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NEXT MED
PROTECHMED

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Promoting innovative solutions for the **Technological Transition** of the **Mediterranean horticultural sector**

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SMARTER MEDITERRANEAN

Project Intro

PROTECHMED – Promoting innovative solutions for the Technological Transition of the Mediterranean horticultural sector is a transnational cooperation project funded by the European Union through the Interreg NEXT MED Programme.

The project brings together partners from Greece, Italy, Türkiye, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Malta to address common challenges affecting Mediterranean protected horticulture, including water scarcity, energy efficiency, climate pressures, and the need for sustainable technological solutions.

Through cooperation, knowledge exchange, and innovation development, PROTECHMED supports the transition towards a more sustainable, resilient, and competitive horticultural sector across the Mediterranean.

Project Objectives & Expected Results

PROTECHMED aims to accelerate the technological transition of Mediterranean protected horticulture through the development and testing of eco-innovative solutions, capacity building, and cooperation among research organisations, agricultural stakeholders, SMEs, and public institutions.

The project focuses on improving the sustainable use of resources, promoting digitalisation and smart technologies, and supporting the uptake of innovative approaches adapted to Mediterranean environmental and economic conditions.

Project at a Glance

Duration: 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028
Total budget: €2,312,661
EU contribution: 89% (€2,058,268.29)
Partners' contribution: 11% (€254,392.71)



Project Partners

- UTH – University of Thessaly – Special Account for Research Grants (Greece) – Lead Partner
- SVIMED ETS – Euromediterranean Centre for the Sustainable Development (Italy)
- CIHEAM – International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies – Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (Italy)
- AÜ – Akdeniz University (Türkiye)
- LARI – Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (Lebanon)
- BIAT – Business Incubation Association in Tripoli (Lebanon)
- UTAP – Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (Tunisia)
- MAFF - Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Supply (Malta)

  Associated partners include regional chambers, cooperatives, and agri-tech agencies.



Semester 2

During the second semester of implementation, PROTECHMED partners progressed with key preparatory activities, stakeholder engagement actions, and knowledge-building processes supporting the development of sustainable solutions for Mediterranean protected horticulture.

Local Info Days

During Semester 2, partners organised **Local Info Days** in **Türkiye, Lebanon, and Italy** to introduce PROTECHMED's objectives, activities, and expected benefits to relevant stakeholders.

The events provided opportunities to present the project's approach, raise awareness among actors from the horticultural sector, discuss regional challenges and opportunities, and encourage stakeholder participation in future project activities. Through these meetings, partners strengthened links with local actors and supported the creation of a foundation for future cooperation, knowledge exchange, and uptake of innovative solutions.

Gap Analysis and State of Play

A key activity completed during Semester 2 was the Gap Analysis and State of Play, which established an important foundation for the next phases of PROTECHMED. The assessment focused on analysing existing horticultural practices, available technologies, sector challenges, and territorial needs across the participating countries. The results provide valuable insights into the current situation of Mediterranean protected horticulture, helping identify technological gaps, opportunities for innovation, and priorities for the development of solutions adapted to different regional contexts.

PROTECHMED Inception Camp in Ragusa, Sicily

The **PROTECHMED Inception Camp**, held from **3 to 5 June 2026 in Ragusa, Sicily (Italy)**, represented a major milestone in the project's implementation.

The three-day event brought together project partners, researchers, agricultural companies, public authorities, and sector experts from Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Türkiye, Lebanon, and Malta to exchange knowledge, explore innovative technologies, and contribute to the co-design process for sustainable horticultural solutions.

The Camp opened with a project coordination meeting, where partners reviewed progress, discussed the methodology of the event, and prepared the collaborative activities ahead.
Participants then took part in technical visits across the south-eastern Sicilian horticultural district, exploring innovative cultivation systems and technologies, including aeroponics, hydroponics, soilless cultivation, IoT-based monitoring solutions, and agrivoltaic applications.







Among others, **innovative technologies** showcased included, **smart glasses, sensors, digital platforms**, and expert support to enable **real-time greenhouse monitoring** and improve technical decision-making.

The final day of the Inception Camp focused on the **Co-design Workshop on Technological Solutions for Sustainable Horticulture in the Mediterranean Region**, coordinated by **SVI.MED ETS in collaboration with the University of Catania.**

Using a Living Lab approach, participants worked in thematic groups to identify technological priorities and define possible pathways for the project's pilot actions in Sicily, Greece, Türkiye, Lebanon, and Tunisia. The discussions addressed key areas including:

- smart water management and irrigation systems;
- energy efficiency and environmental control;
- digitalisation, IoT, and Decision Support Systems;
- nutrient management and fertigation;
- integrated pest management;
- circular economy solutions;
- capacity building and knowledge transfer.

Upcoming Activities in Semester 3

Following the completion of the Sicily Inception Camp, PROTECHMED will enter the next phase of implementation, focusing on **transforming the knowledge, recommendations, and insights** generated through previous activities **into concrete actions and solutions** for sustainable Mediterranean horticulture.





Partners will focus on:

- **Finalising the technical specifications and executive blueprints** for the five pilot projects, ensuring that each solution is adapted to the specific needs and conditions of the target territories;
- **Further developing the Living Lab methodology** to support stakeholder participation, co-creation, and structured knowledge exchange during the next phase of project activities;
- **Implementing and validating pilot actions** in the participating territories, translating the results of the project's preparatory activities into practical solutions;
- **Testing innovative technologies** aimed at improving water, energy, and nutrient efficiency in protected horticulture systems;
- **Continuing stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building activities** to support the uptake and adaptation of PROTECHMED solutions;
- **Strengthening cooperation through the PROTECHMED innovation ecosystem and transnational agri-cluster**, fostering collaboration among researchers, agricultural stakeholders, institutions, and sector actors across the Mediterranean.

Upcoming Activities in Semester 3

The outcomes of the Sicily Inception Camp, together with the results of the **Gap Analysis and State of Play**, will guide the next steps towards the deployment of sustainable, replicable, and context-specific solutions for Mediterranean protected horticulture.





In addition, **SVI.MED ETS and CIHEAM Bari, in collaboration with all partners, will develop two Guidelines** through internal coordination meetings. These Guidelines will support the alignment of Training activities and the Transnational Living Lab approach, ensuring that territorial needs are addressed, stakeholder participation is encouraged, and experiences and knowledge are exchanged across different Mediterranean contexts. The Guidelines will provide a common framework to support the effective implementation of future activities and facilitate the uptake of PROTECHMED solutions across the participating territories.

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PROTECHMED IS A PROJECT CO-FUNDED BY THE INTERREG NEXT MED PROGRAMME 2021-2027.