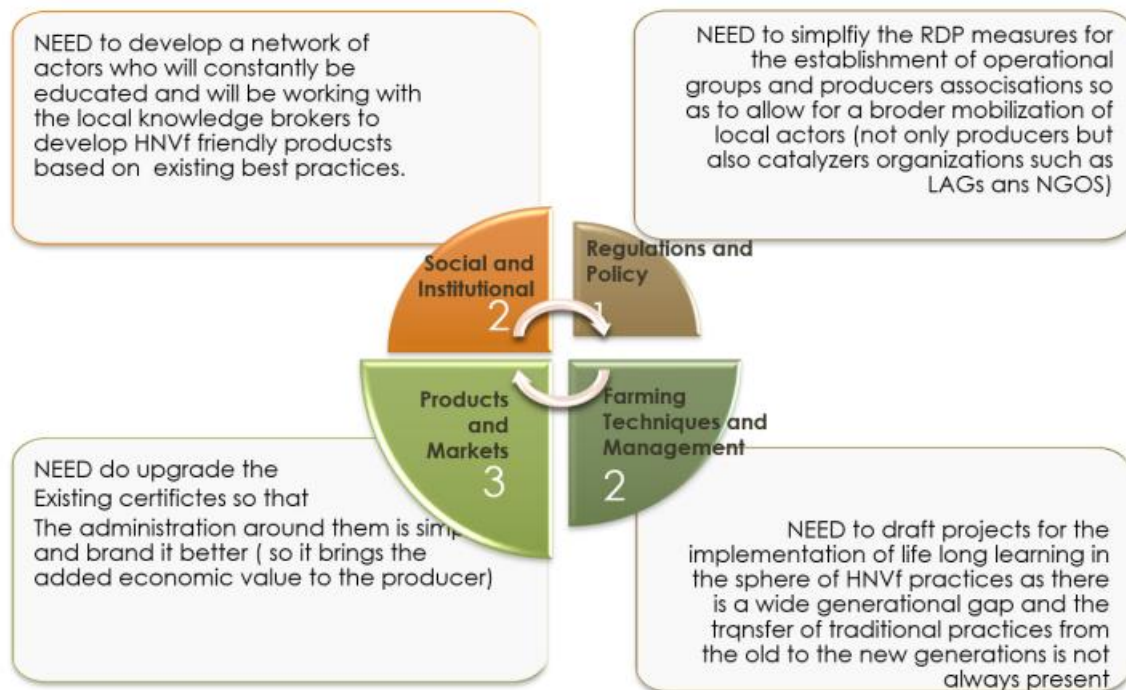


Figure 5: HNV-LINK assessment of innovation situation in the LA Dalmatian islands in 2018 with a score of 5 indicating where further innovation is required. 0 = insignificant, nothing is happening to address the needs of HNV under this theme; 1 = Few innovations and overall impact very small, many HNV issues not addressed at all; 2 = Several innovations, some with significant effects for HNV, but not at the necessary scale; many HNV issues not addressed effectively; 3 = Several significant innovations, with at least some of them addressing HNV issues at the necessary scale; but some important issues need to be addressed more effectively; 4 = Many significant innovations, the main HNV issues are addressed at the necessary scale; but there are still some smaller issues that need to be addressed more effectively; 5 = Innovation is addressing effectively all the main HNV issues under this theme, needs are being met right across the LA.

#### d/ The Vision

In the early stages of the participatory process, the team focused on co-creating an HNV Vision for the Dalmatian islands.

Firstly, crossing it with all the existing strategic developments in the territory: municipalities, LAGs and regions development documents. Secondly, by discussing the existing proposals from these strategies with local actors. Thirdly by linking the actors' demands with the existing strategies and funding possibilities for their implementation. Fourthly, the team engaged with stakeholders to gather existing baseline information and the development of a business-as-usual scenario. Combining this data with the HNV innovation assessment facilitated the identification of innovation gaps.

Innovation gaps must be identified to develop solutions for the sustainable development of the islands. This process needs to be anchored in an agreed HNV vision for the area.

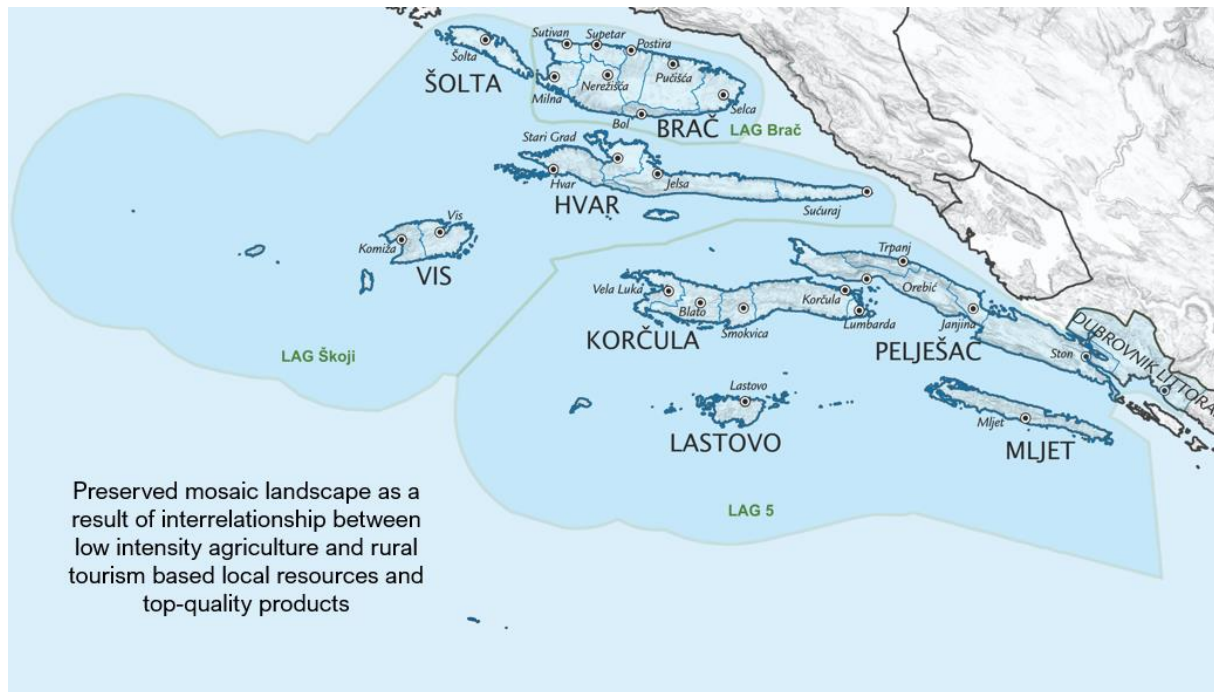


Figure 6: The agreed HNV Vision by stakeholders as part of the HNV-Link project.

**Sources from HNV-Link documents:**

<http://hvnlink.eu/learning-areas/dalmatian-islands-croatia/>

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## Case-Studies on innovative development in Peripheral Rural Areas

### Part C - INNOVATION FICHE FOR PERIPHERAL RURAL AREAS

*corresponding to Module 4 of the e-learning course*

#### 1 / PRA and innovation identification

**1.1 - Peripheral Rural Area name:** East Croatia

**1.2 - Innovation short name:** Organic short supply chain

**1.3 - Agricultural system to which the innovation relates:** Organic products market

#### 1.4 - The story in a nutshell:

In Osijek-Baranja County (OBC), despite the dominance of intensive agriculture, there is a large number of small farms looking for a way of subsistence through organic farming and agritourism activities, especially in the region of Baranja - a famous agritourism region. However, there is no strong support for the development of organic agriculture and the development of the organic food market. Therefore, organic producers are aimed at activists from the civil and scientific sectors who want and can encourage new activities for the development of organic agriculture and markets.

Since 2014, the Ospera Association has been gathering organic farmers into an informal group and, in agreement with local authorities, has been organizing mini fairs and various types of sales of organic products without continuity. Over time, the strength of their joint action has declined significantly. Following several failures, in 2017 a new attempt took place, ie a new initiative to help the development of organic producers and the local organic food market. This initiative relied on a strategy of participatory approach and involved the various stakeholders and resulted in the successful application and implementation of the Interreg project Organic Bridge implemented by the city of Valpovo. The project sought to solve part of the problem: to unite organic producers and to create preconditions for better marketing of organic products.

Innovations occur in two dimensions: 1) social and institutional, 2) products and markets.

The end results of the innovative process were: 1) the establishment of an association of organic producers in Osijek-Baranja County called "Center for the Development of Organic Production" and 2) the establishment of a short supply chain of organic products for the city of Osijek and its surroundings. The project provided a solid foundation for the further development of the association of producers and various forms of sales through a short supply chain.

#### 2 / What specific challenges does innovation address?

Local organic producers in OBC are facing extremely high competition from conventional products in Osijek-Baranja County, which is why they cannot achieve a fair price or sufficient demand for their organic products when they sell them at local green markets. Therefore, it was necessary to establish and strengthen an association of organic producers that will represent organic producers and promote organic products in the local area through separate market places, mini-fairs, promotional campaigns, online sales, etc.

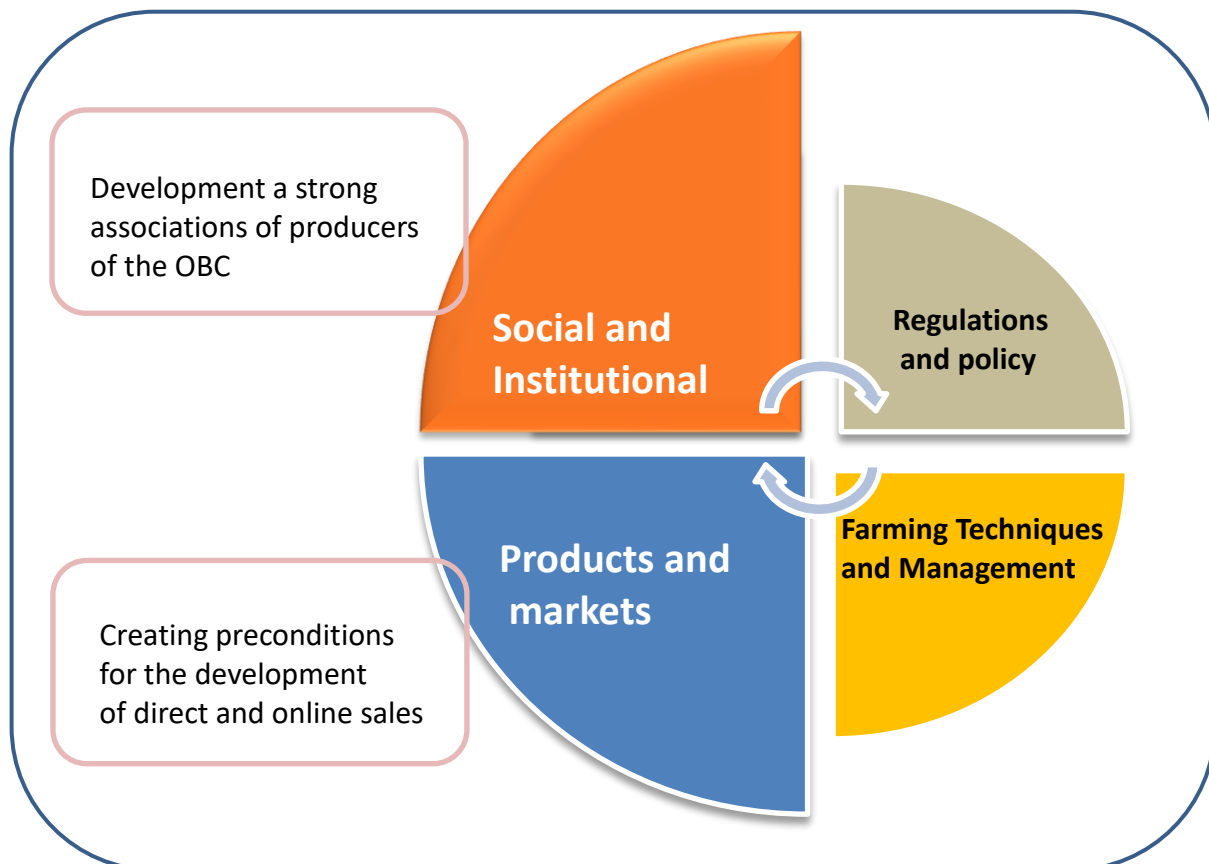
#### 3/ Description of the innovation

Creating preconditions for the development of direct and online sales is a very complex process that requires well-organized manufacturers whose representatives have the negotiation power to achieve common goals of the organization.



Given that small organic producers have weak economic strength, the process of association and joint market entry are necessary to achieve a competitive advantage. On the other hand, the offer of organic food from small producers is important for consumers because it ensures the variety and freshness of seasonal products.

From the point of view of society, short supply chains are extremely important because they supply consumers with local products, which is the best form of supply from the point of view of energy consumption. This means that there is no unnecessary transport and unnecessary storage for those products that can be produced locally, which practically go the shortest way from the field to the table. This type of distribution fully contributes to achieving the goals of the Farm to fork strategy.



#### 4/ What are the overall achievements of the innovation?

The association of small organic producers and the beginning of the development of integrated sales through a short supply chain in OBC can be considered an achievement of this innovation.

##### 4.1 What was the process that made it happen?

The Organic Bridge project has played a major role in developing the awareness of organic producers about the need to nurture their own association. During the project, other stakeholders who can contribute to the development of local supply chains of organic products such as representatives of local and regional self-government and citizens were informed about the importance of supporting small organic food producers.

The key activity for the development of this innovation was the establishment of the association "Center for the Development of Organic Production (CREP)". As part of the Organic Bridge project, the founding assembly of the association was held on September 14, 2018. The

call for the establishment of the association was initiated by the management of the Organic Bridge project.



Figure 1. Founding assembly of CREP

Source: <https://ekocrep.com>



Figure 2. Logo of CREP

Source: <https://ekocrep.com>

This top-down path of association formation is not the happiest solution because experience shows that bottom-up associations are more sustainable. As the project progresses, innovation grows. However, with the completion of the project, the activities resulting from the innovation suddenly weaken as a result of the lack of money to further strengthen the innovation.

The future of innovation therefore depends on the possibility of applying new projects that can ensure the continuity of further development of innovation until the moment when manufacturers can independently or jointly continue to survive in the market without the support of the wider community.

#### 4.2 What were the enabling and success factors?

Organic Bridge project activities were based on knowledge of 1) the importance of developing organic production in terms of preserving the high natural value of agricultural potential, 2) the importance of small organic producers in terms of social sustainability of rural areas and the diversity of supply of seasonal organic products and 3) the importance of short chains supply without unnecessary CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Although these are strategic directions of agricultural development, the wider community as well as representatives of organizations responsible for agricultural development, often do not have enough responsibility or knowledge to achieve these goals. That is why it is important to implement development projects that can contribute to this because projects have proven to be a good way to bring together responsible stakeholders and fund innovation.

#### 4.3 Is it improving socio-economic viability of HNV farms and communities while maintaining HNV characteristics? How?

#### 4.4 Does innovation include conservation of nature values as an explicit objective, or is this effect incidental? How?

Organic food production and short supply chains of consumers are an ideal way of food production because they have the highest degree of preservation of high natural value of agricultural resources. On these foundations, the European Union launched the European Green Deal sets out to shape the world's first climate neutral continent. As has been said many times, the bearers of this way of food

production are small organic farmers who are struggling to break into the food market, so they need financial and other support from society to preserve the natural potential for food production in the future.



Figure 3. Farm to Fork Strategy: Horizontal topics.

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en)

The Organic Bridge project carried out **planning activities** to raise awareness of the importance of organic agriculture for environmental protection. Visibility activities for small organic producers have also been carried out, all with the aim of developing a short supply chain of organic products because small producers can survive in the market and survive in production if local consumers buy from them. During the Organic Bridge project, in May 2019, info days and an eco-fair were held.



Figure 4. Eco-fair in Valpovo, 2019.

Source: Author



#### 4.5 On what scale is the innovation successful (individual farm holding, whole community...), and potentially successful?

This innovation has contributed to better networking of small organic producers and the development of new initiatives to improve their joint market presence. This resulted in the launch of online sales of organic products for the city of Osijek, which proved to be a very useful way of selling during the COVID 19 pandemic. Online sales started on the platform <https://ekotrznica.hr/> through which only organic products were advertised and sold, and is the result of the development of cooperation between the association CREP and the IT company Reducos j.d.o.o. This platform was completed in the summer of 2021, and online sales continued through Reducos' new platform <https://plodovi.hr>, which sells both organic and conventional products from small farms from OBC. In addition to these platforms, small organic farmers can also sell their products through the platform <https://eceker.hr/> with the support of the association Slap.



Figure 5. Online prodaja proizvoda malih farmi  
Source: <https://plodovi.hr>



Figure 6. Online prodaja organskih proizvoda  
Source: <https://eceker.hr/>

Cooperation between organic producers has also brought new challenges. At the end of 2021, the CREP association signed a contract with the Tržnica d.o.o. Osijek. The contract referred to the use of space and market stands for members of the CREP association every Thursday afternoon for the purposes of direct contact sales.

This opens up various opportunities to improve the economic position of small organic producers, but also new ways of supplying consumers with organic agricultural products.

#### 5/ Which was the process and/or the limiting factors, for preventing full realisation of the innovation's potential?

The described development of a short supply chain of organic products of small farms in Osijek-Baranja County is the result of the activities of the Organic Bridge project. The project promoters recognized the strength of small producers' associations as the basis for the development of the local supply chain. In order to realize the greater potential of this innovation, financial resources are needed for the continuous promotion of small local producers until the time when organic agriculture will be strengthened by significant local and national support policies and financial support.



### 6/ What lessons can we draw from this experience?

- ✓ Organic farming is the best way to preserve natural agricultural potential for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system in line with Farm to fork strategy goals.
- ✓ For the sustainability of small organic farms, it is very important to associate them and organize joint sales activities.
- ✓ Small organic producers are not economically viable in the environment of many conventional producers, so they need the help of the community, which can contribute to their development in various ways.
- ✓ The implementation of development projects is very important for the sustainability of small organic farms.
- ✓ In order to achieve the horizontal goals of the Farm to fork strategy, it is very important to develop short supply chains that help small organic products to be marketed in the local environment without intermediaries or as few as possible.

#### Sources of information:

<http://www.ekocrep.com/>

[https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en)

## Case-studies on innovative sustainable development in Peripheral Rural Areas Dalmatian islands PRA Part D – INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION

*corresponding to Module 5 – e-learning course*

### Part D: Innovation exchange, transfer and dissemination



#### **Content:**

After reflection on the innovation needs and the vulnerabilities of the area, the PRA engages in an active process of moving forward with the sustainable development of the PRA by implementing innovative solutions for preserving and enhancing the HNV farming system and the peripheral rural area's economies.

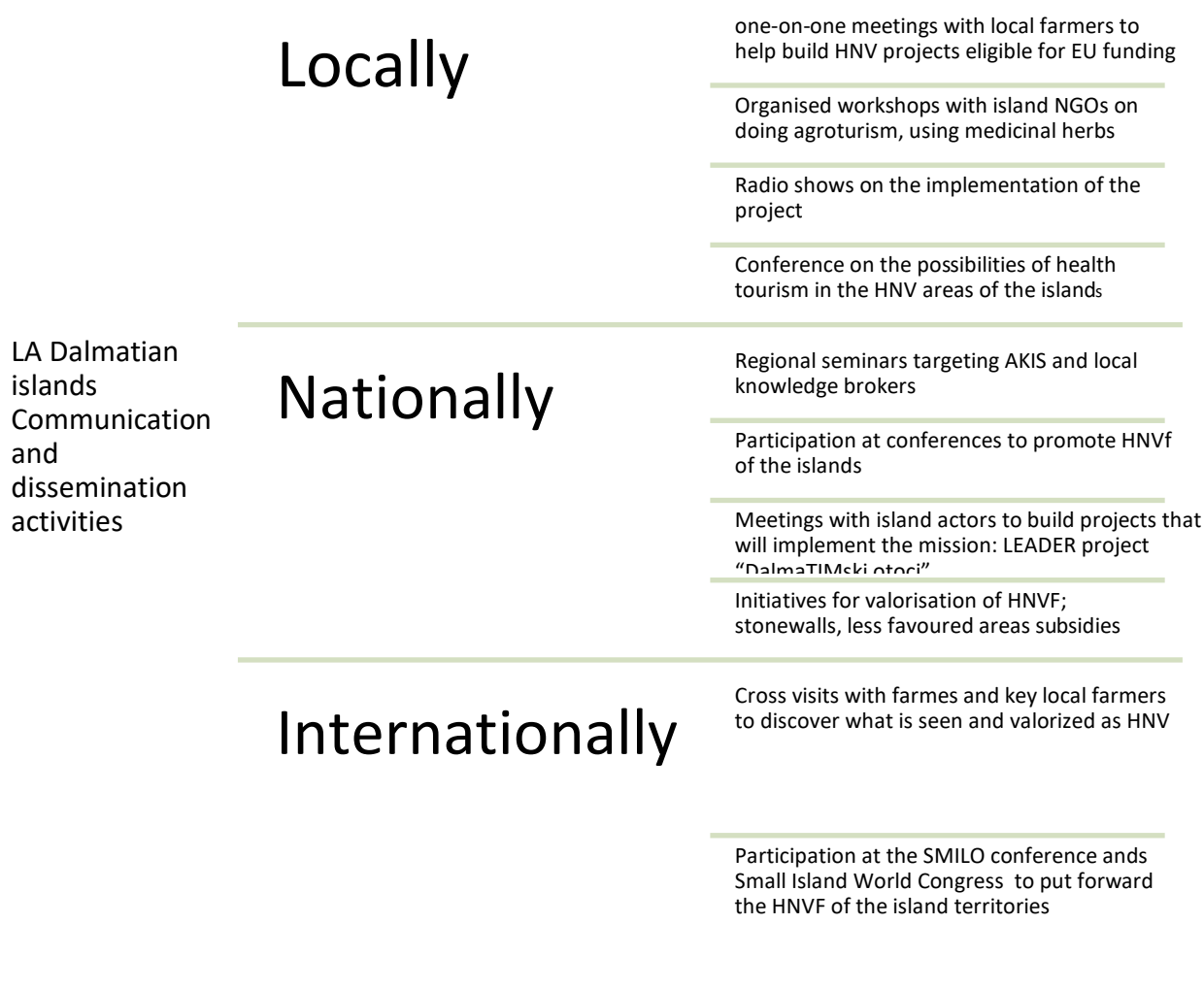
Part D provides students with information on communication and dissemination examples carried out during the HNV-link project, with an emphasis on the most efficient actions focused on specific end-users.

## 1 / Engaging Communication and Dissemination Actions for sustainable development of the PRA

### Summary of the communication and dissemination activities carried out during HNV-Link

The overall objective of the communications and dissemination actions in the Dalmatian islands PRA during HNV-Link were to catalyze the creation of a future network for sustainable development in HNV areas across the islands, with LAGs acting as coordinators.

Actions focused on increasing awareness of the HNV concept and the environmental and touristic value of HNV farmlands among a diverse range of actors. This was accompanied by dissemination of a range of HNV innovations from across HNV Link EU learning areas to stimulate the development of local solutions.



Communication and dissemination within the HNV-Link project for the LA Dalmatian islands were targeted at EU, national and local actors with diverse scope:

1. Locally, it was important to build projects with farmers and NGOs that will be eligible for EU funding and answer to the short term needs of the area.

For example (1.1.) help farmers obtain EU funding that will help restore dry-stone walls; enlarge their production of honey; finance new fig plantations.

Alternatively, (1.2) work with NGOs to get funding to organize workshops that will support HNVf, such are workshops ["Wild herbs on our plate"](#) that promote the links between gastro tourism and HNVf.

Alternatively, build wider EU projects such as [Erasmus + "Rural 3.0"](#) to bring students and farmers closer through service-learning.



2. Nationally, it was important to build networks of project-focused actors devoted to development beyond tourism, such as taking part in conferences, e.g. [Taste the Mediterranean](#). The objective was twofold; (2.1) to understand that the true economic reasoning is in the natural and cultural heritage and that (2.2) HNVf provides more sustainable tourism development than the apartmentization of the islands.

3. Internationally, the focus was on learning and exchanging practices through cross-visits and participation in the Small Islands World Congress, where island stakeholders from all over the world discussed challenges of sustainable island development.

#### Brief assessment/reflections on the overall Communication and Dissemination Process

The HNV-Link communications and dissemination activities were part of the ongoing communication, knowledge sharing and networking process in the Dalmatian islands kick-started with the implementation of the LEADER programme through LAGs. They expanded with the work of Fisheries LAGs.

LA Dalmatian islands represent a network of heterogeneous actors operating at different scales to implement the LA Vision. Each on their scale and based on their possibilities and economic convenience. This approach is essential if the vision of the LA Dalmatian islands is to be implemented. The vision itself represents a process. It extends beyond individual actors and projects and is inscribed in the long-term dynamics of the learning area. LAGs and the supporting institutions support entrepreneurial actors of local farmers, entrepreneurs and NGOs in implementing the HNV vision. They do so by organizing workshops, peer-learning activities, exchange of experiences, and project building exercises.



Figure 1 Establishment of an International Institute for Island Development "MIRO" as a research and educational centre on island HNVf



Institute “MIRO” as an actor is there to support the learning process, research and advocacy for the HNVf of the islands – there to preserve the mosaic landscape of the islands. Projects such as “Construction of an operational cooperation framework for agri-environmental actions on the Dalmatian islands” allowed for a knowledge brokerage exercise that provided the first database of Agri-environmental practices on the islands Peljesac, Mljet and Korcula.



Figure 2 LEADER transnational cooperation project "Bee friends"

Visibility of the LAG 5 area as an HNVf territory fostered LEADER transnational cooperation projects with colleagues from LAG Moslavina and LAGs from Poland. [The Bee friends project of exchange of best practices.](#)

TRUT is all about local authenticity. For our Signature batch we are using a mix of Korčula-finest botanicals. For the crisp citrus flavour we hand-picked bitter oranges, carefully peeling&drying the pure orange zest. The base flavour is formed from a special local variety of Juniper with support from musky Angelica root. And a touch of our secret ingredient: beautiful (and award-winning) raw honey from our own beehives.



Figure 3 SMS Vlaho Komparak creating HNV value-added products - island gin ( [Copyright SMS Vlaho Komparak](#) )

SMS Vlaho Komparak continued to innovate by creating local projects with high added value. In order to fight lower honey yields ever, he turned to the [production of honey gin](#) shedding light on the fragility and the importance of HNVf landscapes.

## Part 2 / Focus on Cross-Visits

The cross-visits of the regional teams were one of the key activities within the HNV-Link Network. The project learning area teams visited each other during 2018. The objective of the cross-visits was to support peer learning about HNV farming innovations and how these could be implemented in learning areas. As HNV-Link has discovered so far, there is no shortage of innovative solutions to help solve challenges to the viability of HNV farming in HNV farmland regions. However, knowledge transfer and exchange of these solutions are not always successful. As a result, individual innovations may stall if the whole institutional, legislative and cultural context does not support novel approaches.

A Croatian delegation (representatives from Dalmatian islands Learning Area) visited the Tarnava Mare region where the HNV innovation in Romania was situated. Croatian group consisted of 6 stakeholders: two farmers, a representative of the Croatian Agricultural Advisory services and representatives of the local action groups that form the core of the LA Dalmatian islands: director of LAG Brač and LAG 5, and project manager from LAG Škoji.

The **reasons for visiting** the region were to see the following innovations, which were judged by LA Dalmatian islands stakeholders of interest:



*Figure 4 SES fruleco and Touristic information centre with local products*

- **SES Fruleco enterprise:** a food processing unit established ten years ago by Adept foundation. The enterprise was initially created to show the best practice for meeting hygiene requirements for processing fresh fruits and vegetables. The enterprise was transformed into a community food processing unit that uses an innovative marketing scheme: baskets with local products, local branding, mobile apps and a cooled delivery vehicle that helps the local farmers to add value and diversify to their HNVF products;



*Figure 5 Green infrastructure sheepfold*

- **Green Infrastructure Sheepfold Model:** a traditional sheepfold that uses solar panels, thus helping shepherds to improve their living conditions while staying with the flocks on the hills in the summer - electric light, power to charge their mobile phones to keep in touch with their families and to be able to use hot water to increase the hygienic condition up, on the hills. In order to protect the pastures, an innovative “easy to move” mobile fence was used, but without great success.
- **Farmers association and milk collection unit:** the milk association was created to bring the small HNMF farmers together, to use the milk collection unit together and negotiate for milk prices to solve economic and landscape conservation problems with minimal expenses. The introduction of HNV innovative mowers increased the association's viability, and significant surfaces of abandoned meadows were restored.



- **Angofa farm and nature school:** Adept Foundation decided to create a farm that will show in practice how HNMF grasslands have to be managed. They began by procuring grasslands and Angus Aberdeen cattle to create a farm. The next step is to create the Angofa Nature School that will allow schoolchildren from the Sighisoara Municipality and other towns to attend open farm and nature classes in a modern and innovative nature school.
- **SMS information system:** a free information service for Romanian farmers, who regularly receive SMS messages on their mobile phones suited to their needs. The service is primarily aimed at helping small-scale farmers to have full-time access to announcements on funding opportunities, application deadlines, market opportunities, etc., even when they do not have regular access to the Internet. This applies particularly to isolated farms, villages, and shepherds away from home.

#### The main expectations from the participants were:

- To understand what are the HNV measures and how the Romanian farmers use them
- To understand how the visited innovations contribute to the biodiversity conservation in HNV farmland in Romania;
- To meet Romanian farmers and see how they rear their animals, how they meet the requirements of livestock breeding, how they market their products; to see how the livestock breeders use the common /municipal grasslands;
- To see the similarities and the differences of the EU RDP measures and how they are applied;
- To see how farmers are working: setup of the production process, legislation, what advisory services are offered to the farmers – private or state ones, to learn about the legislation regulating the relations between the state and the farmers.

#### Lessons Learnt:

- Implementing Agri-environmental measures must not mean to itself but represent a key element of the territory that links both social and economic activity. Projects of the Adept foundation that aim to develop local craftsmanship and branding of the territory as a tourist destination aim to reduce that gap.



- Innovations visited represent a hybrid form of land management that is a sort of compromise between the needs for nature conservationism coming from outside of the community and international funding, more specifically EU schemes, programmes, and the methodology to implement them. It was, therefore, most interesting to see how farmers have used them and to see how they perceive them (as a means to an end or a kick start for the development of the local economy based on sustainable development)
- Community enterprise for fruits and vegetable processing as well as the trading of the products under a common label and certificate was most interesting to the LAG representatives that wanted to ensure more on the process of project development and implementation as it is an activity that is perceived as necessary both in their Local Development Strategies.

**Further information / Sources:**

Short videos of the cross-visit implemented under the HNV-Link project:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1YVZENHsnaslseNp-e-R2g/videos>

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