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Advancing Circular Economy Through the LIFE-IP CEI-Greece Project: Local and Regional Alliances for Sustainable Agri-Food Waste Management

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Abstract

Greece generates a wide range of agri-food residues and by-products, reflecting the diversity of agricultural production across its regions. Although these materials have considerable potential for reuse and valorisation, a significant proportion remains unexploited or is currently directed towards relatively low-value uses. At the same time, the characteristics of agri-food waste vary considerably between regions, making locally adapted approaches essential for identifying technically feasible and economically viable solutions.

The LIFE-IP CEI-Greece project, which supports the implementation of Greece's national waste management and circular economy policies, addresses this challenge through the development of local and regional voluntary alliances for agri-food waste management. These alliances bring together stakeholders involved in the generation, management and potential use of agri-food residues, including local and regional authorities, farmers, producers, processors, research institutions and other relevant organisations.

Within these alliances, Agri-food Waste Management Plans are developed to map locally generated waste streams, examine existing management practices and identify opportunities for their improved use and valorisation. Rather than promoting a single solution, the approach takes into account the type and composition of the waste, quantities generated, local conditions, available infrastructure and potential markets. Depending on these factors, different management and valorisation pathways can be considered. An electronic decision-support tool developed through the project complements this process by helping stakeholders explore suitable circular management options.

Experience from the implementation of the action highlights the importance of cooperation at local and regional level in moving from the identification of available resources to practical circular economy solutions. Establishing links between waste producers, potential users, public authorities, research organisations and other market actors can help address existing gaps and create opportunities for new value chains.

The presentation discusses the approach followed by LIFE-IP CEI-Greece, the experience gained through the establishment of the voluntary alliances and the preparation of Agri-food Waste Management Plans, as well as some of the main challenges encountered. It also considers how locally based partnerships and better coordination between stakeholders can contribute to turning agri-food residues into resources and support the wider transition

towards a circular bioeconomy in Greece.

Keywords: agri-food waste, circular economy, LIFE-IP CEI-Greece

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