

Two ResAlliance showrooms of best practices in Greece

Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIMITRA
Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems (IMFE)

As part of the European Union project **ResAlliance** ("Knowledge Alliance for Landscape Resilience for Agriculture and Forestry in the Mediterranean Basin"), two major public demonstration events (showrooms) were held in Greece in May and June 2025, aiming to share and promote good practices for enhancing the climate resilience of rural and forest landscapes.

The first event took place in Ancient Olympia, Peloponnese, on May 21, and the second in Athens on June 11. Both events were organized by **the Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems (IMFE) of the Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIMITRA**, with support from the **General Secretariat of Forests of the Ministry of Environment (YPEN)**, and the **Institute of Olive Tree, Subtropical Plants and Vine (IELYA)**.

The first event was held at the premises of the **International Olympic Academy (IOA)**. The IOA, as well as the **Forest Policy Implementation Inspectorate for Peloponnese-Western Greece-Ionian of YPEN**, also offered their support. The event gathered over 120 participants in person and online, including representatives from public authorities, forest and agricultural professionals, local producers, and researchers. Opening remarks were made by senior representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Mr. Evangelos Gkountoufas, Head of the General Directorate of Forests and Forest Environment, Mr. Nikitas Mazis, Head of the Forest Policy Implementation Inspectorate and the Director of IMFE Dr. Eirini Pittara.



The Head of the General Directorate of Forests and Forest Environment Mr. Evangelos Gountoufas addresses the audience



Commemorative photo at the IOA premises.

Among the featured speakers, Dr. Evangelia Avramidou, Principal Researcher at IMFE and ResAlliance Ambassador for the LandLabs initiative, presented the project's goals and highlighted the availability of over 130 "best practice" factsheets covering successful examples from across the Mediterranean region that can help mitigate climate change effects. Dr. Georgios Lyrintzis gave a compelling retrospective on the ecological restoration of Ancient Olympia's landscape after the 2007 wildfires, using photographic comparisons. Dr. Panagiotis Lattas, Forest Director of Pyrgos, discussed the latest wildfire prevention activities in the region. Ms. Ioanna Michail of IELYA focused on boosting agricultural system resilience to environmental stress, while Ms. Vicky Inglezou from the NILEAS Producer Group showcased innovative olive grove practices in Messinia. Dr. Stavros Alexandris, former professor at the Agricultural University of Athens, shared data on excessive water use in agriculture and promoted the adoption of drone technology (UAVs) for precision irrigation. Local beekeeper Ms. Kleoniki Panagopoulou presented her combined beekeeping and agro-tourism model, highlighting the difficulties faced by small-scale producers. Mr. Dionysios Brintzikis, a local winemaker, elaborated on smart viticulture and risk adaptation strategies. Dr. Evangelia Korakaki introduced a pilot project on prescribed burning in Chios, conducted by IMFE in collaboration with WWF Greece, as a vegetation management strategy for reducing wildfire risk. Dr. Gavriil Xanthopoulos concluded the session with a presentation on a community-led wildfire prevention initiative in Kythera, which proved to be both effective and cost-efficient. The day ended with a field visit to restoration sites, vineyards, and rural businesses demonstrating sustainable and climate-smart practices.



Presentation of the restoration works in Ancient Olympia by Dr. P. Lattas and Dr. G. Lyrintzis.



in front of the site of the monument and the grove dedicated to Pierre de Coubertin . The site was completely destroyed by fire on 26 August 2007.



Opening of the event in Athens by Dr. Irini Pittara, Director of IMFE

The **Athens event**, held at IMFE's conference hall, drew over 130 participants and served as the national dissemination meeting of ResAlliance. It was opened with addresses by Mr. Stavros Tsilikounas, Deputy Director of Forests at the Ministry of Environment; Dr. Irini Pittara, Director of IMFE; and Mr. Nikolaos Kakavas, President of the Panhellenic Federation of Public Sector Agronomists. Mr. Tsilikounas presented the Ministry's accomplishments over the past decade, including progress on forest mapping, the modernization of forest services, and the implementation of national programs such as ANTINERO and AQUA MONTIS. He also detailed the ongoing National Reforestation Program and the development of modern nurseries for high-quality plant material.



The participants at IMFE's conference hall, with the ResAlliance factsheets posted on the walls.

Following that, Dr. Evangelia Avramidou introduced ResAlliance and highlighted its impressive results, encouraging attendees to explore and vote on all the factsheets produced by the project, that were posted on the walls of the conference hall. She mentioned that in response to an open call for submission of innovative practices, there are already 27 online submissions

from around the Mediterranean and that participants still have time, until the end of June, to compete for the project's "Best Practice" award. She emphasized the value of the LandNet that has been created by ResAlliance, with more than 1800 registered members so far, which offers networking opportunities, open courses, and an online forum for community engagement.

Dr. Gavriil Xanthopoulos once again presented the Kythera wildfire prevention case study, while Dr. Miltiadis Athanasiou explained the principles and benefits of prescribed burning, stressing that this practice is not a cure-all and must be carefully executed under expert supervision. He discussed a recent pilot project in Chios that tested the operational viability of such techniques in various forest ecosystems, with promising results.

Dr. Evangelia Daskalakou provided a detailed overview of post-fire forest regeneration in Mount Parnitha, with a focus on monitoring natural regeneration processes, seedling survival, and grazing impacts following the devastating 2007 fire. Dr. Georgios Lyrintzis focused on flood risk mitigation, emphasizing the value of small, smart mountain structures to reduce erosion and sediment transport during extreme weather events. Dr. Stavros Alexandris discussed the issue of meteorological measurement errors due to non-standard equipment placement, explaining how such inaccuracies impact both climate modeling and practical irrigation planning.

Antonis Kavvadias, a collaborator of IMFE, presented a modeling study on small dam locations in Messinia, conducted using free GIS and hydraulic tools (HEC-RAS and QGIS), in response to the concerns of the local NILEAS producer group. The proposed micro-dams aim to improve local water availability and reduce fire risk at a low cost.

Dr. Sofia Gounari highlighted the crucial ecological role of bees and the importance of supporting beekeeping as a resilience-enhancing practice in Mediterranean agroforestry systems. She called for improvements in national legislation to better support this sector. Finally, Dr. Georgios Koumpouris of IELYA discussed the preservation of Greek olive biodiversity, warning against the widespread replacement of traditional varieties by monocultures. He shared research-based strategies to maintain ecosystem diversity and sustainability in olive cultivation, including carbon recycling, cover cropping, and minimal soil disturbance.

Both events concluded with engaging discussions and opportunities for attendees to network, share insights, and explore practical applications. Presentation materials, along with video recordings, will soon be available online on IMFE's ResAlliance webpage (in Greek) (<https://www.fria.gr/resalliance.html>). Stakeholders are encouraged to further explore the project's online resources at the official project site www.resalliance.eu, where they can join the LandNet, examine all the factsheets, submit their own good practices, and benefit from the available educational material.