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Improving the sustainability level of companies in PDO areas: the case of the Prosecco DOC sustainability project

Sustainability is a key aspect that necessarily has to become part of the management planning of all companies in the agricultural sector. The adoption of more sustainable production models is in fact a social as well as an economic need: on the one hand the environment, community and workers must be protected, and on the other such approaches are necessary to maintain high competitiveness in markets. It is also necessary to demonstrate it, through tools that can ensure a real commitment to reducing environmental and social impacts, such as certifications (Pomarici and Sardone, 2020). This, of course, is not easy: farms are faced with an increasingly uncertain agriculture due to the effects of climate change and rising production costs. So far, the decision to embark on a sustainability path, including the enrolment on sustainability certified programs, may not be a priority for many companies. In fact, it is often difficult for companies, especially small ones, to succeed in investing money, time and human resources in sustainability pathways, which are very often perceived as economically unsustainable (De Steur *et al.*, 2020; Pizzol *et al.*, 2021; Savelli *et al.*, 2019).

It is therefore necessary to promote initiatives that support companies in embarking on sustainability paths, simplifying the process of conversion to more sustainable production models. Such initiatives should aim to foster the sharing of knowledge and expertise in order to find common solutions to problems shared by companies in a specific area (Jourjon *et al.*, 2016; Pomarici *et al.*, 2015). Proper and easier sharing requires the presence of coordinating figures who can foster dialogue among the various stakeholders. Such initiatives can find fertile ground within areas delimited by GI/DO thanks also to the presence of interprofessional bodies, such as Consortia, which, especially in the face of the new EU reg. 2024/1143, have the role of managing, enforcing and developing ethically their GI to strengthen their position in the value chain.

In this regard, the Prosecco DOC Consortium has launched a project in 2019 that aims to increase the level of sustainability of the entire appellation. To do this, an operational group (OG) in the framework of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for agricultural productivity and sustainability, according to art. 35 of the reg. 1305/2013, was established. The OG consist of different type of stakeholders: companies representing the different types of businesses in the appellation, research organizations and consultants, with the aim of collaborating to find and test strategies and develop tools that allow winegrowers and wineries to approach and implement social responsibility, reducing their environmental and social impact, while ensuring good economic performance to all companies in the supply chain. In fact, the OG has worked and continues to work to find solutions that can, for example, reduce treatments in the vineyard, preserve biodiversity, support local communities, ensure respect for workers' rights, reduce waste, ensure good margins for all operators in the supply chain etc... These tools and strategies, after being tested in a small group of wineries, are being made available to the entire community of Prosecco DOC appellation producers through dissemination and training activities.

The SOPD Equalitas standard was chosen as the sustainability benchmark for the project. It is an internationally recognized standard for certifying compliance with good sustainability practices at the organization, product, and designation of origin levels. The activities carried out by the OG aim to help companies obtain certification at the organization and product level and for the entire appellation, led by the Consortium, to obtain certification at designation of origin level (Di Chiara *et al.*, 2024).

The Prosecco Sustainability Project demonstrates how a knowledge-sharing approach, involving a range of professionals with diverse skills, can support the transition of a large and varied production system like the Prosecco DOC area. By addressing the specific challenges unique to different sites and recognizing the diversity among the companies involved, collaboration among various stakeholders with different perspectives enabled the development of efficient and effective strategies to enhance social, economic, and environmental outcomes across the entire community.

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Please choose the main keywords of your contribution (with an X, unlimited number)

- Agriculture
- Biodiversity
- Diversification
- X** Sustainability
- Innovation
- Politics
- Quality
- Resilience
- X** Food System

Secondary keywords *

- Family Agriculture
- Urban Agriculture
- Agroecology
- X** Territorial Approach
- Short Food Channels
- Consumm'actors
- Cultural Diversity
- Right to Food
- Circular Economy
- Gastronomy
- Social Inclusion
- X** Geographical Indication
- X** Initiatives/Projects
- Mountain
- X** Tools
- Heritage
- Landscape
- Small producers
- X** Participatory Process
- Network
- Traditional "Savoir-Faire"
- Food Security
- X** Valorisation Strategies
- Certification and Labelling
- Sustainable Tourism