



QUALIFY – *Quality standards and authenticity to foster competitiveness of agrifood SMEs*

**Action plan for the
REGION OF
THESSALY/ GREECE**

2022

Table of Contents

QUALIFY – <i>Quality standards and authenticity to foster competitiveness of agrifood SMEs</i>	1
Introduction	3
Part I – General information	4
Part II – Policy context.....	4
Part III – Details of the actions envisaged.....	6
Action: “Support of local producers and enterprises for the certification of Protected designation of origin (PDO) and Protected geographical indication (PGI) products”	6
Background	6
Action.....	7
Players involved	8
Timeframe	8
Costs	8
Funding sources.....	9

Introduction

This document is the Regional Action Plan of the Region of Thessaly for the QUALIFY Interreg Europe Project. As a result of the Region of Thessaly involvement in the interregional learning process of the QUALIFY partnership, the Action Plan includes one proposed action to be monitored during the Phase 2 of the project.

The Action Plan addresses to the policy instrument the Regional Development Programme 2021-2025 (RDP) Priority Axis 5 “Extroversion”: Enhance of Tourism, Culture, Agrifood and Entrepreneurship, objective Enhance of the Agrifood sector for PDO and PGI products. The proposed action is the “Support of local producers and enterprises for the certification of Protected designation of origin (PDO) and Protected geographical indication (PGI) products and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG)”.

Part I – General information

Project	Quality standards and authenticity to foster competitiveness of agrifood SMEs
Partner organization	Region of Thessaly
Country	Greece
NUTS2 region	Thessaly (EL61)
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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Regional Development Programme 2021-2025 (RDP)

Priority Axis 5 “Extroversion”: Enhance of Tourism, Culture, Agrifood and Entrepreneurship

Objective: Enhance of the Agrifood sector for PDO and PGI products.

Introduction: The Law 4635/2019 enacted the National Development Programme 2021-2025 which aims at the development of an integrated system for the design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the projects to be funded by the

national Public Investment Programme based on the priorities per policy area within the framework of national development goals and specific objectives.

Part of the National Development Programme are the Sectoral and Regional Development Programs (SDP / RDP), which are drawn up by the competent authorities Ministries and the Regions. National Development Programme's development goals are developed in five pillars:

- Smart Development (research and development, digital transformation and innovation)
- Green Development (circular economy, environmental Protection, climate change)
- Social Development (health, employment, education / sport, social cohesion)
- Development Infrastructure (networks, transport, supply chain)
- Extroversion (culture, tourism, agri-food sector, entrepreneurship)

The goals of the Regional Development Programme 2021-2025 of Thessaly are in accordance with the National Development Programme and include the following Priority Axes (PA):

- PA 1: Smart Development
- PA 2: Green Development
- PA3: Social Development
- PA4: Development Infrastructure
- PA5: Extroversion
- PA6: Technical Support

The Regional Development Programme has been approved by the Regional Council and is in force since the beginning of 2022.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

Action: “Support of local producers and enterprises for the certification of Protected designation of origin (PDO), Protected geographical indication (PGI) products and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG)”

Background

The first pillar of Thessaly RIS3 focuses on the agri-food sector. The region is the heart of agricultural and livestock production in our country and has a comparative advantage in the production of such products which are exported to the international market. In addition, the Region of Thessaly has a significant role in the representation of local agricultural products and local stakeholders. Among other developed initiatives, the Region of Thessaly participates in the Union of European Regions with Designation of Origin Products (AREPO). Through its participation, the opportunity is given to promote the Products of Designation of Origin (PDO) and Geographical Indication (PGI) of Thessaly in the fields of dairy, meat, fruit, olives, nuts and wine”. Consequently, more emphasis is needed to the certification to strengthen even more the brand name of local products and mainly to promote them in a systematic, persistent and more organized way to the international market.

Through the process of the interregional learning the partners identified several good practices on quality and authenticity. The Region of Thessaly identified the PARAGO scheme, which was designed and implemented by the Greek Ministry of Interior – Sector of Macedonia and Thrace and aimed to the promotion of the sustainability of local communities, the protection of both producers and consumers, the promotion of quality, fraud prevention, and authenticity in agrifood SMEs to be more competitive in the national and international markets.

Quality schemes of geographical indications system protect the names of products that originate from specific regions and have specific qualities or enjoy a reputation linked to the production territory, contributing to the interconnection of culture and local traditional products as a part of the overall regional branding strategy.

The idea to design and implement an Action that will preserve, enhance and promote the labeling of origin in agri-food products came from two Good Practices by the Regional Government of Catalunya:

- Project Auntenfood on authenticity, traceability and food safety in olive oil: Based on the practice's description this type of project is a great opportunity for SME in the agri-food sector that can improve their quality standards to grow and be more competitive. And can be transferred to other oil-producing regions and countries, (as well as in other characteristic food products), which could implement a similar system of characterization of their varieties and origins and create a similar advisory tool. In addition, control authorities could use this tool to have indications of fraud or deception.
- Survey and focus group: perception of food authenticity: This practice has been carried out with the intention of checking the level of concern and demand of the average consumer regarding the authenticity of food and it showcased that both the survey and the focus group assessed the degree of consumer concern in aspects related to authenticity (geographical origin, proximity, etc.), quality (processing, quality brands, organic products), nutritional value and possible perceived risks, among others. The importance that consumers attach to labeling mentions and in particular to those related to authenticity was also been evaluated.

Based on the above and during the Partner Meeting in Thessaly (25-27 October 2021), RoT's representatives presented the initiatives for the promotion of authenticity of the agri-food sector in the Region of Thessaly alongside the planned activities towards food labelling of origin, which were accordingly reviewed by the project partners. As it was discussed most SMEs in the Region of Thessaly operate in the agri-food sector, therefore it is necessary to take measures that boost quality processes and innovation for rural economy and Agri-food SMEs. In addition, SMEs in Thessaly are facing viability challenges linked to a low competitiveness result and consequently, there is a need to develop innovation and quality support services, so that SMEs can exploit new products, services, and models and access new markets. Towards this direction, the planned call for proposals will provide support to Social Cooperative Enterprises of Collective and Social Benefit, Producer Groups and Agricultural Cooperatives in the process of preparation, documentation and submission of technical files for the certification of traditional local products with the quality label of PDO, PGI and TSG, according to the Regulation 1151/2012 of the EU.

Action

The aim of the action is to provide support to Social Cooperative Enterprises of Collective and Social Benefit, Producer Groups and Agricultural Cooperatives in the process of preparation, documentation and submission of technical files for the certification of traditional local products with the quality label of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG), according to Regulation 1151/2012 of the EU.

On the one hand the action provides technical support to the eligible beneficiaries for the certification procedure of PDO/ PGI/TSG quality labels, while on the other hand funds

networking and promotion activities for the registered as PDO, PGI and TSG products of Thessaly.

The overall objectives of the action are related to the connection of the products and their special characteristics with the biodiversity of the area, the traditional way of production and processing, the culture, the customs and traditions of the production of the local communities, the strengthening of mountainous, semi-mountainous, border areas, the protection of the intellectual property and social characteristics of the local communities of Thessaly.

Players involved

The Directorate of Development Programming which is the responsible unit on behalf of the Region of Thessaly for the drafting of the Regional Development Programme, the monitoring, evaluation, implementation and the technical support to the RDP.

The Directorate of Agricultural Development which is responsible for the drafting of the Call, the evaluation of the beneficiaries and the monitoring.

Other regional stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations, development agencies and research centers.

Timeframe

The time needed to implement the action is 1 year starting in June 2022 and ending in April 2023. The planned schedule is included in the following table:

Activity	Date
Launch of the Call	June 2022
Information and communication activities to future beneficiaries	June - August 2022
Submission of the applications	September 2022
Evaluation – Approvals	September - November 2022
Implementation of funding proposals	November 2022 - April 2023

Costs

The foreseen budget of the action is 140.000€.

Funding sources

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Regional Development Programme 2021-2025 (RDP), Priority Axis 5 "Extroversion": Enhance of Tourism, Culture, Agrifood and Entrepreneurship, Objective: Enhance of the Agrifood sector for PDO and PGI products.

Date: 06.07.2022

Name/ function: **KONSTANTINOS AGORASTOS, GOVERNOR OF THE REGION OF THESSALY**

Signature/ Stamp:


