



AGFORWEB



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weaknesses and strengths

Result: Report on Study visits

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1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

The study visits were conceptualized as an integral component of Work Package 3 (WP3), focusing on development activities aimed at knowledge transfer. Recognizing the exceptional importance of cross-border educational exchanges, the visits were designed to foster the sharing of agroforestry practices and experiences among participating institutions. This initiative sought to address the varying levels of agroforestry implementation and expertise within the West Balkan region and neighboring countries.

The primary objectives were multifold. First, the visits aimed to equip students with practical knowledge by exposing them to diverse agroforestry systems. Second, they intended to strengthen the competencies of teaching staff through direct interaction with peers and practitioners in the field. Finally, the study visits aimed to enhance institutional collaboration, creating a platform for future cooperative projects.

Through these visits, students and professors not only acquired valuable insights into agroforestry practices but also built networks that would facilitate long-term professional relationships. By integrating theoretical knowledge with field experience, the study visits contributed significantly to developing well-rounded expertise in agroforestry.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

The initial plan envisioned nine study visits, with four participants (two students and two professors) from each institution visiting two different partner organizations. However, to optimize resources and enhance the quality of interactions, the project management committee later restructured the approach. Each partner institution hosted a single consolidated study visit for all project participants, ensuring comprehensive participation and a more impactful knowledge-sharing process.

To ensure cost-effectiveness, the revised approach emphasized joint travel arrangements for students and professors. This adjustment not only reduced expenses but also encouraged collaborative learning by enabling participants to engage more intensively with each other during travel and site visits.

Each study visit was meticulously planned to align with both academic schedules and the seasonal activities associated with specific agroforestry practices. This ensured that participants could observe and engage with agroforestry systems at their peak operational periods, providing a richer learning experience. Detailed itineraries were prepared to maximize exposure to diverse agroforestry practices while accommodating the logistical needs of all participants.

3. STUDY VISIT

The revised approach necessitated scheduling the study visits to align with the academic and agricultural calendars of the host countries. The first visit was held in Montenegro during the summer, highlighting silvopastoralism—a predominant agroforestry practice in the region. Subsequent visits were organized in the Pannonian region of Croatia, Istria, Bulgaria, and Serbia, allowing participants to observe a variety of agroforestry systems. These visits combined theoretical discussions with field observations to deliver a rich learning experience.

Each visit offered participants insights into the local applications of agroforestry, fostering dialogue and collaboration among institutions.

Detailed descriptions of each visit, including the practices observed and the knowledge exchanged, are provided in the annex of this report.

3.1. Highlights from the Study Visits

****1. Andrijevića, Montenegro (July 11, 2023)****

Participants visited the Katun “Čakor” in northeastern Montenegro, observing silvopastoral practices in action. Local farmers showcased their use of natural grazing areas for autochthonous Busha cattle and Simmental breeds. The integration of livestock farming with eco-tourism was also demonstrated, highlighting the sustainable use of forest and pasture resources. The visit included an exploration of beekeeping agroforestry practices in Babino Polje, showcasing the synergy between apiculture and forestry.

****2. Pazin, Croatia (April 25, 2024)****

In Istria, participants explored various agroforestry systems, including wind protection belts and truffle plantations. A notable visit to the Karlić truffle plantation provided insights into truffle cultivation as a lucrative agroforestry practice. The day concluded with a visit to Stancija Kumparićka, a goat farm integrating forestry and pasture management for cheese production.

****3. Osijek, Croatia (October 26, 2023)****

The visit focused on alley cropping systems and their role in microclimatic regulation. Participants examined field trials and opened soil profiles to understand the impacts of agroforestry on soil health. The day concluded with a visit to Kopački Rit Nature Park, demonstrating the integration of biodiversity conservation with sustainable land management.

****4. Goč, Serbia (October 2-3, 2024)****

Participants visited dynamic agroforestry experimental fields and shelterbelts near Pančevo. The second day included visits to households in Dragosinci and Bogutovac, where traditional practices like raising pigs in oak forests and mixed farming systems were showcased. These examples illustrated the economic and ecological benefits of agroforestry.

****5. Kavarna, Bulgaria (June 25, 2024)****

This visit featured protective forest belts at the Dobrudza Agricultural Institute and a tour of the Balchik Botanical Garden. Participants observed experimental studies on tree-shrub compositions and their impacts on agricultural productivity. A cultural visit to Cape Kaliakra highlighted the integration of historical preservation with environmental conservation.

Outcomes and Benefits

The study visits successfully achieved their objectives by exposing participants to diverse agroforestry practices and fostering collaborative learning. They provided students and professors with invaluable insights into sustainable land-use practices, promoting the development of innovative strategies for agroforestry in the West Balkan region. Furthermore, these visits strengthened professional networks among partner institutions, laying the groundwork for future research and development initiatives.

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