



# SIMOCA

Setting up and implementation of sustainable and Multifunctional rural development model based on Organic Competitive Agriculture



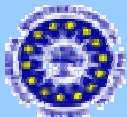
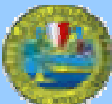
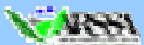
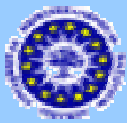
## The SIMOCA Project MEMORANDUM on Organic Agriculture & Sustainable Rural Development in the CADSES area

### *Elements for a Trans-national Strategy*



elaborated in the framework of the S.I.M.O.C.A. Project  
(Setting up and implementation of sustainable and multifunctional rural  
development model based on organic and competitive agriculture)

MARCH 2006



This Memorandum was prepared in the framework of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES S.I.M.O.C.A. project by Patrizia Pugliese of the IAMB working team.

The IAMB team also included Gianfranco Cataldi, Chiara Ciannamea and Vincenzo Fucilli who collaborated to earlier drafts.

Important intellectual input to the elaboration and validation of the document was provided by Damiano Petruzzella and Raffaele Zanolì.

Experiences shared by partners in the project activities and discussions were vital to get useful insights into key issues addressed in this Memorandum.

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## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### *Three preliminary considerations*

#### **1. A wider framework is required for a full understanding and realisation of organic agriculture's potential for sustainable rural development**

Thanks to its rapid diffusion in the last decade and continuing growth worldwide, organic agriculture has become a vibrant, dynamic phenomenon on the global agricultural and agri-food scene.

Though organic agriculture's multi-faceted potential is proclaimed – rhetorically, sometimes – in policy and academic writing, the role attributed to organic agriculture is often concretely reduced to a *land management measure* or to a (niche) *market opportunity*, the latter increasingly affected by conventionalisation trends.

Therefore, there is a strong desire to reassert the notion of organic agriculture as a *holistic, system approach* to farming and its environment.

New emphasis is needed on organic agriculture's positive, direct and indirect impacts on the management of human, social, natural and financial resources<sup>1</sup>. On such resources rural communities rely for their livelihoods, and their management (or mismanagement) has inevitable effects on urban people and spaces as well.

It would be also important to refresh the attention given to less widely noted, but extremely influential aspects of organic agriculture, like its inspiring philosophy, its *people-and-place-centred approach* and its *continuing learning perspective*.

Moreover, getting a rich picture would avoid organic agriculture being counterproductively overloaded with unrealistic roles and responsibilities.

There is no single easy recipe for the profound crisis affecting many agricultural and rural areas.

Yet, this stance is a temptation that organic advocates do not always resist whilst an early integration of organic concepts and practices into comprehensive rural development strategies would be far more influential.

Only a rebalanced and unbiased focus on organic agriculture and a wider conceptual framework will allow for more constructive discussion and effective action.

These are critically needed, now more than ever to: *a) objectively* recognise and realise organic agriculture's possible contributions to sustainable rural development; *b) engage* dialogue and cooperation with different actors and territories on such issues; *c) strategically* place organic agriculture in the evolving debate (and consensus) on the multifunctionality of agriculture which is increasingly expected to meet wider societal demands.

#### **2. Organic agriculture and rural development communities should effectively integrate and complement each other in restructuring and strengthening rural areas**

Despite all synergies achievable in principle between organic agriculture and rural development, in practice, separate lobbying circles and disconnected agendas have often resulted in organic agriculture's potential for rural development staying unexploited or being only partially exploited.

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<sup>1</sup> In this line of thinking and action the Principles of Organic Agriculture have been recently rewritten and approved by IFOAM.

Instead, by including *and prioritizing* organic agriculture into rural development debate and planning, a long-term vision and co-evolution pathway could be identified and pursued. The earlier, the better.

The development of a coherent and integrated strategy could help operators and policy-makers to go beyond the current rhetoric on organic agriculture and rural development relationship and take action towards a more effective cooperation between organic communities and rural environments.

Collaboration, though, may prove to be difficult and slow to build up. Moreover, it must be navigated through processes of learning and adaptation.

Therefore, organic agriculture and rural development circles need to *systematically synergise*, both *at the grass-roots* and *institutional level*.

Successful, mutually reinforcing integration will heavily rely on a good *contextualisation* exercise, aimed at sensibly assessing organic agriculture's potential in the enlarged EU new policy for rural development as well as in national and local institutional settings as well.

### **3. *Diversity across organic agriculture communities and rural areas constitutes a valuable resource for strategic efforts towards integration and cooperation***

Organic agriculture features a highly diversified situation across the CADSES area, in which countries (and regions) with a still rudimentary organic sector are juxtaposed to countries (and regions) sporting leading positions in the EU organic landscape. A number of intermediate circumstances are reported as well.

Also, characteristics and problems of agriculture and rural areas are indeed very different across the CADSES area, due, among other factors, to different historical and institutional evolution patterns.

Clearly, on one hand, in such a context, any generalisation is extremely difficult – meaningless, sometimes – and the drawing of a common strategy of any kind becomes a rather daunting task.

On the other hand, diversity may also represent a important *driving force for dialogue, knowledge sharing and networking*.

Within a trans-national framework, these have proved to be crucial elements for envisaging strategic areas of common interest, and, more importantly, to start building up a common ground for strategic and coordinated action.

*Flexibility* and *contextualisation* are equally essential attitudes in wide strategic efforts emerging in highly diversified contexts.

## SETTING UP AND VALIDATING A TRANS-NATIONAL STRATEGY

### *The SIMOCA Project approach*

The setting-up and validation of a trans-national Strategy to optimise the relationship between organic agriculture and rural development was one of SIMOCA project's goals.

The present Memorandum synthesises the thinking and the activities related to the achievement of this objective and, hopefully, will represent an initial step for a continued dialogue among the CADSES countries and regions on the challenges posed by organic agriculture and rural development integration process.

The Strategy is addressed to policy-makers, rural development agencies, local rural community leaders, grass-roots associations and organic people and initiatives whose decisions and actions can handicap or facilitate organic agriculture's rural development outcome.

The Strategy is the result of a three-year, multi-actor process of *participatory discussion, knowledge and experience sharing* on enabling and disabling factors affecting relations between organic agriculture and rural development.

The SIMOCA project activities and results provided an important, permanent source of ideas and lessons for the elaboration of the Strategy.

In six (out of seven) selected pilot areas, identified by partners for the realisation of the project activities, a preliminary socio-economic study and a SWOT analysis of organic and multifunctional agriculture were carried out.

Eventually, in each pilot area workshops with local stakeholders were organised to discuss the study results and viable courses of action to address the constraints identified in the analysis.

On this basis, a *Local Action Plan* - including priorities, measures and monitoring indicators - was also prepared and implemented.

Besides place-related measures, all Action Plans comprised a cross-cutting measure concerning the establishment of a local *Competence Centre* on organic and multifunctional agriculture.

These centres have played a pivotal multifunctional role in the realisation of the other activities included in Local Action Plans, mainly focusing on dissemination of information, training and extension and promotional activities.

Besides the provision of logistic and professional support to such initiatives, more importantly, each Competence Centre has progressively become a valuable local resource for networking and experience exchange.

## Pilot areas of SIMOCA project



Lessons learnt from the SIMOCA project experience on rural development and organic agriculture practice essentially focus on the need to:

1. improve the level of participation of local authorities and other stakeholders in rural development programmes
2. create a physical contact point and an associated high-skilled working group able to catalyse local development processes, draw the attention on relevant issues and animate the territory on a permanent basis
3. build on territorial and local environment resources
4. capitalise on previous rural development initiatives (e.g. Leader)
5. invest on human resources improvement

Though the Strategy is profoundly grounded in SIMOCA partnership's past experience as well as on project outcomes and lessons, important efforts *to go beyond the SIMOCA framework* have been made throughout the process of elaboration and validation of the strategic document.

With the purpose of getting new insights into organic agriculture and rural development in the CADSES area, an *extensive literature review* was carried out in the preliminary stages of the draft elaboration.

From the study of various reports, papers and policy documents a broad understanding of critical and relevant issues linked to organic farming and rural development in CADSES countries was derived.

Moreover, the Strategy was submitted to two successive rounds of *expert review*, involving representatives of international organisations, national authorities, research institutes and civil society who kindly contributed with their thoughts and comments. The draft document was revised accordingly.

Additionally, two *intermediate validation workshops* and a *500-stakeholder validation survey* (based on questionnaires) provided further important inputs for the broadening and consolidation of the rationale behind the Strategy and of the proposed five key strategic areas for action.

Interestingly, in the framework of the first validation workshop, an effort was also made to identify a number of *policy goals* within each strategic area. A final list of policy goals was produced, discussed and voted by the audience (see below).

Finally, it appears important to draw the attention on some *positive side effects* that the process of drafting and participatory validation of the Strategy has produced.

One example will suffice to illustrate the point.

In the second validation workshop, impacts were reported in terms of awareness raising among local stakeholders involved in the validation process of the Strategy, for example among farmers asked to fill up the validation questionnaire.

In one pilot area, in particular, a more proactive attitude was observed among some farmers who, following the involvement in the discussion on the Strategy, started using and appreciating the services offered by the locally established Competence Centre and dialoguing with local and national authorities to solve their difficulties linked to the adoption of organic agriculture methods.

## THE SIMOCA PROJECT TRANS-NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CADSES AREA

### *Five key strategic areas*

The SIMOCA trans-national Strategy focuses on five, closely interrelated areas of interest for organic communities and rural spaces in CADSES countries and regions.

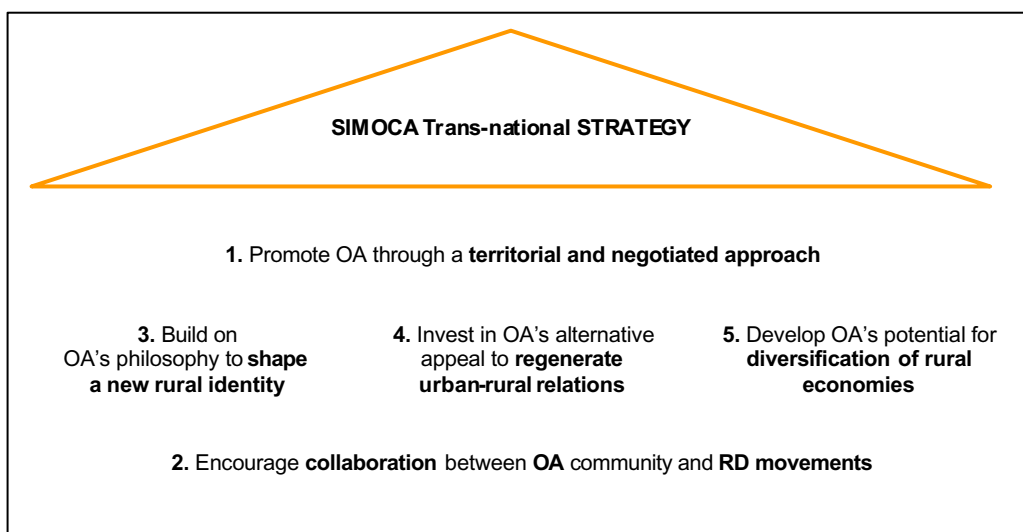
The first *two components* of the Strategy address *horizontal, cross-cutting aspects* which essentially address the need for a broader and more effective approach to organic agriculture and rural development interrelations.

The proposed courses of action are essentially built around the adoption of a *territorial perspective* and *collaborative attitudes*.

The architecture of the Strategy also includes *three specific thematic areas* focusing on selected key issues of the current rural development debate, which provide scope for action to emerging and advanced organic communities.

These areas concentrate on three very important aspects in the shaping of rural future in the CADSES area, namely, the *rural identity*, the *rural-urban interplay* and the *diversification* of local economies.

### SIMOCA Trans-national Strategy on Organic Agriculture (OA) and Rural Development (RD)



**1. Promote organic agriculture through a territorial and negotiated approach<sup>2</sup>**

For organic agriculture's potential for sustainable rural development to be fully understood and effectively realised, organic agriculture need to be promoted as a **territorial option rather than an individual choice**.

But this does not imply to dismiss the individual dimension altogether and, with it, the invaluable role played by single organic farmers. Rather, the aim is to try to enhance individualities in an enabling territorial framework.

No exclusive application (i.e. *marginalisation*) of organic agriculture in selected zones is to be intended either.

Organic agriculture is often recognised to have positive direct and indirect impacts on rural development. Organic agriculture's contribution to sustainable rural development results from a bundle of driving forces and influences of various kinds. The history and specific characteristics of each organic initiative are clearly very important aspects. Equally influential prove to be external socio-economic conditions and the institutional environment.

The **territory** in which organic agriculture is introduced may critically affect its overall performance and its capacity to effectively contribute to local development.

In many cases organic agriculture can be considered as an appropriate response to rural decline, but it is **not a one-fits-all solution**.

A good assessment of local resources availability and real possibilities for their mobilisation, as well as a clear understanding of territorial evolutionary trends are quintessential in planning and implementing rural development projects and programmes focussing on organic agriculture.

In organic success stories around the world, significant impact on local rural development has often been observed when, from a pioneer's visionary idea, an organic project has been turned into a concrete and shared development project for a community and its territory, thus **capturing other local stakeholders' interest and capacities, enhancing the local identity and taking advantage of local/regional trends of change**.

Such considerations should underpin the use of organic agriculture as a rural development policy-making instrument.

A territorial perspective is required to reach a **critical mass** in local organic production and connected services and activities, which would allow the sector to influence local/regional development trajectories.

"Eco-region" and "organic district" initiatives<sup>3</sup> are interesting examples of how organic agriculture can act in a territory as a catalysing factor in fostering dynamic, innovative entrepreneurship, generating employment and mobilising endogenous development drivers.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the ideas and the wording of this strategic area heavily draw on a recently published document by FAO illustrating the principles of a new methodological approach to rural development: the PNTD. For further info see: FAO Rural Development Division (2005) *An approach to rural development: Participatory and Negotiated Development* (PNTD), Rome. [http://www.fao.org/sd/dim\\_pe2/pe2\\_050402\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe2/pe2_050402_en.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Schermer, M. (2006) *Regional Development: through organic territory: ecoregions in Austria*. In: Holt G. Reed M. (eds) *Sociological Perspective of Organic Agriculture: From Pioneer to Policy*. CABI (in press).

Clearly, in this perspective, the existence in the territory of a **strong and well organised local organic movement** represents a **critical success factor**.

In the newly established EU rural development policy, various instruments – LEADER, first of all – may be available to support organic agriculture on a territorial basis.

The **territorial approach necessarily entails some engagement in negotiation** with other actors whose stakes in the same spatial resources and whose actions in the same rural arenas can handicap or facilitate organic farming's rural development outcome. The process of dialogue and negotiation itself is a valuable opportunity both for supporters and for opponents of organic farming at the local level. The former could realistically assess organic farming's potential (over-optimism is often as detrimental as underestimation) and accordingly plan their strategies. The latter may be induced to reconsider some of their preconceptions and positions. A **common ground for discussion and action need to be found** and new interesting synergies and partnerships may arise.

In many territories of the CADSES area the institutional building process is still incomplete and rural institutions are quite weak and poorly (or only informally) networked.

In this framework, negotiation may not be a straightforward process to go through.

Therefore, **awareness raising, training, animation and networking** initiatives constitute a **critical preparatory step** to carefully plan and appropriately implement. Moreover, institutional capacity building activities should be envisaged for a better representativeness and to improve lobbying capacity for local needs.

## **2. Encourage collaboration between the organic agriculture communities and rural development movements**

National Rural Movements have been recently (and are still being) formed across many Central and Eastern European countries modelled on the early work of Nordic European countries. By combining bottom-up initiatives, like village action movements and local NGOs, with more top-down and co-ordinated organisational formulas such as rural forums and parliaments (especially developed in Central and Eastern Europe), these movements appear well placed to provide a voice to local people's needs and creativity whilst, at the same time, dialoguing with government and public organisations. Rural movements are also networked internationally, develop common agendas and actively lobby for policy change at the EU level<sup>4</sup>.

In the framework of the newly established EU rural development policy, national, transnational and grass-roots rural movements support a **broader notion of rural development** policymaking which demands that the priorities of competitiveness, sustainability and cohesion are pursued together and the adoption of an integrated, territorial and partnership-based approach to all rural development measures. Rural movements advocate the need to encourage the evolution of agriculture into a market-oriented and multifunctional industry.

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Häring et al. (2005) The potential of the new EU Rural Development Programme in supporting Organic Farming. Discussion Paper, EU-CEE-OFP, QLK5 -2002-00917.

<sup>4</sup> For further info about rural movements in Eastern European countries, see Halhead (2005) *The Rural Movements of Europe. Participative democracy and rural policy formulation. The role of rural community movements in Europe*. Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Rural Network Conference, Abingdon, Virginia, USA, June 2005.

At the same time, they recommend to go beyond the limited focus on agriculture to embrace, for effective diversification paths, all the sectors of rural economies.

This broader understanding of rural development issues appears to match a **more comprehensive and multifunctional idea of organic agriculture** (not just reduced to an agri-environment measure, but also considered as a tool for sustainable integrated development) that many rural development analysts and practitioners are increasingly supporting, recognising the adoption of **organic farming as a sustainable livelihood strategy** worth considering in many different rural areas.

Hence, there is **scope and urgent need for convergence** and fruitful **cooperation** between rural movements and organic agriculture communities.

Collaboration between such two vibrant phenomena of current rural environments and discourses, if adequately encouraged, would, on one hand, contribute to realizing organic agriculture's potential for sustainable rural development, on the other, further enrich rural movements' base of support and operational agenda.

Synergies between organic agriculture communities and rural development movements could contribute to a more widespread uptake of rural development policy opportunities among organic operators, in line with the recommendations included in the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming<sup>5</sup> which points out that many of such opportunities are not always very well known in the organic sector.

The new EU RD policy could for instance provide room to: promote organic agriculture's role model for farming in environmental sensitive areas; emphasize its synergies with rural territories and communities in terms of local marketing initiatives, participation in food quality schemes, diversification of economic activities; enhance capacities in the sector, by extending professional training opportunities to organic actors other than farmers<sup>6</sup>.

In new and old EU member states national and regional RDPs are now being elaborated for the next programming period (2007-2013). At the same time, Organic Action Plans are being designed in many countries.

In this framework, **adequate prioritisation of organic agriculture in the new RDPs** - as many analysts suggest<sup>7</sup> - could be a bold and important move towards a more structured and coherent support to organic agriculture and to the realisation of its development potential in rural areas.

Only through creative and strategically targeted planning and implementation of EU and national RD policies, organic farming will not remain but one item in the new RD policy's menu and its impact on sustainable development of rural areas will become more appreciable.

Participation of organic agriculture representatives in the consultative and monitoring committees for new RDPs would be a significant boost in this direction.

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<sup>5</sup> EC (2004) European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament COM (2004)415 final (10.6.2004).

<sup>6</sup> Häring et al. (2005) *The potential of the new EU Rural Development Programme in supporting Organic Farming*. Discussion Paper , EU-CEE-OFP, QLK<sub>5</sub>-2002-00917.

<sup>7</sup> Slabe, A. et al. (2005) *Specific needs of organic farming sectors in the EU New Member States and Candidate Countries to be addressed by the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013*. D11: Discussion Paper 3, EU-CEE-OFP, QLK<sub>5</sub>-2002-00917.

Evidently, convergence of objectives and measures in national (and regional) support policies for organic agriculture, on one hand, and for rural development, on the other hand, is a critical step also in Accession and Third countries of the CADSES area.

### **3. Build on organic agriculture's philosophy to shape a new rural identity**

Although agriculture is but one component of the “post-industrial rurality”, it is still quite a dominant one in many countries (and regions) of the CADSES area, especially in the most rural regions where poverty is still an important issue to address and agriculture a crucial source of output and income.

Moreover, with the closing down of industrial enterprises located in rural regions and a mainly urban-oriented growth of the service sector, the restructuring and revitalisation of the agricultural sector seem to be urgently needed to avoid the materialisation of the worst scenarios of decline and marginalisation which have been experienced elsewhere. This has to be a regeneration process based on the values and the principles of sustainable agriculture.

Experience suggests that, if adequately supported, sustainable agriculture development can play an important role as a source of pro-poor growth, primarily leading to dramatic improvements of the living conditions and the preservation of the local natural capital. Progressively, it also fosters significant growth in rural non-farm economies.

**Organic farming is one of the most holistic forms of sustainable agriculture.**

If fully understood and genuinely applied, organic agriculture philosophy can be **a very proactive and innovative driving force thanks to its people-and-place-centred approach** to farming and to the management of the resources variously connected to it.

Like, to a certain extent, other sustainable methods of farming, organic agriculture may not be, sometimes, an immediately affordable, safe and ready-to-use option, which on one hand calls for appropriate rural/agricultural policy interventions in terms of distribution, use and quantity of available resources as well as of creation of supportive environment.

On the other hand, organic farming absorbs underutilised local workforce, increases local income opportunities and **entails a very intensive learning process** (for effective compliance to specific standards and principles). This **gradually empowers individuals**, leading to improvements in the local capacity to experiment, innovate and solve own problems, stimulating networking and collective action and revaluing sustainable local traditions and knowledge.

**A new, enabling sense of rural identity and pride** may arise as an interesting **side effect from this learning process**. It can contribute to make the living and working in certain rural areas more attractive both for experienced farmers and for new urban landowners, it can capture the youth interest and offer alternative opportunities to rural women.

An **adequate policy framework** should be established, at the national and local level, to encourage and consolidate such achievements and to capitalise on mobilised resources. Equally, **appropriate information and communication initiatives** should be supported to create a shared knowledge based on the local/national “rural” and on organic agriculture's potential for its conservation and sustainable valorisation.

Sustainable development is primarily about people and about building up on people's awareness and capacity for self-development while caring for their own land, heritage and environments.

Where feasible, organic agriculture is recognised as potentially contributing to such individual and collective skills acquisition.

Yet, extreme commoditisation and conventionalisation pressures, individualist behaviours, strong and permanent incentive-dependency are also frequently observed in the organic sector, due to partial, unbalanced focus on the application of organic agriculture's principles and practices.

Linking policy support for organic agriculture to complementary investments aimed at human and social capital development could reduce such risks and contribute to release people (and places)'s energy and resourcefulness.

This may be particularly crucial in transition societies (like some in the CADSES area) where fast changes have often placed a double pressure on certain rural areas, due to natural decline on one hand, and forced development, on the other.

In such areas, there is a strong need for dynamic, creative people with organisational capacities and ready to take responsibility; in other words, for local leaders able to determine development options, to keep control over the development process and to retain benefits locally.

Through **facilitating the emergence of such local leaders**, organic agriculture can contribute to endogenous development.

#### **4. Invest in organic agriculture's alternative appeal to regenerate urban-rural inter-relations**

Urban-rural divide and the notion of "the rural" as peripheral and backward still appear to be important elements of the rural development debate and discourses in various countries/regions of the CADSES area where the "urban bias" is still a dominant attitude.

Meanwhile the occasions for rural-urban exchanges are increasing, rural regular commuters to urban workplaces, rural out-migrants and urban in-migrants, urban tourists visiting the countryside being but some examples. Additionally, in such neglected, or sometimes contested, rural spaces things are gradually and quietly evolving.

Considerable support to stop negative trends of change and to facilitate positive ones in rural areas may derive from urban actors whose interest and commitment could be captured by making them share a new, more attractive view of "the rural" and perceive it as source of local/national pride.

**Raising urban awareness and commitment for rural destiny** could also contribute, to some extent, to meet the insistently lamented need for capital and entrepreneurial skills in rural areas.

In many cases **food** can be a **very powerful vehicle to regenerate urban-rural relationships** through alternative initiatives such as local food links or community supported agriculture schemes which are usually more likely to be established in the connection with organic farming.

But also outside such schemes, by permanently connecting urban tables (and homes) to rural fields (and communities), **regular purchase of local organic products can significantly**

**contribute to rural development**, despite the physical distance which sometimes separates urban consumers from organic producers living and working in peripheral rural areas. Positive feedback from urban customers can help these farmers escape their marginalisation. At the same time, reciprocal knowledge and mutual understanding can be fostered.

Hence, important policy implications can be derived, for instance, in terms of **effective communication**.

Moreover, organic agriculture naturally tends (and could be further encouraged) to establish **multiple synergies with other sustainable uses of the countryside** like green and rural tourism small-businesses, educational programs, environment conservation schemes, renewable energy initiatives which have increasing appeal to young generations and urban dwellers.

Regenerated rural-urban relations represent an essential first move towards a collectively perceived need for a **more balanced territorial development** and a more effective lobbying for adequate public investment reorientation in favour of rural development.

## **5. Develop organic agriculture's potential for diversification of rural economies**

Organic agriculture is not just about applying ecologically-sound farming methods and producing healthy quality food. In many ways, to a certain extent, it can also **contribute to diversify rural economies through income generation and job creation**, hence offering an alternative to young people who are not willing to migrate to cities.

Options available at the *individual farm level* are most frequently linked to crop diversification, on-farm processing and agro-tourist activities. Various other options can be produced by each farmer/operator's creativity. The development of entrepreneurial attitude and ability, often lacking in many rural areas of CADSES territory, can be **facilitated by organic farming's innovative and self-reliant philosophy**.

Yet, more substantial contribution to local economy diversification may result from the introduction of organic agriculture on a *territorial basis* which would open up new opportunities for the development of multiple upward and downward linkages within and outside the organic sector, that is connected to the supply of inputs and technical advice as well as to the provision of infrastructure and services for post-harvest, processing and marketing activities.

Organic farming and production can also play an important part in **enhancing the territory/region's overall image** and increasing the demand for regionally branded food and craft products and for countryside tourist and recreation services.

Further interesting partnerships can result from synergies with the people and agencies involved in the management of protected areas and environment and cultural heritage conservation initiatives.

A **conducive institutional and business environment** should be created, accordingly, in order to realise such potentialities.

Local/regional economies circumstances and distress-push/demand-pull factors<sup>8</sup> should be carefully considered in planning diversification strategies and connected policy support.

Moreover, efforts to achieve an appropriate balance between on-farm and off-farm initiatives as well as between self-employment promotion and micro-business development opportunities, providing waged labour, should be searched for.

**Convergence** of aims and instruments **with rural development policies** (upgrading of rural infrastructure, provision of learning/training opportunities, health system improvements, etc.), **agencies and grass-roots initiatives**, on one hand, and **a revitalised, more collaborative urban-rural interplay**, on the other, are both critical factors of success in such development strategies.

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### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FIRST VALIDATION WORKSHOP**

In the framework of the first validation workshop of the Strategy, held in Warsaw in September 2005, after some plenary and group discussion on the draft document, participants were asked to identify and vote a list of policy goals that could be suggested to operationalise the five proposed strategic areas.

The table below shows the policy goals identified by the audience, listed in order of expressed preferences, and associated to the relevant strategic area.

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<sup>8</sup> Diversification can be demand-pull, where rural people respond to new opportunities or distress-push, where the poorest are driven to seek non-farm employment as a survival strategy. Sometimes these processes work together. For further details see: Davis, R. (2003) *Evolution of national and regional policies and programmes supporting diversification of rural incomes in the context of the EU accession*. In: Tanic, S. and Lonc. T. (eds.) (2003) *Proceedings of FAO workshop on Farm Commercialisation and Income Diversification on the road to EU accession, Prague, Czech Republic, 2-6 November 2003*.

### The Warsaw workshop results

Strategic Area	Policy goals
1	Continuous animation activities, training, education, extension at loc. level
2	Capacity building of loc. associations, institutions, stakeholders (incl. RD mov.)
4	Education on organic agriculture in schools and among consumers
4	Promote organic farmers' markets
3	Information centres on organic agriculture
5	Promote economic diversification of farm activities in rural areas
4	Organic meals in canteens (public procurement)
1	Networking at all levels (local etc.)
3	Support farm shops in rural / urban areas
4	Promote agro-tourism and eco-tourism
5	Promote supply chain and vertical integration
5	Promote environmental sustainability
2	Strengthen/Create RD movements in each country and at internat. level
2	Involve organic movement in rural development movements
3	Creation of a database of contextual knowledge
4	Develop promotional activities on organic farming
5	Promote social sustainability (special attention to minorities)
1	Continuous monitoring of local territories
4	Foster cooperation in direct sales

There are multiple interlinkages and some overlapping among the suggested policy goals. Interestingly, these appear to revolve around three main recurring ideas which correspond to some needs, strongly perceived in the organic sector and rural communities of many CADSES countries and regions.

The first of such needs is a permanent local demand for all sorts of **animation** activities, which adequately designed and carried out, can produce significant results in terms of people's empowerment and participation to the shaping of their territories' development. Animation encourages *networking* through which *territorial diversity* can be usefully enhanced.

Secondly, particular attention is given to any initiative aimed at the development of the **market**, not only for organic foods - through ordinary and alternative channels - but also for those rural services that could be profitably associated to organic agriculture by seizing available opportunities for the diversification of local economies.

The third key idea expressed by the workshop participants is linked to the need for a satisfactory provision of **information and education** services, addressing "organic and rural development" issues of specific interest for the local communities and targeting various groups of the local population (farmers, young people, consumers, local decision-makers, etc.).

With regard to such challenges, the positive, though still relatively short experience of SIMOCA Competence Centres, created in the project pilot areas, can offer good food for thought and further suggestions for future action.

**Community Initiative INTERREG III B (2000 – 2006) CADSES**

Project title (*short title or acronym*)

**SIMOCA**

Lead Partner (*institution and country*)

**Istituto Agronomico Mediterraneo di Bari (IAMB) - (ITALY)**

**Project title**

**SIMOCA: Setting up and implementation of sustainable and multifunctional rural development model based on organic and competitive agriculture**

**Summarized description of the project**

The general objective of the project is to define a new strategy for sustainable and multifunctional rural development based on the growth of organic farming. The general objectives are in line with Priority 1 of the Program Complement, and in particular with Measure 1.3 “Shaping rural development”.

For this purpose, territorial integration between CADSES countries has to be favored by promoting meetings and exchange of knowledge between different bodies that promote land development (decision makers, end-users, etc.) by setting up international networks and favoring knowledge exchange.

The structure of the project is sub-divided into 5 work packages:

- WP1 Building up a common trans-national knowledgebase and permanent communication-networking system;
- WP2 – Elaboration of best-practice models on farm and catchments level for multifunctional and organic agriculture in selected areas;
- WP3. Implementation of the Best-Practice Model in selected case study areas.(Pilot actions);
- WP4 Setting up and validation of a trans-national strategy of sustainable and multifunctional rural development strategy;
- WP5 Capacity building training, awareness and dissemination with innovative systems.

**Project duration**

Date of project start **January,2003**

Date of project finalisation

**March 2006**

**List of partners (LP: Lead Partner, PP: Project Partner)**

		<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>
	LP	<b>CIHEAM-Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari - Via Ceglie 9 - 70010 Valenzano (BA) -Italy</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 1	<b>REGIONE PUGLIA - Via caduti di tutte le guerre n° 15 - 70126 - Bari -ITALY</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 2	<b>Sviluppo Marche S.p.A (SVIM) - Viale della Vittoria 11 - 60123 - Ancona - Italy</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 3	<b>Regione Marche - Dipartimento di Agricoltura - Via Tiziano 44 - 60121 - Ancona - Italy</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 4	<b>Regione Abruzzo-Agenzia Regionale per I Servizi di Sviluppo Agricolo- ARSSA - Piazza Torlonia, 91 - 76051- Avezzano (Aq) - Italy</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 5	<b>UNIVERSITA' DI BARI - Piazza Umberto 1° - 70010 - Bari- Italy</b>	<b>Italy</b>
	PP 6	<b>C.I.H.E.A.M.-Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania - Macedonia Street 85 - 73100 - Chania - Greece</b>	<b>Greece</b>
	PP 7	<b>EKO LIBURNIA - JELACICEV TRG 1/III - HR 51000 - RIJEKA - CROATIA</b>	<b>Croatia</b>
	PP 8	<b>Warsaw Agricultural University - Nowoursynowska 159 C - 02-766 - Warszawa - Poland.</b>	<b>Poland</b>
	PP 9	<b>Slovak Academy of Science - Institute of Botany - Dubravska Cesta 14 84523 - Bratislava -Slovakia</b>	<b>Slovak Republic</b>