

Young farmers' needs in Greece

Annex I.12 to the Pilot project: Exchange programmes for young farmers

Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Rotterdam, 25 September 2015



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Marie-Jose Zondag & Sacha Koppert (Ecorys Netherlands)
Carolien de Lauwere (LEI-Wageningen UR)
Peter Sloot (Aequator Groen & Ruimte)
Andreas Pauer (Ecorys Brussels)

Rotterdam, 25 September 2015

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ECORYS Nederland B.V.
Watermanweg 44
3067 GG Rotterdam

P.O. Box 4175
3006 AD Rotterdam
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)10 453 88 00
F +31 (0)10 453 07 68
E netherlands@ecorys.com
Registration no. 24316726

W www.ecorys.nl

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1 Introduction

Objective of the Pilot Project study on young farmers

The “Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers” has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) to identify the needs of young farmers, get an overview of the existing exchange schemes for young farmers and develop a guide to establish or improve exchange schemes for young farmers (DG AGRI, Tender No AGRI-2012-Eval-03). The study has been implemented by Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in 2014-2015. The aims of this study were:

- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the specific *needs of young farmers* across the EU;
- To describe and access existing schemes and initiatives for the exchange of young farmers;
- To identify specific results of exchange schemes and specific support measures that have proved to be effective and efficient;
- To provide recommendations on the design, implementation and delivery of exchange programmes and schemes.

This country report on the needs of young farmers

The needs analysis was performed through desk research, interviewing on average 78 farmers per EU Member State and having a focus group in each of the 28 Member States. In the focus group the results of the interviews and the needs of young farmers concerning exchange schemes were discussed.

This report contains the needs analysis for **Greece**, and contains:

- General information on young farmers (chapter two);
- The needs of young farmers (chapter three);
- The needs regarding learning and communication (chapter four);
- The hindrances in obtaining information (chapter five);
- Sustainability of the exchange schemes (chapter six);
- The focus group participants (chapter seven).

The report is targeted at policy officers and other stakeholders interested in getting an insight into the needs of young farmers.

Where to find more information

The following documents can be found on the DG AGRI website:

- The 27 other country reports on the needs of young farmers;
- The Analysis on the needs of young farmers (report I);
- The Inventory and Analysis of exchange schemes for young farmers in EU-28 and a selected number of OECD countries (report II). Together with contact details of around 200 exchange schemes and case studies of 22 exchange schemes;
- A guide for successful exchange schemes for young farmers (report III).

All reports can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.

2 Activities of young farmers

In the interviews, the young farmers were asked the following details, among others. Indicated in the table below are:

- The mean age of the interviewed young farmers;
- The % of young farmers with a Bachelors (BSc), Masters (MSc) or PhD;
- The mean hectares of Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) that the respondents own or rent;
- The mean hectares of forestry that the respondents own or rent;
- The % of respondents that indicate that their farm is located in a favourable or less favourable area;
- The % of young farmers with organic farms.

Table 2.1 Some general features of interviewed young farmers (YT) in Greece

	Greece	n*	EU-15 ¹	n	new MS ²	n	EU-28 ³	n
Age (mean (std))	30.5 (5.3)	97	29.4 (6.0)	1 241	29.4 (6.0)	840	29.4 (6.0)	2 081
% YF with high vocational education (BSc, MSc, PhD)	9.9	101	44.8	1 332	42.5	873	43.9	2 205
Ha UAA owned (mean (std))	4.8 (12.8)	73	77.7 (309.3)	1 138	51.9 (165.5)	778	67.2 (260.9)	1 916
Ha UAA rented (mean (std))	7.1 (25.1)	66	56.7 (156.2)	1 097	49.5 (157.5)	761	53.7 (156.7)	1 858
Ha forestry owned (mean (std))	0.0 (0.0)	60	20.7 (106.7)	954	5.4 (22.9)	679	14.4 (83.2)	1 633
Ha forestry rented (mean (std))	0.0 (0.0)	60	2.5 (20.9)	874	1.3 (25.3)	636	2.0 (22.9)	1 510
% favourable area	53.3	101	47.4	1 332	50.2	873	48.5	2 205
% less favourable or highly unfavourable area	41.6	101	43.3	1 332	42.4	873	43.0	2 205
% YF with organic farms	5.0	101	15.2	1 331	11.8	873	13.8	2 204

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

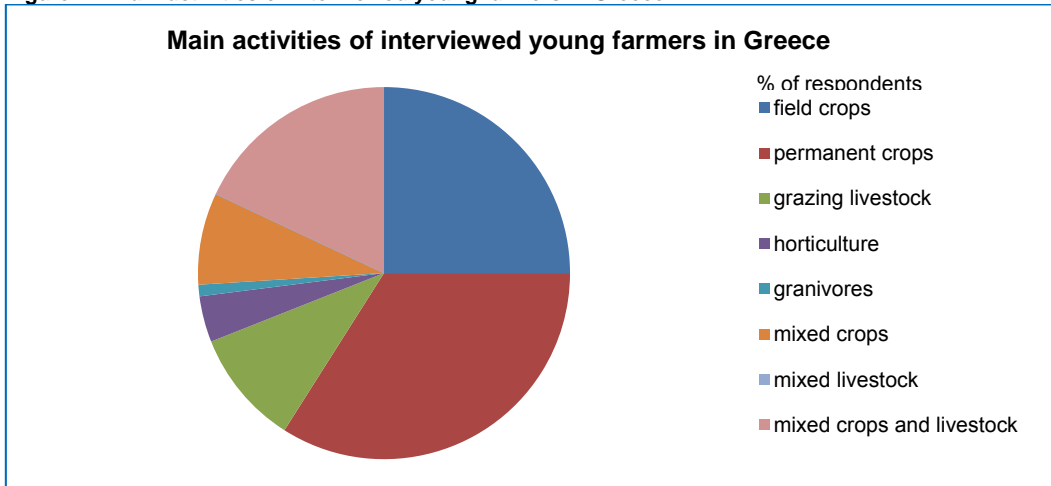
* n = the number of people that were interviewed in respectively Greece, EU-15, new MS and EU-28.

¹ EU-15 are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

² New Member States are the countries who joined the EU in or after 2004: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

³ EU-28 are all Member States, both EU-15 and new Member States.

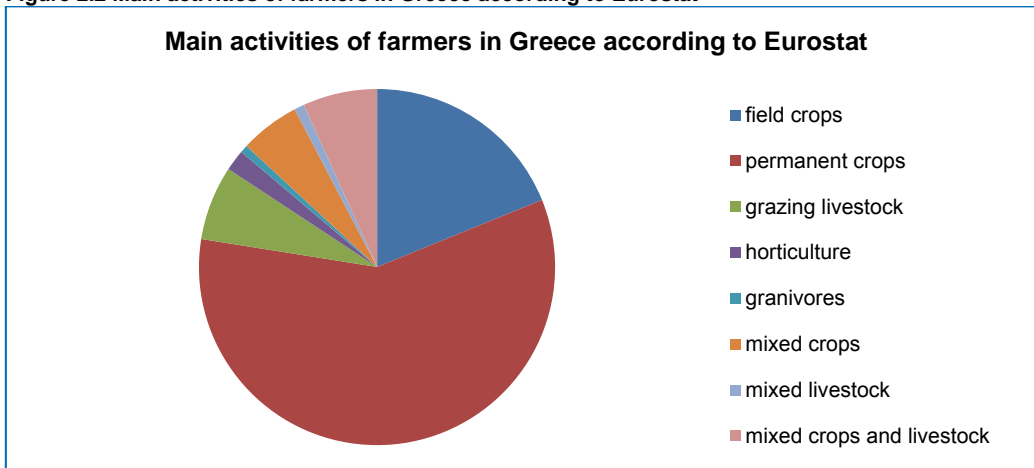
Figure 2.1 Main activities of interviewed young farmers in Greece



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The figures above and below highlight the difference between the main activities of young farmers that have been interviewed and the main activities of farmers in general as included in the Eurostat statistics.

Figure 2.2 Main activities of farmers in Greece according to Eurostat



Source: Farm Typology in 2010 according to the Agriculture, forestry and fisheries statistics of Eurostat (2013 Edition).

3 Needs of young farmers

The needs of young farmers have been identified through, among others:

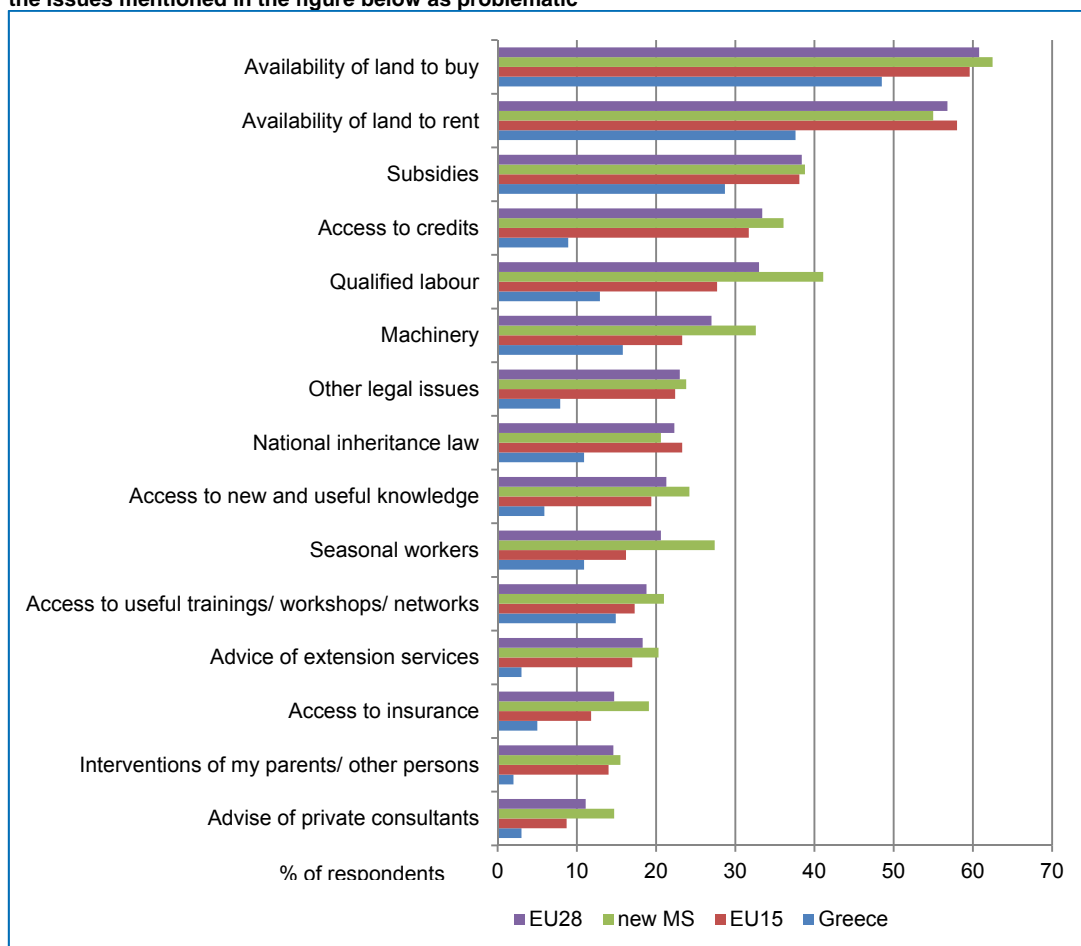
1. Which issues they perceive as problematic, e.g. the possibility of buying land, having access to credit, having the right machinery, having seasonal workers, etc.
2. Which knowledge needs the young farmers have.

3.1 Challenges for young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues they perceive as problematic. This is shown in the figure below.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young Greek farmers perceive all issues in the graph below as less problematic than other young farmers in the EU.

Figure 3.1 General needs of young farmers – percentage of interviewed young farmers who perceived the issues mentioned in the figure below as problematic



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** members generally agreed with the results of the survey in relation to the needs of young farmers. Some specific observations and explanations are reported below.

A key need according to the focus group is the availability of land to buy or rent. There is no land available for rent as most farmers prefer to cultivate their land rather than rent it. This is presumably because of the subsidies they get. The perception among the focus group is that some rural residents that are not fully interested in farming and could rent their land, choose to farm it instead because of the attractive subsidies. As a consequence, young farmers who have not inherited land from their families face great difficulties in finding land to farm.

The need for access to credit appears to be less problematic. This is not because credit is easily available, but because young farmers are reluctant to obtain credit. The general economic situation in Greece and the limited availability of credit from the banking sector deters farmers from requesting it. In addition, young farmers rely heavily on financial support from their family.

Another need that appears lower in the survey than it actually is in practice is the access to new and useful knowledge. This need reflects the dominant perception that farmers know everything about traditional farming and therefore consider the information they have as sufficient. Among young farmers there seems to be low awareness that it is important to acquire knowledge on new issues and innovation.

In summary, the main reasons why all the analysed needs are less problematic for young Greek farmers than for farmers in other EU countries seems to be vested in the low educational level of young farmers in Greece and their dependence on their parents (the farm holding usually belongs to the father). Greek farmers therefore do not easily embark on new activities themselves.

According to the focus group participants, the intervention of parents is a problematic issue in Greece. They do not allow younger farmers to be innovative or engage in new activities. However, in the survey this did not appear as a problem. The focus group members indicated that this might be because young farmers did not want to admit it.

According to the focus group participants, the following needs were not explicitly addressed by the survey:

- Access to the market: a critical problem for young farmers is that they may not be able to sell their products to the market. This can be due to several factors such as limited knowledge of the market structure and characteristics, limited information on market demand, limited marketing skills in order to sell their products effectively, etc.;
- Bureaucracy: the legal framework is constantly changing, while it is increasingly difficult to participate in programmes due to complex and bureaucratic procedures;
- Rural development: rural development is an overall need, which is not addressed by the survey but is fundamental for young people. Without developed services in healthcare, education and infrastructure, it becomes increasingly difficult for young farmers to stay and work in rural areas. In addition to farming, there is a need to promote other rural professions to guarantee an acceptable quality of life in rural areas. Excluding this aspect is thus a key weakness of the survey (and possibly the study on exchange schemes), i.e. the emphasis on farming and not the more integrated concept of rural development.

The focus group noted that the following issues may hamper the entrance of young farmers into agriculture and subsequently their participation in exchange schemes:

- Lack of strategy on national level for young people, especially for young people in rural areas;
 - The status of farmers: working in agriculture is not highly regarded by Greek society;
 - Economic barriers: start-up costs are very high, unless one takes over a family business;
 - Weak rural development: this issue was raised earlier as well and refers to the lack of service and /infrastructure in rural areas to make them an attractive place to live and work for young people;
 - High risks and uncertainty: weather and climate related risks while working in the countryside is tough (24 hours a day/seven days a week!);
 - Lack of social skills;
 - Automation in agriculture often results in job losses and reduction of the rural population.
- However, the objective of rural development is to introduce the conditions and incentives for living and working in rural areas, including in farming and non-farming activities. Quality improvements of agricultural products on one hand and diversification on the other hand may be the way forward for sustainable rural areas.

Legal and policy issues that, according to the focus group, constitute a barrier to young farmers include:

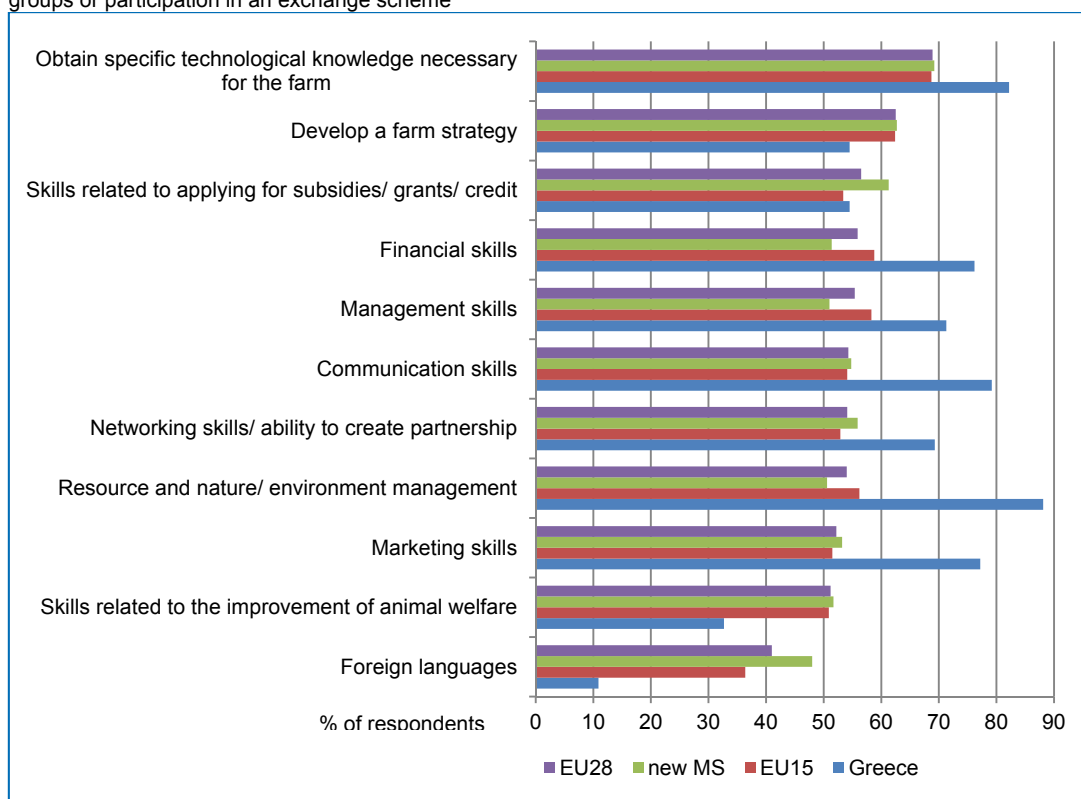
- Property rights are not clearly defined in rural areas in Greece;
- National legislation may prevent the implementation of an idea borrowed from abroad. For instance, there are good examples of open stables in the Netherlands but the Greek legislation does not give permits for open stables.

3.2 Knowledge needs of young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked how likely it is that they will develop the skills mentioned in the table below through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme. The results are included in the figure below.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young Greek farmers perceive it more likely than other young farmers in the EU that they will develop management, communication, financial and networking skills and skills related to resource and nature or environmental management and specific technological knowledge necessary for the farm. They seem to be less interested than their peers in the EU in the development of foreign languages and skills related to the improvement of animal welfare and to the development of a farm strategy.

Figure 3.2 Knowledge needs of young farmers – percentage of respondents who answered that it was likely that they will develop the skills mentioned in the table below through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** added that social skills are considered very important and are not explicitly addressed in the survey (unless one can assume that they fall under communication or networking skills). Also at this point, the focus group indicated that the perspective of rural development is missing in the survey. The issues addressed are very much related to farming and young people in rural areas but they may also engage in activities other than farming (e.g. rural tourism, provision of rural services, etc.). The survey seems to address rural employment as a production process rather than as a way of life and fails to capture the social dimension of employment in rural areas. Social skills, social economy and collective actions are fundamental needs in the rural sector. The ‘holding is not a production factory but a live organisation, an ecosystem, where the farmer stands out as the professional caretaker of the landscape and the environment’.

4 Needs regarding learning and communication

Young farmers were asked about their needs regarding learning and communication:

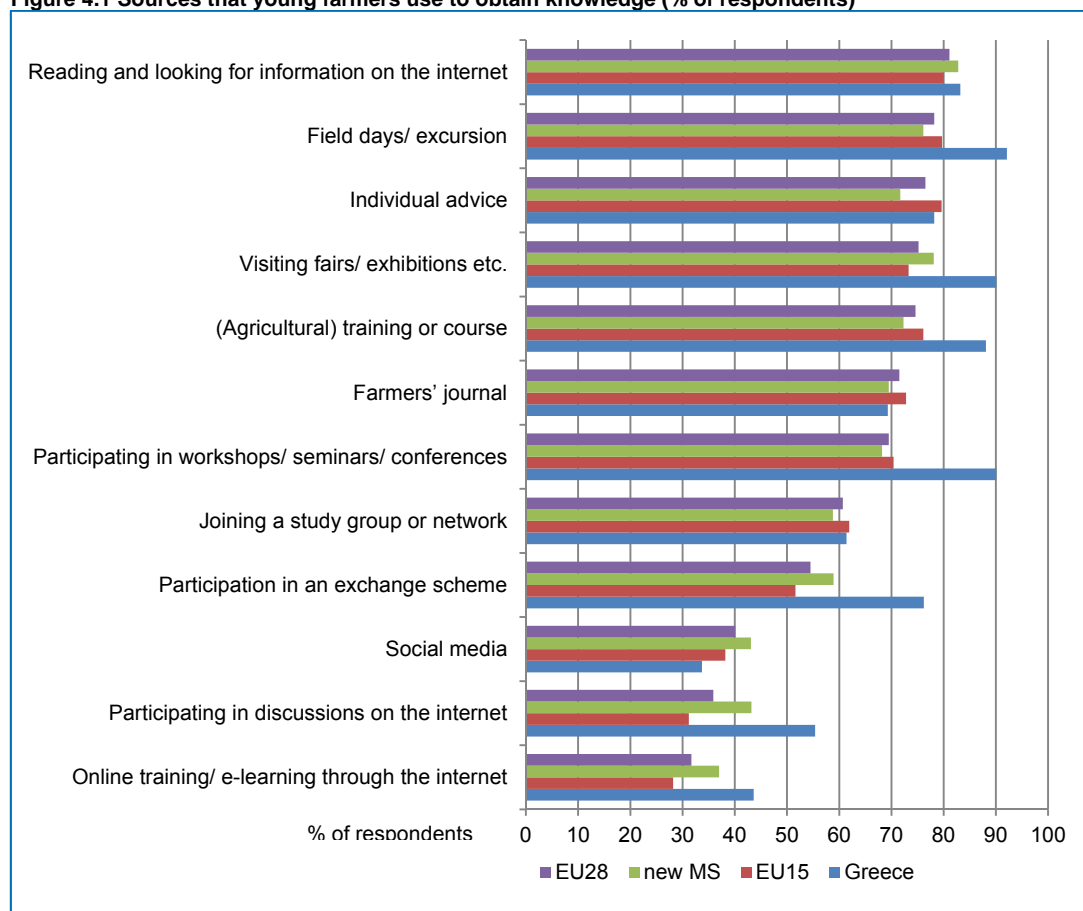
- Through which sources do young farmers like to obtain knowledge?
- Which persons or institutions are information sources for young farmers?

4.1 Most used information sources

The interviewed young farmers indicated that the following sources were most used for obtaining knowledge.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young Greek farmers seem to use almost all above mentioned sources to obtain knowledge more often than other young farmers in the EU. Individual advice and joining a study group or network are mentioned less often by the interviewed young Greek farmers than by their counterparts in other EU countries.

Figure 4.1 Sources that young farmers use to obtain knowledge (% of respondents)



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

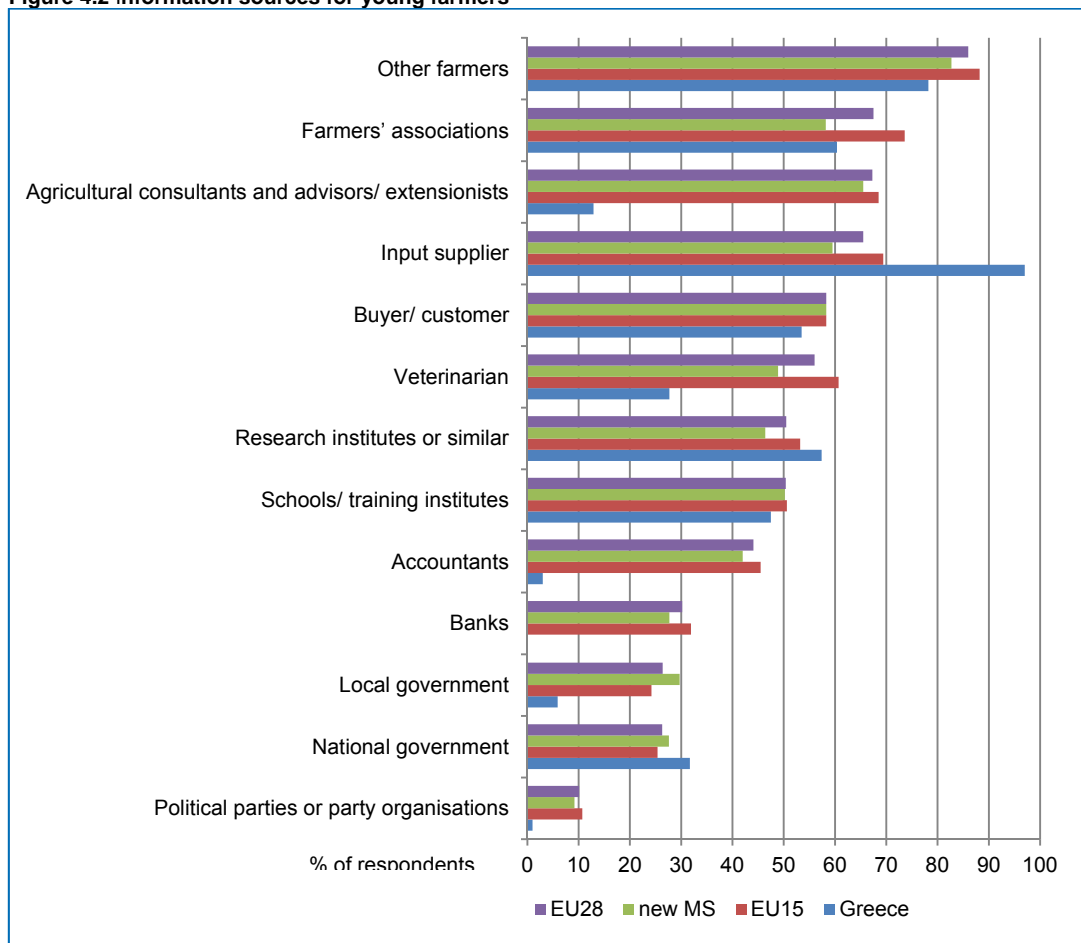
The **focus group** indicated that there seems to be some inconsistency in the results of the survey in relation to the participation in exchange schemes aspect. This appears to be an important source of information but then only 1% of the interviewed young farmers have participated in exchange schemes (Figure 6.1). The focus group members suggested that this may be explained by the confusion between ‘visit schemes’ and ‘exchange schemes’, with several respondents having taken part in the former but mistaking them for the latter. It may also reflect the interpretation of Leonardo projects as exchange schemes as there were several participants in Leonardo projects in Greece.

4.2 Young farmers obtaining information from people and institutions

The interviewed young farmers were asked from which people and institutions they obtain knowledge. The figure below presents an overview.

OUTCOME: Input suppliers seem to be more important information sources for the interviewed young Greek farmers than for other young farmers in the EU. Banks, political parties, accountants, the local government, agricultural consultants and veterinarians seem less important.

Figure 4.2 Information sources for young farmers



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** members explained that the input suppliers are the main source of information for young farmers in Greece as there is lack of extension services and training. This makes young farmers rely on input suppliers who are also qualified agronomists.

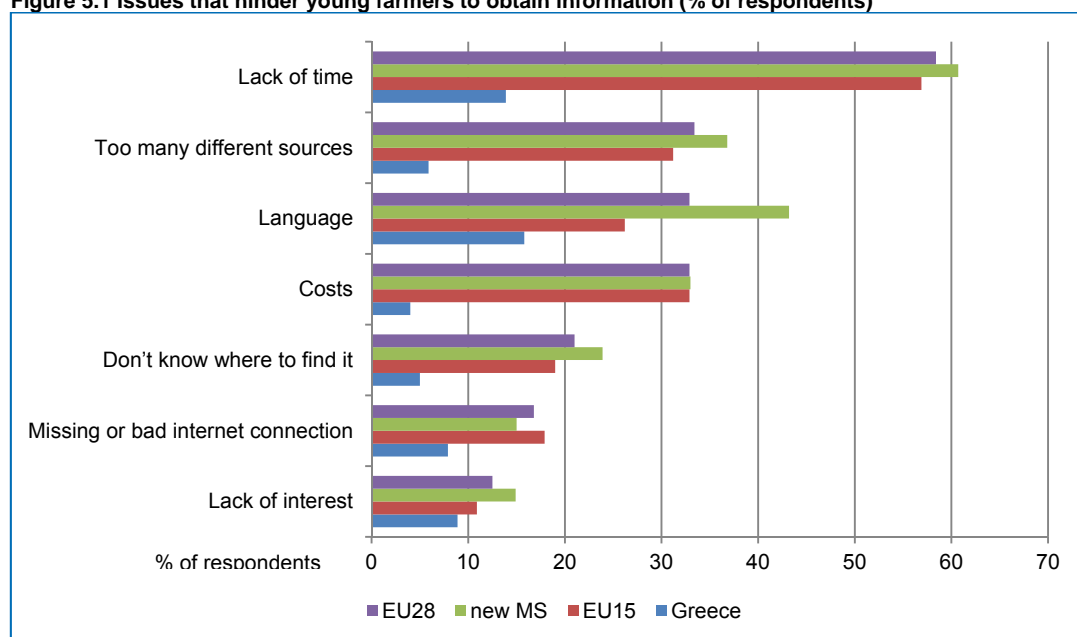
In terms of regional differences, there is – according to the **focus group** members – clearly a difference in communication needs between mainland and island areas as well as between mountainous and non-mountainous areas. For instance, islands or mountainous areas have more difficulty accessing information or to access services or to supply their products to the markets. The situation is worse where mountainous areas and islands are compared: the latter suffer more from transport problems that limit communication and access to information and markets. For instance, farmers in the island of Limnos cannot register for as start-ups as there is no public administration office there. They have to go to another island (Lesvos) where the relevant public administration office exists. Some local island products (e.g. mushrooms from Lesvos or cheese from Naxos) are difficult to advertise, transport and sell to other areas.

5 Hindrances in obtaining information

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in obtaining information, e.g. lack of time, too many sources, the language in which the information is available, the costs of the information, lack of good internet connection. The figure below describes the results.

OUTCOME: To obtain information, the interviewed young Greek farmers seem to be less hindered by most of the issues in the graph below than other young farmers in the EU.

Figure 5.1 Issues that hinder young farmers to obtain information (% of respondents)



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** explained that this is mainly due to the fact that young Greek farmers obtain information mainly from input suppliers and other local sources (other farmers). The only barrier not addressed is related to the regional differences, i.e. the difficulties that mountainous and especially island areas face in accessing information.

6 Suitability of exchange schemes

The young farmers were also asked about the suitability of the exchange schemes to address their knowledge needs and their interest in participating in these schemes. This was done by asking about:

- Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes;
- Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participating in an exchange scheme;
- Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme;
- Intention of young farmers to join an exchange scheme;
- Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes.

6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes

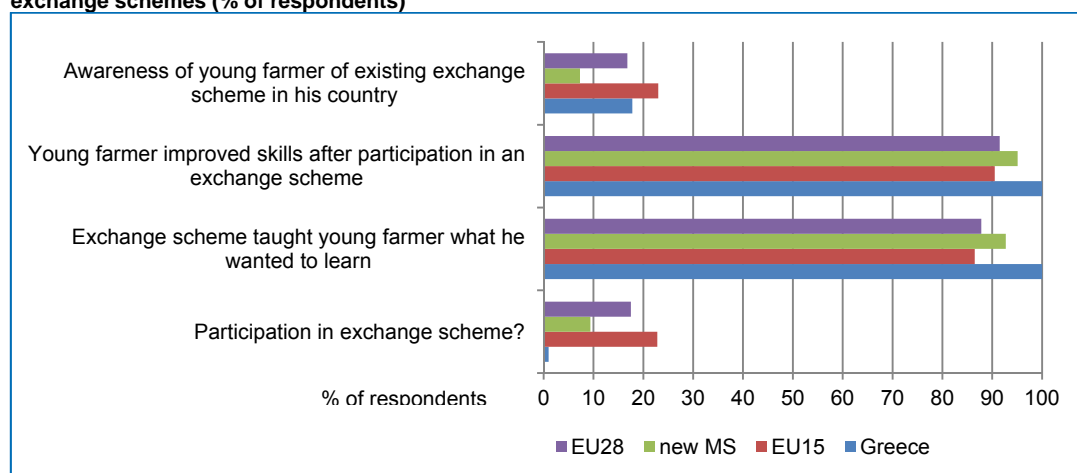
The interviewed young farmers were asked:

- How aware they are of existing exchange schemes in their country;
- If they participated in an exchange scheme;
- If they improved their skills after participating in an exchange scheme;
- If the exchange scheme taught the young farmer what he wanted to learn.

The figure below presents an overview.

OUTCOME: The number of interviewed young Greek farmers that participated in an exchange scheme seems to be much lower than that of other young farmers in the EU. However, the awareness of existing exchange schemes seems to be higher compared to the new Member States and EU-28. Like other young farmers in the EU, the interviewed young Greek farmers who did participate in an exchange scheme improved their skills and learned what they wanted to learn.

Figure 6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes (% of respondents)



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

6.2 Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participation in an exchange scheme

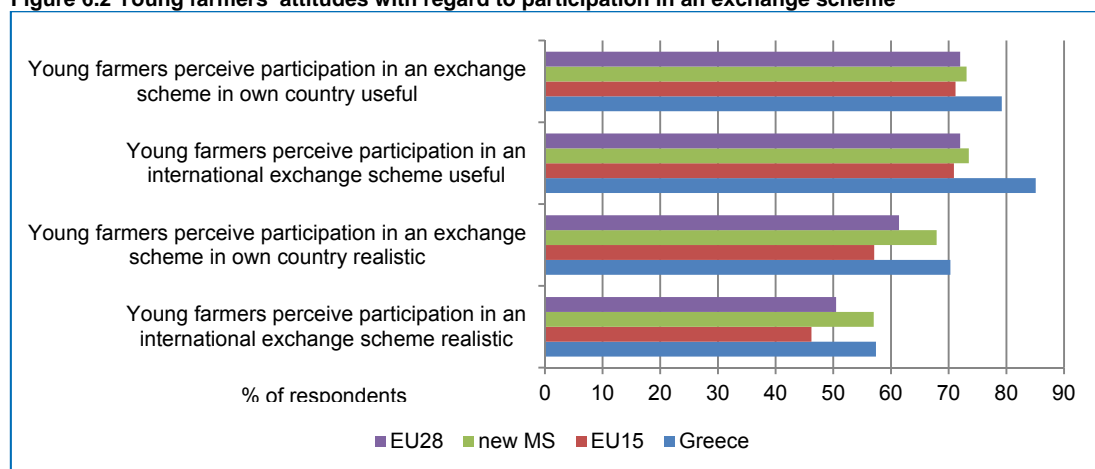
The interviewed young farmers have been asked:

- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country useful;
- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country realistic;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange useful;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange realistic.

The figure below presents an overview.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young Greek farmers perceive participation in (inter)national exchange schemes slightly more useful than other young farmers in the EU. They perceive it comparably realistic as other young farmers in the EU.

Figure 6.2 Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participation in an exchange scheme



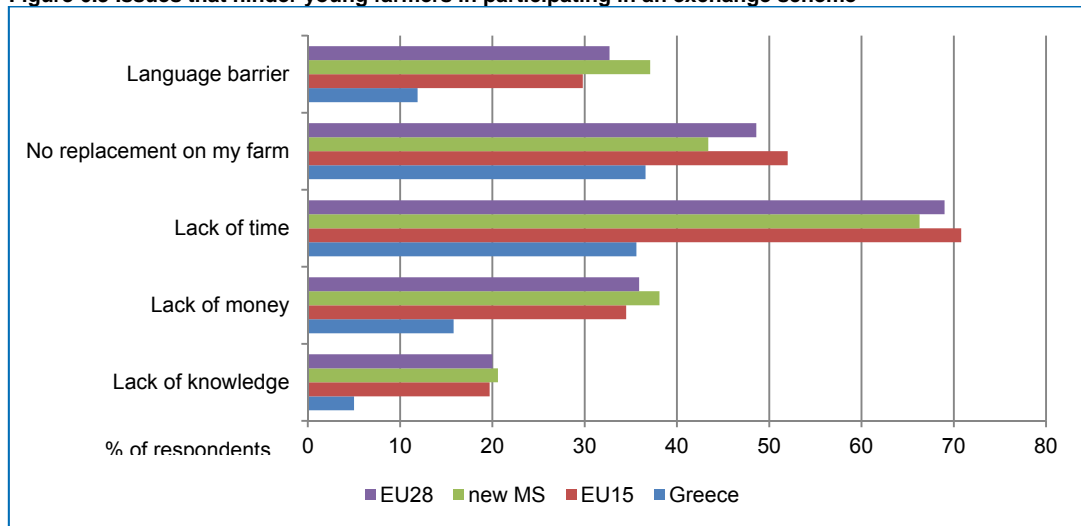
Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

6.3 Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in participating in an exchange scheme, e.g. lack of time, no replacement at their farm, language barrier, the costs of the exchange, lack of knowledge on the exchange. The figure below describes the results.

OUTCOME: The participation of the interviewed young Greek farmers in exchange schemes seems to be less hindered by the issues in the graph below than that of other young farmers in the EU.

Figure 6.3 Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

6.4 Intention of young farmers of joining an exchange scheme

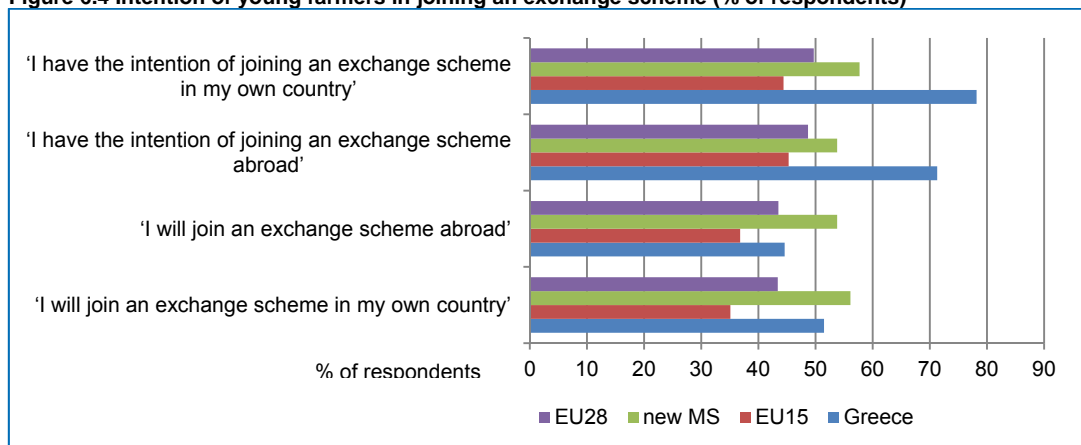
The interviewed young farmers were asked if:

- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They will join an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme abroad;
- They will join an exchange scheme abroad.

The results are included in the figure below.

OUTCOME: The intentions of the interviewed young Greek farmers to join an (inter)national exchange scheme seem to be higher than that of other young farmers in the EU.

Figure 6.4 Intention of young farmers in joining an exchange scheme (% of respondents)



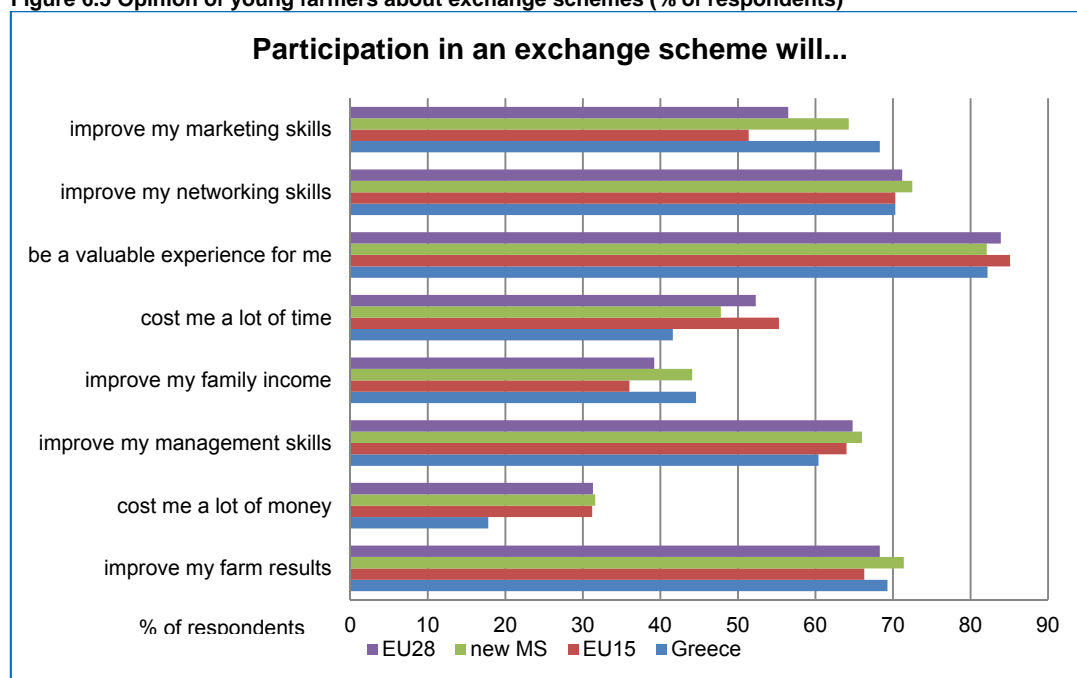
Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes

The interviewed young farmers were asked their opinion of exchange schemes. They were asked if it would be a valuable experience for them, improve their skills (either management, marketing, networking skills), cost them a lot of time or money and if it would improve the family income or farm results. The figure below presents the results.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young Greek farmers think more or less the same about the gains of participation in an exchange scheme as other young farmers in the EU. They think to a lesser extent that participation in an exchange scheme will cost them a lot of time or money.

Figure 6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes (% of respondents)



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** members reflected on the exchange schemes as follows:

In the new 2014-2020 RDP there is an action for international exchanges of young farmers. No national level exchanges are foreseen due to low levels of trust in internal institutions and high levels of bureaucracy which act as an impediment. This new measure will cover replacement costs but not during the first call [for applicant?] to prevent any abuse of the scheme. Although the measure is not finalised yet, the following ideas were discussed by the focus group:

- Financial aspects: there must be a ceiling for costs and expenses for both the young farmers willing to participate in an exchange and the host organisation to cover the local expenses and accommodation costs;
- The exchange scheme should include a combination of: technical visits, practical training and theoretical training;
- The duration should not be less than two weeks (2-26 weeks overall) to give the young farmer the opportunity to really learn;
- The number of participants should be between 5 and 20 people, depending on the theme, content and capacity of the host organisation. The Ministry plans to start with five people in the first call and then increase it as experience of managing the scheme builds up;
- Target countries can be Mediterranean due to similar characteristics but other countries should also be considered (e.g. Nordic countries offer good examples of achieving economies of scale in the production of energy for self-consumption from farm biomass);

- Although exchange schemes are not currently envisaged within Greece, there are innovative farmers in Greece as well that deserve to be the subject of exchanges;
- There are discrepancies in relation to the target group: existing young farmers or new young farmers. If the scheme covers existing young farmers, they should visit others from their own sector/field. If the scheme covers new entrants, they should visit 4-5 different sectors to get ideas. However, addressing new entrants may not be a good idea, as there can be abuses of the exchange, for example potential young farmers visiting another country and then deciding not to engage into farming;
- The subject of the exchange scheme should be related to the current activity of the young farmer and cover the whole production chain, e.g. for olive oil: how to produce it, how to package it, market it and access markets. The objective should be to increase knowledge in all stages of the production chain;
- The exchange scheme may also include incentives for cooperation. For example, Greek and Spanish greenhouse producers may cooperate to increase their effectiveness. The objective should not only be to see what other farmers are doing but also to develop business links and add value to their existing activities;
- The potential to incorporate the exchange schemes in an educational programme can also be explored as long as there are no overlaps with the lifelong learning operational programme. The exchange schemes can for example be included as one of the modules of a broader training or capacity building programme;
- Some provisions are needed to support young farmers to implement in practice what they have learned from the exchange scheme to avoid new ideas being developed but no programmes or funding being available to put them into practice.

7 Focus group participants

The following people participated in the focus group:

	Name	Organisation
1	Georgia Simatou	PASEGES (Farmers' Trade Union)
2	Margarita Kalafaki	ELGO-DIMITRA (NGO)
3	Antonia Konaxi	Intermediary body Western Greece region
4	Alexis Koutsouris	
5	Rallou Tsigou	Intermediary body North Aegean region
6	Dimitris Michailidis	Journalist "Agronea"
7	Giorgos Tsoumanis	ELGO-DIMITRA (NGO)
8	Christina Stavropoulou	PASEGES (Farmers' Trade Union)
9	Emilia Pavlou	National Rural Network
10	Gabriella	National Rural Network
11	Anthi Katsirma	Managing Authority, Programming and Evaluation Unit
12	Efthymios Tsiatouros	Managing Authority, Programme Implementation Unit
13	Giannis Marantos	Managing Authority, Programme Implementation Unit

Moderator and reporter: Marili Parissaki

Date focus group: 3 September 2014

Place: Ministry of Agriculture, Leoforos Athinon, Athens, Greece



P.O. Box 4175
3006 AD Rotterdam
The Netherlands

Watermanweg 44
3067 GG Rotterdam
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)10 453 88 00
F +31 (0)10 453 07 68
E netherlands@ecorys.com

W www.ecorys.nl

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