



# NEWSLETTER

April 2026

## CultiVETing - Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the Agri-Food Sector through VET

From knowledge to action: what we learned from Europe to transform VET in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkans region.

Technology is no longer an option. It is a necessity to keep agriculture competitive. This was one of the reflections that was repeated during the study visits in Italy and Greece, within the framework of the peer learning activities of the CultiVETing project.



### Peer Learning

Peer learning activities - the study visits in Liguria and Athens - carried out within the framework of the CultiVETing project went beyond the exchange of experiences. They contributed to creating a deeper understanding of how effective education systems and the agri-food sector function in practice.

Participants analyzed concrete models where education, business, and innovation are closely interconnected, and where collaboration is functional and daily, not just a concept.

One of the key lessons is that change does not necessarily require new ideas, but rather the coordinated implementation of those that already work.



## What did the field experiences show?

### 1. Public-private partnerships are essential

The Liguria model showed that close cooperation between public institutions and private cooperatives is one of the key factors for success in rural and agricultural development.

#### Without this interaction:

- policies remain on paper
- interventions are fragmented
- impact is limited



## 2. Technology is transforming agriculture

From aeroponics to smart agriculture and digital tools, technology was identified as a key factor for:



- increasing productivity
- improving sustainability
- modernizing traditional practices

But an important lesson is that innovation works only when it is adapted to the local reality.

What role do partnerships play?

One of the most important lessons is that genuine collaboration among stakeholders is essential.

In the models observed during the visits to Italy and Greece, it was highlighted that:

- The private sector is not only a beneficiary, but a co-creator
- Educational institutions are flexible and open to change
- Public authorities act as facilitators of processes

Without these partnerships, reform efforts remain fragmented and with limited impact

## 3. Small farmers are an asset, not a problem

The visits showed that small farmers should not be seen as an obstacle, but as an important development resource, as they:

- preserve tradition and local identity
- contribute to biodiversity and sustainability
- can be competitive in niche markets with the right support

Supporting them through training, mentoring, and financing is essential for the sustainability of the sector.



## 4. Local cooperation and cooperative models work

The observed cooperative models showed that:

- Sharing resources increases efficiency
- Access to markets is improved
- competitiveness increases

These models are transferable and highly relevant for Albania, Kosovo, and the region.



## 5. Education and skills remain a critical link

One of the strongest challenges identified is the lack of practical and entrepreneurial skills linked to the market. The activities highlighted the importance of:



- mentoring programmes
- non-formal education
- school–business linkages

Without investment in skills, any effort toward modernization remains limited.



## 6. Integration with other sectors creates value

One of the most interesting practices was the connection between agriculture and tourism:

- it increases the value of local products
- it creates new sources of income
- it strengthens rural development

This is also a major potential for Albania and the region, given the growth of the tourism sector .



## 7. Cultural heritage is a competitive advantage

The visited models showed that:

- tradition + innovation = market differentiation
- local products gain value through identity

Preserving traditional methods is not an obstacle; it is a strategic asset.

So far, the project has developed analyses and resources that address the gaps between vocational education and the labor market in the agri-food sector – one of the main challenges in the WB. These findings provide not only the diagnosis, but also a clear direction for the next steps.

Good models exist and practices are already functioning. The challenge remains building systems that make these models work in a sustainable way.

Read the full report on peer learning: <https://cultiveting.eu/resources/>

CultiVETing - Towards a stronger VET system and a more sustainable agri-food sector.

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## Project partners

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VIS Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo

IEK AKMI - IEK AKMH

Albanian Network for Rural Development

Employment Promotion Agency Kosovo Agricultural University of Tirana

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Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo

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This project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

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