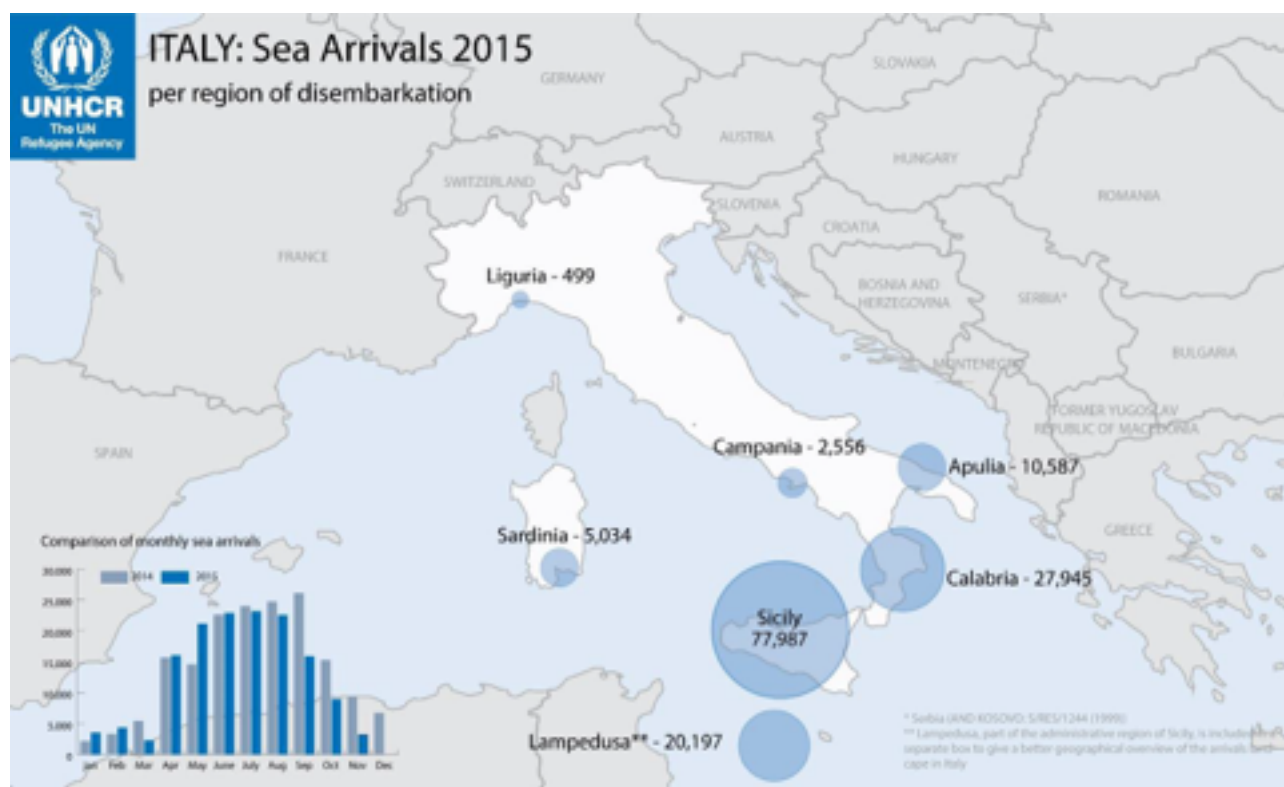


Sicilia Integra

Socio-Economic Integration of Migrants through Organic Products

Each year thousands of men, women and children attempt a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Many of them are trying to escape poverty, climate impact and war in their home countries. From January to November 2015, the total number of refugees and migrants arriving in Italy by sea stands at around 144,200 persons (Italy - Sea Arrivals, UNHCR UPDATE #3, November 2015). Key disembarkation points in November remained Sicilian ports which have been identified as hotspots: 77,987 migrants have reached Sicilian shores in 2015. Up to November, 3,515 persons have lost their lives or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea. During 2015 persons originating from over 65 different countries arrived in Italy (UNHCR). So far EU and National policies have failed to adopt an integrated response to deal with this dramatic and complex problem.

Sicily, at the center of the Mediterranean, has always been a crossroads of cultures and agriculture. It has the largest surface (280,448 hectares) of fertile organic land, the highest number of organic operators (9,888 producers/processors) in Italy (SINAB, 2014) and one of the richest concentrations of biodiversity in Europe. Despite the concentration of abandoned agricultural land, in recent years there has been a revival of traditional methods of agriculture with young farmers, sensitive to the themes of biodiversity conservation and regenerative agriculture, saving over 40 varieties of wheat.



Sicily still bears the impact of the economic recession of 2008 standing as the poorest region in Italy with 54,4% of Sicilians living below the poverty threshold (ISTAT 2014), and youth unemployment over 40% (ISTAT). The fragile state of the economy has reduced significantly Sicily's labour market capacity to absorb of the continuous flow of migrant job-seekers. Furthermore this flow obliges Sicilian institutions to deal with their integration while interacting with a range of social, religious and cultural complexities.

There is an urgent need for integrated approaches that could support the socio-economic integration of migrants while promoting new sustainable trends to enhance Sicilian local economy. Riace in Calabria has demonstrated how integration of migrants into an existing Italian society is possible. In 1998 when 200 Kurds fleeing the Turkish-Kurdish conflict landed on a beach near the small village, Riace was in danger of becoming extinct with an aging population. Today a quarter of the population is comprised of immigrants who have been given new homes and a new start in life.

A potential solution to the current migration crises can be found in the ecovillages, permaculture and transition communities' social movements. In many places these community-led strategies have shown how rural villages and urban communities can re-establish sustainable livelihoods combining local traditional knowledge with appropriate technologies. A study carried out by AEIDL in 2013 identified in excess of 2,000 community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability across 13 EU countries, including transition and permaculture initiatives and ecovillages, which together provide pioneering examples towards the realisation of localised resilient economies.

Some young migrants from Africa express their aspiration to return to their countries of origin when circumstances allow, while demonstrating interest to acquire appropriate skills which could be applied back to their communities. Sicilia Integra advocates that immigration can also represent a 'transformational' opportunity and an effective way to ease people out of situations of vulnerability building long-term resilience for both the migrant and the destination communities.

In addition by adopting regenerative agriculture approaches the project would favour the sequestration of carbon into the ground. One of the most effective ways to promote atmospheric drawdown of carbon was recently emphasised by Prof. Jason Box at COP21: *"The Roman Empire began deforesting the Mediterranean long ago, and that desertification trend is behind drought. Now we can actually begin reversing that and bring humidification back to the Mediterranean through regenerative approaches. Besides bringing moisture back to some of these places and sequestering carbon, it also gives people hope"*.

Led by Gaia Education and the University of Catania in partnership with Associations managing SPRAR Migrant, Organic Farming Cooperatives and private business partners the project aims to support the socio-economic integration of migrants through agricultural capacity building activities with the view of creating an alternative trading platform for the commercialisation of Sicilian organic products in European markets.



1. Sicilia Integra Objectives

The **general objective** of **Sicilia Integra** is to support the socio-economic integration of migrants through comprehensive agricultural capacity building activities with the view of increasing the production and commercialisation of sicilian organic products in European markets.

The **specific objectives** of the project are:

- Creating pathways of education and training for migrants and young Sicilian as farmers led by Gaia Education and the University of Catania
- Building an inclusive and transparent system of governance and long-term relationships among the different stakeholders involved
- Ensuring financial sustainability of the close-loop process starting from the qualitative and quantitative needs of potential private business partners as buyers of Sicilian organic products

The **cross-cutting objectives** of the project are:

- Defining a set of humanitarian and ethical values that will represent the basis upon which the project will grow with engaging actions aimed to address potential complexities deriving from cultural, social and religious differences
- Conducting the vertical integration of the project with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and COP21 accord
- Promoting the vertical integration with the thematic objectives of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund

The project foresees also **medium and long term** ambitious **goals** in line with the values and methodologies promoted by Gaia Education which include the provision of sustainability education that promotes thriving communities, transforming multiple crises in multiple fair and sustainable solutions and creating an alternative trading platform.

2. Actions and Deliverables

In order to reach the objectives described above, the following **actions** will be implemented:

Action 1_Education

The migrants - before being integrated into the organic farming communities - will join a 5 week course designed to provide the knowledge and practical skills on regenerative and organic farming techniques in the context of the three dimensions of sustainability– environment, society and economy, with culture as an underlying dimension. The 5-week course will also include young unemployed Sicilian chosen among secondary agricultural school graduates, students or graduates at the University Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Environment.



Migrant Design Education

The Migrant Design Education syllabus will be developed by Gaia Education and University of Catania educators, 2 migrants with extensive experience in education and agriculture representing the migrant communities, representatives of the host farms.

The courses will be conducted to a mixed audience of migrants and young sicilians interested in learning and engaging with the **Sicilia Integra** pathway of learning with a view of entering the organic agriculture job market.

The Education Cycle

The training activities will be structured in order to achieve 4 possible scenarios in the short-medium and long-term:

- migrants who will work in the Sicilia Integra farms;
- migrants that will create their own business in partnership with Sicilians;
- migrants who will return to their countries with new skills and capacities;
- migrants who will become educators of other migrants and young sicilians

Action 2_ Governance

The key players involved in the process are:

- Gaia Education and University of Catania (Educational Institutions),
- SPRAR - Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Migrants Institutions),
- Farmers/Food Growers and Third Sector Associations (e.g., Libera, AIAB, Rete Permacultura, Legambiente, Rete Fattorie Sociali, LIPU, Slow Food)

A Steering Group holding the vision of the project with representatives of the 5 main institutions/associations is to be established in January 2016. The Steering Group will be supported by an operational technical team constituted by a project manager and other experts involved in the project. (Project Management: **Turi Timpanaro**, **Caterina Timpanaro**; HR Assistant: **Vincenzo Santiglia**)

In order to establish relationships, roles and tasks among the involved players, MoU-Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between Gaia Education and the other players.

Action 2.1_MoU Gaia Education- University of Catania (UNICT)

Memorandum of Understanding between Gaia Education and UNICT has been developed and approved and is currently being translated in the legal department of the University.



Action 2.2_MoU Gaia Education- Associations managing SPRAR

Memorandum of Understanding between Gaia Education and Associations managing SPRARS in 3 areas identified by the project: Internal Area (province of EN and CL), South East Iblee Area (RG and SR), Etna Area (CT and ME).

Action 2.3_MoU Gaia Education–Food growers

Memorandum of Understanding between Gaia Education and a network of food growers. First steps:

- Define criteria of farms selection
- Mapping and identification of farms
- Promotion/establishment of a 'Rete di Imprese'
- MoU definition and signature with the 'Rete di Imprese'

According to research conducted the appropriate legal entity to serve as umbrella organisation for the network of associated organic farms is the “**Rete di Imprese**”.

The MoU will include the following key points related to ethical principles and in line with some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Organic production
- Creation of new jobs respecting rights of workers and trade unions agreements
- Respect of the gender issue in migrants and project team selection
- Respect of transparency and legality
- Resource efficiency (water, energy, waste,etc.) and use of renewable energy sources
- Promotion/protection of local biodiversity

Action 2.4_ Supporting Associations Involvement

Definition of the involvement and letter of support of the supporting associations (Libera, AIAB, Rete Permacultura, Legambiente, Rete Fattorie Sociali, LIPU, Slow Food, etc.)

Objective 3_ **Economic Sustainability**

Action 3.1_Business Plan

Business Plan between Gaia Education, University of Catania and Food Growers in consultation with potential commercial buyers is in discussion.

Action 3.2_Fundraising

Explore EU, national, regional and local funding opportunities aiming at supporting the project activities (training, production, marketing, etc.) i.e.:

- Erasmus+ for training, with the aim of inviting different teachers to work on the Syllabus,
- Catania Municipality/Frontex
- Ministero degli Interni/SPRARs/Farms - Funds for training
- Ministero del Lavoro/SPRARs/Farms - Funds for training
- Catania Municipality/Fondazione con il Sud
- Region of Sicily

3. Partners

Gaia Education is a leading-edge provider of sustainability education promoting thriving communities within planetary boundaries. Since 2006, Gaia Education has successfully conducted 180 Design for Sustainability programmes in 41 countries in five continents, reaching over 7,000 people. Gaia Education empowers participants of all ages with the appropriate skills to design a society which uses energy and materials with greater efficiency, distributes wealth fairly and strives to eliminate the concept of waste. Students become change agents and sustainability designers, taking active roles in transitioning their existing communities, institutions and neighbourhoods to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, as well as leading more joyful, meaningful and healthier lives. **Coordinators:** [May East MSc](#), [Ross Jackson PhD](#)

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Di3A University of Catania Its mission is to produce high-quality and high social and economic impact scientific research, and to organise courses and other educational activities with highly innovative content and learning objectives. These courses are designed to meet the current needs of society and labour market, mainly focused on the areas of agricultural and food production and environmental protection of the Mediterranean Basin. **Coordinator:** [Prof Paolo Guarnaccia](#)

Associations managing SPRARs, the system of protection of asylum-seekers and refugees (SPRAR) consists of regional networks of local authorities in partnership with the third sector providing "integrated reception" to migrants, including support and guidance for the construction of individual pathways of socio-economic development. **Association Don Bosco 2000 (EN)** carries out the following activities: management of houses for child victims of abuse, for immigrants, women in situations of grave neglect, elderly, drug addicts; assistance activities for refugees and minors, foreign minors, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking and violence, the management and organisation of centers di 'Accoglienza' (CDA), centers for asylum seekers (CARA) and service protection for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR). **Coordinator:** [Agostino Sella](#)

Associazione I Girasoli (CL) **Coordinator:** [Calogero Santoro](#).

Cooperativa Passwork (SR) **Coordinator:** [Sebastiano Scaglione](#)

LUSH Ltd is a UK based cosmetics company employing over 15,000 people in 52 countries. Lush is striving toward the highest ethical standards and a regenerative supply chain for most of their ingredients. Furthermore, Lush promotes charity campaigns to support the activities of environmental, humanitarian and animal rights activist groups. **Coordinators:** [Martin Stengel](#), [Tom Chambers](#)



4. Stakeholders

AIAB Sicilia is an association of organic producers, technicians and citizens-consumers dedicated to the promotion of organic agriculture as a model of sustainable development based on the principles of conservation, respect of the environment, the animal welfare and the health of the consumers. AIAB supports the interests of farmers, producers and processors to achieve economies of scale, economic efficiency and 'bargaining' power, and facilitates the production planning for the processing industry and for local, national and international markets.

Rete Fattorie Sociali Sicilia is a network of people, associations and farms engaged in the promotion of health, sustainable development and social inclusion of individuals that have suffered hardship who could re-gain meaning in life through agricultural activities. The Social Agriculture has its roots in solidarity, reciprocity, generosity and mutual help that characterise the rural areas of Sicily, offering cultural, educational, social and working inclusion services for vulnerable individuals or disadvantaged areas.

Legambiente Sicilia is an environmental NGO inspired by the values of protection and enhancement of nature and the environment, land and landscape, history, art and culture and the principles of democracy, freedom, solidarity, justice and social cohesion. Legambiente is a not for-profit, non-partisan, pacifist and non-violent association open to citizens of all political and religious beliefs that may accede to becoming part of one of more than 40 clubs distributed in all provinces of Sicily.

Associazione Libera Catania is part of a network of more than 1,200 associations, groups and schools, committed to building up organisational synergies between the political and cultural local realities capable of promoting a culture of lawfulness. Antimafia education, the social use of the real estate confiscated from organised crime, the education on democratic lawfulness, the fight against corruption, are some of Libera's concrete commitments.

Slow Food Catania belongs to a global, grassroots organisation, founded in 1989 to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteracting the rise of fast life and combating people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us. Slow Food believes food is tied to many other aspects of life, including culture, politics, agriculture and the environment.

Lipu Catania is an environmental organisation founded in 1965 and the Italian partner of BirdLife International, the largest organisation in the world engaged in conservation of birds and their habitats. The scope of LIPU is nature conservation, specifically directed towards wild birds and their natural habitats, and the dissemination of environmental education. Currently it manages 29 protected areas (Oasis and Reserves) and 11 wildlife recover centers and realizes technical-scientific, educational, cultural and awareness activities throughout the country.

Rete Permaculture Sicilia is a regional network composed by approximately two hundred people, including citizens, associations, companies and agricultural cooperatives actively working towards a resilient and prosperous Sicily respecting the ethics and principles of permaculture.

