

# Certification Programmes

## (Challenges facing local certification schemes)



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### Background

Governance issues are present in all cases studied. The governance structures are dilemmatic (globally deterritorialized and market-values driven or locally territorialized and influenced by cultural values), sector sensitive (e.g. energy or alternative food production or tourism) and case technology dependent (hard large-scale or soft flexible small-scale dimension of cases). Such duality is reflected in hybrid forms of governance joining vertical organizational structures with horizontal networking structures (combining EU, national and regionally developed structures of governance). The cluster investigated the governance structures (their details are in **bold**) which challenge the established governance structures.

### Case studies

**Integrating Rural Tourism and Local Food Production for Sustainable Development (Elena, Bulgaria):** established by local municipal authorities in cooperation with local businessmen operating in tourism or food processing and local NGOs in early 2000s. **When joining rural tourism with agriculture and food processing a local certification scheme was developed.** This has increased the role of consumers in the valuation of new products and services, leading to increases in the level of tourist demands. The goals have not yet been achieved (due to a lack of long term commitment from the actors involved and problems with communication) and the local certification scheme needs to be further developed

**Local Quality Convention (Plastiras Lake, Greece):** initiated in 1990s; aims to include quality in all aspects of the local economy through the use of a special certification scheme. With the involvement of a range of actors (often those with other business experience, who have recently returned to the area) the central theme in the Convention is quality assurance throughout the local economy, which would be guaranteed by a special certification scheme. The key actor in the initiative was the regional development agency. In the mid 2000s the initiative lost internal coherence as it became overly preoccupied with the interests of its members (e.g. the certification of the businesses was dominated by new entrepreneurs rather than local people).

**A Regional Label for Quality Production and Environmental Protection (White Carpathian mountains, Czech Republic):** established in the early 1990s, aims to support local sustainable developments for the region's natural and cultural heritage. The initiative introduced a regional label which certifies high quality products that uniquely represent local traditions. The local actors succeeded with this label about 10 years before any similar activities were developed at the national level. The money generated through its activities and certification scheme (e.g. through the sale of organic apple cider) is intended to support new projects (i.e. as micro-financing), which will increase the sustainability of the region and will also generate money for similar activities. Such an approach led to changes in the governance structures.



New forms of governance and retro-innovations

### Change

- The focus on the quality (quality schemes, quality labels) instead of quantity of rules within governance structures.
- Quality linked with return to traditions (retro-innovations).
- Joining together various stakeholders (often those who originally operated outside the region/locality) – “transdisciplinarity” in practice through networking.
- It will take about 5-10 years before the necessary changes in governance structures will show results.

### Key findings/Lessons learnt

- Incorporation of the stakeholders from outside the agricultural sector into the initiative increases its credibility and supports novel changes (this is supported by the findings from other EU funded projects).
- Local/regional quality certification schemes need to be streamlined with European schemes (too many labels confuse customers).
- Once the schemes are firmly established they mostly develop themselves without external help (e.g. develop their own micro-financing).
- Retro-innovations as a new field for bio-economy?
- Quality shift and authenticity in small-scale and soft areas (traditional food production, tourism) might form the background for “smart specialization” (Europe 2020).
- The schemes are oriented to support the use of regional/local resources. These schemes influence the search for new forms of governance related to networking: the schemes require the building and transmission of trust.
- The development of regional quality certification schemes is directly related to the ‘maturity’ of the whole transition.



Local certified food is linked with the offer to the tourists

For further information see: [www.farmpath.eu](http://www.farmpath.eu)



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