Interreg

Co-funded by the European Union

NEXT MED

MAENA

The Second Drop: Farmers mobilization, Technical innovation, and Regional outreach

Newsletter #Issue 2

September 2026

ABOUT MAENA

MAENA (Replenishing the small water cycle towards a more resilient Agriculture) project directly tackles critical water scarcity and climate vulnerability in the Mediterranean, a region where current water management policies overlook the vital role of Small Water Cycles (SWC). Recognising that agricultural overuse severely disrupts SWCs—which contribute up to 2/3 of land precipitation—MAENA introduces a new water management paradigm. Targeting up to 40% water savings. The project aims to enhance farm resilience through practical SWC restoration techniques. A participatory approach implemented across 20+ pilot farms, coupled with transnational training, will provide proof-of-concept of the proposed solutions. The ultimate goal is to form a strategic MED Hub to foster regional cooperation and enable decision-makers to replicate and scale up these practices for a more resilient and sustainable agricultural sector in the region.

Newsletter Purpose

- Highlight tangible technical advancements—from smart monitoring stations and cover crops to upgraded irrigation systems
- Illustrate how farmers are actively co-designing and testing Small Water Cycle Restoration solutions across the Mediterranean
- Preview upcoming interactive training sessions and capacity-building workshops designed for farmers and sector professionals



LARI Fanar station

MAENA Demonstration Hubs - Lebanon

MAENA project is driving the restoration of the SWC by establishing specialised demonstration farms across Tunisia, Lebanon, and Italy. These sites will serve as a "proof of concept" for sustainable practices that will be scaled up and and deployed across around twenty private farms in partner countries (Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy and Spain)
The field actions focus on four critical pillars: water conservation, soil remediation, water-energy nexus solutions, and advanced monitoring.
In Lebanon, these interventions are being implemented at LARI (Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute) Fanar station featuring rehabilitating existing glasshouses, constructing a new polycarbonate greenhouse, and deploying plant- and substrate-monitoring sensors alongside smart irrigation and rainwater harvesting systems to ensure operational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

Learn more

Smart water management for Tunisian Fig Orchards

A smart irrigation and monitoring framework at INRAT (National Institute of Agronomic Research of Tunisia) experimental farm in Tunisia. has been deployed. Home to a collection of 26 native fig varieties, the site now features a modernized drip irrigation network linked with soil moisture sensors and centralized data loggers. This site functions as an interactive demonstration and training platform for researchers, students, and agricultural practitioners.

Learn more



INRAT experimental site



National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia (INAT)

Empowering local farmers: Calls for participation across the Mediterranean

A core pillar of the MAENA project is putting farmers at the center of Small Water Cycle Restoration (SWCR). To extend direct support to local agricultural communities, target calls for participation and public information days were rolled out across partner regions, backed by an engaging multi-channel social media campaign:

- Tunisia: Following the official launch during a dedicated Information Day, the Tunisian call was opened to support local farmers in building long-term agricultural resilience (Read full announcement).
- Italy: In the Puglia region, the call engaged local producers to implement practical, on-farm water management solutions to optimize irrigation efficiency (Learn more).
- Jordan: A targeted outreach campaign invited farmers based in Jordan to apply for tailored technical and material support to address field-level water scarcity (See call details).

Local farmers in Spain restoring the Small Water Cycle

Following a successful call for participation, 6 local farms were selected in Catalonia to implement tailored SWCR measures. Practical interventions, field monitoring, and predictive modeling are currently underway across key crop systems:

- Vineyards (Cover Crop Optimization): Real-time soil water monitoring is being conducted to refine cover crop management and prevent water stress.
- Olive Groves (Keyline Topography): Two olive parcels are undergoing keyline design transformations—including the conversion of a former almond plot—to maximize rainwater retention and restore micro-hydrology at the field scale.
- Winter Cereal Crops (3 Farms): Remote sensing data is being leveraged to track crop maturity and map dynamic plant water demand for satellite-optimized irrigation scheduling.



Vineyard plot in Spain



Training & skill-building: Launching MAENA syllabus

Drawing upon the collective expertise of the MAENA consortium, a structured training syllabus comprising **11 targeted module**s has been finalized. Designed to empower local agricultural communities, the curriculum bridges technical, financial, governance, and gender-sensitive dimensions to ensure a truly holistic approach to SWCR at the farm scale.

Key Highlights of the Training Framework:

- Grounded in real-world practice: The curriculum directly aligns with the practical outcomes, data, and best practices emerging from MAENA's institutional demonstration farms, and other initiatives, turning theoretical principles into field-tested applications.
- Demonstration sites as interactive Hubs: Trial farms act as dynamic, hands-on learning centers where participants observe and experience advanced SWCR solutions in action

Regional Presence: MAENA at key Mediterranean events & synergies

MAENA continues to strengthen its visibility and institutional connections through active participation in regional forums, scientific conferences, and peer-to-peer exchanges:

- World Environment Day: Highlighted small water cycle restoration as a key climate adaptation tool (Article).
- Strategic Synergies: Strengthened cross-border cooperation with Mediterranean initiatives SWA-MED and REST4GREEN.
- International Conference "Smart Agriculture 2026": Presented smart irrigation and SWCR practices (Details).
- Academic Outreach: Welcomed students and researchers from the College of Europe - Natolin Campus during their Tunisia study tour.



Media



MAENA inception video with subtitles (Arabic, IT, SP, CT)



MAENA inception video with Tunisian arabic subtitles

Get Involved

Subscribe and receive MAENA news and updates directly to your inbox!

Subscribe



PROJECT FIGURES

MAENA is a cooperation project funded by the European Union through the Interreg NEXT MED programme. The programme is managed by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy) and aims to promote transnational cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

Budget
2.8 M€

EU Contribution
2.5 M€

Duration
3 years

PARTNERS

STAY CONNECTED

"This Newsletter has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the Interreg NEXT MED Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of MAENA partners and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or the Programme management structures."