



FAYP: an EC-funded project to attract young people to agriculture

by Ilaria Armaroli and Paolo Tomassetti

There is one sector in Italy which is not exposed to the economic crisis: agriculture. Led by exports (+4.8% in 2013) even in times of substantial stalled economy, the agricultural and agri-food industry keeps positively affecting the Italian balance of trade ([Censis, 2014](#)). It is estimated that more than 2 million new jobs could be created in the European Union through innovative approaches to agricultural practices ([EFFAT, Green Jobs in Agriculture and Rural Areas, 2014](#)).

However, despite the occupational and entrepreneurial potential of the sector, only a small proportion of young people are currently living in rural areas. The ageing of population, combined with the economic progress and the structural redistribution of production inputs towards emerging sectors (industry first, and then the service sector), may partly explain this phenomenon. The [2014 report](#), produced by INEA, the Italian research centre in the field of agriculture, reveals that only 17% of Italian farmers are under the age of 40 years. The situation slightly improves within medium and large enterprises in the Southern Italy, given the absence of occupational alternatives. Finally, as the European social partners in agriculture highlight, there is another serious challenge to be faced in the agricultural sector: the dramatic gap between jobs available in the sector and workers who are qualified to fill them ([EFFAT, COPA-COGECA, 2013 Common Declaration of the European Social Partners in Agriculture, 2013](#)).

Against this background, ADAPT promotes the EC-funded [FAYP \(Fostering Agriculture among Young People\)](#) project. The initiative gathers four agricultural employers' associations from Mediterranean Europe (CAP – Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal, CIA – Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori, PASEGES – Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives, UPA – Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos), where the strong tradition in agriculture is associated with high levels of youth unemployment. The goal pursued by the FAYP consortium is to foster the involvement of young people in agriculture by developing innovative practices along three guidelines: education, training and guidance; communication; and easing doing business-related policies.

Education, training and guidance

Mentoring and guidance programmes as well as innovative courses, organised by employers' associations in cooperation with schools and universities, are increasingly needed as farming is no longer merely a family-run business. From Rome, Lisbon, Athens and Santiago de Compostela CIA, CAP, PASEGES and UPA have brought out the importance of change, thus joining the consortium led by ADAPT. The first meeting of the FAYP partners took place in Rome in March 2015. In that occasion, the employers' associations discussed about education and modern learning strategies. Particularly, it emerged that in Athens, PASEGES attracts children to agriculture by piquing their curiosity and involving them in an art contest which is aimed at imaging and painting an ideal farm. Moreover, PASEGES' experts are usually engaged in providing lectures to students

at universities. Interestingly, it came out that CIA has recently used the international stage of Expo2015 to organise creative workshops and seminars addressed to young visitors. The Italian agricultural employers' federation is also deeply committed to the promotion of "Agricoltura è vita": the association which is meant to provide vocational education and training for farmers.

Communication

Agriculture is changing. In the past century cultivating the land was a prerogative of farmers based in small villages, producing exclusively for local communities. Conversely, nowadays working and doing business in agriculture means being able to use technologies, learn languages and business strategy in order to operate on a global scale, respect the environment and cultural diversity, meet the needs of production and those of the community, thus delivering social, educational and recreational services. Nevertheless, a biased opinion stemming from an archaic image of the rural world still affects the sector: only the insiders, indeed, truly know that agriculture has profoundly changed in the recent times, as a result of the technological and multifunctional evolution.


The FAYP second meeting, which took place in Lisbon last September, was thus intended to deal with the key role of communication in promoting a positive image of agriculture, which is likely to improve the social perception of the sector. Importantly, it emerged that an agricultural fair is annually organised by the Portuguese CAP, which attracts the local population to agriculture through debates, events, conferences and meetings, all related to the rural world.

There is a broad consensus, among the FAYP partners, on the fact that new targets require new ways of communication: social networks, updated websites and catching videos on YouTube might be very effective instruments to reach young people. However, turning the awareness into concrete actions is still far from being a reality. Meanwhile, the Spanish UPA does play its part, by providing its website with intuitive links to the pages in Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, YouTube and Flickr.

Easing doing business-related policies

The third meeting of the FAYP project will be held in Santiago de Compostela, where, in January 2016, the farmers' associations will be invited to discuss about practices and policies aimed at supporting entrepreneurship in agriculture. Lobbying towards public institutions and consultancy targeted to young people will be thus the focus of the next debate, which will be intended to frame a common strategy boosting young people entrepreneurial activities in rural areas.

By June 2016, the FAYP project is expected to achieve its ambitious goals. A final conference will be organised in Brussels within the context of the 2016 second meeting of the Social Affairs Committee of COPA-COGECA, the European farmers' association, in order to illustrate and analyse the main results of the FAYP final report and the relevant position paper. Within the next months, the surveys conducted as well as the public initiatives and dissemination activities carried out by the international consortium, led by ADAPT, will thus contribute to making the FAYP project a powerful leverage for the exchange of best practices among European farmers' associations, hence fostering the effectiveness of social dialogue in agriculture, addressing the overarching EU unemployment and tackling the social policies challenges as highlighted in the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#).

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