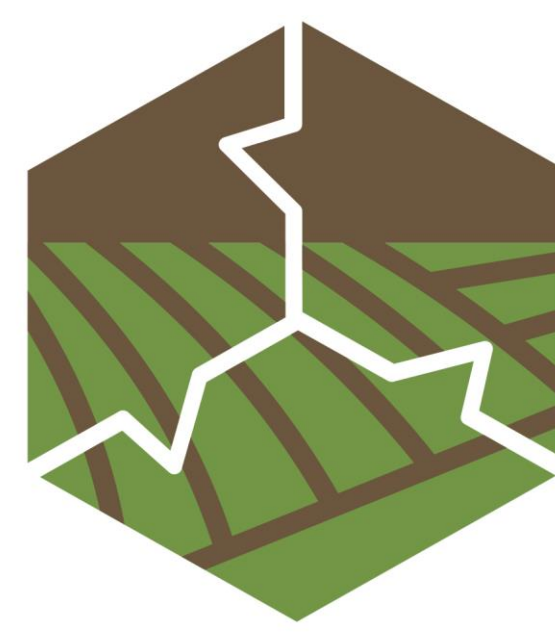




AGRIDEMO



FARMDEMO



PLAID

Country Report for Cyprus

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ΓΕΩΠΟΝΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

Topics of demonstration

Taro, Potatoes, Vegetables

- Integrated pest management/spraying
- Water/irrigation management
- Low input farming
- Soil fertility & management

Grapevine

- New varieties
- Pruning and trellising systems

Small ruminants breeding (sheep/goat)

- Animal health management & welfare
- Animal nutrition
- Machinery, housing & rearing systems
- Electronic identification & installations (sheep breeding)
- Dairy products

Providers and purpose of demonstration

Currently in Cyprus on-farm demonstrations are solely initiated and provided by the public extension service. The vast majority of demo activities are held on public farms.

Farmers take the lead when demos are hosted in their own farms and act as the main demonstrator/instructor.

The purpose of the demonstrations while focusing on increasing productivity and, hence, competitiveness has at its core the improvement of farm families' welfare and sustainability.

Knowledge creation and info sharing concentrate on topics related to crops and dairy products which are both part of the Cypriot farming tradition and at the same time hold a unique/high commercial value added potential (taro/potatoes and dairy products).

Moreover, water management and climate change hold a central role due to the country's ecological and geographical specificities.

History

The establishment of the Department of Agriculture, in 1896, marked the beginning of agricultural extension methods, with its first Director, Panagiotis Gennadios, trying to modernise the agricultural tools used so far. His successor, Diomedes Sarakomenos, starts between 1907-1908 the first demonstrations in Mesaoria and Limassol, when a new improved iron plow is demonstrated, comparing the initial increased purchase costs with the benefits that go beyond the cost of buying, thus establishing demos as an agricultural extension tool. Demonstration activities had a particular and significant development the years that followed the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, in 1960, which is considered as the "golden age" for agricultural extension, and of the mechanisation and development of the agricultural sector. However, since the 80s there has been a gradual decline in demonstrations and almost abandonment after 2000.



Types of Demonstrations

- On-farm (public/commercial farms)
- Off-farm – data analysis
- Hands on farm
- Discussion groups
- Field walk
- Field trips
- Animal breeding tech

Access Issues

Gender: Men farmers are reported as the vast majority of participants. Although female holders account for more than a quarter of all sole holders in agricultural holdings, their participation in demo activities is reported to less than 10% of total.

Age: Participants in demonstrations held in both public and commercial farms are constantly reported to be over 55 years old, echoing the aged farming population in the country. However, there is still a dynamic one third of farmers younger than 55 years old which organised demos have not yet managed to attract their interest.

Geography: Demonstration activities are concentrated in areas with intensive agriculture (taro, potato and vegetables in the past). While public farms are also located in such areas, their demo activities are developing to cover also the needs of more scattered areas and topics especially in animal husbandry (i.e. goat breeding).

Other Issues

Despite the recent downsizing incurred due to the economic adjustment programmes followed in Cyprus, the public extension services try to embed the demo approach into farmers' culture by focusing on emblematic cultivations such as the taro which is the first and only PDO product in Cyprus (nominated only recently, in August 2016), on high value added products (sheep and goat dairy products and potatoes) as well as on topics related to the draught climate and -the high cost of- irrigation.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Demonstrations taking place on commercial farms in Cyprus are still a weak minority
- No other actors in the food chain take any lead in organising, funding or mobilising forces in orchestrating demonstrating activities in Cyprus.
- The observed situation reflects a rather dominant top-down approach; nevertheless, the structural characteristics and consequent limitations of Cypriot agriculture deem necessary for public led extension services to continue acting as a driving force in shaping the demonstrations landscape in the country
- Priority remains to engage farmers in hosting demonstrations and cultivate farmer-to-farmer interaction and peer learning activities. To this end public funding could be instrumental.



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