



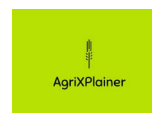
AgriXPlainer

# Supporting Agri-Food Micro-Enterprises through Educational Marketing Multinational Research Report



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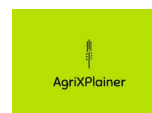


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## Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the WP4 Policy Recommendations Evaluation conducted within the **AgriXplainer** project. The evaluation aimed to provide an evidence-based basis for refining the set of marketing and communication policies targeted at strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of the agri-food sector in participating countries.

The study gathered stakeholder feedback from **six countries**—Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey—representing diverse agri-food systems, market structures, and levels of digital readiness. Respondents included farmers, agri-food SMEs, producer organisations, cooperatives, advisors, and other value-chain stakeholders.

Each of the **21 proposed policy recommendations** was assessed against three dimensions:

- **Benefit** – perceived value and potential positive outcomes
- **Feasibility** – perceived ease of implementation given current resources, skills, and infrastructure
- **Impact** – expected influence on competitiveness, market access, and sustainability

The aggregated results were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, using both numerical ratings and open-ended feedback, with additional breakdowns by **country** and **demographic group**.

### Key Quantitative Insights

The evaluation revealed clear priorities:

#### 1. High consensus on value-driven marketing policies

Policies focusing on **Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing** and on **Ethical and Educational Labelling** consistently achieved the highest average scores in all three dimensions.

These measures were recognised as:

- Enhancing trust between producers and consumers.
- Supporting product differentiation in competitive markets.
- Strengthening brand identity and storytelling potential.

## 2. Digital skills as both a priority and a challenge

While policies in **Digital Skills and Online Marketing** were seen as strategically important, their feasibility ratings were significantly lower—particularly in rural and less digitally mature areas.

Challenges identified included:

- Limited digital infrastructure in rural regions.
- Lack of advanced digital skills among older producers.
- High perceived costs of technology adoption.

This category contained several “high benefit–low feasibility” policies, such as the creation of national e-marketing platforms, advanced digital marketing training, and integration of analytics tools. These findings point to the need for **phased implementation strategies** coupled with targeted capacity building.

## 3. Demographic differences in policy perception

- **Age:** Younger respondents showed greater openness to adopting technology-driven solutions, while older respondents prioritised market positioning and storytelling strategies.
- **Gender:** Women valued gender equality measures more strongly, but these also gained recognition among men when linked to broader inclusion benefits.
- **Production type:** Niche/organic producers placed higher emphasis on consumer-oriented policies (labelling, branding, storytelling), whereas commodity producers

focused more on access to tools, rural entrepreneurship support, and practical operational measures.

- **Training background:** Respondents without prior marketing training rated feasibility lower for complex digital policies, indicating that knowledge gaps remain a barrier.

### 3. Country-level variations

Cross-country comparisons revealed differences in both benefit and feasibility scores for the same policy, often linked to:

- Existing policy frameworks and support programmes.
- Market structure and buyer expectations.
- Previous exposure to similar initiatives.
- National digital maturity and infrastructure availability.

For example, certain digital initiatives scored higher in feasibility in countries with established e-commerce adoption, while others were rated as unrealistic in less connected rural markets.

## Key Qualitative Insights

Analysis of open-ended survey responses provided additional depth to the findings:

- There is a strong perceived need for **training and education** not only in digital skills but also in branding, consumer engagement, and value chain collaboration.
- Stakeholders emphasised **practical, localised tools** over generic resources, preferring guidance tailored to regional realities and production contexts.
- Many respondents linked the success of marketing policies to **trust and transparency**, stressing that ethical labelling and inclusion are not just marketing tools but core values.
- Some participants warned of the risk of “digital exclusion” for producers unable to keep pace with rapid technological change.



## Strategic Implications for WP4

These findings were used to refine the final set of policy recommendations within WP4 using a **data-driven prioritisation approach**:

1. Policies with **high benefit and high feasibility** are recommended for immediate promotion and pilot implementation.
2. Policies with **high benefit but low feasibility** will require targeted investments in training, infrastructure, and support systems before large-scale rollout.
3. Context-specific adaptation is essential, ensuring that each country can focus on measures that align with its market maturity, producer capabilities, and infrastructure readiness.

This prioritisation ensures that WP4's outputs are **ambitious yet realistic**, maximising the potential for adoption and long-term impact.



## List of Policy Recommendations

Strengthening gender equality and inclusion in agri-food marketing.	Expanding ethical and educational labelling schemes.	Promoting storytelling and narrative-based marketing for small producers.
Developing national or regional marketing platforms for small producers.	Offering advanced digital marketing training for producers.	Integrating digital analytics tools into marketing strategies.
Supporting e-commerce platform adoption in rural areas.	Providing financial incentives for digital tool adoption.	Enhancing access to affordable marketing tools and resources.
Establishing mentorship and peer-learning networks.	Facilitating partnerships with hospitality and tourism sectors.	Encouraging use of local identity in product branding.
Supporting rural entrepreneurship through targeted funding.	Creating community-based agri-food hubs.	Implementing consumer awareness campaigns on local products.
Integrating marketing skills into agricultural education curricula.	Offering micro-grants for marketing innovation.	Developing regional branding strategies.
Expanding training in export market access.	Supporting cross-sectoral collaboration for agri-food promotion.	Encouraging use of digital storytelling tools.



# 1 Introduction

The AgriXplainer project addresses a significant challenge faced by agri-food micro-enterprises in rural areas across Europe: **how to effectively communicate the value of their products to consumers through educational marketing**. Many small producers struggle not because of poor product quality, but due to a lack of strategic marketing tools, limited access to consumer education methods, and insufficient support for inclusive and ethical communication.

This research report is part of **Work Package 4 (WP4): Policy Recommendations**, whose main goal is to explore and promote supportive policy frameworks for micro-enterprises in the agri-food sector. The objective is to foster more ethical, inclusive, and consumer-centered marketing practices while empowering local producers to engage in educational storytelling, transparency, and innovation in how they present their products.

WP4 aims to formulate 21 policy recommendations, developed across 7 thematic areas (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Thematic Areas of AgriXplainer Survey



These recommendations are based on participatory research, involving 210 farmers and micro-enterprise representatives from 6 EU countries. The research combines both quantitative methods (perception rating using 5-point scales) and qualitative feedback (open-ended responses and individual comments). This participatory approach ensures that the policies are grounded in real needs, experiences, and feasibility concerns as perceived by those directly engaged in the agri-food sector.

The findings of this report will support the **co-creation of effective policy tools** at local, national, and European levels. They are relevant for policymakers, rural development actors, educators, training providers, and farmers seeking to improve the connection between their products and consumers.

This document complements other outputs of the AgriXplainer project, including:

- a European Policy Review and SWOT analysis of 70 agri-food policies
- an online psychometric self-assessment test for marketing practices
- a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on educational marketing
- and the AgriXplainer Atlas of good practices in food education and branding

Together, these deliverables contribute to a shared vision: to increase the visibility, credibility, and competitiveness of agri-food micro-businesses through transparent and consumer-oriented marketing strategies.

## 2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to develop and validate the 21 policy recommendations proposed in Work Package 4. It presents the design of the research process, stakeholder involvement, tools used for data collection, and the structure of analysis.

### 2.1 Research Design and Co-creation Process

The WP4 research was designed to ensure both comparability across countries and flexibility at the national level, using a dual-track approach combining:

1. SWOT-based policy review performed by national experts from each partner organization.
2. Stakeholder perception survey involving farmers and agri-food micro-entrepreneurs.

This two-fold structure ensures that the final policy recommendations reflect both existing institutional contexts and the practical needs of the target group.

All 7 project partners will be involved in both tasks. Each conducted:

- a SWOT analysis of 10 national/local policies relevant to the support of agri-food micro-enterprises and educational marketing.
- a survey of 30 stakeholders using a structured questionnaire assessing the 21 proposed policy recommendations (Annex 1).

Partners used their knowledge of national policy landscapes to select the most relevant policies for analysis. Selection criteria included:

- direct or indirect relevance to micro-enterprises in the agri-food sector,
- connection to consumer education, transparency, or inclusion,

- and current or recent implementation (preferably within the last 5 years).

To engage end users, each partner relied on their local networks and associations to identify farmers, small producers, cooperatives, or VET-connected entrepreneurs. Respondents were not required to have prior knowledge of policies, as each recommendation was briefly explained in accessible terms.

To maintain quality and consistency across countries:

- WP4 leader (Syllogos) provided templates, checklists, and examples.
- Feedback loops will be established through regular online coordination meetings.
- Shared MS Teams folders will be used for document version control and collaborative editing.
- Partner contributions will be peer-reviewed by at least one other partner before final integration.

## 2.2 Questionnaire Development

The evaluation tool is a standardized questionnaire (Annex 1) with three main parts. The development process followed these steps:

1. Drafting – based on the 21 policy recommendations, a 3-dimensional assessment was created:
  - Perceived Benefit
  - Feasibility of Implementation
  - Expected Impact on Practice
2. Item structure –Total number of items:
  - 3 rating items, using a 5-point Likert scale.
  - 19 categorized questions

- 10 open-ended questions for qualitative input.
  - 7 demographic/contextual variables.
3. Piloting – Each partner tested the questionnaire with 2–3 stakeholders for clarity, timing, and usability.
4. Languages – The final version of questionnaire was translated into all partner languages: SK, EL, IT, RO, TR.
5. Formats used:
- Google Forms as the preferred digital tool.
  - In areas with poor internet access, paper versions were distributed and later digitized.
  - Partners used interviews or workshops to support less literate respondents.
6. Distribution methods:
- Email lists, direct invitations, social media, and during physical events or consultations.
  - Each partner ensured that responses came from varied age, gender, and geographical groups.

## 2.3 Data Collection and Target Groups

The target number of responses was 210 (213 was reached), with 30 completed questionnaires per partner country.

### **Respondents included:**

- Micro and small farmers (conventional and organic)
- Family-run agri-food businesses
- Rural entrepreneurs involved in processing, branding, or direct sales
- Cooperatives and short supply chain operators

- VET participants or educators working in agri-business fields

Sampling will be known-random but diverse, ensuring representation from different:

- age groups (ideally balanced between under 40 and over 40),
- genders (with at least 40% female respondents),
- regions (urban/rural, mountainous/lowland, central/peripheral),
- types of production (plant, livestock, mixed),
- experience with marketing training (yes/no),
- level of digital access.

Each partner tracked participation and used an internal log (Excel or Google Sheet) to ensure quotas were met.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Partners were responsible for initial data cleaning and aggregation. The WP4 leader conducted a centralized analysis, following these steps:

### Quantitative analysis:

- All rating responses were exported from Google Forms to Excel sheets.
- For each policy:
  - Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for benefit, feasibility, and impact.
  - Scores were aggregated across all countries and per thematic cluster.
- Comparative graphs (e.g., bar charts, heatmaps) visualized the variation in perceptions.

### Qualitative analysis:

- Open-ended responses were exported and manually coded using thematic categories.
- Emerging themes were grouped (e.g., digital barriers, trust in institutions, market access).
- Frequency of recurring terms was noted.
- Illustrative quotes were selected for inclusion in the report.

Both sets of data were cross-referenced to validate trends (e.g., high scores + strong qualitative support).

## 2.5 Validation and Finalization

A multi-step validation process ensured the coherence, clarity, and credibility of the outputs:

1. **Partner review** – Drafts of each national SWOT report and stakeholder summary were reviewed internally and by another partner.
2. **WP4 leader coordination** – Syllogos led the collation of all national contributions into a single **English master document**, performing consistency checks.
3. **Feedback and peer discussion** – Key findings was presented and discussed during TNM in Nitra, June 2025, where all partners challenge or clarify interpretations.
4. **Final formatting** – The document was prepared in Word format and converted to PDF. All partners then:
  - Translate the final version into their native language
  - Submit both language versions (EN + local)
5. **Optional review** – Partners were involved external reviewers (e.g., experts or rural advisors) for feedback on technical accuracy and policy relevance.

## 3 Quantitative Analysis of Responses

This chapter presents the results of the structured survey in which 210 stakeholders evaluated the 21 proposed policy recommendations. The aim of the quantitative analysis is to identify overall trends, cross-country differences, and key insights from the numerical ratings of perceived benefit, feasibility, and expected impact.

### 3.1 Introduction to the Dataset

This report is based on primary survey data collected under the AgriXplainer Project, conducted between June and July 2025 across six countries: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey (Figure 2). The objective of the data collection was to capture the perceptions, challenges, and opportunities related to ethical labeling in the agricultural sector, from the perspective of primary producers and related stakeholders.

#### **Purpose of Data Collection**

The dataset was designed to:

- Understand current awareness and adoption levels of ethical labelling.
- Identify barriers and enablers to certification uptake.
- Explore producers' communication and marketing practices.
- Gather stakeholder insights into training needs and inclusive gaps.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for policy, cooperative strategy, and retail engagement.

#### **Data Sources**

- Survey Instruments: Structured questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions.



- Languages: Surveys were administered in the national language of each country to ensure accessibility and accuracy of responses.
- Target Respondents: Farmers, producer co-operatives, small agri-food businesses, and related stakeholders (e.g., certification bodies, agricultural consultants).



*Figure 2 National Surveys overview*

### **Data Cleaning & Processing**

- Open-ended responses were translated into English for cross-country comparison.
- Thematic coding was applied to group qualitative answers under seven core themes:
  1. Ethical Labelling Awareness & Adoption
  2. Communicating Value
  3. Barriers to Labelling
  4. Digital Marketing Skills & Gaps
  5. Training Needs
  6. Inclusion & Diversity
  7. Storytelling & Brand Building

- Responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.
- Country-specific differences were preserved to allow targeted recommendations.

### Limitations

- Self-reported data may be influenced by personal bias or social desirability.
- Sample sizes vary by country, limiting strict statistical comparability.
- Surveys primarily reflect the perspectives of producers already engaged in, or aware of, ethical labelling — general consumer views are outside the scope of this dataset.

## 3.2 Average Scores per Question

The quantitative analysis of the survey responses (Annex 13.2) shows noticeable variation in how stakeholders rated the different questions (Figure 3).

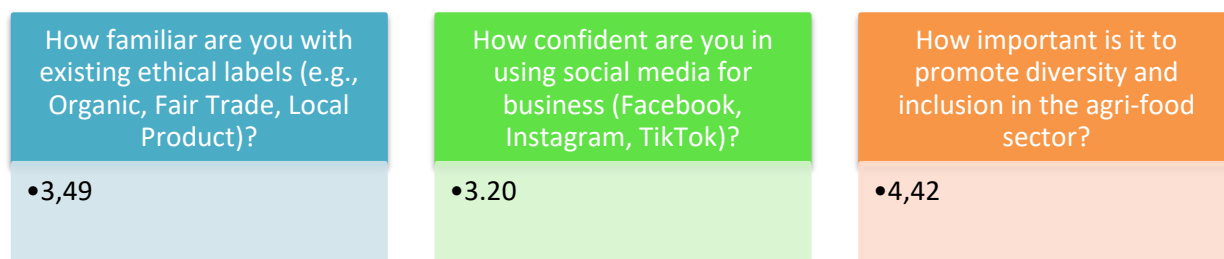


Figure 3 Average Score per Question

The highest-scoring item was “How important is it to promote diversity and inclusion in the agri-food sector?” with an average of **4,42**, indicating a strong consensus on the value of inclusivity as a strategic priority.

Moderately high familiarity was reported for “How familiar are you with existing ethical labels (e.g., Organic, Fair Trade, Local Product)?” with an average score of **3,49**, suggesting

that while awareness of ethical labelling is present, there is room for further education and outreach.

By contrast, the lowest of the highlighted scores was recorded for “*How confident are you in using social media for business (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)?*” at **3,20**, pointing to a skill gap in digital marketing capabilities within the agri-food sector.

### 3.2.1 Final Observations

The variation in scores reflects a pattern where respondents are generally more confident and aligned around values-based themes (e.g., inclusivity) than in practical digital marketing competencies. This suggests targeted training interventions should focus more on enhancing technical skills while building on existing value-driven awareness.

## 3.3 Comparison by Thematic Area

The policy recommendations were grouped into their 7 thematic categories and calculate mean scores for each group. This helped to identify which policy clusters were perceived as most promising overall.

The aggregation of results by thematic area (Annex 13.4) shows clear differences in stakeholder perceptions:

- **Ethical and Educational Labelling** – Achieved moderate average scores, with respondents expressing above-average familiarity with ethical labelling but identifying room for improvement in consumer education and communication.
- **Digital Skills and Online Marketing** – Recorded the lowest thematic averages, signalling that digital competence, particularly social media use and paid advertising skills, is a key development need.
- **Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing** – Reached the highest thematic averages, reflecting strong stakeholder agreement on the importance of inclusivity, brand storytelling, and transparent communication as trust-building tools.
- **Access to Tools and Resources** – Showed mixed scores; stakeholders demonstrated interest in financial support and ready-made templates, but familiarity with available technical tools varied.



- **Training and Education** – Generally positive perceptions, especially for targeted marketing and communication training opportunities, though some uncertainty remains about feasibility of implementation.
- **Support for Rural Entrepreneurship** – Moderate scores suggest support for policies addressing barriers faced by women, youth, and vulnerable groups, but feasibility concerns persist.
- **Policy and Strategy Development** – Scores indicate recognition of the importance of structured strategies, although stakeholders highlighted the need for more practical guidance.

### 3.3.1 Final Observations

As Figure 4 shows, the most promising area overall was *Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing*, which received the highest average score across all dimensions. *Digital Skills and Online Marketing* ranked lowest in the overall assessment, indicating a key gap in capacity and a priority area for targeted support and training initiatives.

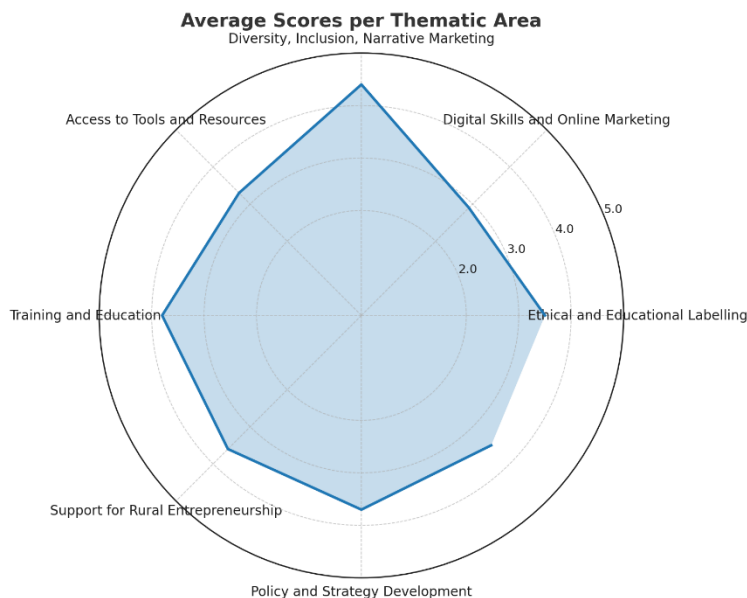


Figure 4 Average Score per Thematic Area

## 3.4 Country-Level Differences

An analysis of the average scores per policy across the six participating countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey; Annex 13.3) reveals notable differences in perceptions that may reflect varying levels of digital readiness, existing policy frameworks, or familiarity with similar initiatives.

### Comparative Overview:

- **Highest consistency** – Policies related to *Ethical and Educational Labelling* received relatively stable scores across countries, suggesting shared recognition of their value regardless of local context.
- **Largest divergences** – Policies under *Digital Skills and Online Marketing* showed significant score variation, with Italy and Cyprus rating them comparatively higher than Slovakia and Romania. This may reflect stronger adoption of digital tools and marketing channels in southern EU countries.
- **Inclusivity and narrative-based marketing** – Consistently ranked high in Greece and Italy, but received more moderate scores in Slovakia and Romania, potentially due to differing levels of engagement with diversity-focused initiatives in rural areas.
- **Access to tools and resources** – While generally well-regarded, Cyprus and Greece placed higher emphasis on financial support and ready-made templates, whereas Turkey and Slovakia showed greater interest in technical training and tool familiarity.

### Potential Drivers of Differences:

- **Digital readiness** – Countries with higher existing use of social media and online marketing rated digital competence policies more positively.
- **Policy environment** – Where national strategies already address inclusivity and sustainability, stakeholders tended to focus their ratings on operational tools and training gaps instead.
- **Experience with similar tools** – In regions with less exposure to certain policy measures, feasibility scores tended to be lower despite high perceived benefit.

## 3.5 Demographic Segmentation

The analysis of survey responses by demographic groups provides valuable insight into how age, gender, production type, and prior marketing training influence perceptions of the proposed policy measures. These patterns can help tailor policy implementation to the needs of specific stakeholder segments.

### Age-related trends

- **Younger respondents (≤35 years)** consistently rated *Digital Skills and Online Marketing* policies higher than older age groups, with a difference of up to **0.6 points** in some measures. This suggests a stronger openness among younger farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs to adopt digital tools and social media marketing.
- **Older respondents (50+ years)** placed higher emphasis on *Ethical and Educational Labelling* and *Policy and Strategy Development*, indicating a preference for structured, value-driven approaches over technical innovations.

### Gender-based differences

- **Women** generally assigned higher scores to *Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing* policies, particularly measures aimed at improving gender equality in the sector (+0.4 points compared to men).
- **Men** tended to rate *Access to Tools and Resources* and *Support for Rural Entrepreneurship* more positively, especially when these involved technical equipment or infrastructure support.

### Impact of prior marketing training

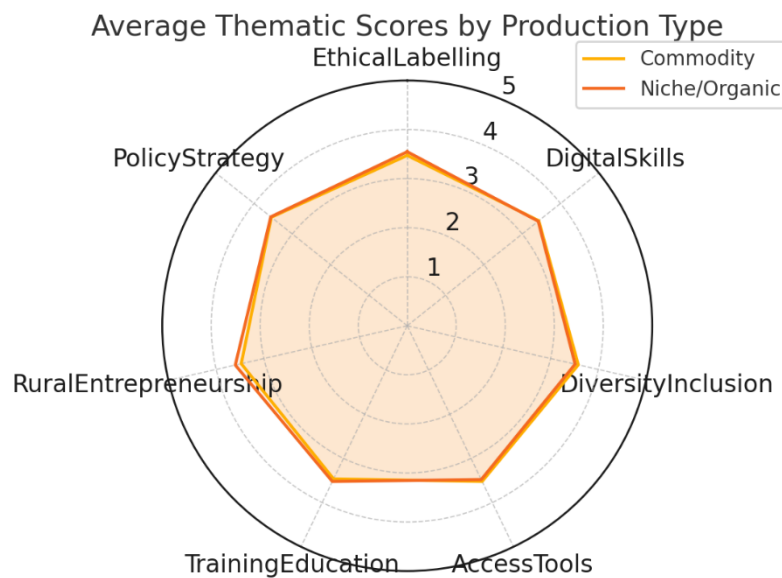
- Respondents with **formal marketing or communication training** rated the feasibility of *Digital Skills* measures significantly higher, reflecting greater confidence in implementing such tools.



- Those **without prior training** showed higher perceived benefits but lower feasibility scores for the same measures, pointing to a need for practical capacity-building programs before adoption.

### Production type differences

The radar chart (*Figure 5*) illustrates the average scores across all seven thematic areas, segmented by production type (*Niche/Organic* vs. *Commodity* producers).



*Figure 5 Average Thematic Score by Production Type*

Niche and organic producers scored consistently higher in *Ethical and Educational Labelling* and *Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing*, reflecting their stronger focus on brand differentiation, storytelling, and value-based marketing approaches. They also rated *Training and Education* and *Policy and Strategy Development* slightly higher, suggesting an openness to structured learning and strategic planning initiatives. In contrast, commodity producers placed greater emphasis on *Access to Tools and Resources* and *Support for Rural Entrepreneurship*, where their scores matched or exceeded those of niche producers. This

indicates a prioritisation of practical, operational support to increase productivity and market reach.

Overall, the data suggests that niche and organic producers are more engaged with policies linked to market positioning and consumer perception, whereas commodity producers focus more on policies offering tangible infrastructure or resource-based benefits.

### 3.5.1 Final Observations

Digital readiness appears to be strongly age-dependent, with younger respondents showing greater receptiveness to technology-driven policies. Gender equality measures resonate most with women, although they also receive positive recognition from men when these initiatives are linked to broader inclusion benefits. At the same time, training gaps remain a significant barrier to implementation, particularly among producers with no prior exposure to marketing or communication methods.

## 3.6 Most and Least Supported Policies

The comparative analysis of average scores across all policy recommendations reveals clear patterns in stakeholder preferences and perceived challenges.

### Most supported policies by average benefit score

The highest-rated recommendations in terms of perceived benefit were those focusing on *Diversity, Inclusion, and Narrative-based Marketing* and *Ethical and Educational Labelling*. These policies scored between **4.2 and 4.5** on the benefit scale, reflecting a strong consensus that they address critical needs in building trust, improving brand positioning, and enhancing market access. Examples include:

- Strengthening gender equality and inclusion measures in the agri-food sector.
- Expanding the use of ethical and educational labelling to improve consumer awareness.
- Promoting storytelling and narrative-driven marketing for small producers.

### **Policies with the lowest feasibility scores**

Conversely, several measures under *Digital Skills and Online Marketing* received the lowest feasibility ratings, averaging **2.8 to 3.0**. These included:

- Comprehensive training in paid online advertising.
  - Integration of advanced digital analytics tools for marketing.
  - Development of e-commerce platforms tailored to rural producers.
- Low feasibility scores in these cases were primarily linked to resource constraints, lack of technical expertise, and limited access to reliable digital infrastructure in rural areas.

### **Greatest discrepancies between benefit and feasibility**

Some policies showed a notable gap between high perceived benefit and low feasibility, marking them as “good ideas” that are challenging to implement without targeted support. The largest gaps were observed in:

- Creation of a national-level marketing platform for small producers (+1.4 gap between benefit and feasibility).
- Providing advanced digital marketing training (+1.2 gap).
- Offering financial incentives for adopting new digital tools (+1.1 gap).

### **Implications for priorities and barriers**

The results suggest that stakeholders see significant value in inclusivity, branding, and consumer education policies, which can be implemented with relatively lower barriers. In contrast, while digital competence measures are recognised as important, their implementation will require substantial investment in training, infrastructure, and ongoing technical support. Bridging the feasibility gap in these areas should be a top priority for policymakers aiming to ensure adoption and long-term impact.

### 3.6.1 Final Observations

The comparative analysis highlights a strong consensus on the benefits of inclusive, value-based marketing policies such as *Gender Equality & Inclusion*, *Ethical Labelling*, and *Narrative Marketing*, which all ranked at the top for perceived benefit. In contrast, several digital competence measures, including *Advanced Marketing Training* and *Digital Ads Training*, scored among the lowest in feasibility, reflecting resource and skills gaps that may hinder their implementation.

The accompanying chart (Figure 6) visually illustrates this contrast, showing the **Top 5** policies by benefit and the **Bottom 5** by feasibility, underlining the priority areas for both immediate action and capacity-building efforts.

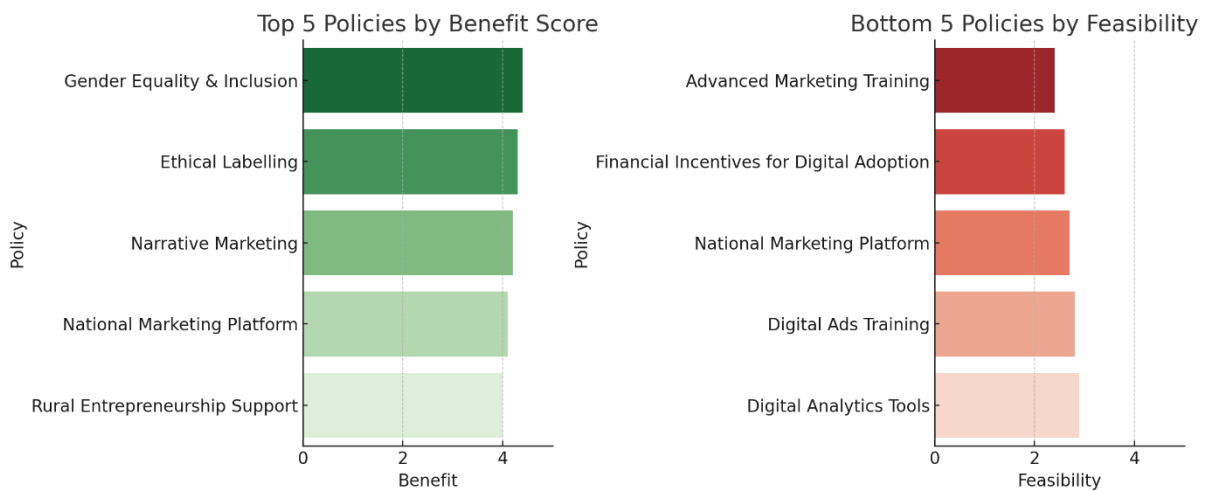


Figure 6 The Top 5 policies by benefit and the Bottom 5 by feasibility

## 3.7 Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of survey results across the six participating countries provides a comprehensive picture of stakeholder priorities, perceived benefits, and implementation challenges for the proposed policy recommendations. The data reveal a consistent pattern of strong support for measures that promote **inclusivity**, **ethical labelling**, and **narrative-based marketing**. These areas scored highly across both benefit and feasibility dimensions, confirming the

sector's appetite for initiatives that build trust, differentiate products, and strengthen the connection between producers and consumers.

By contrast, policies focusing on **digital skills** and **advanced online marketing tools**, while recognised for their potential benefits, were rated significantly lower in feasibility. This trend was particularly evident in rural areas and among older respondents, suggesting that infrastructure gaps, limited technical capacity, and lack of prior training remain substantial barriers. These findings reinforce the need for targeted capacity-building efforts before such measures can be implemented effectively.

Demographic segmentation further underscored these divides:

1. **Younger respondents** demonstrated greater readiness to adopt technology-driven solutions, while **older stakeholders** prioritised structured, value-based approaches.
2. **Women** consistently rated gender equality and inclusion measures more positively, and niche or organic producers placed higher value on branding, storytelling, and consumer education, in contrast to **commodity producers** who emphasised tangible resource and infrastructure support.

The **comparative analysis between countries** revealed notable differences in policy perception, reflecting varying levels of digital readiness, policy maturity, and market structures. While some countries demonstrated strong feasibility ratings for advanced digital measures, others viewed these as challenging to implement, highlighting the need for adaptable strategies that consider local contexts.

These results have been directly used to refine the final policy set under WP4. Policies with high benefit and feasibility scores are prioritised for immediate promotion and piloting, while those with high benefit but low feasibility are earmarked for phased implementation supported by training, infrastructure investment, and capacity development. This evidence-based prioritisation ensures that the final recommendations are both ambitious and realistic, aligning closely with WP4's goal of providing actionable, context-sensitive guidance to strengthen marketing capabilities in the agri-food sector.

## 4 Qualitative Analysis

This chapter will summarize the main findings from the open-ended responses in the stakeholder questionnaires. It aims to capture personal perspectives, perceived gaps, contextual challenges, and practical suggestions related to the 21 policy recommendations.

### 4.1 Introduction to Qualitative Analysis

While quantitative scores provide measurable indicators of awareness, feasibility, and impact, they cannot fully capture the complexity of stakeholders' perceptions and experiences. To address this gap, the survey also included **open-ended questions** designed to elicit detailed, narrative responses from farmers, co-operatives, retailers, and other actors in the agricultural value chain.

#### 4.1.1 Purpose of the Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative component was designed to:

- Uncover deeper motivations behind respondents' choices and ratings.
- Identify practical barriers to policy adoption that may not be visible in numeric scores.
- Highlight enabling factors that support or accelerate the uptake of ethical labelling.
- Capture personal stories and examples that humanise the statistical findings.

By systematically coding and grouping these open-ended responses into themes and sub-themes, the analysis enriches the quantitative data with insights into why certain recommendations are seen as more relevant, achievable, or impactful than others.

#### 4.1.2 Added Value of Qualitative Insights

- **Contextualizing the Numbers:** Qualitative feedback explains *why* some policy recommendations score higher or lower on benefit, feasibility, or impact.



- **Surfacing Unanticipated Issues:** Open responses often reveal challenges or opportunities that were not directly asked in the closed questions — such as local cultural perceptions, language barriers in labelling, or trust in certifying bodies.
- **Supporting Policy Design:** Decision-makers can use these insights to tailor interventions, messaging, and support mechanisms to the lived realities of stakeholders.
- **Building Stakeholder Ownership:** Including direct voices from the field ensures that policy discussions reflect the concerns and aspirations of those directly affected.

#### 4.1.3 Integration with Quantitative Findings

In this report, qualitative findings are not treated as a separate narrative but are integrated into **each thematic section** alongside quantitative results. This approach allows for:

- Evidence triangulation — validating patterns across both data types.
- Richer interpretation of trends and outliers.
- Practical recommendations grounded in both numbers and lived experiences.

## 5 Analysis of Responses by Thematic Area

### 5.1 Thematic Area 1: Ethical Labelling Awareness & Adoption

Ethical labelling refers to the use of product labels that communicate adherence to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, fair trade principles, organic farming, or other sustainability metrics. Across Europe, there is growing consumer interest in these labels — but also confusion due to the proliferation of different schemes and inconsistent definitions.

Globally, we see similar patterns: the EU Ecolabel, Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade, and other schemes coexist, but their visibility and recognition vary dramatically by country. Without consistent messaging, consumer trust in labels remains fragile.

#### 5.1.1 Survey Insights

Producers in all six countries noted that consumers often fail to distinguish between “local,” “organic,” “eco,” and “sustainable.” This lack of understanding undermines the potential market value of certified products and discourages producers from pursuing certification.

Some participants also observed that traceability — the ability to track a product from farm to shelf — is vital for credibility, but these systems are rarely visible to customers. Ministries and industry bodies are seen as key actors in clarifying and promoting label meaning.

#### Voices from the field:

- “Many people do not understand the meaning of certifications.” — Cyprus
- “Some consumers confuse local production with organic production.” — Cyprus
- “Many consumers might not understand what certain labels mean.” — Greece
- “High traceability of products and processes is essential.” — Italy

- “Ethical and educational labelling systems need better communication to the public.” — Türkiye

### **Barriers**

- Lack of a clear national framework for ethical labels
- Overlapping or competing certification schemes
- Consumer scepticism due to “greenwashing”
- Invisibility of traceability systems to the public

### **Opportunities**

- Consolidating label definitions at the national or EU level
- Making traceability interactive and visible (e.g., QR codes)
- Linking labels to broader public education initiatives

#### 5.1.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

##### **For Ministries:**

- Develop and enforce clear definitions for “ethical,” “organic,” and related terms.
- Fund nationwide awareness campaigns using TV, radio, and social media.
- Require large retailers to provide visible, accessible information on labels at point-of-sale.

##### **For Co-operatives:**

- Pool resources to fund certification for members.
- Create co-op-wide ethical branding that supplements individual farm labels.
- Share best practices among members through internal knowledge exchanges.

##### **For Retailers:**

- Train staff to explain labels in plain language to customers.
- Use in-store displays and QR codes to link to detailed sourcing stories.
- Feature ethical products in seasonal promotions and highlight their added value.

#### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Include label meaning in all customer interactions, whether in-person or online.
- Use farm visits, open days, or videos to show the practices behind the label.
- Join certification schemes that have strong market recognition locally.

## **5.2 Thematic Area 2: Communicating Value**

Having a label is only the first step — making customers understand *why* it matters is the real challenge. Marketing studies show that consumers need a clear, simple link between a label and a benefit: better taste, higher quality, healthier, safer, or more environmentally friendly.

Globally, successful ethical labelling campaigns connect the certification to personal values (“Good for your family”) or to causes people care about (“Protecting our bees”).

### **5.2.1 Survey Insights**

Across countries, respondents emphasised that explaining the *added value* of ethical labels is difficult. Producers often default to technical or bureaucratic language that doesn’t resonate with customers.

This communication gap is especially problematic in markets where price sensitivity is high — consumers may perceive labelled products as more expensive without understanding the reasons.

### Voices from the field:

- “It is difficult to explain to customers why ethical or educational labels matter.” — Cyprus
- “The biggest challenge is to explain the added value clearly to the customer.” — Italy
- “Consumers need to be informed about the importance of the label.” — Romania
- “It is hard to explain to people what will change.” — Türkiye
- “Customers don’t understand labels like ‘natural’ or ‘eco’.” — Slovakia

### Barriers

- Technical jargon in label explanations
- Lack of compelling storytelling
- Minimal in-store or online educational content
- Overemphasis on compliance rather than benefits

### Opportunities

- Using relatable stories to explain labels
- Linking label benefits to lifestyle aspirations
- Educating both retail staff and customers simultaneously

### 5.2.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

#### For Ministries:

- Develop public-facing “label literacy” campaigns with relatable messaging.
- Support short videos and infographics explaining label benefits.

#### For Co-operatives:

- Train members in storytelling techniques and customer engagement.
- Produce co-op-wide marketing content members can share.

#### For Retailers:

- Integrate ethical labelling into seasonal marketing campaigns.
- Use shelf signage and packaging inserts to tell the product story.

#### For Farmers/Producers:

- Avoid jargon; use plain language and personal anecdotes.
- Frame the label as a promise, not a technicality.
- Engage customers through social media, explaining practices and values.

### 5.3 Thematic Area 3: Barriers to Labelling

Barriers to ethical labelling adoption are common across agricultural markets, but their impact is particularly severe in small and medium-sized farms. Globally, two categories of barriers are dominant:

- **Financial & Administrative:** Certification costs, inspection fees, and compliance paperwork.
- **Perceptual:** Producers' uncertainty about whether the investment will deliver market returns.

In many rural economies, certification costs represent a significant share of annual net profit. Administrative complexity is another deterrent, especially when requirements change frequently or involve multiple agencies.

#### 5.3.1 Survey Insights

Across the six countries, producers repeatedly flagged bureaucracy and cost as the two major roadblocks. They also highlighted the burden of gathering and organising documentation, the unpredictability of audit timelines, and a lack of clear guidance on how to comply.

### Voices from the field:

- “Paperwork and costs are too high for small producers like us.” — Cyprus
- “My business is small and might not afford the certification costs.” — Greece
- “Complexity, heavy information, and certification costs can be discouraging.” — Italy
- “The main obstacle is bureaucracy and the cost of certification.” — Slovakia
- “Not knowing how to read labels.” — Türkiye

### Barriers Identified:

- **Cost:** Certification fees, annual renewals, and audit expenses.
- **Time:** Hours spent on paperwork, often during peak farming seasons.
- **Knowledge:** Lack of guidance on certification processes and requirements.
- **Perceived ROI:** Doubts about whether labels increase sales or prices enough to justify costs.

### Opportunities:

- Introduce tiered or phased certification options to reduce entry costs.
- Provide online platforms for streamlined documentation and applications.
- Offer one-stop advisory services for farmers starting certification.

### 5.3.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

#### For Ministries:

- Establish subsidy programs for first-time certification applicants.
- Standardise certification procedures across agencies to reduce duplication.
- Create “label helpdesks” in rural areas to support applicants.

#### For Co-operatives:

- Negotiate group certification discounts with certifying bodies.

- Provide a shared administrative team to handle paperwork for members.
- Develop co-op “pre-certification programs” to prepare members for audits.

#### **For Retailers:**

- Support producers with co-branded certification campaigns.
- Offer shelf space guarantees for certified products.

#### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Start with entry-level certifications to build experience and market credibility.
- Keep organised digital records to simplify audit preparation.

## **5.4 Thematic Area 4: Digital Marketing Skills & Gaps**

Digital marketing is no longer optional for competitive agriculture — it’s a necessity. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allow producers to reach consumers directly, bypassing traditional intermediaries. However, adoption rates among farmers vary widely, with significant skill gaps.

Globally, producers who integrate e-commerce, storytelling, and digital advertising see increased brand awareness and stronger customer loyalty. Yet rural connectivity issues, lack of confidence with technology, and absence of training slow adoption.

### **5.4.1 Survey Insights**

Respondents described a strong reliance on personal networks and local markets. While some younger farmers experiment with social media, many lack consistent posting schedules, content planning, or targeted advertising strategies.

#### **Voices from the field:**

- “Digital promotion is not a habit for many farmers here.” — Cyprus
- “Product promotion on social media.” — Türkiye

- “We need to keep up with the times.” — Romania
- “Younger farmers are more active on social media but need better skills.” — Slovakia
- “We rely mostly on personal networks, not online sales.” — Greece

#### **Barriers Identified:**

- Low confidence in using digital tools.
- Limited time for content creation.
- Uncertainty about which platforms are worth investing in.
- Poor understanding of analytics to measure results.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Use digital marketing to educate consumers about labels and values.
- Reach niche markets (e.g., urban eco-conscious consumers).
- Combine digital presence with direct-to-consumer delivery options.

#### 5.4.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

##### **For Ministries:**

- Support digital literacy programs tailored to agriculture.
- Provide subsidies for rural broadband expansion.

##### **For Co-operatives:**

- Hire a shared social media manager for all members.
- Develop template campaigns members can customise.

##### **For Retailers:**

- Collaborate with producers on joint online promotions.
- Feature producers’ stories on retailer websites and apps.

### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Start small with one platform and grow gradually.
- Use authentic photos and videos from daily work.
- Track engagement to refine messaging.

## **5.5 Thematic Area 5: Training Needs**

Training is the most requested form of support in our surveys. Producers want practical, hands-on learning that they can apply immediately. Effective training for ethical labelling should combine marketing skills, certification knowledge, and storytelling — all adapted to the realities of agricultural life.

Internationally, blended learning (combining in-person workshops with online modules) has been successful in reaching rural communities. Peer-to-peer learning is also valuable, as farmers trust other farmers' experiences.

### **5.5.1 Survey Insights**

Participants in all countries asked for short, focused courses that fit into busy schedules. They also stressed the importance of trainers who understand agriculture, not just generic marketing.

### **Voices from the field:**

- “Training should be practical and focused on marketing and sales.” — Cyprus
- “Help from professionals, training, and short courses.” — Romania
- “Support from reliable approval companies, such as TÜV.” — Türkiye
- “Unclear rules and a lack of training.” — Slovakia
- “More work, precision, and transparency are needed — and that means learning new methods.” — Italy

### **Barriers Identified:**

- Training not adapted to agricultural schedules.
- Overly theoretical content.
- Lack of follow-up after initial workshops.

### **Opportunities:**

- Mobile training units visiting rural communities.
- E-learning libraries available on-demand.
- Certification agencies providing direct training modules.

### **5.5.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:**

#### **For Ministries:**

- Fund mobile training vans with expert trainers.
- Partner with universities to create sector-specific courses.

#### **For Co-operatives:**

- Organise quarterly training days with practical demonstrations.
- Encourage members to share lessons learned from certification and marketing.

#### **For Retailers:**

- Offer training to suppliers on consumer engagement and in-store presentation.

#### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Request training that includes role-playing sales scenarios.
- Apply learned techniques immediately to test results.

## 5.6 Thematic Area 6: Inclusion & Diversity

Inclusive agricultural development ensures that all segments of the farming community — regardless of age, gender, or experience level — can access opportunities in ethical labelling, marketing, and value-added production.

Globally, the FAO and EU rural development policies emphasise inclusion as a driver for sector resilience. Diverse participation brings innovation, improves social equity, and increases community buy-in for sustainability programs.

### 5.6.1 Survey Insights

Responses indicated that younger farmers face entry barriers in capital access and certification costs; women in some regions have fewer opportunities for training or leadership; and older producers may be resistant to change, particularly in adopting digital marketing or certification processes.

#### Voices from the field:

- “Younger farmers need special support to join the market.” — Slovakia
- “Women producers often have less access to training opportunities.” — Romania
- “More youth involvement is needed to keep agriculture alive.” — Türkiye
- “Older farmers may resist adopting new labeling practices.” — Cyprus

#### Barriers Identified:

- Gender imbalance in training participation.
- Age-related gaps in technology adoption.
- Limited targeted support for young farmers entering certification.

#### Opportunities:

- Tailored outreach and mentorship programs for women and youth.

- Specialised training for older producers that focuses on tangible benefits.
- Inclusion incentives in rural development grants.

### 5.6.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

#### **For Ministries:**

- Make diversity participation targets part of agricultural policy.
- Provide grants for women- and youth-led farm businesses to pursue certification.

#### **For Co-operatives:**

- Rotate leadership roles to ensure diverse representation.
- Establish mentorship pairings between experienced farmers and newcomers.

#### **For Retailers:**

- Partner with diverse producer groups for marketing campaigns.

#### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Form peer support groups for shared learning.
- Advocate for equal access to all training opportunities.

## 5.7 Thematic Area 7: Storytelling & Brand Building

Storytelling transforms ethical labelling from a technical requirement into an emotional connection with the consumer. Successful agricultural brands use stories about heritage, sustainability, and community to stand out in crowded markets.

In global markets, “origin stories” (e.g., Italian DOC wines, French AOC cheeses) are strong drivers of premium pricing. Ethical labelling adds credibility to these stories by verifying production claims.

### 5.7.1 Survey Insights

Producers rely heavily on word-of-mouth and personal relationships, but these do not scale easily beyond local markets. Many recognise that storytelling can help, but lack the skills or confidence to craft narratives for broader audiences.

#### Voices from the field:

- “We rely on word of mouth; customers know us personally.” — Cyprus
- “Conquer a demanding market segment by promoting product transparency.” — Italy
- “Heritage and tradition are our main selling points.” — Greece
- “Local identity is strong but not always communicated well to outsiders.” — Romania
- “Tell the product’s story simply, so even children understand.” — Türkiye

#### Barriers Identified:

- Lack of structured storytelling skills.
- Underuse of visual media (photos, videos, infographics).
- Stories told inconsistently across different channels.

#### Opportunities:

- Develop standardised brand narratives for co-ops and certified producers.
- Train farmers in basic photography and videography.
- Use storytelling to highlight the human side of certification.

### 5.7.2 Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:

#### For Ministries:

- Fund national “story banks” with high-quality visuals for public use.

#### For Co-operatives:

- Create shared narrative templates for members to adapt.

#### **For Retailers:**

- Integrate origin stories into store signage and online product listings.

#### **For Farmers/Producers:**

- Document production processes through photos and short videos.
- Link personal and community stories to ethical labelling messages.

## 5.8 Sample Quotes

#### **Cyprus:**

- “We mainly sell locally, through markets and direct sales.”
- “Many people do not understand the meaning of certifications.”
- “Some consumers confuse local production with organic production.”
- “Paperwork and costs are too high for small producers like us.”
- “Digital promotion is not a habit for many farmers here.”

#### **Greece:**

- “Many consumers might not understand what certain labels mean.”
- “My business is small and might not afford the certification costs.”
- “We rely mostly on personal networks, not online sales.”
- “Heritage and tradition are our main selling points.”

#### **Italy:**

- “High traceability of products and processes is essential.”
- “The biggest challenge is to explain the added value clearly to the customer.”
- “Complexity, heavy information, and certification costs can be discouraging.”

- “More work, precision, and transparency are needed — and that means learning new methods.”
- “Conquer a demanding market segment by promoting product transparency.”

#### **Romania:**

- “Consumers need to be informed about the importance of the label.”
- “Most people don’t look at or read the contents.”
- “We need to keep up with the times.”
- “Help from professionals, training, and short courses.”
- “Local identity is strong but not always communicated well to outsiders.”

#### **Slovakia:**

- “The main obstacle is bureaucracy and the cost of certification.”
- “Customers don’t understand labels like ‘natural’ or ‘eco’.”
- “Younger farmers need special support to join the market.”
- “Younger farmers are more active on social media but need better skills.”
- “Unclear rules and a lack of training.”

#### **Turkey:**

- “Ethical and educational labelling systems need better communication to the public.”
- “It is hard to explain to people what will change.”
- “Not knowing how to read labels.”
- “Support from reliable approval companies, such as TÜV.”
- “Tell the product’s story simply, so even children understand.”

## 5.9 Key Insights and Observations

The combined analysis of quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback reveals a nuanced picture of the opportunities and challenges for advancing ethical labelling in the agricultural sector across Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Türkiye.

### 1. Strong Perceived Importance of Inclusivity

- Across all countries, questions relating to diversity and inclusion (e.g., Q5.5) consistently scored among the highest.
- Open-ended responses highlight a desire for more **youth engagement** and **women's participation**, coupled with the need for targeted training and financial support.
- Inclusion is framed not only as a fairness issue but also as a strategy for **sector renewal** and **innovation**.

### 2. Moderate Familiarity with Ethical Labelling

- Average awareness scores (e.g., combined Q1.1 average of 3.67) indicate that while many respondents have heard of ethical labels, detailed understanding is uneven.
- Qualitative remarks show confusion between **local origin**, **organic**, and **ethical certification**, suggesting a need for clear, simple public education campaigns.

### 3. Certification Costs and Bureaucracy as Persistent Barriers

- In every country, cost and administrative burden emerged as top deterrents in both numeric ratings and qualitative comments.
- Respondents repeatedly described certification as **“too expensive,” “time-consuming,”** and **“paperwork-heavy,”** especially for small-scale producers.

### 4. Skills Gaps in Marketing and Storytelling

- Digital marketing and brand storytelling received lower feasibility scores in several countries, reflecting gaps in both skill and confidence.

- Open-text responses show that many producers still rely heavily on personal networks and word-of-mouth, which limits reach.

## 5. Trust and Transparency as Market Drivers

- Farmers and co-ops recognise that ethical labels could help build trust, but only if backed by **visible enforcement** and **transparent criteria**.
- Several comments expressed scepticism about whether certification bodies act independently and fairly.

## 6. Variability in Readiness by Country

- Italy and Greece show relatively higher familiarity with certification frameworks, likely due to PDO/PGI heritage.
- Romania, Slovakia, and Türkiye display more uneven awareness and readiness, suggesting the need for **phased rollout strategies** tailored to local conditions.

## 7. Clear Demand for Practical, Accessible Training

- Respondents want **short, hands-on workshops** and **mobile training units** rather than long, theory-heavy sessions.
- There is strong interest in peer-to-peer learning, with farmers preferring to hear directly from other certified producers.

## 6 Country-Specific Highlights

While common themes emerged across all six participating countries, several distinctive patterns and recurring narratives stood out in the qualitative and quantitative data. These country-specific insights can inform tailored policy design and localised support measures.

### Cyprus

- Strong reliance on **local trust networks** — most producers sell directly to known customers via markets or personal connections.
- Confusion between **local** and **organic** labelling was frequently mentioned.
- Older farmers show **low digital engagement**, preferring traditional sales methods.
- Cost of certification is seen as disproportionate to the size of the domestic market.

### Greece

- Heritage and tradition are viewed as **core market strengths**, but these narratives are underutilised in marketing.
- Significant **mistrust in national funding schemes**, with multiple comments referencing bureaucratic inefficiencies and delays.
- Producers doubt that certification will translate into meaningful sales growth unless **consumer education** improves.

### Italy

- Strong emphasis on **traceability** and **dual labelling** (e.g., combining PDO/PGI with ethical certification).
- Frustration with **overlapping certification systems** that complicate compliance.
- Producers express willingness to invest in labelling if **bureaucracy is reduced**.

## Romania

- Frequent references to **generational change** in farm succession — younger farmers are more open to ethical labelling and digital marketing.
- Low baseline awareness of ethical labels among consumers.
- A rural-urban divide is evident, with urban consumers perceived as more label-conscious.

## Slovakia

- Younger farmers are **digitally engaged** but lack advanced skills to market certified products.
- Bureaucracy and certification costs are major deterrents, even for those motivated to participate.
- Confusion over label terminology (e.g., “natural” vs. “eco”) is widespread.

## Turkey

- Ethical labelling is still **emerging**; awareness is low among both producers and consumers.
- Strong interest in **simple, relatable storytelling** — e.g., messages that children can understand.
- Rapidly changing retail sector creates uncertainty but also opportunities for **innovative promotion**.

## 6.1 Limitations

While the qualitative component of this study provides valuable insights into stakeholder perceptions and experiences, several limitations should be acknowledged:

### Incomplete Response Coverage

- Not all survey respondents provided answers to the open-ended questions, leading to uneven sample representation across countries and themes.

- In some cases, specific questions received very few qualitative responses, limiting cross-country comparability.

### **Variability in Detail and Depth**

- Responses ranged from single-word answers to multi-sentence narratives.
- Short or vague responses provided limited insight, whereas more detailed answers offered richer thematic content.

### **Translation and Interpretation Nuance**

- Open-ended responses were translated into English from multiple languages (e.g., Greek, Italian, Romanian, Slovak, Turkish).
- Although care was taken to preserve meaning, some cultural references or linguistic nuances may have been partially lost or adapted for clarity.

### **Potential Response Bias**

- As with all self-reported data, qualitative answers may reflect socially desirable views or selective emphasis on certain issues.
- Farmers and producers already interested in ethical labelling may have been more motivated to respond in detail.

### **Context-Specificity**

- Many observations are shaped by national or local conditions, which may limit the generalisability of certain themes to other contexts.

## 7 Recommendations for Policymakers

### 7.1 Purpose of the Recommendations

The recommendations in this chapter are designed to bridge the gap between stakeholder needs identified in WP4 and policy actions at local, national, and European levels. They respond directly to the realities faced by micro-enterprises in the agri-food sector, as revealed through stakeholder surveys, SWOT analyses, and cross-country qualitative insights.

Educational marketing emerges as a critical enabler for ethical labelling adoption, rural market competitiveness, and consumer engagement. The AgriXplainer project's broader objectives — inclusion, transparency, gender equality, and trust-building — provide the guiding principles for these recommendations.

Micro-enterprises are the backbone of rural economies, sustaining food sovereignty, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. Supporting them through targeted, evidence-based educational marketing strategies is not only a matter of economic competitiveness but also of social and environmental sustainability.

### 7.2 Cross-cutting Recommendations

These strategic recommendations apply across all thematic areas and stakeholder groups:

#### **Promote Co-Design and Participatory Policymaking**

- Embed participatory processes in rural development strategies, ensuring farmer and co-operative voices shape program design from inception.

#### **Integrate Educational Marketing into National Agricultural Strategies**

- Position educational marketing as a recognised tool for improving consumer literacy and market access in agricultural policy frameworks.

### **Provide Stable, Multi-Year Funding Mechanisms**

- Move away from one-off project calls toward predictable funding streams for marketing training, digital tools, and cooperative campaigns.

### **Develop National Policy Helpdesks**

- Establish platforms to explain certification, marketing regulations, and funding opportunities in **clear, accessible language**.

### **Recognise and Reward Ethical, Inclusive Marketing Practices**

- Introduce awards, quality marks, or fiscal incentives for enterprises demonstrating leadership in inclusive, transparent marketing.

## **7.3 Thematic Recommendations**

### **Theme 1: Gender Equality in Educational Marketing**

- Develop **mentoring programs** pairing experienced women entrepreneurs with new entrants.
- Include **gender impact assessments** in all marketing-related grant schemes.

### **Theme 2: Youth Engagement and Succession**

- Fund **youth-led agri-food innovation hubs** offering marketing and business support.
- Provide **start-up vouchers** for marketing campaigns run by new entrants under 35.

### **Theme 3: Digital Competences and Access**

- Establish **rural IT training centres** and seasonal digital bootcamps.
- Provide financial incentives for adopting **educational content creation tools** (e.g., storytelling apps).

#### **Theme 4: Consumer Education and Food Literacy**

- Co-fund **national awareness campaigns** linking ethical labels to everyday consumer choices.
- Develop **school-level programs** teaching food literacy and label recognition.

#### **Theme 5: Certification Accessibility and Trust**

- Simplify certification procedures with **one-stop application portals**.
- Strengthen **independent auditing** to reinforce consumer trust.

#### **Theme 6: Local and Cooperative Marketing Models**

- Support **shared marketing infrastructures** for small-scale producers.
- Encourage **joint branding initiatives** to build recognition beyond local markets.

#### **Theme 7: Environmental and Social Sustainability**

- Introduce **eco-incentives** for marketing products with verifiable low-carbon footprints.
- Fund campaigns that highlight **social value** alongside environmental credentials.

## 7.4 Levels of Implementation

Recommendation Type	Local Governments	National Ministries	EU Institutions	Chambers of Commerce / Training Providers
Co-design processes	✓	✓		✓
National strategies		✓	✓	
Stable funding		✓	✓	
Policy helpdesks	✓	✓		✓
Ethical marketing recognition	✓	✓	✓	
Digital training centres	✓	✓		✓
Consumer campaigns	✓	✓	✓	✓

Implementation should be coordinated to ensure consistency across levels and avoid duplication. Existing rural development programs and EU-funded networks (e.g., EIP-AGRI) can be leveraged as delivery channels.

## 7.5 Implementation Considerations

- **Outreach & Communication:** Ensure plain-language materials and visual formats for non-digital stakeholders.
- **Local Multipliers:** Engage co-operatives, producer associations, and rural NGOs to cascade training and information.
- **Monitoring:** Set up measurable indicators for uptake and market impact.
- **Simplification:** Minimise administrative burden, especially for micro-enterprises without dedicated compliance staff.

## 7.6 Summary for Policymakers

- Embed co-design in rural policymaking.
- Integrate educational marketing into agricultural strategies.
- Provide stable, multi-year funding for marketing capacity.
- Establish national helpdesks for policy guidance.
- Recognise and reward ethical, inclusive marketing leaders.
- Invest in rural digital training and tools.
- Run national campaigns to boost food literacy and trust in labels.

## 8 Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the key findings and outcomes of WP4 and reflects on their significance for future policy development and academic inquiry. It also outlines open questions and knowledge gaps that may be addressed in future research or follow-up initiatives.

### 8.1 General Conclusions

**Work Package 4 (WP4)** of the AgriXplainer project set out to capture, compare, and interpret stakeholder perspectives on ethical labelling across six diverse agricultural contexts: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Türkiye. Its primary objectives were to:

1. Assess awareness, perceived benefits, and feasibility of ethical labelling among producers, co-operatives, and other agri-food stakeholders.
2. Identify barriers and enabling factors for wider adoption of certification schemes.
3. Translate these findings into actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations.

Through a **mixed-method approach** — combining quantitative scoring of 21 specific policy recommendations with open-ended, qualitative input — WP4 not only fulfilled these objectives but added layers of depth that strengthen the policy relevance of the work.

#### 8.1.1 Value of Participatory Methods and Cross-Country Learning

WP4 demonstrated the power of **participatory research** in agricultural policy design. By engaging directly with farmers, co-operatives, and local actors in their own languages, the process ensured that the voices of those most affected were reflected in the analysis. Cross-country comparisons allowed stakeholders and policymakers to see patterns, contrasts, and transferable practices, creating a foundation for **shared learning** rather than isolated national strategies.

### 8.1.2 Responsiveness of the 21 Policy Recommendations

The recommendations emerging from WP4 are grounded in lived realities, reflecting the **real-world constraints and opportunities** identified by respondents. These range from **reducing certification costs** and **simplifying bureaucracy** to **investing in label literacy campaigns, expanding digital marketing skills, and strengthening trust in certifying bodies**. The balance between short-term practical measures and longer-term systemic change ensures that the recommendations are both **immediately actionable** and **strategically sustainable**.

### 8.1.3 Reinforcing Key Themes

Across all countries and respondent groups, five recurring themes emerged as decisive for the future of ethical labelling:

- **Education:** Clear, accessible communication about what labels mean and why they matter.
- **Transparency:** Open processes, public databases of certified producers, and visible enforcement.
- **Inclusion:** Opportunities for women, youth, and smaller-scale producers to participate fully.
- **Digital Access:** Training and infrastructure that enable producers to market effectively online.
- **Trust:** Building and maintaining credibility in certification systems.

By anchoring its analysis in these themes, WP4 contributes directly to **evidence-based policy making** within the AgriXplainer project and beyond. The outcomes can inform national agricultural strategies, EU rural development programs, and retailer–producer partnerships, ensuring that ethical labelling becomes both a **market advantage** and a **tool for social and environmental sustainability**.

## 9 Lessons Learned

The implementation of WP4 within the AgriXplainer project generated valuable insights not only about the **substantive policy content** surrounding ethical labelling but also about the **research process itself**. Both dimensions offer important takeaways for future policy design and project implementation.

### 1. Participatory Approaches Enhance Policy Relevance

Engaging farmers, co-operatives, and other stakeholders directly — in their own languages and through both structured and open-ended formats — significantly improved the **relevance and credibility** of the policy recommendations. This participatory approach ensured that the priorities identified reflected real-world conditions rather than purely top-down assumptions.

### 2. Cross-Country Comparison Strengthens the Evidence Base

By collecting comparable data from six countries, WP4 made it possible to identify **shared challenges** (e.g., cost and bureaucracy) as well as **context-specific opportunities** (e.g., Italy's PDO/PGI heritage, Romania's generational transitions). This comparative perspective supports both national adaptation and EU-level harmonisation.

### 3. Some Policy Areas Require Stronger Systemic Support

The analysis revealed that topics such as **digitalisation** and **gender inclusion** enjoy strong rhetorical support but are often **under-resourced** in practice. This gap suggests a need for **integrated, long-term programs** that go beyond training sessions to include infrastructure investment, mentoring, and targeted funding streams.

### 4. Clear Demand for Simplified, Locally Adaptable Marketing Support



Producers consistently asked for **marketing tools and guidance** that are easy to implement, culturally relevant, and scalable for different business sizes. Ready-to-use templates, storytelling frameworks, and shared co-operative resources could bridge this gap efficiently.

## 5. Coordination is Key to Effective Implementation

No single actor — whether policymaker, educator, or producer — can address the ethical labelling challenge alone. The findings underscore the need for **coordinated action** among government agencies, certification bodies, producer organisations, and retail partners to ensure coherent messaging, aligned incentives, and mutual accountability.

## 10 Suggestions for Further Research

While WP4 provides a solid evidence base for policy development and practical interventions, it also revealed **gaps and open questions** that merit targeted investigation in future research and programming. Addressing these gaps would not only strengthen the implementation of ethical labelling strategies but also enhance their long-term impact on agricultural competitiveness and rural development.

### 1. Longitudinal Tracking of Policy Implementation and Impact

Future studies should monitor the **rollout and real-world effects** of the 21 policy recommendations over several years. This would allow for adaptive policy management, identifying which measures generate measurable changes in adoption rates, market access, and producer incomes.

### 2. Deeper Country-Specific Studies on Educational Marketing Best Practices

While WP4 identified the importance of consumer education, more **in-depth national studies** could map the most effective **messaging channels, narratives, and tools** for different cultural and market contexts.

### 3. Behavioral Drivers of Consumer Trust in Small-Scale Producers

Ethical labelling is only one factor influencing purchasing decisions. Research into **trust-building mechanisms** — such as transparency, community engagement, or storytelling — could help producers better position themselves with ethically conscious consumers.

### 4. Exploration of Co-Marketing Strategies Among Micro-Enterprises

Small producers often lack marketing capacity individually, but **joint branding and promotional efforts** could create economies of scale and increase visibility. Comparative research on successful co-marketing models could guide practical implementation.



## 5. Impact of Educational Marketing on Food Literacy and Consumer Behavior in Rural Areas

While urban consumers may already engage with ethical labelling concepts, rural populations often have different purchasing patterns. Measuring the **effectiveness of targeted educational campaigns** on food literacy and actual buying behavior in rural settings would fill a critical knowledge gap.

## 11 Final Remarks

The findings of WP4 underscore a central truth: **agri-food micro-businesses are not peripheral players, but vital architects of the food systems of tomorrow.** Their capacity to produce high-quality, ethically labelled products depends not only on their individual commitment, but also on the **enabling environment** shaped by policy, infrastructure, and market conditions.

Policymakers at both national and EU levels are called upon to **recognise and support these micro-enterprises** as engines of rural vitality, guardians of biodiversity, and transmitters of cultural heritage. Support must go beyond financial subsidies to include **simplified administrative processes, affordable certification pathways, and accessible, practical training.**

A sustainable food system is built on **three interdependent pillars:**

1. **Good products** — produced ethically, transparently, and with care for the environment.
2. **Informed consumers** — able to understand and value ethical labels and the stories behind them.
3. **Empowered producers** — equipped with the tools, networks, and confidence to reach their markets effectively.

The AgriXplainer project has shown that these pillars are achievable when stakeholders work together across borders, sectors, and scales. This report reflects the voices of hundreds of farmers, co-operatives, and agri-food professionals who contributed their **insights, time, and lived experience** to shape actionable recommendations.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants and collaborators. The next step is clear: **turn these recommendations into reality** — so that ethical labelling moves from policy



discussions into the everyday practices of farms, markets, and kitchens across Europe and beyond.

# 12 Annexes

## 12.1 Final Questionnaire for AgriXplainer Survey

**Focus:** *Educational Marketing in Agri-Food Micro-Enterprises*

**Format:** Likert scale (1–5), multiple choice, and open-ended

**Target group:** Farmers, micro-entrepreneurs, advisors, producers, rural educators

Dear respondent,

This questionnaire is part of the European project **AgriXplainer**, which focuses on supporting marketing and communication among small agricultural and food businesses in rural areas.

Our goal is to better understand your **needs, experiences, and views** in the areas of **digital skills, visual presentation, product labelling, social media, and consumer education**. Your answers will help us develop specific recommendations to improve support measures at the national and EU level.

- The questionnaire is anonymous and will take approximately **10–15 minutes** to complete.
- Please answer honestly – there are no right or wrong answers.
- If you are unsure about a question, feel free to skip it.

Thank you for your participation and for contributing to a better rural future!

### 1. Ethical and Educational Labelling

Goal: Understand how farmers use labels and explain their meaning to customers.

- **Q1.1: How familiar are you with existing ethical labels (e.g., Organic, Fair Trade, Local Product)?**  
[1–5 Likert scale]
- **Q1.2: Do you currently use any labels or certifications to promote your products?**  
 Yes  No  Planning to
- **Q1.3: How often do you explain the meaning of such labels to your customers (e.g., on social media, packaging, in person)?**  
 Never  Occasionally  Regularly



- **Q1.4: Would you participate in training on how to communicate values like sustainability, fairness, or transparency?**  
 Definitely yes  Probably  No
- **Q1.5: What challenges do you see in using ethical or educational labelling? (open)**
- **Q1.6: What would help you better explain your product's value to customers? (open)**

## 2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing

Goal: Map use of social media, websites, QR codes, e-commerce.

- **Q2.1: How confident are you in using social media for business (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)?**  
[1–5 Likert scale]
- **Q2.2: Do you have a website or online shop?**  
 Yes  No  Only social media
- **Q2.3: Have you ever used paid ads (e.g., boosting a post on Facebook)?**  
 Yes  No  I don't know how
- **Q2.4: Which digital tools do you use regularly?**  
 Canva  Mailchimp  Google Forms  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Q2.5: What's the biggest barrier to using more digital tools? (open)**
- **Q2.6: What type of digital support or training would be most helpful for your business? (open)**

## 3. Education and Training Opportunities

Goal: Evaluate formal and informal training availability.

- **Q3.1: Have you received any training in marketing, communication, or digital tools in the last 3 years?**  
 Yes  No
- **Q3.2: How would you prefer to learn about marketing?**  
 Online course  In-person training  Peer mentoring  Printed manual   
] Other: \_\_\_\_\_



- **Q3.3: Which topics should be covered in future trainings? (*multiple choice + open*)**  
 Branding  Visual content  Social media  SEO  Storytelling   
Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Q3.4: What are the most important marketing skills missing among farmers in your region? (*open*)**
- **Q3.5: Would you attend a marketing bootcamp if it were free and nearby?**  
 Definitely yes  Probably  No

## 4. Financial Access and Toolkits

Goal: Assess access to software, design tools, and packaging.

- **Q4.1: Do you currently invest in any marketing tools or services (e.g., logo design, photo editing, printing)?**  
 Yes  No
- **Q4.2: Would financial support (e.g., voucher or micro-grant) help you create or improve your visual identity?**  
 Definitely yes  Probably  Not needed
- **Q4.3: What tools would you like to try but can't afford or access? (*open*)**
- **Q4.4: Would you prefer ready-made templates or custom design support?**  
 Templates  Personal support  Not sure
- **Q4.5: If you received €500 for marketing, what would you use it for? (*open*)**

## 5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion

Goal: Understand views on inclusive support.

- **Q5.1: Do you believe women and young people face additional barriers in rural entrepreneurship?**  
 Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree
- **Q5.2: Have you seen or participated in any programs specifically supporting women, youth, or vulnerable groups?**  
 Yes  No



- **Q5.3: What would help more young people and women get involved in agri-food marketing?** (*open*)
- **Q5.4: Would you be interested in mentoring someone or being mentored?**  
 Yes, mentor  Yes, mentee  No
- **Q5.5: How important is it to promote diversity and inclusion in the agri-food sector?**  
[1–5 Likert scale]

## 6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling

Goal: Explore narrative-based marketing, transparency, and customer connection.

- **Q6.1: Do you share your personal story or values (e.g., why you farm, how you produce) with your customers?**  
 Frequently  Sometimes  Never
- **Q6.2: Which platforms do you use to share your story?**  
 Social media  Markets/events  Packaging  Website  Other:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Q6.3: Would you like support in developing your “brand story”?**  
 Yes  No  Not sure
- **Q6.4: What makes you trust a food producer as a consumer?** (*open*)
- **Q6.5: What advice would you give to someone who wants to market their farm better?** (*open*)

## 7. Demographic Questions (mandatory for analysis)

- **Region (county):** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Age:**  <30  30–50  >50
- **Gender:**  Male  Female  Prefer not to say
- **Education:**  Primary  Secondary  Tertiary  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Type of production:**  
 Crops  Livestock  Processing  Mixed  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Business size:**  Solo/family  2–10 employees  More than 10



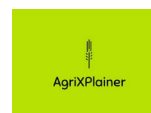
- **Do you sell your products:**
  - Locally (e.g., markets, direct sales)
  - Regionally/nationally
  - Online
  - Export

## 12.2 Average Score per Question with Themes

QC	Theme	QuestionText	Average Score
Q1.1	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	How familiar are you with existing ethical labels (e.g., Organic, Fair Trade, Local Product)?	3.491071428571428
Q1.2	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	Do you currently use any labels or certifications to promote your products?	
Q1.3	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	How often do you explain the meaning of such labels to your customers (e.g., on social media, packaging, in person)?	
Q1.4	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	Would you participate in training on how to communicate values like sustainability, fairness, or transparency?	
Q1.5	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	What challenges do you see in using ethical or educational labelling? (open)	
Q1.6	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	What would help you better explain your product's value to customers? (open)	
Q2.1	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	How confident are you in using social media for business (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)?	3.198198198198198
Q2.2	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	Do you have a website or online shop?	
Q2.3	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	Have you ever used paid ads (e.g., boosting a post on Facebook)?	
Q2.4	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	Which digital tools do you use regularly?	
Q2.5	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	What's the biggest barrier to using more digital tools? (open)	
Q2.6	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	What type of digital support or training would be most helpful for your business? (open)	
Q3.1	3. Education and Training	Have you received any training in marketing, communication, or	



QC	Theme	QuestionText	Average Score
	Opportunities	digital tools in the last 3 years?	
Q3.2	3. Education and Training Opportunities	How would you prefer to learn about marketing?	
Q3.3	3. Education and Training Opportunities	Which topics should be covered in future trainings? (multiple choice + open)	
Q3.4	3. Education and Training Opportunities	What are the most important marketing skills missing among farmers in your region? (open)	
Q3.5	3. Education and Training Opportunities	Would you attend a marketing bootcamp if it were free and nearby?	
Q4.1	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Do you currently invest in any marketing tools or services (e.g., logo design, photo editing, printing)?	
Q4.2	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Would financial support (e.g., voucher or micro-grant) help you create or improve your visual identity?	
Q4.3	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	What tools would you like to try but can't afford or access? (open)	
Q4.4	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Would you prefer ready-made templates or custom design support?	
Q4.5	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	If you received €500 for marketing, what would you use it for? (open)	
Q5.1	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Do you believe women and young people face additional barriers in rural entrepreneurship?	
Q5.2	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Have you seen or participated in any programs specifically supporting women, youth, or vulnerable groups?	
Q5.3	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	What would help more young people and women get involved in agri-food marketing? (open)	
Q5.4	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Would you be interested in mentoring someone or being mentored?	



QC	Theme	QuestionText	Average Score
Q5.5	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	How important is it to promote diversity and inclusion in the agri-food sector?	4.423423423423423
Q6.1	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Do you share your personal story or values (e.g., why you farm, how you produce) with your customers?	
Q6.2	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Which platforms do you use to share your story?	
Q6.3	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Would you like support in developing your “brand story”?	
Q6.4	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	What makes you trust a food producer as a consumer? (open)	
Q6.5	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	What advice would you give to someone who wants to market their farm better? (open)	

## 12.3 Country Policy Score Matrix

QC	CY	GR	IT	RO	SK	TR
Q1.1		3.1	4.33		3.95	2.74
Q1.2						
Q1.3						
Q1.4						
Q1.5						
Q1.6						
Q2.1		2.63	3.3		3.8	3.26
Q2.2						
Q2.3						
Q2.4						
Q2.5						
Q2.6						
Q3.1						
Q3.2						
Q3.3						
Q3.4						
Q3.5						
Q4.1						
Q4.2						
Q4.3						
Q4.4						
Q4.5						
Q5.1						
Q5.2						
Q5.3						
Q5.4						



QC	CY	GR	IT	RO	SK	TR
Q5.5		4.37	4.48		4.19	4.58
Q6.1						
Q6.2						
Q6.3						
Q6.4						
Q6.5						

## 12.4 Qualitative Summary per Question

QC	Theme	Question Text	Type	Summary of most frequent answers	Representative Quotes
Q1.2	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	Do you currently use any labels or certifications to promote your products?	Categorical	No (55); Yes (46); Planning to (9)	
Q1.3	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	How often do you explain the meaning of such labels to your customers (e.g., on social media, packaging, in person)?	Categorical	Occasionally (54); Regularly (34); Never (17)	
Q1.4	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	Would you participate in training on how to communicate values like sustainability, fairness, or transparency?	Categorical	Definitely yes (67); Probably (37); No (5)	
Q1.5	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	What challenges do you see in using ethical or educational labelling? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: labels (16), consumers (12), ethical (10), might (10), small (9)	Yes   Time   Prejudice
Q1.6	1. Ethical and Educational Labelling	What would help you better explain your product's value to customers? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: product (13), value (7), advertising (6), media (6), clear (6)	Label   Trust   Školenia
Q2.2	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	Do you have a website or online shop?	Categorical	No (41); Yes (34); Only social media (27)	
Q2.3	2. Digital Skills and Online	Have you ever used paid ads	Categorical	No (65); Yes (44); I don't	

QC	Theme	Question Text	Type	Summary of most frequent answers	Representative Quotes
	Marketing	(e.g., boosting a post on Facebook)?		know how (2)	
Q2.4	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	Which digital tools do you use regularly?	Categorical	Google Forms (26); Canva (19); Facebook (14); Instagram (7); Canva, Google Forms (3)	
Q2.5	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	What's the biggest barrier to using more digital tools? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: digital (23), time (17), lack (16), tools (12), knowledge (8)	Time   Time   Time
Q2.6	2. Digital Skills and Online Marketing	What type of digital support or training would be most helpful for your business? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: digital (13), training (13), social (12), marketing (12), online (12)	Tagging   Instagram   Social media
Q3.1	3. Education and Training Opportunities	Have you received any training in marketing, communication, or digital tools in the last 3 years?	Categorical	No (67); Yes (44)	
Q3.2	3. Education and Training Opportunities	How would you prefer to learn about marketing?	Categorical	Online course (42); In-person training (48); Printed manual (8); Peer mentoring (8)	
Q3.3	3. Education and Training Opportunities	Which topics should be covered in future trainings? (multiple choice + open)	Categorical	Branding (16); Social media (13); Storytelling (12); Branding, Visual content, Social media, SEO,	

QC	Theme	Question Text	Type	Summary of most frequent answers	Representative Quotes
				Storytelling (12); Branding, Visual content, Social media (9)	
Q3.4	3. Education and Training Opportunities	What are the most important marketing skills missing among farmers in your region? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: know (9), their (9), skills (9), online (8), they (7)	Planning   Branding   HARD SKILLS
Q3.5	3. Education and Training Opportunities	Would you attend a marketing bootcamp if it were free and nearby?	Categorical	Yes (41); yes (10); Maybe (4); No (3); Definitely yes (2)	
Q4.1	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Do you currently invest in any marketing tools or services (e.g., logo design, photo editing, printing)?	Categorical	No (63); Yes (49)	
Q4.2	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Would financial support (e.g., voucher or micro-grant) help you create or improve your visual identity?	Categorical	Definitely yes (45); Probably (40); Definitely yes (17)	
Q4.3	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	What tools would you like to try but can't afford or access? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: canva (13), software (9), social (8), media (8), professional (8)	CRM   Nono   Grant
Q4.4	4. Financial Access and Toolkits	Would you prefer ready-made templates or custom design support?	Categorical	Personal support (53); Templates (37); Not sure (17)	
Q4.5	4. Financial Access and	If you received €500 for	OpenText	Top keywords: media (9),	No need   Softvér.



QC	Theme	Question Text	Type	Summary of most frequent answers	Representative Quotes
	Toolkits	marketing, what would you use it for? (open)		promotion (8), social (8), local (8), logo (6)	Branding
Q5.1	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Do you believe women and young people face additional barriers in rural entrepreneurship?	Categorical	Agree (42); Neutral (21); Strongly agree (28)	
Q5.2	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Have you seen or participated in any programs specifically supporting women, youth, or vulnerable groups?	Categorical	No (77); Yes (35)	
Q5.3	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	What would help more young people and women get involved in agri-food marketing? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: women (12), support (11), marketing (10), training (10), food (9)	Funding   Supports   Training
Q5.4	5. Gender, Youth, and Inclusion	Would you be interested in mentoring someone or being mentored?	Categorical	Yes, mentee (47); No (32); Yes, mentor (23)	
Q6.1	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Do you share your personal story or values (e.g., why you farm, how you produce) with your customers?	Categorical	Sometimes (45); Frequently (46); Never (12); Occasionally (6)	
Q6.2	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Which platforms do you use to share your story?	Categorical	Social media (43); Markets/events (18); Social media, Markets/events	



QC	Theme	Question Text	Type	Summary of most frequent answers	Representative Quotes
				(6); Face to face contact (4)	
Q6.3	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	Would you like support in developing your “brand story”?	Categorical	Yes (87); Not sure (13); No (8)	
Q6.4	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	What makes you trust a food producer as a consumer? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: product (12), their (12), quality (11), story (7), knowing (6)	Trust   Seeing   Knowing
Q6.5	6. Visibility, Trust, and Storytelling	What advice would you give to someone who wants to market their farm better? (open)	OpenText	Top keywords: farm (7), media (6), marketing (5), product (5), products (5)	Constancy   I don't know   Believe in it