AGROECOLOGY FOR WEEDS

NEWSLETTER

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Get ready to be inspired! In this edition of the AgroecologyIsGood newsletter, brought to you by the GOOD Horizon project (goodhorizon.eu), we're bursting with exciting updates.

EVENTS

As part of the lectures "*Rational systems and sustainable measures in agricultural production*" at the Maize Research Institute, the two-year results of the Living Labs Serbia were presented to agricultural producers. Participants gained insights into innovative agroecological approaches, especially sustainable weed management and improved cropping practices. With climate change causing high temperatures, prolonged drought and reduced yields in key crops such as maize and soybeans, Serbian farmers are increasingly searching for resilient solutions. Interest in cover crops is growing, as they support crop rotation diversification, soil fertility, moisture retention and weed suppression. The meeting highlighted that such strategies can strengthen production stability and help safeguard agroecosystems, particularly for essential crops like maize.

LIVING LABS UPDATES

Updates from the Portuguese Living Labs: Cowpea and Olive

The year 2025 has been full of activity in the Portuguese Living Labs for Cowpea and Olive. In spring, we terminated the cover crops using a range of AWM practices. At the organic sites, we compared tillage, chain-mowing, and roller-crimping for cowpea; and mowing-shredding, grazing and weedy (no treatment as control) for the olive grove. At the conventional sites, we complemented these approaches with herbicide applications at both the recommended and half-recommended doses. Cowpea was sown in June across 3 experimental sites, and we closely monitored its growth throughout the season. To assess how each management strategy influenced weed pressure and composition, we conducted three weed samplings during crop development and measured cowpea yield at harvest. While olive harvesting was still ongoing, all weed data have been collected and analysed. The preliminary findings are already providing valuable insights into how different management practices shape weed dynamics and crop performance. To share these results, we hosted an Open Field Day at the end of summer, welcoming farmers, researchers, and students.

Updates from the Latvian Living Lab: Pea

In Latvia the 3rd year of the ongoing experiment within GOOD project is including the seed inoculation with indigenous AMF (Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi). The application of AMF spores is done directly to seeds before sowing, according to the protocol developed by the project partner at the University of Pisa. In the Latvian LL the inocula has been used to coat *Avena sativa* seeds in the cover crop mix sown in the pea field (conventional set up) and *Secale cereale* seeds in the rye field (organic set up). This novel method aims to enhances the establishment of mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, promoting plant health, nutrient uptake, growth, and indirectly potentially weed suppression. The drone flight for the 2nd year of the ongoing experiment within GOOD project is successfully concluded! A new Pilot and a new drone model have been crucial to ensure a smooth and clear flight over the pea field experimental conventional set up. The weed detection was done the day before the cash crop harvest. Manual identification will follow up, for the implementation of the software machine learning.

Updates from the Spanish Living Lab: Cherry

Last year, the Cherry Living Lab in Spain became a full member of the European Network of Agroecology Living Labs supported by the AGROECOLOGY Partnership, strengthening its connection with Europe's agroecology community. Building on this development, the first meeting of Spanish Living Labs and Research Infrastructures was held on November 11 at the CICYTEX Center in Plasencia. Organized by CICYTEX and Fundecyt-PCET, it brought together nearly twenty Living Labs and Research Infrastructures, along with most Spanish partners in the Partnership. The event highlighted opportunities for collaboration, featured presentations on funding and ongoing initiatives, and included working groups discussing participatory methods and the development of territorialized food systems. The meeting helped advance collaboration and map Spain's growing network of agroecological initiatives.

LIVING LABS UPDATES

Updates from the Sardinian Living Lab

The third experimental year (2025/2026) for the Sardinian Living Lab on Triticale, coordinated by the CNR ISPAAM of Sassari as part of the European GOOD project, commenced on November 21st with the sowing of triticale.

The field trials will evaluate several distinct weed management strategies:

- Chemical Control: testing the efficacy of a standard chemical herbicide at two different application rates (the full recommended dose and a reduced dose).
- Mowing: mechanical cutting of weeds between crop rows.
- Pelargonic Acid: application of a fast-acting, plant-derived contact bioherbicide.
- Cover Crop Strategy: the use of a Barrel medic (*Medicago truncatula*) cover crop to suppress weeds. This strategy includes two distinct versions:
    - Mycorrhized cover crop: inoculated with beneficial fungi to enhance nutrient absorption.
    - Non-Mycorrhized cover crop: a control version without fungal inoculation.

This research aims to gather fundamental data to understand how agroecological practices can influence not only the reduction of herbicide use but also crop productivity and profitability for farmers.

Updates from the Dutch Living Lab: Onion

The onion experiment is conducted at the experimental farm De Rusthoeve in Colijnsplaat. Delphy tested different use of the cover crop phacelia. A highlight in the results of 2025 was the effect of our phacelia cover crop, tested with and without inoculation of local mycorrhiza, on the performance of our onion crop. It proved to be an ideal live demonstration of how a well-chosen cover crop can suppress weeds and set the crop up for success. The contrast on the farm was striking: the organic field left fallow instead of using a cover crop had to be terminated early, due to unmanageable weed pressure, while organic plots that had phacelia cover crops prior to planting remained far more manageable and still provided yields.

SURVEY

End of 2025 and beginning of 2026 a survey has been distributed among consumers in all participating countries about their preferences and purchasing decisions regarding sustainably produced apples and wine. The results will help to map the acceptance of sustainable products in retail. You can find the English version of the survey here https://escdijon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eJVNZqdQsU7TWgm

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