



LACTIMED, cross-border cooperation to promote typical dairy products in the Mediterranean

For thousands of years, Mediterranean regions have had a tradition of livestock farming and dairy production which, even today, has an important social and economic role in rural communities. Milk and dairy products also occupy an important place in the Mediterranean diet.

Yet, nowadays, this dairy chain has to deal with a number of challenges that are sometimes more accentuated in the Northern Mediterranean, like competition from industrially manufactured products, a loss of farming and food diversity and dwindling interest in farming professions. In the Southern countries, the challenges are more linked to insufficient quantities produced and non-guaranteed quality, low levels of milk processing and the informal nature of the dairy business. However, most constraints are common to all rural areas in the Mediterranean, such as animal feed and productivity, quality and food safety, difficulties in promoting typical products, access to funding and the structuration of the dairy chain at a regional level.

Over three years, the LACTIMED Project, initiated by the ANIMA Network and the CIHEAM – MAIM, strove to boost the production and distribution of typical and innovative dairy products in the Mediterranean. It has contributed to the organisation of local dairy chains, supported dairy farmers and promoted their products in local and international markets.

To achieve this, we brought together twelve partners with complementary profiles in five different regions (Alexandria and Beheira (Egypt), Bekaa and Baalbeck-Hermel (Lebanon), Bizerte and Beja (Tunisia), Sicily (Italy) and Thessaly (Greece). By gathering academic experts with chambers of commerce, innovation clusters and those involved in promoting the regions, LACTIMED provided an opportunity to promote the dairy chain from all these angles.

By using the meticulous local diagnosis studies, the project engaged producers in a collective process of targeting markets and pooling resources to attain them. Eight pilot clusters resulted from this work on subjects ranging from improving quality (collection, health and safety, training) to retailing (labelling, marketing, e-commerce). The project also supported and funded entrepreneurs involved in innovative approaches to promote traditional products.

In addition to these local activities, various discussions and field visits gave rise to a network of people and skills combining the private-sector, public authorities, academic institutions and civil society. This Mediterranean network resulted from the LACTIMED Project and constitutes an important base to pursue this work in developing the regions by strengthening and structuring the dairy chain and, more generally, typical agricultural products from the Mediterranean.

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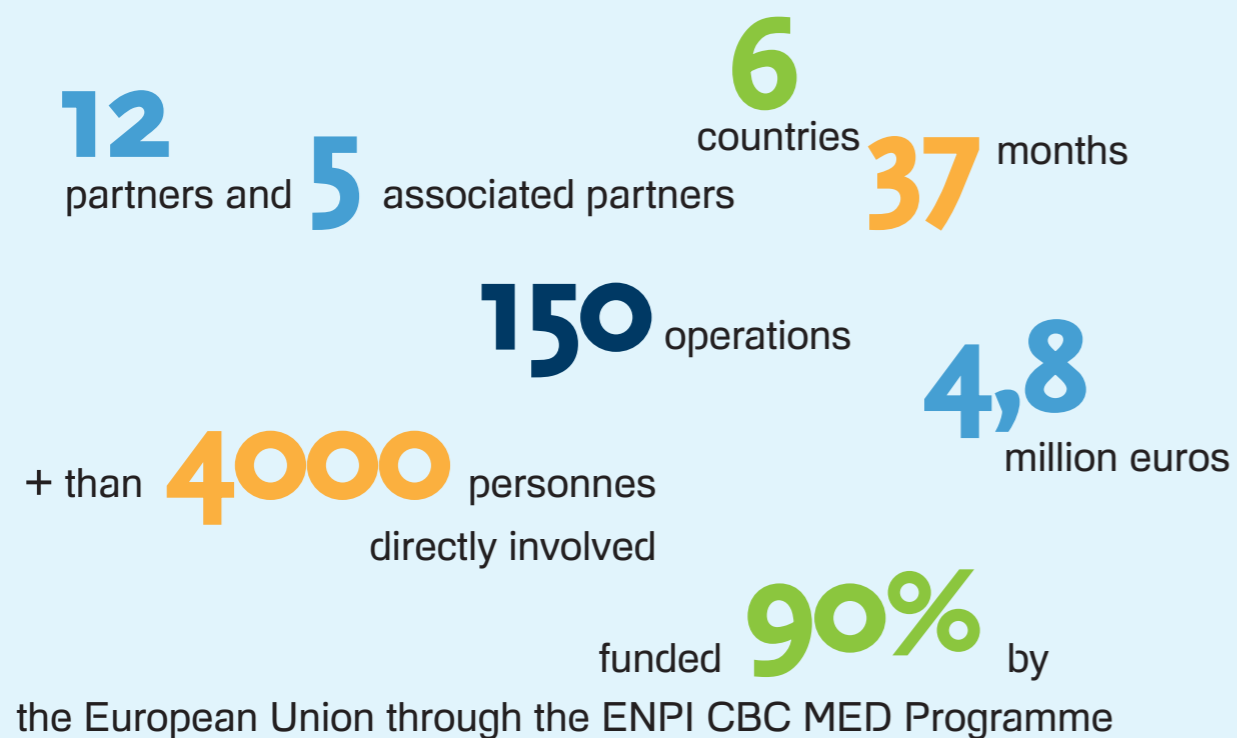
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LACTIMED aims to foster the production and distribution of typical and innovative dairy products in the Mediterranean by organising local value chains, supporting producers in their development projects and creating new markets for their products. The project is 90% funded, for an amount of EUR 4.35 million, by the European Union through the ENPI CBC MED programme. From November 2012 to December 2015, **ANIMA** and its 11 partners organised a hundred operations targeting the various stakeholders of the dairy chains of Alexandria and Beheira (*Egypt*), the Bekaa and Baalbeck-Hermel (*Lebanon*), Bizerte and Beja (*Tunisia*), Sicily (*Italy*) and Thessaly (*Greece*).

LACTIMED IN FIGURES



A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION

The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

The European Union implements the multilateral cross-border cooperation "Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme" which is part of the new European Neighbourhood Policy and of its financing instrument (ENPI): it includes the European Union and partner countries regions placed along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)

The management of the Programme is ensured by joint structures, and implemented by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). The general objective of the Programme is to contribute to promoting the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential.

LACTIMED project Consortium

Project leader (ANIMA) + partners and associates (Chambers of commerce and agriculture, training and research organisations, public authorities, financial organisations, civil society, clusters, etc.)



COORDINATOR, PARTNERS AND ASSOCIATES

France

ANIMA Investment Network
Cooperation platform for economic development in the Mediterranean (LACTIMED project Coordinator)
CIHEAM-MAIM - International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (Partner)
CCIFM - Italian Chamber of Commerce for France in Marseille (Partner)

Greece

University of Thessaly (Partner)
UHCCI - Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Partner)
Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food - Animal Production Directorate (Associate)

Italy

ASTER (Partner)
Slow Food (Partner)
Slow Food Italy (Associate)



Egypt

GAFI - General Authority for Investment (Partner)
CACIC - German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce (Partner)
CITL-AAST - College of International Transport and Logistics - Arab Academy for Science Technology and Maritime Transport (Partner)

Lebanon

CCIAZ - Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Zahle and Bekaa (Partner)
Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon - Direction of Animal Resources (Associate)

Tunisia

Bizerte Cluster (Partner)
BNA - National Agricultural Bank, Bizerte Regional Direction (Associate)
DERB - Bizerte Regional Development Association (Associate)

Target groups

Micro, small and medium enterprises of the dairy sector

Farmers, collectors, processors, providers

Supporting organisations

Agro-clusters, local chambers, business organisations, regional directorates for agriculture, universities, R&D centres

Agro-industrial groups

Small, medium and large retailers

Tourism and catering operators

National and local authorities





6 countries
12 partners and **5** associated partners
37 months (from November 2012 to December 2015)
150 operations
+ than 4000 personnes directly involved
4,8 million euros (funded 90% by the European Union through the ENPI CBC MED Programme)



5 diagnoses of the dairy chains
389 stakeholders from the dairy chains consulted
60 typical dairy products identified
3 training cycles



About **200** stakeholders trained (including SMEs) and more than **30** speakers



8 cluster pilot projects
100 000 euros for the competition on innovative projects laureates



10 000 euros for each of the **10** awarded projects

50 projects presented

38 entrepreneurs and project holders preselected and coached

1 308 business meetings

6 conferences

10 taste workshops / theaters

150 buyers involved

104 SMEs involved



15 cities: Palermo, Enna, Milazzo, Turin, Zahle, Beirut, Alexandria, Cairo, Montpellier, Marseille, Athens, Larissa, Corfu, Tunis, Bizerte.

27 investment opportunities and **9** pre-feasibility studies

25 partnership opportunities

28 agri-tourism activities

16 publications and **450** press articles



LOCAL DIAGNOSES TO DEVELOP A CONCERTED STRATEGY

Right from the outset of the project, a team of experts went to meet almost 400 local stakeholders (livestock farmers, producers, collectors, processors and support organisations, etc.) in Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Sicily and Tunisia. They produced inventories of the local dairy chains to map out the different players, resources and skills in each territory as well as their market positioning. This work was undertaken from January to September 2013 and resulted in 5 diagnosis reports on the state of local dairy chains and commercial opportunities in national and international markets centred on four main priorities:


- An inventory of the dairy chain: literature review, identification of local stakeholders, interviews and working meetings with experts and key stakeholders;
- Field surveys involving 81 cheese and dairy producers, 110 livestock farmers, 36 livestock farmers/processors, 43 local authority, national and institutional representatives, 40 distributors, 18 industry experts, 14 animal feed producers, 316 consumers and 2 consumer organisations, 2 tour operators,

12 research, development and training centres, and 4 consular chambers and development agencies;

- Identification of 60 typical local dairy products with production method specifications;

- Summarising and defining strategic priorities to ensure the development of the industry and proposals of ways forward to create dairy clusters.

This work was completed by a study on the dairy products market and international market opportunities which provided a basis for supplementary information and analysis. These territorial diagnosis reports helped adopt a strategy with SMEs and other value chain players to promote typical local dairy products for better integration of the dairy industry and its commercial development. The diagnosis reports are a cornerstone of this strategy and the project activities run over a 3-year period. They are also key tools to raise awareness of public authorities about the constraints of the industry that require greater support in terms of public policy.

 **5** dairy chain
diagnosis reports

 **389**
dairy chain stakeholders consulted

60
typical local dairy products identified



COMMON CHALLENGES IN MEDITERRANEAN REGIONS

Collecting this precious information from grass-roots stakeholders helped reveal the difficulties they face as well as key priorities identified by LACTIMED to address them as effectively as possible.

In summary, this research highlighted (frequently) common challenges such as a lack of infrastructure and the expense of feeding livestock in most of the regions. Hygiene and food safety issues sometimes prevent small-scale producers from accessing national and international markets. Processors suffer from irregular milk supplies while financial tools are poorly adapted and there is generally not enough investment to develop the industry.

In Mediterranean regions, there are major socio-economic issues at stake connected to dairy livestock farming activities. Some of these concern improvements in the income of rural communities, fighting poverty, creating jobs and promoting rural areas (socio-cultural heritage, tourism and land-use planning). However, despite efforts made to boost dairy production, the dairy chain is still far short of its potential in many countries. Numerous structural constraints penalise its development and weaken livestock farmers, most of whom are in a highly vulnerable economic situation and have few alternative activities, especially in mountainous areas. Despite the wide range of production systems present in the regions studied, the major common challenges identified by professionals fall into five areas:

1 • Ensuring quality animal feed to improve productivity

Securing good quality animal feed is a major concern for livestock farmers and one of the main problems hindering productivity in the dairy chain.

To reduce the gap between local availability and animal feed consumption, measures must be taken to restrict concentrated feed imports and to improve the quality of feed rations. The main courses for action are:

- Taking simultaneous action to extend areas earmarked for fodder production and boost crop productivity;
- Encouraging the use of by-products derived from the food processing industry;
- Reinforcing the technical supervision and training provided to livestock farmers in terms of balanced feeding practices and storage which influence herd health, productivity and product quality.

2 • Food safety and improving quality: disseminating good practices for high quality products

The pressing need to improve quality, especially in terms of food safety, is indisputable in the face of growing consumer demand. The actions identified seek to establish a genuine quality-based policy for operators to improve food safety and the commercial quality of marketed products. Improving quality helps both ensure consumer safety by marketing safe products and promotes local dairy products.

As milk is a sensitive product, microbiologically-speaking (contamination risks), managing quality requires the involvement of all operators and all links in the dairy chain (production, collection, processing, distribution, etc.). Public authority involvement is vital for public health issues and implementing quality-based policies in the upstream part of the sector for livestock practices, milking and collection, is therefore a priority. Indeed, disseminating good practices is prerequisite to developing the industry.

3 • Enhancing product origin and supporting collective approaches to promote typical local products

Under the influence of population growth and rising consumer interest in traditional products, the outlook for growth in the demand for dairy products offers promising perspectives that require major promotional policies.



The challenge of improving the quality of local dairy products should not be limited to food safety. Promoting the distinctive qualities of these products (organoleptic, nutritional, place of origin and traditional know-how) is also a key area of action. The typical features of products have a highly important position in the dairy industry and largely contribute to its promotion. These properties provide real potential to create added value which requires, in particular, developing national standards and regulations that include the distinctive characteristics of products, encouraging collective quality-based measures via a policy of official labels, and introducing control mechanisms to comply with specifications while funding joint promotional activities.

4 • Access to bank finance to facilitate professional development and structuring in the sector

Development of the dairy value chain remains hampered by a lack of financial resources. Small farmers are excluded from private bank finance and the lack of funding exacerbates the economic vulnerability of farms and seriously impedes the modernisation of production resources and product promotion (input supplies, equipment and marketing). Certain measures could address this problem:

- Creating partnerships between the State and commercial banks and financial tools geared to the economic circumstances of small-scale producers (eligibility, guarantees, duration of loans);
- Introducing public-sector financial support targeting small producers with short-term loans (for purchasing better quality inputs) and medium and long-term credit to buy equipment and construct buildings to improve production conditions;
- Encouraging producer groupings (clusters or others) eligible for collective funding support.



5 • Support the structuring of a network organisation at a regional level

To ensure growth in the dairy sector, it is vital that efforts to structure the value chain are backed up with strong horizontal and vertical coordination between all players. Building a cluster-type network organisation at a regional level appears to be the best option to facilitate the delivery of concrete solutions for common problems by pooling resources and expertise and strengthening innovative capacity.



RAISING PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS AWARENESS

As a genuine mouthpiece for SMEs, the project strove to disseminate the findings of the diagnoses and, in particular, the obstacles identified, to generate greater awareness and bring changes to support measures and regulations. To do this, the LACTIMED team drafted a joint white paper on the pilot regions. This included recommendations to develop favourable conditions for typical and innovative Mediterranean products, supplemented by specific recommendations for Sicily and Egypt.

This appeal is aimed at institutional decision-makers in charge of public policy at national, regional or territorial levels. LACTIMED's ambition was to both raise the awareness about constraints that weighing heavily on the industry and to implement actions to realise the full value of typical local dairy products. The recommendations from the field studies formulated by various dairy chain players plead for robust and pragmatic institutional support to create the right conditions to develop this strategic value chain which supports inclusive local development.

This white paper was presented and discussed at 9 different high-level meetings with 33 public authority or decision-making officials. It also involved more than fifty representatives from civil society, private sector academic institutions, development agencies or private-sector support organisations and journalists.

The findings from the diagnosis reports were also disseminated to local stakeholders during 6 workshops bringing together 408 participants, as well as the general public and professional audiences at 6 conferences directly informing 200 people. This awareness-raising exercise was relayed by communication activities and press campaigns in each country.

Overall, the awareness-raising activities helped resonate the dairy chain priority needs and contributed to engaging all the players (especially public sector stakeholders) on these questions.



LACTIMED was presented on the France Pavilion during the Universal Exposition 2015 in Milan as a good practice in the Mediterranean Agri-food sector.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION BASED ON THE DIAGNOSES AND A STRATEGY IN CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Contribute to the inclusion of dairy chains and creation of local clusters
- Foster entrepreneurship and innovation
- Increase the visibility and reputation of typical dairy products to develop commercialisation
- Develop local capacity through Mediterranean exchanges
- Initiate the Route of Mediterranean Dairy Products

LACTIMED team exchanges views on the dairy sector with Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and Anna Catte, Director General of the JMA of ENPI CBC MED programme.



STRENGTHENING THE DAIRY INDUSTRY BY BUILDING NETWORKS: CREATING CLUSTERS TO JOINTLY ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF EACH TERRITORY

- 8 cluster pilot projects
- More than 360 stakeholders from the dairy chains consulted

One of the objectives of the LACTIMED Project was to develop the dairy chain by creating local clusters. It was advisable that the challenges identified during the diagnostic exercises carried out in each territory at the start of the project should be considered collectively. LACTIMED began creating clusters to provide solutions by pooling resources and expertise and improving the structure of the dairy chain. To boost locally created value, the project encouraged suppliers, livestock farmers, collectors, processors, distributors, research laboratories, training centres and support organisations to be part of a network and create local dairy clusters. The aim was to pool resources (natural, technical and financial), knowledge (research

and development, training, livestock farming, collecting, processing, packaging and marketing) and to develop new collective forms of access to markets.

As such, after consulting with more than 360 stakeholders, 2014 saw the emergence of 8 cluster projects to meet the specific needs and challenges expressed by those stakeholders in each territory. Sharing everyone's problems and advantages had a real impact on the ground.

8 clusters in the Mediterranean
for a more competitive dairy chain



APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The creation of clusters in 6 steps

1] Diagnosis of the dairy chain

- Inventory of the dairy chain
- Field surveys with stakeholders
- Identification of typical local dairy products
- Study of national and international market opportunities
- Summary and proposal of a local action plan
- Diagnosis of the local dairy chain

2] Workshop to present the findings of the diagnostic exercises and mobilise local players

- Presentation and discussion of finding
- Discussion on a joint strategy
- Raise awareness about the cluster's collective approach
- A core group of players (SMEs and institutions linked to the industry) wanting to work together to develop a cluster

3] Working groups of local players, partners and stakeholders in the local value chain

- Participatory development of a pilot cluster project to address common challenges, to be more competitive and to generate economies of scale, etc
- The "bottom-up" approach adopted by the LACTIMED partners is to develop a cluster that meets the needs and aspirations of its members and can be appropriated by those members
- Building a joint strategy

4] Joint conceptualisation of cluster projects

- Generating several ideas and organising them into a hierarchy
- Strategic choice and formalising the steps to establish the cluster
- Cluster pilot project

5] Launch and growth of the cluster

- Implementation of pilot activities
- Stakeholder support from LACTIMED partners acting as facilitators
- The aim is for its members to take ownership of the cluster tool and for a leader to emerge

6] Review of implementation and sustainability

- Produce an assessment of the cluster after its launch
- Identify challenges and proposals to address these collectively
- Produce a roadmap for the cluster

Consolidate the implementation of clusters by a cross-cutting action

• Regional capacity building training sessions for SMEs and local support structures in the dairy chain

- The cluster approach
- Efficient and sustainable farming techniques
- Flexible and innovative agro-industrial processes
- Short and long marketing channels
- National and international regulations, etc.

• Raising local authority awareness

- A White Paper for the introduction of measures to sustain local agro-clusters for typical and innovative Mediterranean products
- Discuss the obstacles identified by the diagnosis and public policies supporting the dairy sector
- Highlight the potential of typical dairy products in terms of job creation, contribution to the balance of payments (exports), competitiveness (securing added value), conserving traditional know-how and nutritional health
- Promote the inclusion and dissemination of project results for agricultural and food industry development policies

• Cross-border exchanges on the cluster approach

• Market access and promotion of cluster products

- Participation of SMEs in joint promotion activities to make their products visible
- Organisation of business meetings with buyers (small and large-scale retail, chef networks, etc.) and consumers
- Promotional activities for investment opportunities and partnerships in the pilot territories
- Raising professional audience and public authority awareness about challenges facing the dairy sector



8 CLUSTERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN FOR A MORE COMPETITIVE DAIRY CHAIN

Tunisia

Objective

- Improve milk quality and organise its collection
- Facilitate access of small-scale livestock farmers and processors to bank finance to boost production

Bizerte Cluster (dairy cattle sector): 25 livestock farmers + 1 collection company + dairy sector support organisations + financial and academic institutions

Beja Cluster (sheep dairy sector): More than 50 sheep farmers (breeding Sicilio-Sarda breed ewes) + 2 processors + dairy sector support organisations + financial and academic institutions

The dairy cattle and sheep sectors of Bizerte and Beja respectively face difficulties in milk supply, and the overriding need is to improve milk quality and optimise collection and access to finance. Two clusters have been developed to jointly address these needs: in Bizerte for the cattle dairy sector, in Beja for the sheep dairy sector. The main purpose is to develop a pooled collection center, encourage the processing of typical products and develop new products, pool specific equipment and services (veterinary assistance, technical assistance, and group purchase at advantageous prices), help access training to preserve livestock farming methods and traditional management practices while fostering the growth of agro-tourism in the region.



The participation of organisations supporting the dairy chain, financial institutions, federations and research institutes is an asset to further structure the dairy chain. In particular, the participation of the National Agricultural Bank in the cluster helped develop two innovative financial products which facilitated the financing of 153 breeders producing milk. Financing them through the cluster decreased the risk linked to their solvency and generated about 4.4 million dinars loans to acquire heifers (Tripartite loan) and to invest in their farm (Interface loan). This initiative allowed small farmers generally excluded from financing to invest and increase or even double their herd, increasing their productivity and incomes.

Lebanon

Objective

- Improve milk quality and organise the collection of goats' milk

Ayta Al Foukhar Cluster: 15 members. Goat milk processing

Al Fekha Cluster: 15 sheep and goat farmers. Joint milk collection and milk processing

Deir El Ahmar Cluster: 15 members, including 13 farmers. Milk processing

In Lebanon, collection and milk quality-related issues brought producers together to address common needs, especially in terms of structuring and organisation. The clusters have been set up as cooperatives, mainly bringing together milk producers and processors. They address two specific needs: join forces to reduce the costs linked to milk collection and deliver to processors, and reach together sufficient quantity of milk necessary to processing, to valorise part of their milk by producing typical products. In addition to the support process for marketing, organisational and technical aspects, LACTIMED also facilitated the acquisition of specific equipment. The cluster also allowed to establish a fairest price of the milk in the Ayta Al Foukhar region and a purchase contract between 10 goat milk producers and the cooperative (roughly 10% higher than the usual retail price), securing a constant supply.



Italy

Objective

- Promoting typical Sicilian cheeses to develop marketing channels

Cluster: 40 producers gathered to promote jointly their production through Sicilian Roots Website

The studies and diagnoses undertaken in Sicily revealed a lack of national awareness about Sicilian dairy production. It also highlighted the necessity to develop and improve promotion and marketing. This was a demand voiced especially by small-scale producers with no sufficient resources and skills to improve and develop marketing, promotion and commercialisation initiatives on their own. Although the producers now have a strong presence in the local market, they still had to publicise their products beyond Sicily. Consequently, the idea of a website came about to communicate on all of the cluster's products and increase their visibility by primarily targeting local and national markets and (why not?) international market too. The Sicilian Roots website represents 40 producers and features the products, local breeds, traditional expertise and addresses (inns and shops) they offer. Unpasteurised cheeses, indigenous breeds and traditional techniques are the watchwords that unite the various stakeholders in this project.

The aim is to boost sales and extend the reach and the network of producer contacts. The cluster also defends and promotes a quality-based sustainable production and livestock breeding model to more generally develop short marketing channels better adapted to these traditional small-scale farms. It also marks a new step in getting to know each other and developing joint working arrangements in the local dairy sector to better develop the cluster towards activities linked to maturing cheeses or joint marketing. As part of this process, a partnership with a Sicilian cheese selector was struck to market platters of LACTIMED Sicilian cheeses throughout Italy or abroad.



Egypt

Objective

- Address the lack of milk collection centres close to groups of livestock farmers and an organised collection system
- Improve milk quality

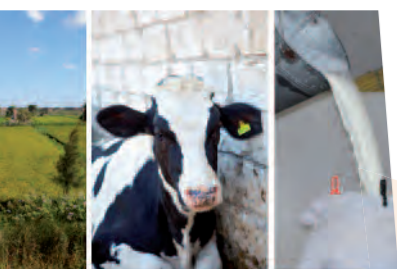
El Nubaria Cluster : 1 milk collection center + 7 farmers

The cluster concept is relatively new to Egypt but 7 dairy cattle and buffalo farmers from the village of El Nubaria chose to form a group and join up with two entrepreneurs to develop a collection center: refrigerated reservoirs were installed near the three groups of livestock farmers with the centre subsequently being supplied by vehicles equipped with refrigerated tanks.

A positive impact on the price of milk based on its quality also leads to a rise in income for the various parts of the chain (a processor will sell a quality cheese for a higher price and the dairy farmers/dairy producers can also benefit from this added value).

90 families living close by may be interested in joining this cluster. A training course has been introduced to support the livestock farmers in this process and make their businesses more robust. The farmers purchase inputs collectively

and work on making nutritional improvements to cattle feed rations. They also benefit from laboratory analysis equipment to carry out more regular checks to improve milk quality.



Greece

Objective

Catalysing cooperation between the dairy chain stakeholders in Thessaly and increase SME competitiveness

Cluster Terra Thessalia Lactis

In Greece, the territorial diagnosis showed that local dairy chains and their production systems maintained strong links with their territories but were confronted with a lack of cooperation between various players which affected the earnings of companies and the competitiveness of the sector. This was exacerbated by shortcomings in the professional organisation of various stakeholder categories and a weakening in the extension system and technical support over the last three decades.

The process to create the cluster required a significant mobilisation during the project. This involved more than 90 private and public sector or other institutional players, acting in either a productive or a supportive capacity and playing a leading role in innovation in the sector. It is a unique experience due to its territorial dimension and in the sense that it is establishing cooperation with small dairy production areas in Thessaly by deliberately focusing on small cheese dairies while encouraging extensive, pastoral and traditional livestock farming methods.

To meet these challenges, the cluster's development was tied to adopting and developing a territorial-based strategy to:

- Bring together dairy chain stakeholders around a platform for regional dialogue;
- Become a coordination and support mechanism for the industry;
- Contribute to structuring the industry;
- Create more added value for the various parts of the value chain;
- Boost the competitiveness of the industry in Thessaly.

Organisation and operation

The cluster comprises 7 cheese-makers and farms linked to them (400 herds for milk production) representing a production potential of 3-4 M tonnes of Feta per year, 4 livestock farming cooperatives (representing 240 herds), 2 cooperative banks, 12 research centres, 3 professional and support organisations and 15 demes (administrative circumscriptions similar to municipalities) as associate partners.

The purpose of the Thessaly cluster project, called Terra Thessalia Lactis, is to bring together those working in the dairy chain around a regional platform for dialogue which establishes cooperation mechanisms based on three distinct structures:

1. A territorial Assembly governed by the signature of a charter enabling the participation of institutions and public services which seeks to organise services and activities concerning:

1) Applied research and 2) Identifying and activating specific dairy-based resources in the bio-economy. The cluster also includes a self-regulating mechanism in the form of a participatory guarantee system (labelled cheeses).

Furthermore, members endeavour to forge stronger links between stakeholders (SMEs, research bodies, public authorities and civil society), especially with the aim of establishing a mechanism to relay difficulties encountered by companies in the industry to associated research centres able to provide responses and contribute to developing the extension system.

2. A promotion company for the dairy products produced by the cluster's cheese-makers to develop marketing, particularly under the cluster's label.

3. A support structure has also been created in which four organisations supporting the dairy sector are working together and which accompany the cluster on several priorities:

- ▶ A balanced feed ration pilot action for the herds.
- ▶ The development of a system to guarantee the quality of dairy products (Terra Thessalia Lactis label) with the introduction of a quality label guaranteeing criteria specific to labelled cheeses produced by cluster members. This flagship action of the cluster is based on local cheeses, i.e. those produced by frequently family-owned small and medium-sized companies using milk produced by animals situated less than 15km from the company in semi-extensive conditions (pasture most of the year and nutrition based on local bio-diversity). The cheese is also produced with spring milk (very rich) respecting traditional cheese-making practices and equitable relations between all the partners in the value chain (especially in redistributing added value between the various players). This label is also based on the introduction of new techniques to geo-localise herds (sample of cattle equipped with GPS systems) to guarantee these criteria to the consumer who can access information on their cheese via a web platform. This enables the cluster to differentiate its cheeses from other products in Thessaly or other Greek regions. This constitutes a considerable challenge to improve and territorialise the product but the first cheeses were marketed in autumn 2015 in Switzerland and France.
- ▶ Cluster communication and promotion activities.
- ▶ Training and support for members on the use of cluster tools and dairy sector coordination.

And in the future?

Setting up the cluster and pilot actions requires considerable coordination and strong ownership by the members. In the medium-term, the challenge will be to consolidate this process and the pilot actions, promote the cluster's products and establish trading links in Greece and in Europe.



LACTIMED COMPETITION

PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

100,000 euros for the competition

10,000 euros for each of the 10 awarded projects

72 trained stakeholders **38** innovators coached

50 projects submitted to the LACTIMED competition

In 2014, LACTIMED launched an innovative project competition to reinvigorate the Mediterranean dairy sector and to illustrate that innovation and entrepreneurship can go perfectly hand-in-hand with traditional expertise and local resources. A call for projects was opened to the 5 pilot territories, identifying **50 projects** conducted by different profiles applicants: entrepreneurs (breeders, cheesemakers, etc.), researchers and inventors, representatives of cooperatives, associations or development agencies. Different profiles like the men and women composing this sector.

The pre-selection was carried out on the basis of a common evaluation grid focused on the organisational and commercial capabilities of applicants, the innovation dimension and market potential, the valorisation of local resources and skills and the sustainable development impact. Moreover, the young entrepreneurs and women were especially encouraged.

Open to micro, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), professional associations, federations and research centres, this competition aimed at promoting innovation and creating value for typical Mediterranean dairy products in a traditional sector. The ambition of LACTIMED was also to develop producers and entrepreneurs' poten-

tial through effective coaching for the **38 preselected applicants** to develop their business plans. Better prepared, they have then presented their project to an international jury during a pitching session. As well, some training sessions from the LACTIMED cycles gathered **72 participants** next to the applicants in the margins of the coaching.

At the end of this competition, **100,000 euros** total financing for innovators of Mediterranean dairy chain: a **10,000 euros** support was assigned to each of 10 awarded to launch their innovative projects. They also benefitted from a technical and business assistance and from a networking to implement their projects with the support of LACTIMED partners. In addition, in some cases these fundings generated an additional fundraising for some of the winners.

The objective of this operation was surely to encourage innovation, but also to reinvigorate project owners' capabilities and to support their development. Non-winning finalists became better prepared through the support of coaches specialised on technical, innovative, commercial and financial aspects; which allowed some of them to present their projects, better developed, to a bank or another funding agency. Besides, LACTIMED network helped them to forge relations with some potential funders.



10 INNOVATIVE PROJECTS FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN DAIRY INDUSTRY

Specialised dairy product packaging machines

Country: Egypt

Award-winner: Eman Hassan, Co-founder and Financial Director of CUBI

Project: CUBI project developed cutting-edge machines designed for packaging dairy products at a reasonable cost for Egyptian small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Innovative and highly-promising, this project enables businesses to commercialise milk and dairy products where foodstuffs are totally safe from contamination. The LACTIMED award helped her to purchase the machinery required for manufacturing equipment designed for packaging.



Creation of state-of-the-art tools for manufacturing Karish

Country: Egypt

Award-winner: Entsar Nour El Deen, Doctorate graduate in food and packaging engineering at the Institute for Technological Research on Food

Project: The idea for this project stems from a twofold desire: to innovate, by designing and creating tools for producing healthy food and, at the same time, to help perpetuate tradition while preserving the traditional recipe. Entsar Nour El Deen intends to develop tools for manufacturing the traditional Karish cheese using contemporary materials in order to reduce risks of contamination by microbes and by insect larvae. This groundbreaking project optimises production and guarantees better qua-

lity cheese, a lower risk of contamination and, consequently, a decrease in product losses. The LACTIMED award supports the research and development costs for this project.



Production of flavoured goat milk butter

Country: Greece

Award-winner: Xristos Laitos, Cheesemaker

Project: By combining local and traditional products, he has created a highly-original, imaginative butter, which he proposes in various versions: classical goat milk butter or flavoured with garlic, herbs or even truffles. Commercialised in two formats, a 125 gram one and a 250 gram one, the visual aspect of the product plays a key role: It is the initiatory step on a journey to explore the product's place of birth. The packaging, designed in the colours of Thessaly, is informative, explaining the qualities of this goat milk butter. The LACTIMED award offers Xristos Laitos the opportunity to acquire and set up the equipment required for manufacturing this goat milk butter, which will be distributed on the national market with the prospect of targeting international markets too. By commercialising it at a reasonable price, he intends to make it available to large numbers of people.



Imaginatively-shaped Feta for Greek salads

Country: Greece

Award-winner: Anastasios Antwniou, Chairman of the Voskos Cooperative

Project: This project seeks to reinterpret tradition. Anastasios Antwniou proposes to make Feta, the internationally-renowned PDO Greek cheese, in a different way. Until today, Feta was known and sold in pieces weighing several hundred grams, but Anastasios Antwniou wishes to cut it into small, uniform cubes, pack it in a highly-original way and enhance it with flavours by combining various typical ingredients. Preserved in local virgin olive oil and accompanied by aromatic herbs from Mount Olympus, the Thessalian PDO Feta, manufactured by the cooperative, will be sold prepared and ready to garnish salads. These three locally-sourced ingredients ensure a premium-quality product presented as a condensed Thessalian gourmet product. The LACTIMED award offered Anastasios Antwniou the opportunity to invest in specific equipment, such as a cheese-cut-

ting machine. This prize will also helped him launch a promotional campaign for his new product, particularly on the Greek Islands in order to reach tourists.



The Girgentana goat trail

Country: Italy

Award-winner: Ignazio Vassalo, Breeder, Agronomist, Secretary for the Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Girgentana Goats

Project: Ignazio Vassalo aims to support the Girgentana goat local breed, under threat of extinction and increase the number. To do this, he has developed a circuit at the very heart of the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, for visitors to discover this breed of goat. As a first step, five goats have been reintroduced into one of their native habitats, in a park. Visitors have the opportunity to discover farms, cheese dairies and goat holdings, where they are able to spend the day with the animals in the pastures. They are also able to purchase dairy products. A real sensorial experience promoting the region and local culture, this

project helps breeders continue to breed this race. It will also, over time, lead to consolidating the reintroduction of the breed with the increase in demand for Girgentana goat milk-based products. The LACTIMED award co-funded communication programmes, such as information signs in several languages, the creation of www.capragirgentana.eu website and an “Adopt a Girgentana Goat” campaign as part of this project.



Green kishk production, preservation and commercialisation

Country: Lebanon

Award-winner: Hiyam el Gharib, Founder and President of the cooperative association for producing agricultural products “Ain El Arich”

Project: She turns goat milk into a traditional, local product, kishk (also known as kashk, qurut), but by choosing a highly-original preservation method. Today, this preparation, comprising white powder made from thick yogurt, salted milk and cracked wheat (bulgur), is frequently proposed in its dried form, which facilitates transportation and distribution outside the Bekaa Valley. Hiyam El Gharib manufactures this product, which has outstanding nutritional values, in its “fresh” form, which is difficult to find nowadays. To commercialise this kishk, known as “green kishk”, she implements appropriate preparation systems, to pre-

serve the kishk in olive oil, inside vacuum glass containers. The LACTIMED award, combined with self-financing, has helped the cooperative purchase suitable equipment for producing, preparing and preserving the kishk.



Organic olive oil and goat milk labneh

Country: Lebanon

Award-winner: Sami Hajjar, Agricultural engineer, Founder of Kab-Elias Centre

Project: Sami Hajjar’s project addresses the ever-growing demand from Lebanese consumers, who are increasingly aware of the relationship between nutrition and health, for organic products. Sami Hajjar manufactures organic goat milk labneh, a traditional product, which he prepares in an original way: in sphere-shaped pieces, the labneh is preserved in regionally-produced olive oil. Certified organic, it is commercialised incorporating local, natural flavours. Consumers are able to choose from several flavours: mint, thyme, sumac or red pepper, which conjure up the flavours of the region.

The LACTIMED award has enabled Sami Hajjar to purchase two machines: one that provides better homogeneity when cutting the labneh and the other that seals the glass containers optimally and thus prevents any risk of contamination.



“Borj Lella” table d’hôte

Country: Tunisia

Award-winner: Zied Ben Youssef, Breeder, Chairman of the Sicilian-Sardinian ewe breeders’

Project: The main focus of this project is on organising trekking activities, proposing accommodation and typical catering at the farm. Zied Ben Youssef has also incorporated a pedagogical aspect, by inviting tourists to discover the farm’s activities: to participate in milking the ewes and learn about and take part in fresh cheese making. He has enhanced the producer-consumer relationship. Tourists have plenty of time to take full advantage of the farm environment and its typical activities, through the bay windows where they are able to watch and follow the dairy at work, whilst enjoying a traditional meal. The LACTIMED award has enabled Zied Ben Youssef to invest in fitting out the building where the public is accommodated, improving his kitchen equipment and developing the cheese processing facility, so that tourists are welcomed in the best possible

conditions. With the “Borj Lella” project, tourists can now enjoy of a real table d’hôte.



BioLact Protect: Development of an organic detergent to fight and prevent bio film

Country: Tunisia

Award-winner: Hamida Ksontini - Assistant researcher in industrial and food microbiology at the Higher Institute of Food Industries of Tunis (Ecole Supérieure des Industries Alimentaires de Tunis).

Project: The watchwords of this project are innovation and ecology. Assistant researcher in microbiology, Hamida Ksontini forms a lively duo with her colleague Faten Kachouri. They know very well the challenges of cleaning and disinfecting industrial surfaces in the agri-food environment and their research led to the creation of an organic detergent based on lactic bacteria called BioLact Protect. Environmentally-friendly and effective, marketable at a reasonable cost, this organic detergent is highly-promising. Moreover, it is particularly appropriate for dairy sector equipment. After having filed a patent for invention and considered a business development for years, the LACTIMED award has enabled Hamida Ksontini and Faten Kachouri to carry out a business plan. After a coaching phase, the duo intends the development of a semi-industrial production. This is the direct result of a local market research conducted with the LACTIMED award support and the contacts made with some financial sources.

“The competition offered us the opportunity to exploit our research results and to implement them through a project”.
Dr Hamida Ksontini



Developing self-produced lactic ferments

Country: **Italy**

Award-winner: **Sandra Invidiata, Breeder and Cheesemaker**

Project: Above the Mediterranean, in front of Collesano Mountains, Sandra Invidiata keeps her eighty cows on fifty hectares. For the last twenty years, she has been working on improving and developing her agricultural family business: creation of a dairy, a pedagogical farm and the development of agri-touristic activities. Committed to the well-being of her herd and to producing high-quality milk, Sandra Invidiata breeds brown and crossbred cows, applying the principles of organic farming. The raw milk that she produces is distributed locally and also processed into cheese. Sandra Invidiata makes typical Sicilian products such as Provola delle Madonie and Ricotta cheese.

The project that Sandra Invidiata proposes places a special focus on preserving local characteristics. Instead of using industrial ferments, which without doubt remedy certain manufacturing defects, she prefers to self-produce her own. Through this approach the authentic taste of the cheese is preserved, unlike with industrial ferments which tend to standardise flavours. As such, self-produced ferments make it possible to give products a unique identity. Using this process, she makes exceptional cheeses that are typical of the area and she saves time on production, whilst reducing the influence of temperature and climate, key factors when working with drawn curds. The LACTIMED award has enabled Sandra to be provided with advice from a specialised food technologist.



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Winning this award really boosts my project! My goal is to distribute these tools throughout as many Egyptian governorates as possible". Entsar Nour El Deen

"The LACTIMED project helped us become familiar with new and best dairy product practices. We were able to discuss and work hand-in-hand with businesses in Greece and also in other Mediterranean countries. Winning this award marked another step forward in an ambitious effort that has been pursued for many years". Anastasios Antwniou

"LACTIMED helped us make a dream come true". Ignazio Vassalo

"Our participation in this competition was fruitful and LACTIMED's initiative encourages SMEs to open up to new prospects. The competition award is a real incentive for developing our project". Sami Hajjar



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INCREASE THE STANDING AND REPUTATION OF TYPICAL DAIRY PRODUCTS TO DEVELOP COMMERCIALISATION

from May 2014 to October 2015

1308 business meetings

4 conferences

10 workshops/
taste theatres

150 buyers
involved

104 SMEs involved

15 cities:

Palermo **Milazzo** **Cairo** **Beirut** **Tunis**
Bizerte **Enna** **Zahle** **Alexandria** **Marseille** **Corfu**
Larissa **Turin** **Montpellier** **Athens**

27 investment
opportunities

9 pre-feasibility
studies

25 partnership
opportunities

MEDITERRANEAN TYPICAL DAIRY PRODUCT WEEKS

To boost the presence of local products on national markets and help them conquer new international markets, LACTIMED introduced tailored events involving restaurant, tourism and distribution operators, consumers and the media during 'typical dairy product week' events as genuine showcases for producers and their products. These local and regional activities were centred on the post-processing part of the industry to facilitate marketing and contributed to increasing the standing of typical dairy products in the five Mediterranean regions.

Locally, one of the aims was also to put the particular qualities of the dairy chain in each pilot region on the national map by promoting the products, their organoleptic properties, history and production processes as well as the occasionally ignored riches and the realities of the entire local dairy chain.

At a Mediterranean level, "Mediterranean Typical Dairy Products Weeks" were organised in Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia with the participation of LACTIMED at international food industry trade shows and public events. Pavilions bringing together SMEs in those countries participating in the project helped unveil the unique offer of the regions' dairy products. These pavilions also benefited from the participation of tourism promotion officials from the different regions jointly working to promote tourism and local products.

As well as the desire to promote and test these products with consumers, the main goal was to access new markets and these week-long events also re-

sulted in 1,308 business meetings between 104 producers and 150 national and international buyers through the LACTIMED partners generating new contracts for beneficiaries and new business links.

These meetings were also supplemented by the participation of project holders combining 27 investment opportunities, 9 pre-feasibility studies and 25 partnership opportunities (projects resulting in discussions between companies but not necessarily converted into an injection of capital) identified by the project.

Organising such events was ultimately seen as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges facing the industry, to disseminate the results of the project and to promote its various publications (local diagnosis reports, brochures on typical dairy products, etc.). This was all done while prioritising promotion and communication to give them maximum visibility and significance for both the general public and professional and specialist players.



EXCHANGING AND FORGING TIES BETWEEN BOTH SIDES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

The LACTIMED project also encouraged sharing between Mediterranean countries, illustrating the strong ties that unite these countries through tangible experiences. These included, Lebanese, Egyptian and Tunisian chefs teaching their techniques and knowledge in Italian and French cookery schools and introducing the students to milk-based recipes and specialities.

In parallel, cheese producers from the South spent several weeks in French, Greek and Italian farms to produce their own cheeses in situ with their own recipes and techniques, but using local resources. This marked the opportunity to exchange know-how and expertise.

The products resulting from these peer-to-peer and student exchanges were subsequently presented to the general public and professionals during LACTIMED Weeks in Europe to let the European public discover Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian dairy products that are currently barred from the European Union.

Caraglio and Orbassano, Italy • 20 and 21 October 2014 Producing dairy products in the Piedmont

1 Egyptian producer and 2 Lebanese producers travelled to two dairies in the Piedmont (Caseificio Moris in Caraglio and the Caseificio La Pinchina di Finella Aiello in Orbassano) to prepare typical cheeses from their regions. The products were then displayed at the LACTIMED exhibition stand at the Salone del Gusto in Turin, Italy.

Turin, Italy • 22 October 2014

Culinary masterclass with Mediterranean chefs

Chefs, Mustafa El Refaey (Egypt) and George Khalaf (Lebanon) cooked with 20 students from the Piazza dei Mestieri cookery school and together prepared typical main dishes and desserts that were subsequently displayed at the LACTIMED Pavilion at the Salone del Gusto.

Aurillac, France • 24 to 27 March 2015

Producing dairy products at the ENILV dairy school in Aurillac

5 Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian producers travelled to the dairy to prepare typical cheeses and fermented milk from their regions. This featured Egyptian Karish, Domiati and Laban cheeses, Lebanese Halloumi and Akkawi and even Tunisian Rigouta or Jben Arbi. The products were then displayed at LACTIMED's M.A.D. Festival exhibition stand.

Nîmes, France • 25 March 2015

Culinary masterclass with Mediterranean chefs

Chefs, Mustafa El Refaey (Egypt) and Iyad TEJ, (Tunisia) cooked with 10 apprentices from the Nîmes Chamber of Commerce and Industry's CFA High School, in conjunction with the M.A.D. culinary festival. The students had the chance to learn about techniques and typical desserts from the LACTIMED project regions. The desserts were then displayed at LACTIMED's M.A.D. Festival exhibition stand.

Kalambaka, Greece • 27 September 2015

Dairy production in Thessaly

9 Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian producers travelled to

the Paidis Dairy to prepare typical cheeses from their regions. The products were then displayed on the LACTIMED exhibition stand in Larissa, Corfu and Athens.

The LACTIMED Weeks largely contributed to exchanges between dairy sector players in the Mediterranean and especially between SMEs. As the meetings and activities progressed, strong links developed between these individuals which now form the base of a Mediterranean network that could be further built-up. Also, bilateral relations and initiatives between companies and individuals in the same region or between different Mediterranean countries continue and supplement various joint projects.

These "Weeks" also helped publicise different marketing approaches and raised the awareness of those working in the industry about the importance of labels to promote their products but also as a means of structuring the industry and regional development.



"The LACTIMED exhibitions and training seminars helped us promote our products and publicise them in local markets, but especially Mediterranean markets in conjunction with Egypt, Greece, Tunisia and Italy. We were able to discover new products and ideas for innovative developments. The project opens up great opportunities for dairy producers and processors and a whole world of cooperation between Mediterranean players."

Dani Tannoury • Director, Dairy Tannoury Ltd - Zahle, Lebanon

A GLANCE AT THE LACTIMED WEEKS

The LACTIMED Weeks ran from May 2014 to October 2015 and brought together producers from the 5 regions at various international trade shows mentioned below. These events helped publicise the products and meet various stakeholders (distributors, restaurant owners, etc.) interested in these cheeses.

At these fairs, LACTIMED offered a range of activities open to the general public such as tasting sessions at the exhibition stand staffed by the producers, business meetings, conferences, taste workshops and exchanges of experience, etc. In total, almost 300,000 visitors attended all of the fairs in which LACTIMED participated.

LACTIMED Week in France, 27 • 31 March 2015

The LACTIMED Week in France (27-31 March 2015) was the last of the Mediterranean series of LACTIMED Weeks (Mediterranean Typical Dairy Product Weeks), offering visitors a gourmet journey to discover Mediterranean dairy products.

As such, LACTIMED took part in the M.A.D. Festival ("Méditerranée à Déguster" culinary festival) which was held on 27 - 29 March 2015 in Montpellier. As a culinary festival targeting Mediterranean gastronomy in all its different forms and gifted with an unprecedented health/nutrition dimension in France, this public event provided the opportunity to meet the leading players in Mediterranean gastronomy, to take part in culinary workshops and to interact on various themes about living and eating well.

ANIMA coordinated LACTIMED's participation using a Mediterranean Pavilion to bring together producers from the project's five pilot regions (Egypt, Greece, Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia). The programme included a wide range of activities such as tastings, round table discussions, taste workshops, business meetings for professionals, discovering the different regions and meetings with dairy industry players, etc.). This event also provided the opportunity for a unique moment of sharing between the Mediterranean countries, be this North-South, North-North, or South-South. It illustrated the rich common identity and the strong ties that unite these countries.



MEDITERRANEAN WEEKS

Producers from the 5 Mediterranean countries came together in the same pavilion to promote their dairy products

Turin, Italy - LACTIMED at the Salone del Gusto

Dates: 23 - 27/10/2014

Tunis, Tunisia - LACTIMED at the 2014 SIAT international agricultural investment and technology trade show

Dates: 29/10/2014 - 1/11/2014

Beirut, Lebanon - LACTIMED at the Beirut Cooking Festival

Dates: 7 - 9/11/2014

Cairo, Egypt - LACTIMED at the HACE trade show - Hotel Expo 2014

Dates: 11 - 14/11/2014

Montpellier and Marseille, France - LACTIMED at the “Méditerranée à Déguster”,

M.A.D. Culinary Festival and at the Villa Méditerranée

Dates: 27 - 31/03/2015

Larissa, Corfu and Athens, Greece - Greek Roadshow

Dates: 27/09 - 2/10/2015

LOCAL WEEKS

Producers from the same region came together to promote their typical dairy products both locally and nationally

Palermo, Enna, Milazzo, Italy • Dates: 24/05 - 1/06/2014

Athens, Greece • As part of the 2014 Dairy Expo trade show • Dates: 1 - 3/11/2014

Alexandria, Egypt • Dates: 27/02/2015 and 27/04/2015 with the MedDiet Project

Zahle, Lebanon • Dates: 4 - 6/07/2014

Tunis, Tunisia • Dates: 14 - 16/05/2015

Bizerte, Tunisia • Date: 22/10/2015

Mustafa El Refaey

Chef at the Zooba Restaurant, Cairo - **Egypt**

Mustafa El Refaey took part in some enlightening exchanges of experience in the Northern Mediterranean such as masterclasses with cookery schools in Italy and France. He also had the chance to cook with dairy products from other Mediterranean countries and to meet more than 40 starred-chefs from the four corners of the Mediterranean at the M.A.D Festival in Montpellier (France) in March 2015.

“For me, it was a great experience to discover Greek, Sicilian, Tunisian, Lebanese and Egyptian cheeses. This project was very rewarding.”

Amr Daoud

Cheese-maker, **Egypt**

Amr Daoud has been a cheese-maker for 30 years in Alexandria where he has a medium-sized company making traditional cheeses and dairy products. You can, in fact, meet him there and visit his dairy. However, it was his curiosity for products from around the Mediterranean and his ambition for further expansion, or even exports, which led him to take part in many of the LACTIMED Weeks as an exhibitor.

This process resulted in him producing cheese with his peers in Europe and testing typical Egyptian cheeses on new markets with cheese lovers and professionals. He has become a genuine ambassador for Egyptian culture and gastronomy and is currently nurturing several developmental ideas and partnerships for his business.



TOURISM AND 'TERROIR': THE ROUTE OF MEDITERRANEAN DAIRY PRODUCTS

AGRI-TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, A DRIVER FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Jointly promoting tourism and local products is a key element of rural development in the Mediterranean. Indeed, over the last three years, this topic has played an important role in implementing the LACTIMED Project.

This subject was covered at a workshop organised as part of the 8th Mediterranean Economic Week. It highlighted the benefits for rural areas of jointly promoting tourism and local products using concrete examples of local and regional agri-tourism initiatives in the Mediterranean. The various experiences given by speakers representing chambers of agriculture, regional nature parks and associations promoting tourism and local products from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea (France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, etc.) provided unprecedented insights into strategic issues. These addressed questions such as how can synergies between tourism and local products be developed? What kinds of local initiatives? How effective are they? What are the

benefits for the producers? What is the impact on the local area? The subject of thematic routes is an essential component in combining tourism and local products and was widely discussed. For a region, they offer real opportunities to disseminate agri-tourism practices and contribute to promoting the producers and their products.

Over the last few years, public sector strategies have emerged to promote local products alongside the introduction of grassroots initiatives. This process stems from ecological and economic awareness coupled with an observation that all too often, the added value of well-known products eludes local players. Small-scale producers could considerably increase their incomes by strengthening the territorial identity of their products and by capitalising on it with tailored promotional actions. Agri-tourism conveys these values and represents an additional business activity to agricultural production and processing. It is therefore crucial to develop it to revitalise rural areas.

Three main priorities arose from the initiatives presented that address the common challenge of developing the economic potential of natural and cultural heritage while preserving it too:

- 1] - Welcoming the visitor to an enhanced and preserved space by creating synergies between tourism and farming such as accommodation and meals at the farm, guided visits, educational activities, thematic circuits and hiking, etc.;
- 2] - Promoting local products through tastings or farmers' markets, enabling consumers to buy directly from the producer and discover production methods and local know-how, etc.;

- 3] - Give these products and initiatives greater visibility by developing communication and promotional aspects with a specific message creating an identifiable image (brands, labels and logos), publishing promotional guides to influence visitor numbers and assembling packages for tour operators, etc.

The recommendations were shared to optimise the spin-offs from these initiatives:

- Involve local stakeholders and introduce a system of governance for the area;
- Assess the impact of actions delivered right from the earliest stage;

- Monitor and efficiently manage the flow of visitors to control the effect of increased visitor numbers on various sites.

After this workshop, ANIMA presented plans for the "Route of Mediterranean Dairy Products", developed by LACTIMED. The route's purpose is to boost the tourism appeal of Mediterranean countries as gastronomic destinations, to

increase national consumption of typical local dairy products through domestic tourism, to increase the standing and distribution of these products on the international stage and to create new income streams for local businesses and communities.

THE ROUTE OF MEDITERRANEAN DAIRY PRODUCTS

With these issues very much in mind, LACTIMED initiated a Route of Mediterranean Dairy Products and produced a tourist guide to travel along it. This journey travels through the project's five pilot regions, from Bizerte to Alexandria via Sicily, Thessaly and Bekaa. It also highlights 28 agri-tourism sites identified between September 2014 and April 2015.

This new way of travelling has become increasingly popular with tourists seeking exchange, discovery and authenticity. It consists of visiting a farm or any other farming business with an educational or recreational purpose and is part of the wider world of rural tourism which covers alternative accommodation services (table d'hôte guest meals, wine and local product tasting, etc.) and leisure activities (hiking, other outdoor activities, cookery courses, etc.).



By offering these types of activities, farmers and other local players can generate additional income, come into direct contact with the consumer and share their passion for their occupation and their countryside. For the traveller, it is the chance to rediscover rural life, become acquainted with farming and artisanal techniques as well as savouring healthy, traditional cuisine.

The guide features hikes through pastures, discovering farms rearing sheep, goats and cows, learning how to make Pecorino, Halloumi, Rumi cheeses, and tasting local specialties, etc. The purpose of all these activities is to attract visitors to the heart of rural areas in the Mediterranean. They will be promoted by responsible travel agencies and other sustainable tourism players.

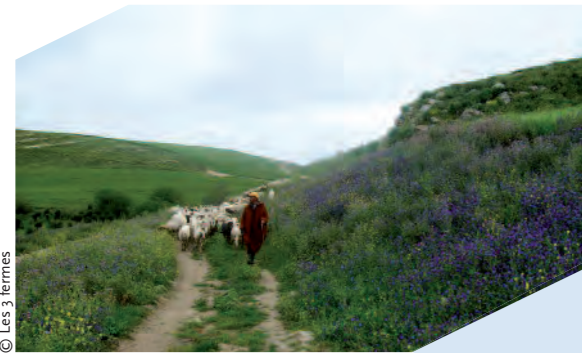
The guide is also available online at www.lactimed.eu where you can select activities based on different research criteria (country, accommodation, catering, farm visits, cheese dairy visits, hikes, cultural visits, visits geared to children and accessible to people with reduced mobility).



► LACTIMED Workshop, 5 November 2014, Marseille
"Tourism and local products:
promising synergies for the development of rural
areas in the Mediterranean"



A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF DAIRY INDUSTRY IN 28 STAGES



Tunisia • Bizerte and Beja

"La petite Suisse"

Visit around an organic dairy cattle breeding farm

Henchir Dheb

Relaxation and gastronomy at the "Golden Farm"

Tunisiaecotourism.com

An ecotourism agency located in the Bizerte region

Amina Najjar Baccouri's farm

Discovery of the Tarentaise cattle dairy farming

Atka and Zied Ben Youssef's farm

Visit to a sheep breeding farm in the Beja mountains

Ali Mastouri's farm

Discovery of the Jebel Chitana-Cap Négro National Park



Italy • Sicily

Invidiata organic farm

Dairy farm visit and accomodation in the Madonie Park

Kalat Scibet Farm

Discovery and trekking with Ragusano donkeys

Fattoria Fabio

Farmhouse fare and cheese-making

Fratelli Borrello

Discover the culinary specialties of the Nebrodi Park

Girgentana tour

Discover an endangered breed of goat

Fattoria Vassallo

Farm retreat and introduction to organic stock farming

Asilat

Donkey-themed activities at the foot of Mount Etna

Massaria Ruvettu

Discover the sheep and cheeses of the Belice Valley

Greece • Thessaly

Kissas dairy

Visit a family-run dairy in Mouzaki

Amarantos dairy

Cheese tasting with a view of the Meteora

Voskos cooperative

Meet young goat and sheep breeders in Livadi



Lebanon • Bekaa

Tanail Domain

An educational farm in a remarkable eco-park

Darb El Karam

A gastronomic tour in the west of the Bekaa Valley

Vamos Todos

Hiking, food tasting and vineyard tours

Rachaya Gardens

The Rachaya women's association

Aita El Foukhar Cooperative

Making and tasting of goat's milk products

Skaff Farm

Visit to a cattle farm and dairy in Zahlé

Lakis Farms

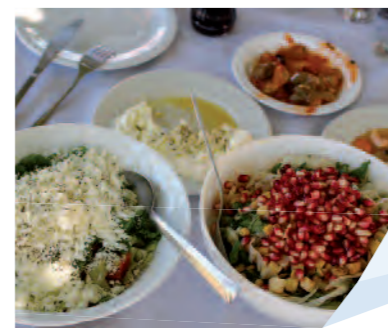
From farm to plate

WADA

The Women's Association of Deir El Ahmar

Mamlaket Al Lezzeb

Exploring the Kingdom of the juniper



Egypt • Alexandria and Beheira

Abu Daoud

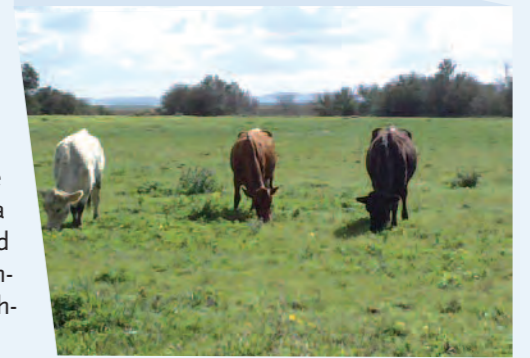
A traditional cheese dairy just a stone's throw from Alexandria

"The Green Valley"

Between artisanal cheese-making methods and modernity

"La petite Suisse" • Visit around an organic dairy cattle breeding farm

Adel Maiz was born in Ghar el-Melh, a village located 23 km from the farm. He arrived in Switzerland at the age of 17, where he pursued studies in mechanical design engineering and then worked there. In 2002, he decided to return to Tunisia as he missed his country and wanted his children to become familiar with the culture. He purchased 8 ha of land, situated 9 km from Utica and, in 2003, began cultivating legume crops and breeding. In 2010, he turned to organic breeding, with the help of the Abel Garnier Association for Environmental Agriculture. His collaborator Khawla Ben Salem, senior agri-food technician, manages the farm and is responsible for milk processing.



"La petite Suisse" has been welcoming visitors since 2009 and proposes the following activities:

- Breakfast, including milk, butter, fresh cheese, eggs and honey from the farm, accompanied by traditional bread made by a local woman;
- Visit: stable, cattle livestock (around fifteen Holstein, Montbéliard, etc. cows), crops (barley, durum and ancient wheat, sulla), beehives, olive trees and hen house;
- Participation in evening milking;
- Demonstration of processing milk into yogurts, butter, cheeses, etc.;
- Visit to a goat breeding farm, thirty kilometres from "La petite Suisse";
- Salad and grilled-food catering (depending on the season);
- Accommodation for up to 4 persons (2 bedrooms on the first floor of the farm).



Darb El Karam A gastronomic tour in the west of the Bekaa Valley



The Food Heritage Foundation works to preserve and promote traditional Lebanese foodstuffs and know-how. It has set up a gastronomic tour entitled 'Darb el Karam' (the generosity tour) to highlight the seasonal nature and unique qualities of the products, traditional processing methods and, above all, the generosity of the hosts. The route winds its way along the west side of the Bekaa Valley and passes through the villages of Kherbet Qanafar, Ain Zebde, Saghbine and Aitanit.

Visitors can:

- Help to pick apples, tomatoes, blackberries, olives and onions;
- Pick edible wild plants in Ein Zebde;
- Take a walk with a shepherd and his goats in the mountains between Saghbine and Ein Zebde and learn all about Baladi goats, the wild plants on which they feed, the milking season, breeding and milk production;
- Visit a flour mill and a family-run dairy in Saghbine and learn about the processes involved in the production of bulgur and goat's milk products such as Akkawi and Baladi cheeses, Labneh, Anbaris, yogurt and Kichk (made from bulgur and yogurt);
- Enjoy fresh goat's milk ice-cream in Saghbine;
- Learn all about Mouneh, the Lebanese method for conserving fruits, vegetables, cereals, spices and dairy products in jars (depending on the time of year);
- Stay with a family and enjoy a traditional meal prepared with local ingredients.



DEVELOPING LOCAL CAPACITY THROUGH MEDITERRANEAN EXCHANGES

TRAINING COURSES

Training dairy industry players by promoting the exchange of knowledge and good practices through regional training sessions bringing together Mediterranean stakeholders

- ▶ 246 people trained
- ▶ 38 guest speakers/lecturers
- ▶ 50 training tools

The cross-border dimension of the project was particularly marked by capacity development among the chain players, exchanges and field visits. The challenges they faced were highlighted by the diagnoses exercises and helped develop three regional training courses organised in Bizerte (Tunisia), Zahle (Lebanon) and Alexandria (Egypt) in 2014. The courses were real highpoints in exchanges between the Mediterranean regions in LACTIMED. These cycles allowed the organisation of:

- 3 Mediterranean exchange seminars on dairy chain challenges and support policies, involving 154 participants (including representatives from 58 public authorities and 20 SMEs) and 15 guest speakers. These focused on comparing public policies to support the sector, on developing distinctive quality signs as well as quality standards and support measures for innovation and territorial development. 21 educational tools were disseminated at these seminars.

- 3 training seminars that brought together 92 participants (30 of which represented local industry support organisations, 31 SMEs and 18 public authority representatives) and 23 guest speakers/lecturers. These seminars covered the cluster concept, marketing channels, farming techniques and flexible and innovative agri-industrial processes. They also gave rise to 29 training tools.

The training sessions should help the beneficiary organisations support local producers and entrepreneurs and to position themselves as mediators of choice between the various stakeholders (manufacturers, producers, resear-

chers, distributors, funders). The training course content was also used to provide support to project holders and other stakeholders in the innovative project competition.

MEDITERRANEAN EXCHANGES

Shared experiences

The LACTIMED project greatly encouraged sharing between Mediterranean countries, illustrating the strong ties that unite these countries through concrete experiences. These included Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian chefs who, for example, taught their techniques and knowledge in Italian and French cookery schools, introducing the students to their recipes and milk-based specialities.

Producers from Southern Mediterranean countries also had the opportunity to produce their cheeses in French, Greek and Italian farms which was a rewarding experience for all involved.

LACTIMED Roadshow in Greece

A LACTIMED Roadshow in Greece on “Mediterranean Cheeses on the Greek Market” (27 September-02 October 2015) marked the opportunity for Greek producers to exchange experience with their Mediterranean counterparts. A group of SME beneficiaries and project partners travelled to Larissa, Corfu and Athens to present their products to the general public and professionals at a joint exhibition stand in these city centres with the help of the local chambers of commerce. This activity directly involved 27 participants (13 SMEs, 3 support organisations, 4 university representatives, 1 public authority and 1 international organisation) and many consumers, professionals and chamber of commerce officials attending exhibitions, tastings and business meetings. In Corfu, an event to taste typical cheeses from project beneficiaries was organised in association with chefs from the island. The purpose was to strike up direct relations between producers and chefs.



Prior to this, 9 Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian producers made cheese in situ with 3 Greek producers. In addition to these activities, participants also had the chance to visit 4 cheese dairies and dairy companies as well as livestock farms in Thessaly.

Strengthening the Sicilian cluster through exchanges

Several members of the Sicilian cluster took part in visits to two collective production initiatives in France and Italy.

A 6-person Sicilian SME delegation, all members of the LACTIMED cluster, took part in a meeting on 22 to 25 July 2015 with the Basque Country farmers association, IDOKI. The purpose was to discuss collective production activities, maturing, labelling, marketing and promotion. These discussions gave the Sicilian cluster new ideas to further develop collective initiatives.

On 4 - 6 August 2015, the Sicilian producers also went to Gerola Alta, in Italy, to visit Bitto Trading S.P.A, which represents Presidio Slow Food producers in historic Bitto. The aim was to familiarise themselves with the Lombard producers' innovative and adaptable collective system of organisation geared to the realities of small-scale production with a view to direct product sales.

Apart from seeing farms, milking and cheese being produced, they also visited the “Casa del Bitto”, which represents 14 producers and where the cheese is left to mature for 1 to 10 years then marketed collectively. This visit also helped



the producers gain in-depth knowledge about the Bitto Trading S.P.A collective coordination system and the possibilities it offers for exports and collective maturing premises with

full-time employees dedicated to the cheeses as well as shipping them abroad.

Training Sicilian chefs in typical cheeses

Promoting typical products requires the involvement of chefs as a genuine link between producers and consumers. That said, it is not always easy for restaurants to offer quality cheeses and provide information on the quality and origin of the products, or even details about the producers. Buying directly from small producers also supports quality cheeses as well as the producers. A training and discussion day on this subject was organised in Sicily on 21 October 2015. It involved 22 Sicilian chefs, 8 producers and 7 guest speakers to inform the audience, encourage direct contacts and give greater visibility to Sicilian dairy heritage. This meeting was geared around several sessions enabling those present to improve their knowledge on the cheeses and their specific features (virtues and defects) as well as on authentic Ricotta-based Sicilian pastries.

Strengthening the Egyptian cluster by exchanges with Sicily

A twelve-person Egyptian delegation (representing SMEs, ministries, universities, dairy industry support organisations and the Egyptian cluster itself) travelled to Sicily on 22 to 26 November 2015 to visit the LACTIMED award-winning farm of Sandra Invidiata. Sandra is, herself, a member of the Sicilian cluster, launched as part of the project. She also visited the CORFILAC dairy industry research consortium and the visit focused on talks about the downstream part of the dairy chain and, in particular, promoting typical products. The delegation also visited other companies as well as meeting with local chambers of commerce. The aim was to better understand practices related to protecting and enhancing local breeds and typical products.

PUBLICATIONS



► “Explore the world of Mediterranean dairy products” brochure

Highlighting of Mediterranean typical dairy products in the 5 project territories (Egypt, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Tunisia), reflecting their rich identity, biodiversity, traditions and “men and women's know-how”.



► “8 clusters in the Mediterranean for a more competitive dairy chain” brochure

Highlighting of eight cluster pilot projects developed in the framework of the LACTIMED project.



► Report on dairy products market and international opportunities

This report aims at shedding light on production, international market, consumption trends and evolution, distribution channels, attitudes and behaviors of consumers.



► LACTIMED white book “Recommendations for reinforcing favorable conditions for typical and innovative Mediterranean dairy products”

Made by various actors of the dairy chain, they aim to raise awareness concerning constraints having considerable impact on the dairy value chain and also the

importance of implementing necessary actions to fully promote typical local dairy products. They argue for a strong and pragmatic institutional support in order to create favorable conditions for a stronger dairy chain, through inclusive local development.



► LACTIMED training tools

50 training tools used at the LACTIMED training cycles on different categories: technical aspects, distinctive quality signs, commercialisation, clusters, public policies and case studies.



► “10 innovative projects for the Mediterranean dairy sector” brochure

Highlighting of ten award-winner projects of the LACTIMED competition, selected among 50 innovative projects.



► 5 diagnoses of dairy chains

Diagnosis of the local dairy chain that includes an inventory of the dairy chain, the analysis of the results of field survey with producers, the identification of typical dairy products with their production specifications and information on the domestic market.

- Diagnosis and local strategy for Alexandria and Beheira (Egypt)
- Diagnosis and local strategy for Thessaly (Greece)
- Diagnosis and local strategy for Sicily (Italy)
- Diagnosis and local strategy for Bekaa and Baalbeck-Hermel (Lebanon)
- Diagnosis and local strategy for Bizerte and Beja (Tunisia)



► “Investing in dairy chain - Keys to success” 3 Guides

Designed as a toolbox, this guide gives an overview of the general conditions for investment in each territory, of the specific measures for dairy chain, as well as information on support organisations and other useful contacts. It presents about 20 concrete investment and partnership opportunities proposed by local stakeholders.

- “Investing in the Bizerte and Beja Dairy Chain - Keys to success” Guide
- “Investing in the Alexandria and Beheira Dairy Chain - Keys to success” Guide
- “Investing in the Thessaly Dairy Chain - Keys to success” Guide



► “Route of Mediterranean Dairy Products” Guide

Touristic guide allowing furrowing the five pilot territories of the LACTIMED project, from Bizerte to Alexandria, through Sicily, Thessaly and the Bekaa. It highlights 28 steps of agri-tourism identified between September 2014 and April 2015.



► LACTIMED video

This video presents the main actions and results of the LACTIMED project. It will lead you to discover the Mediterranean dairy chain stakeholders and their typical products, reflecting the territories they come from.



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We would like to thank all the LACTIMED partners and associates for the information provided to create this brochure.

Photo credits: Alberto Peroli, Federica Bolla, Slow Food Archive, Chevalier photos

Cover photo credits: Alberto Peroli (1 and 3), Federica Bolla (4)

Graphic design: Armelledesign / execution: Pierre-Marie Gély

This publication has been produced as part of LACTIMED project with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of ANIMA Investment Network, LACTIMED coordinator, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme's management structures.

LACTIMED aims to foster the production and distribution of typical and innovative dairy products in the Mediterranean by organising local value chains, supporting producers in their development projects and creating new markets for their products. The project is financed by the European Union for an amount of EUR 4.35 million (90%), through the ENPI CBC MED Programme.

The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It finances cooperation projects as a contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia. The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French. www.enpicbcmmed.eu

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N°ISBN: 2-915719-50-0