

INCEPTION_REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To date, the overall progress of the EcoPest Project has been satisfactory, apart from falling slightly behind schedule in the matter of establishing the initial basis of reference. This was due to:

- An increased number of participant farmers
- The starting date of the agricultural season: EcoPest is dependent on farmers' activities, not the other way round
- EcoPest team deciding to expand the pilot area boundaries (Action 2)

These delays were caused by the Project taking the chance to become more wide-ranging, which will be of obvious benefit to all concerned.

During this period, implementation of the 13 separate Actions of the Project began, and the early stages of Action 14 were initiated.

Action 1: The administrative structure of the Project (including the contracts with the external partners) has been completed. The first phase of the internal inspection of the Project has also been performed, under the terms of the applied Quality Assurance System.

Action 2: All the necessary initial activities and contacts have been established. The Technical Committee created the data-recording forms to record the condition of the current growing season. These actions are going according to plan, with active participation by 231 farmers and 50 local advisors. Fields and farms were selected on the basis of environmental criteria and farmers' willingness to actively participate. The pilot area was delineated and mapped according to all the relevant data. A questionnaire for collecting historical data regarding pesticide inputs was created, and is being completed by farmers in collaboration with local agronomists and the scientific team from the Coordinating Beneficiary. A large number of surveys (14) are now complete. The methodology and associated paperwork for recording local plant pests and diseases were generated and are being completed. *This action is in progress.*

Action 3: The first attempt was made to define the real and precise requirement for pesticide inputs. Soil samplings took place; proposals for appropriate fertilization were put forward, existing Protocols for integrated pest management were consulted, and the first Guidelines for Plant Protection were published.

Action 4: *This Action is in progress, and according to schedule.* The EcoPest team ranked pesticides in use in the pilot area on the basis of risk.

Action 5: *The activities of this Action started before the deadline noted in the Project Proposal.* The initial experiments and measurements regarding spray drift have been completed. The Protocol for the development of a strategy for spray drift control has been published (first edition).

Action 6: *This Action is in progress.* The pollution monitoring network has been set up. Regular sampling, analysis and bioassays continue to be performed, confirming that the main pollutants are connected with the use of pesticides. Maps overlaid with the data have been produced, depicting 'hot spots' of high levels of pollution.

Action 7: *This Action remains in progress.* In co-operation with local government (the Cheronia Municipality), the EcoPest team have defined criteria for the sites where dumpsters will be placed, for the convenient and safe collection of empty pesticide package containers.

Action 8: A detailed record of the condition of the Project area will allow the reliable assessment of risk parameters. However, in order to extrapolate the results and their potential utilization, the p-EMA software originally mentioned in the Project's Proposal will be replaced due to its lack of certification. From now on, the environmental monitoring and assessment software tools FOOT-FS and FOOT-CRS (as developed in the context of FOOTPRINT program which was co-funded by the 6th FP-6) will be used in this Action.

Action 9: Informative meetings and specialized training of farmers and agronomists took place for completing the questionnaires (of historical data for pesticide inputs, cultivation practices, etc) and forms of current activities and recordings. The planned for the 6th month workshop did not take place because the recording and assessment of the current conditions has not been completed. Moreover, crops harvesting prevented farmers and agronomists to attend the workshop.

Action 10: The prototype calibration system for spraying machinery was assessed according to external standards. The activities necessary for the calibration of machinery in the pilot area took place. In addition, selected examples of spraying machinery were visually inspected and the results were recorded and analyzed. The EcoPest team has prepared the relevant proposals for inclusion in the National Action Plan, regarding the regulation of spraying machinery.

Action 11: Senior figures within Agrocert and the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food have repeatedly expressed their interest in incorporating EcoPest's findings into the National Action Plan. Especially fruitful collaboration has since been developed with industry partners, namely the Hellenic Crop Protection Association (HCPA).

Action 12: EcoPest's aims, methods and results continue to be disseminated through various forms of media, as outlined in the Project proposal.

Action 13: Reports concerning the monitoring and auditing of EcoPest have been composed by BPC and the Project's partners, as outlined in the original plan of the Project.

Tools such as the permanent water sampling network, the EcoPest website (which will be actively maintained after the Project's formal termination) and the incorporation into the National Action Plan of the results of rational pesticide usage – all of these are expected to contribute to the wider utilization of EcoPest's results and deliverables.

In conclusion, all Actions are enjoying active and successful progress. The planned extension to some of the deadlines will result in greatly improved reliability of the rational use of pesticides.