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SmartGreenEcos

# PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Project launch, first milestones and new support opportunities for dairy SMEs







SmartGreenEcos is building a smart and green ecosystem to support agri-food SMEs in Cyprus, Greece, Tunisia and Jordan.

**Inside this issue:**

- Why the dairy subsector was selected as the project's first focus area
- What happened during the first six months of implementation
- How SmartGreenEcos will support SMEs through its future services

**What SMEs can expect from SmartGreenEcos:**

**AI-based benchmarking, practical training, digital procurement support and opportunities for collaborative product development**

*SmartGreenEcos (GC: A_T_1.2_0526) is co-funded by the European Union under the Interreg NEXT MED Programme. Its total budget is €2,803,600, with an EU contribution of €2,495,204 (89%).*

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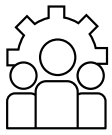
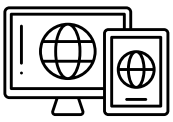
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# A smart and green ecosystem for Mediterranean SMEs

Welcome to the first SmartGreenEcos newsletter. In this issue, we look back at the project's first six months of implementation and share the first key milestones of this new Interreg NEXT MED initiative. SmartGreenEcos supports agri-food SMEs in Cyprus, Greece, Tunisia and Jordan through a shared ecosystem designed to strengthen digitalisation, sustainability and innovation, while offering practical support to improve performance, skills, cooperation and market readiness.

During its launch phase, the project focused on internal coordination, strategic preparation and the design of its future service logic. In January 2026, partners reached an important milestone by selecting the dairy subsector as the first strategic focus area. In the following pages, you will find a short overview of what the project is about, what has happened so far, and how SmartGreenEcos will support SMEs in the next stages of implementation.

## At a glance


4 countries | 100 SMEs to benefit| 4 digital platforms | 36 months



# SmartGreenEcos selects the dairy subsector as its first focus area

Following a comparative assessment of food industry groups across Cyprus, Greece, Tunisia and Jordan, SmartGreenEcos selected the dairy subsector as the project's first strategic focus area.

The decision was based on a structured partner process that examined which sector could offer the strongest basis for collaboration among SMEs and for testing the SmartGreenEcos model in practice. After an initial screening, three candidate groups were shortlisted: fruit and vegetables, dairy products, and bakery products. These were then assessed against key criteria such as economic relevance, exports, supply-chain structure, and green and digital transition needs.

Dairy products emerged as the strongest overall option because the sector combines clear transition needs with strong potential for cooperation across the value chain. For SMEs, this means a more relevant and practical starting point for support in areas such as traceability, energy use, water management, cold-chain logistics and quality standards.

By focusing first on dairy, SmartGreenEcos can move from preparation to implementation with a clearer sectoral direction and a stronger connection to real business needs.







# What happened in the first six months

The first six months of SmartGreenEcos focused on building the project's foundations and preparing the ground for implementation. During this launch phase, partners worked closely to align priorities, organise coordination mechanisms and define the first strategic steps needed to move the project forward.

## Building the project foundations

Following the start of implementation, the partnership concentrated on setting up the internal working structure of the project and ensuring a shared understanding of objectives, tasks and next steps. This early coordination phase was essential for establishing a common direction across the four partner countries and for preparing the first actions targeting SMEs and stakeholders.

## Selecting the dairy focus

An important milestone of this first phase was the agreement to focus SmartGreenEcos on one food industry group rather than several. This approach was considered more coherent and practical for collaboration, service design and future testing. Following partner discussions and comparative analysis, dairy products were selected as the most suitable subsector for the project's first implementation phase.

## Designing the future services

Partners also worked on defining the high-level logic of the future SmartGreenEcos platforms and services. The aim was to shape a service structure that can respond to the real green and digital transition needs of SMEs and later translate into practical tools, learning opportunities and cooperation support for businesses.



# How SmartGreenEcos will support SMEs

SmartGreenEcos is designed to provide practical support to agri-food SMEs in Cyprus, Greece, Tunisia and Jordan through four core service areas. Together, these services aim to help businesses improve performance, strengthen skills, cooperate more effectively and explore new growth opportunities in the green and digital transition.

## 1. AI-based Benchmarking & Optimisation




*Benchmark your business and identify quick wins*

SmartGreenEcos will help SMEs better understand their current performance and identify areas for improvement. Through AI-based benchmarking and optimisation tools, businesses will be able to better monitor operations, spot inefficiencies more quickly and identify practical ways to reduce waste, save energy and improve productivity.

## 2. Capacity building for smart & green practices



*Train your team in smarter and greener practices*

The project will support SME teams with practical knowledge and skills for smarter and greener ways of working. Training and knowledge-sharing activities will help businesses strengthen their digital readiness, improve sustainable practices and build confidence in using new tools and methods. This will help SMEs turn green and digital transition goals into everyday business practice.

## 3. Digital Procurement tools for joint purchasing



*Access joint purchasing and market opportunities*

SmartGreenEcos will also promote more efficient procurement and stronger business connections. Through digital tools, SMEs will be able to explore joint purchasing opportunities, improve sourcing processes and, in the longer term, connect more easily with buyers and markets through structured B2B functions. This can help SMEs reduce costs, improve sourcing decisions and strengthen their market connections.

## 4. Collaborative New Product Development support




*Co-develop and test new food products*

The project will encourage SMEs to work together on innovation and product development. By creating opportunities for cooperation, testing and shared learning, SmartGreenEcos aims to help businesses move more confidently from ideas to new or improved food products that respond to changing market demands. This can support SMEs in responding to changing consumer demand and exploring new business opportunities.

# Q&A with the Project Coordinator



## Dr. Demetris Eliades

**Project Coordinator of SmartGreenEcos**
**Director of the Private Sector Projects Department at RTD Talos (Lead Partner)**

Dr. Demetris Eliades is the Project Coordinator of SmartGreenEcos at RTD Talos, the project's Lead Partner. As the Director of the Private Sector Projects Department at RTD Talos, with more than 30 years of experience in business strategy, project development and business planning, he brings a strong strategic perspective to the project's implementation. In this short interview, he shares his thoughts on the project's first milestones, the selection of the dairy subsector, and the road ahead for SmartGreenEcos.

**What makes SmartGreenEcos an important project for the Mediterranean?**
SmartGreenEcos brings together issues that matter deeply to the region: food production, sustainability, innovation and the future of SMEs. What makes it especially important is that it does not look at these challenges in isolation. It creates a shared ecosystem where businesses can learn from one another, cooperate and access tools that can help them adapt and grow.

**What would you like SMEs to feel when they hear about SmartGreenEcos?**
I would like them to feel that this project is relevant to their everyday reality. SmartGreenEcos is not just about strategy on paper. It is about practical support that SMEs can use to become stronger, greener, more connected and better prepared for the future.

**What are you looking forward to most in the next phase of SmartGreenEcos?**
The next phase is where the project starts becoming more tangible. We will move from preparation to action, with stronger SME engagement and the gradual development of the services and platforms. I believe this is the point where SmartGreenEcos can begin to show its real value on the ground.

# What comes next?

After its launch phase, SmartGreenEcos is now moving into a more implementation-oriented stage. Building on the first strategic decisions taken by the partnership, **the project will focus on selecting and engaging the 100 SMEs that will participate in the SmartGreenEcos ecosystem**, with 25 companies from each partner country.

In parallel, SmartGreenEcos will focus on turning its shared vision into practical support for businesses. This includes the **development of its future services and platforms, stronger communication and outreach actions, and closer interaction with SMEs in the selected sector**. The aim is to ensure that the project's tools and activities respond to real business needs and create value across the wider Mediterranean ecosystem.

Dairy SMEs and relevant value-chain actors in Cyprus, Greece, Tunisia and Jordan are **encouraged to follow the project's upcoming updates and future opportunities for engagement.** SmartGreenEcos aims to build its next steps in close connection with real business needs and sector priorities.

At the same time, the project will continue to strengthen **cooperation among partners and contribute to a long-term framework for collaboration beyond the lifetime of the project**. In this way, SmartGreenEcos aims not only to support the green and digital transition of SMEs, but also to help shape a more connected, innovative and sustainable agri-food ecosystem in the Mediterranean.




1. 100 SMEs join the project
2. Development of the SmartGreenEcos platforms and services
3. Practical use of the services by participating SMEs

# Stay connected

Follow the latest SmartGreenEcos updates and upcoming opportunities on the official project page and LinkedIn page:

SmartGreenEcos Project

www.interregnextmed.eu/project-page/smartgreenecos/

# Consortium



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INVESTMENT WORLD
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For more information, please contact:
RTD Talos – Lead Partner
**de@talos-rtd.com**

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