



# DESK REVIEW ON MEDSNAIL TOPICS IN TARGET REGIONS

Work Package 3 Agro-food alliance

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3.1 Agro biodiversity study

**Activity:**  
3.2.1 Desk review on studies and projects on MedSNAIL topics already carried out in target regions

**Responsible Partner:** All Partners with the support of Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity

Activity 3.1.2

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### Revision History Log

### List of Contributors

### Dissemination Level

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| Internal use – FAMP – Project Lead Beneficiary |   |
| Internal use - confidential to MedSNAIL        |   |
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| Public   | X |



## INTRODUCTION

Once the methodology was established in the previous activity (311 Joint definition and internal dissemination of the WP activities' methodology), all MedSNAIL partners have prepared a desk review on studies and projects on MedSNAIL topics already carried out in target regions.

The first phase of the mapping have been carried out through desk activities aimed at analysing the target contexts, with particular reference to needs, demands, policies and programmes available in the fields of agri-business, sustainable agriculture and food security.

## TARGET AREAS BY PARTNER

Each partner has chosen an intervention area to carry out case studies. These areas of study have been the following:

| Partner                      | Target area                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| FAMP (Spain)                 | Andarax Valley (Almeria Province)   |
| AUB (Lebanon)                | The West Bekaa and the Shouf        |
| RWDS (Palestine)             | Jenin & Tubas Governorates          |
| University of Sfax (Tunisia) | Sfax governorate and Tunisian Sahel |
| GRC (Malta)                  | The island of Gozo                  |
| NAMAA (Jordania)             | Balqa Governorate                   |

The desk reviews developed by the MedSNAIL partners have followed the indications made by the Slow Food Foundation, which has also reviewed the different studies and has given instructions to improve them. To this end, the Slow Food Foundation has organized on line bilateral meetings with each partner, which took place during the month of April 2020.

## DESK REVIEW PROGRESSES IN TIME OF COVID-19

The health crisis provoked by the expansion of Covid-19 all over the world is undoubtedly having an important impact on the normal development of european projects, as most of them deal with issues that need to be tested on the territory, for which mobility is of outmost importance. Transnational cooperation means working on a topic locally under a common approach agreed by a number of partners, and exchange experiences and know-how, trying to transfer good practices into other contexts.



### Activity 3.1.2

European projects act as real ideas labs where to test and implement new ways of doing to improve governance, and management of resources with a wide approach involving innovative and experimental methodologies as a result from cooperation with european counterparts.

No contingency plan could foresee the development of a pandemic which would prevent people from going out and doing normal life, we are at a rare occurrence and we must find ways to go on working with our projects, adapting working plans to the current situation.

That is what we're trying to do in MedSNAIL. Some weeks ago all partners had a virtual meeting and decided an alternative path for our project, to be tried along the following two or three months, this way leaving summer the possibility to mark a turning point in the development of Covid-19.

MedSNAIL wants to test a methodology, inspired by the Slow Food approach, with the aim of saving and valorising local agro-food products strongly linked to local communities and territories, in order to preserve agrobiodiversity and intangible cultural heritage, empower local farmers and trigger a more socially and environmentally sustainable rural development. At present, we are at the stage of mapping products (raw materials, animal breeds, processed products, traditional techniques, recipes) present in the area of intervention, and assess their potential in terms of conservation of the cultural and environmental heritage, as well as their potential to boost virtuous territorial dynamics from a socio-cultural, environmental and economic point of view.

The first phase of this mapping includes desk reviews by all partners aimed at analysing the target contexts and first approachment to stakeholders in the territories. Preliminary diagnosis have been made by every partner, which were to be pooled and confronted in the frame of a workshop addressed to project partners scheduled to be held in Beirut in June, with the aim to support partners to identify stakeholders and local leaders.

But the situation has made impossible to go on with this scenary, as June is so close and travels will still have to await a little more . That is why we have rethought the project's workplan for the next moths, in an attempt to reinforce partners' skills to face better prepared the engagement of their stakeholders and local leaders, once the confinement measures will be smoothed in their countries.

Indeed, a series of bilateral virtual meetings through which Slow Food Foundation, Italian partner in the project, has assisted and advised partners



on how to optimise their desk reviews.

## MAIN FINDINGS

This section describes the main findings of the desk reviews of each partner:

### **American University of Beirut (AUB) – Lebanon**

AUB has already identified the territories of intervention of the project: West Bekaa and Shouf, Their motivations for this choice are in line with the philosophy and values that the project wants to promote. It highlights the history and origins of food products and traditional dishes and focus on the cultural and emotional ties that people hold to the West Bekaa and Shouf areas.

“The areas of the West Bekaa and Shouf represent typical cases of diversified and authentic agriculture and food systems that are well embedded and preserved in their respective societies. Most of the inhabitants of these areas still rely on traditional agriculture and food processing practices and are tightly attached to their land and traditions. The areas are also known for having unique biodiversity, natural features and landscapes which also form important component of their heritage.

Small producers in these areas often struggle to maintain their productions due to the lack of resources and market access; hence valorising these products can help in creating opportunities to small producers and thus contribute in the conservation of local traditional practices while protecting native biodiversity and natural resources, preserving local agriculture varieties and traditional food recipes and of course contributing to the livelihoods of the rural communities in both areas” .

On the other hand, the rural tourism sector linked to the gastronomic heritage of the country presents good opportunities for development.

### **Gozo Regional Committee (GRC) - Malta**

The agricultural area chosen for the study as part of the MedSNAIL project is the island of Gozo, which is both geologically and politically a part of the Maltese islands. Gozo is heavily dependent on the sea transport link with Malta. A consequence of this is the concept of double insularity, and a strong feeling of regional and cultural identity.

Also from the point of view of biodiversity is richer, especially compared to



wild biodiversity both animal and plant. On the other hand, from the point of view of domestic biodiversity, a large part of the island's heritage has been lost, both in terms of plant and animal species.

“Another important issue is that agriculture and fishing do have an important economic role ranging from food production, culinary tradition, land stewardship, and environmental conservation. They are also important for the tourism industry, and so their significance taken holistically may go farther than their nominal quantitative economic significance”.

This context provides the project with an opportunity to explore the consistency between gastronomical and rural traditions of the island with the new forms of slow tourism, which can be promoted from public policies, in contrast with the long tradition of massive tourism suffered by Malta.

### **The Rural Women’s Development Society Economic, social and political Empowerment for rural women’s (RWDS) - Palestine**

In the case of Palestine, the Janin area has been identified as a possible area of intervention. It is an area with a strong rural vocation, many products of the internal market come from the area, is characterized by the presence of small-scale producers as well as many women who work in some cases individually but often also in cooperatives. RWDS has already activated interventions in the area, based on the community based organisation approach, which have resulted in the constitution of "clubs of women" and which represents a strong starting point for the planned interventions encompassed in the MedSNAIL project.

One of the main problems in the agricultural sector in Palestine is related to water scarcity. The problem is not only physical but also political, as producers do not have access to water resources. This circumstance brings an opportunity to the project to work putting the focus on productions that can be grown with scarce water resources, such as wheat, for example.

It is worth quoting here one of the messages included in the desk review by RWDS which adds a valuable dimension to the project, related to governance and sovereignty issues.

“Agriculture is not only essential component of the Palestinian national, cultural, economic and social fabric but it embodies their perseverance, confrontation and adherence to their land under the threat of confiscation and settlement activities. It also provides a refuge and a source of income and food supplies at times of crises”



### **Women for Cultural Development (NAMAA) – Jordania**

In the case of Jordan, there's a clear relationship between agriculture and economic development and the desk review makes obvious that Jordan is a hotspot for biodiversity in the broadest sense of the word. The territory is characterized by different types of climate with arid, semi-arid, forest and wetlands, which obviously makes the biodiversity of the territory extremely rich.

Although there're many institutions are working on the preservation of biodiversity, all the action is focused on research, which is uncoordinated and fragmented. Small scale producers are not targeted by the national strategy on environment, but it seems that the main challenges at national level arise from the industrial approach to agriculture.

Citizens do not seem to be too aware of how important it is to have access to local and healthy food, although there is a very niche market for organic food. The origin of food is not a priority for citizens who base their choices primarily on price. Even markets of producers selling local products are scarce, mostly products of large scale producers are sold at markets and in shops.

The area of intervention of the project is not yet indicated in the desk, however the partner already has an idea that the Highlands could be a good pilot site. This is one of the areas of Jordan most in line with the philosophy of slow food, in fact there is no intensive agriculture but mostly small scale farmers. The producers need support because the quantities produced are not considered statistically significant and therefore the area is not considered by the government. It is characterized by products at risk of extinction.

### **University of Sfax - Tunisia**

Tunisia has chosen two different areas for case study: Sfax Governorate and Tunisian Sahel.

The climate of Tunisia is divided into 7 bioclimatic areas favorable for a great diversity of husbandries. The great difference between the north and the rest of the country is due to the Tunisian dorsal which separates the areas influenced by the Mediterranean climate from those influenced by the arid climate engendered by the Sahara. Such a characteristic makes Tunisia a country particularly vulnerable to climate change.



Plant biodiversity and agriculture sector, extremely important, are evolving in a fragile natural environment, with highly sensitive dependence on weather conditions. An effective means for ensuring plant diversity should be based on improved skills related to conservation management of potential plants to combat desertification.

In both case study areas, there seems to be a problem of water shortage, provoking water deficit, which has as consequence salinization of the soil in the case of governorate of Sfax, and a clear diversity of soils in the case of the Tunisian Sahel, given by the fact that this study area is subject to two types of opposite climatic actions: the temperate Mediterranean climate on the East coasts and the dry arid climate in the West, with a problem of desertification, which make soil poor in organic matter.

Also in the case of Sahel, the study of agrosystems and the exploitation of agricultural land highlights all the problems relating to the extension of agriculture to the detriment of rangelands, notably cereal growing in the north and arboriculture. Analysis of the dry and irrigated operating systems in different sites, particularly in the coastal area(...), reveals that in this environment the climate forcing was well resolved in the past through traditional techniques

### **Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FAMP) - Spain**

FAMP's choice for the implementation of MedSNAIL project is Valle de Andarax, located in the province of Almeria in Andalusia, and focusing the intervention area within the Valle de Andarax with a double criterion: municipalities that are effectively influenced by the Andarax River and also with a marked rural character.

The criteria for the selection of this case study area have been:

- Depopulation of the rural areas , as one of the most worrying realities of our national demographic. In Andalusia, the depopulation does not reach such dramatic figures as at the national level thanks to the network of medium and small cities distributed uniformly throughout the territory. Despite this, we cannot ignore the fact that there are depopulation situations in our territory that must be taken into account and that require new actions to fight against. In this sense, the report "On the subject of depopulation in Andalusia" elaborated by FAMP describes 11 rural areas to be revitalized in Andalusia, among which is the Valle de Andarax.



### Activity 3.1.2

- Climate change and desertification, being the latter a process of soil degradation accelerated by aggressive and unsustainable human actions in the natural and productive environment. Nowadays is an endemic problem in Mediterranean environments.
- The aging of the population is another factor threatening the rural areas of the national and andalusian territory. Together with depopulation, the lack of generational replacement in rural areas leads in many to the disappearance of crops and traditional techniques.
- Lack of certified products. Andalusia currently has 58 products with a certified quality designation. Only one (the tomato from La Cañada) is found in the province of Almería. Almeria is the province with the fewest certified products in Andalusia.

## DESK REVIEWS BY PARTNERS

The complete Desk Reviews prepared by each member can be analyzed below.

