

ITALY

Agri-food chain integration & quality

Location

Emilia-Romagna

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P3 - Food chain & risk management

Measure

M16 – Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 1 953 906 (EUR)
EAFRD 348 058 (EUR)
National/Regional 459 127 (EUR)
Private / own 1 146 721 (EUR)

Project duration

2021 to 2022

Project promoter

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<https://civ.it/event/programma-di-sviluppo-rurale-dellemilia-romagna-2014-2020/>

An EIP operation group project to test and propagate new, cost-effective and environmentally friendly strawberry and apple varieties in Emilia-Romagna.

Summary

Despite being one of the most important fruit- and vegetable-producing regions in Italy, Emilia-Romagna’s strawberry and apple production has been in decline for 20 years. In order to reassert the competitiveness of the sector, an EIP operational group was set up to identify, test and distribute new, more resilient fruit varieties that meet the needs and preferences of consumers.



© Sweet fles starts project

Project Results

The project was able to prove that the use of resistant and resilient fruit varieties can result in reduced production costs, reduced environmental impact and better economic performance for producers.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ News about this project spread fast within the sector and the new products were well-marketed. However, the project’s limited timeframe did not allow for the full scale of its impact to be measured.
- ❑ The RDP cooperation measure, as adopted by the Region Emilia-Romagna, allows only a limited timeframe for project duration. However, the beneficiary considers that if there was a longer project window, the project would be able to produce even stronger impact results.



© “Sweet resistants” project

Context

Emilia-Romagna is one of the most important Italian regions for the production of fruits and vegetables, yet the total area devoted to strawberry and apple production has been in decline over the last 20 years. This is due to increased competition from intra- and extra-EU countries, as well as changes in customer preferences. Adequately protecting these crops from parasites has also become an increasingly difficult challenge.

In response to these factors, an overall improvement of the value chain for both products became necessary. The starting point was the selection, testing and distribution of new, more resilient and appealing fruit varieties - hence the title of this project (“Sweet Resistants”), which involved two producers’ associations, a large nursery consortium, and three universities.

Objectives

The aim of this EIP AGRI operational group was to identify and promote innovative, more sustainable apple and strawberry varieties that would revitalise the sector and reduce CO2 emissions.

Activities

- i. Identification and pilot production of new apple and strawberry varieties with the desired properties. Three new apple and four new strawberry varieties were identified and tested.
- ii. Propagation of the new varieties at three large partner nurseries. A total of 15 600 strawberry seedlings and apple grafts were propagated.
- iii. Distribution (sale) of the new varieties to members of farming cooperatives and producer associations. Approximately three million strawberry plants and five million apple grafts were distributed to farmers in Italy and abroad.

- i. Provision of technical assistance to about 6 000 farmers in 15 Italian regions on marketing their fruit within an integrated value chain.
- ii. Assessment of economic and environmental features (e.g. carbon footprint) of the new varieties, as well as their cultivation patterns.
- iii. Dissemination of results. Attended three fruit sector trade fairs – ‘Fruit attraction’ (Madrid), ‘Fruit Logistica’ (Berlin), and ‘Interpoma’ (Bolzano), organised visits to the demonstration orchards, and issued dissemination materials (brochure, newsletter, scientific articles).

Main results

The project was able to prove that the use of resistant and resilient fruit varieties can result in reduced production costs, reduced environmental impact and better economic performance for producers.

Key lessons

The major cooperatives and consortia that were partners in the project ensured there was rapid sharing of information within the sector as well as efficient and widespread marketing of the new products.

The RDP cooperation measure, as adopted by the Region Emilia-Romagna, allows only a limited timeframe for project duration. However, the beneficiary considers that if there was a longer project window, the project would be able to have an even stronger impact.

The Project promoter/beneficiary is an EIP-AGRI Operational Group

(<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en>)

Additional sources of information

<https://civ.it/it/>