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MEMBER

NESTOS

Living Lab NESTOS | Greece

The Nestos Living Lab (LL) is a multi-actor, place-based initiative located in the Nestos Valley, one of Greece's most productive agricultural areas. It was established by Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (CIHEAM-IAMM) and the University of Thessaly (UTH) within the framework of the Horizon Europe project RESTPOLL, with strong collaboration from local farmers, cooperatives, regional authorities, and civil society. The initiative aims to restore pollinator habitats and promote agroecological transitions through participatory co-design, real-life experimentation, and territorial policy integration. It serves as a living platform for innovation, learning, and sustainable land management, focusing on biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and farmer-driven transformation.

Aim

The aim of the Nestos LL is to co-develop and implement agroecological practices that restore pollinator habitats, enhance biodiversity, and support sustainable, resilient farming systems. By integrating scientific research, local knowledge, and stakeholder participation, the initiative seeks to transform the agricultural landscape of the Nestos Valley into a model of pollinator-friendly, climate-adaptive, and economically viable agriculture, while influencing policy and market frameworks to support long-term sustainability.

Background information

Nestos LL was launched in response to the rapid agricultural transformation of the Nestos Valley in Greece, where the expansion of intensive kiwi monoculture began threatening pollinator populations and essential ecosystem services. Recognizing the need for more sustainable approaches, the CIHEAM-IAMM and the UTH established the LL within the framework of the Horizon Europe project RESTPOLL, in collaboration with local farmers, cooperatives, regional authorities, and civil society actors. Since its creation, Nestos LL has become a participatory platform for co-designing and testing pollinator-friendly agroecological practices. Its relevance and impact have led to its mobilization by other Horizon Europe projects, including BUTTERFLY and PROPOLSOIL, which engage the LL in similar activities around agroecological transition, the provision of ecosystem services (such as soil and water health), and sustainable food system innovation.

Funding structure

- RestPoll Horizon Europe Project;
- Butterfly Horizon Europe Project;
- PROPOLSOIL Horizon Europe Project.

Activities

- First meeting with stakeholders in March 2024.
- Two-day LL launch workshop in June 2024, including stakeholder presentations, training and co-design sessions.
- Field visit to Nestos Agricultural Co-operative and local kiwi orchards.
- Transect walks for landscape and pollinator monitoring.
- Presentation, and discussion of socio-ecological surveys, farm typology and consumer behaviour studies.
- SWOT analysis exercises identifying strengths (e.g., biodiversity), weaknesses (e.g., bureaucracy), opportunities (e.g., youth participation) and threats (e.g., climate change) in the area.
- Focus groups and participatory sessions on Payments for Ecosystem Services and restoration measures.





First stakeholder meeting with farmers in the Nestos Valley, March 2024. Source: CIHEAM-IAMM & University of Thessaly.



Source: ATB

Methods, stakeholder engagements and tools

Nestos LL combines a transdisciplinary and participatory approach:

- Stakeholder workshops and real-life case discussions;
- Transect walks to assess product-pollinator interactions and to enhance stakeholder and ecology interaction in the area;
- Surveys on consumer behaviour, farm typology, socio-ecological systems, and monitoring of the LLs;
- Focus group workshops;
- SWOT analysis for regional restoration planning;
- Co-design tools to identify future actions and innovations (e.g. stakeholder mapping, value chain mapping).

Achievements

- More than 30 local stakeholders were mobilized in the first co-design and training workshop.

- Key barriers (lack of knowledge, bureaucracy) and opportunities (youth participation, biodiversity) were identified.
- A typology of farming systems was developed to inform targeted agroecological strategies.
- A survey of consumer willingness to pay for agroecological-friendly products was initiated.
- Focus group workshop on Payment for Ecosystem Services was held.
- Groundwork was laid for future bio-economic modelling of agroecological practices.

Publications

Scientific papers:

- Abou Nader E, Kleftodimos G, Kyrgiakos LS, Kleisiari C, Gallai N, Darwich S, Berchoux T, Vlontzos G, Belhouchette H. Linking Beekeepers' and Farmers' Preferences towards Pollination Services in Greek Kiwi Systems. *Animals* (Basel). 2023 Feb 23;13(5):806. doi: [10.3390/ani13050806](https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13050806). ➔

“Connecting through communication, learning from nature, and transforming Nestos into vibrant havens altogether.”

- NESTOS Motto

Contact

Websites:

- <https://restpoll.eu/>
- <https://restpoll.eu/living-labs-science-in-progress/> ➔

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/restpoll/posts/?feedView=all&viewAsMember=true%20> ➔

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/restpoll/> @restpoll

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61553609349597>
@restpoll

E-mail: kleftodimos@iamm.fr and gylontzos@uth.gr



agroecology.ps@ilvo.vlaanderen.be

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Coordinator: Projektträger Jülich (Germany) | Co-coordinator: Agence nationale de la recherche, ANR (France)