SPRINT SUCCESS STORIES

ACHIEVING INTEGRATED VITICULTURE IN PORTUGAL

API-Bairrada was established in 1999 to help farmers in the Bairrada region, especially those involved in viticulture, by providing technical support. Their **main goal is to assist farmers when adapting to industry changes, meeting European Commission requirements, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices**. API-Bairrada's activities include integrated protection and production, focusing on reducing pesticide use. They offer localised advice and ongoing technical assistance to ensure farmers use pesticides judiciously. This initiative is vital for connecting farmers with agrochemical companies, facilitating knowledge exchange to keep up with agricultural advancements.

THE CHALLENGE

1. Growing knowledge gaps among farmers in a rapidly advancing technical and technological landscape;
2. A need to reduce synthetic pesticide reliance, in line with evolving environmental standards and certifications.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Assist farmers in adapting to industry changes
- Promote sustainable agricultural practices, including through minimising pesticide use

KEY CONSTRAINTS

- API-Bairrada faced financial constraints amid ongoing economic challenges but has shown resilience by increasing its number of associates.
- Around 60% of members are over 50 years old; an estimated 1,000 hectares of vineyards may disappear in the next decade due to the aging farmer population.
- Overcoming resistance to transformative changes, particularly regarding new EU requirements, is crucial for the future of viticulture in the region.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

API-Bairrada provides farmers with crucial technical support and guidance, addressing the evolving challenges in the industry. Experts assist farmers in navigating integrated production methods, ensuring compliance with sustainability standards.

WORKSHOPS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMES

API-Bairrada hosts workshops and educational programmes primarily on viticulture, covering ways of reducing pesticide use, plant protection and machinery safety.

CERTIFICATION ASSISTANCE

The association supports members in obtaining certifications for integrated production and organic agriculture, conducting training sessions to ensure compliance with mandatory national and European certification requirements.

COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY

The association collaborates with agrochemical companies to provide its members with access to the latest advancements in terms of pesticides substitutes, and sustainable farming practices.

PROXIMITY-BASED SUPPORT

Frequent engagement has been key. Field technicians issue alerts to farmers, advising on ways of minimising pesticide applications, for example by specifying dosage and recommended active substances.

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RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

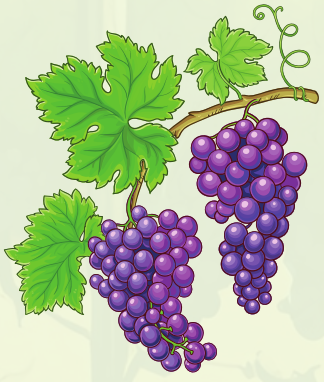
- API-Bairrada has seen significant growth with approximately 120 partners since its establishment, despite not actively recruiting new members.
- The association's success is attributed to its effectiveness in meeting farmers' needs in the Bairrada region, as evidenced by farmers voluntarily seeking its support.
- Continuous on-site assistance with independent field technicians for timely guidance on pesticide application including precise recommendations on dosage and active substances

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Proactive engagement** is key
2. **Adaptability and flexibility** are crucial
3. **Collaboration** enhances knowledge exchange
4. Attracting **large companies** can enhance knowledge exchange
5. A need to provide **bespoke guidance** based on farmers' life stage
6. **Financial resilience** is vital for ensuring initiatives have longevity
7. **Training and certification support** can promote compliance with regulations
8. Advice should be **localised and timely**
9. **Targeted communication efforts** which account for individual farmer concerns are importance when persuading uptake of new practices
10. Support and guidance should be **ongoing**, particularly during uncertain times.

TRANSFERABILITY

The comprehensive approach undertaken by API-Bairrada in supporting farmers through advisory and technical actions presents a transferable model that can be adapted and implemented in diverse wine-producing regions. The success of API-Bairrada's initiatives can serve as a blueprint for promoting sustainable agriculture and reducing reliance on pesticides and conventional methods in other areas.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Read more about API Bairrada here: https://agc.sg.mai.gov.pt/details?id=144659

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