



SMALLDERS PROJECT

SMART MODELS FOR AGRIFOOD LOCAL VALUE CHAIN BASED ON DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR ENABLING COVID-19 RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

D9.3

REPORT ON DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES (FIRST RELEASE)



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for **E**nabling Covid-19 **R**esilience and **S**ustainability

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University of Parma, Italy (UNIPR)

University of Extremadura, Spain (UEX)

IMT Mines Ales, France (LSR)

Faculty of Science of Tunis, Tunisia (LAPER)

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Contributors: Sergio Rubio (UEX), José M. García-Gallego (UEX), Antonio Chamorro (UEX), Francisco J. Miranda (UEX), Teresa Miranda (UEX), Víctor Valero (UEX), Giuseppe Vignali (UNIPR), Gregory Zacharewicz (LSR), Lilia Sidhom (LAPER), Francesco Longo (UNICAL).

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Executive summary

This deliverable D9.3 is aimed at describing the dissemination activities carried out by the members of the consortium in the first half of the project. According to the dissemination strategy of the SMALLDERS project, all the partners are expected to be involved in diffusion and exploitation activities by developing different kind of activities for different type of stakeholders.

Such activities have been defined to achieve the objectives of the SMALLDERS dissemination strategy by 1) creating new relationships with potential users of the platform; 2) designing a project identity; 3) participating in scientific events; and 4) contributing to create knowledge through publication of articles and papers in referenced journals in the areas of interest of the project.

This report includes a description of the activities carried out by the consortium in the different areas of diffusion of the project and analyses the impact of the contributions produced so far. According to these results, the project SMALLDERS seems to be in a good position for achieving their dissemination objectives, thanks to the effort of the whole consortium in producing valuable results from the activities developed and disseminating them among different groups of interests.

1. Introduction

The international SMALLDERS project (<https://smallders.com>) aims to develop a technological platform (SMALLDERS) that, using innovative strategies and methodologies, new technologies and business models, will improve the resilience of small farms in the Mediterranean area, and thus cope effectively and efficiently with unexpected events and disruptions in their supply chains, such as those generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adequate dissemination of the results and outreach to the communities is of vital importance for the project success, to be sure that the most important stakeholders that can contribute to the expected impacts are reached quickly and effectively; this is why all the project partners are expected to be involved in dissemination and exploitation activities.

The objectives of the SMALLDERS dissemination strategy are:

- To raise awareness about the SMALLDERS project, its expected results and progress within defined target groups using effective communication means and tools.
- To exchange experience with projects and groups working in the field to join efforts, minimize duplication and maximize potential.
- To disseminate the fundamental knowledge, the methodologies and technologies developed during the project.
- To pave the way for a successful commercial and non-commercial exploitation of the project outcomes.

Among the specific tasks relating to the dissemination, the following apply:

- External involvement. Several partners involved in the project already have a well-established network of various stakeholders (companies, associations, food industries, etc.) through which they will build links to the project and enable dissemination to take place. All the project partners will seamlessly collaborate to create new relations and links (in their own countries) with smallholders' associations, retail companies,

transportation companies as well as citizens and policymakers. This activity is indeed crucial to support a better evaluation and experimentations of the SMALLDERS platform, as well as to prove the platform readiness and usability.

- Development of the SMALLDERS identity, website, and social media (cf. D9.2). The identity of the SMALLDERS project was created by designing a specific logo as well as templates for communications, presentations, flyers, brochures and dissemination activities. The SMALLDERS website (<https://smalllders.com>) and the social media profiles created (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) are used to post relevant information about the SMALLDERS project, its activities, and results.
- Scientific journal papers. As the partners of the SMALLDERS project all come from Universities or research centers, the primary expected outcome of the activities carried out will be the publication of scientific papers. Publications are targeting international scientific journals, covering the areas of interest of the project (i.e., engineering, food, supply chain/logistics, or information technology) and categorized under the relating subject areas. Similarly, high impact journals will be privileged for enhancing the visibility of the results across a broad spectrum of readers.
- Other scientific publications. Scientific papers can also be presented at international conferences, with the aim of start sharing the initial results of the project, as well as disseminate the project knowledge. International Multidisciplinary Modeling & Simulation Multiconference (I3M) and International Conference on Industry 4.0 and Smart Manufacturing (ISM) are among the suitable outlets for those publications.

- Conference tracks, workshops and events participation and organization. Specific special sessions, workshops and conferences will be organized by project partners to support dissemination and reach the expected impacts. To this end, the partners have organized several special sessions at relevant International Conferences to disseminate the project results among researchers.

The following sections describe the main dissemination activities carried out by the partners since the beginning of the SMALLDERS project.

2. SMALLDERS identity, website, and social media

SMALLDERS visual identity is defined through different elements with common characteristics that provide a clear and coherent representation of the whole project. The main tools developed for creating the SMALLDERS identity are described in a detailed way in the deliverable D9.2.1; nevertheless, a short description of such tools is provided as follows.

2.1. SMALLDERS logo

The logo meets the main objectives of the project. It is described by a circular shape surrounded by green leaves to partly represent the activity of the small holder (as well as to stress the importance of sustainability). In addition, inside the circle, the letter "S" appears. This one highlights on the one hand the first letter of the project present in the term 'Smart' and on the other hand appeals to the aspect of sustainability which, again, is an important part of the SMALLDERS project.

Figure 1. SMALLDERS logo

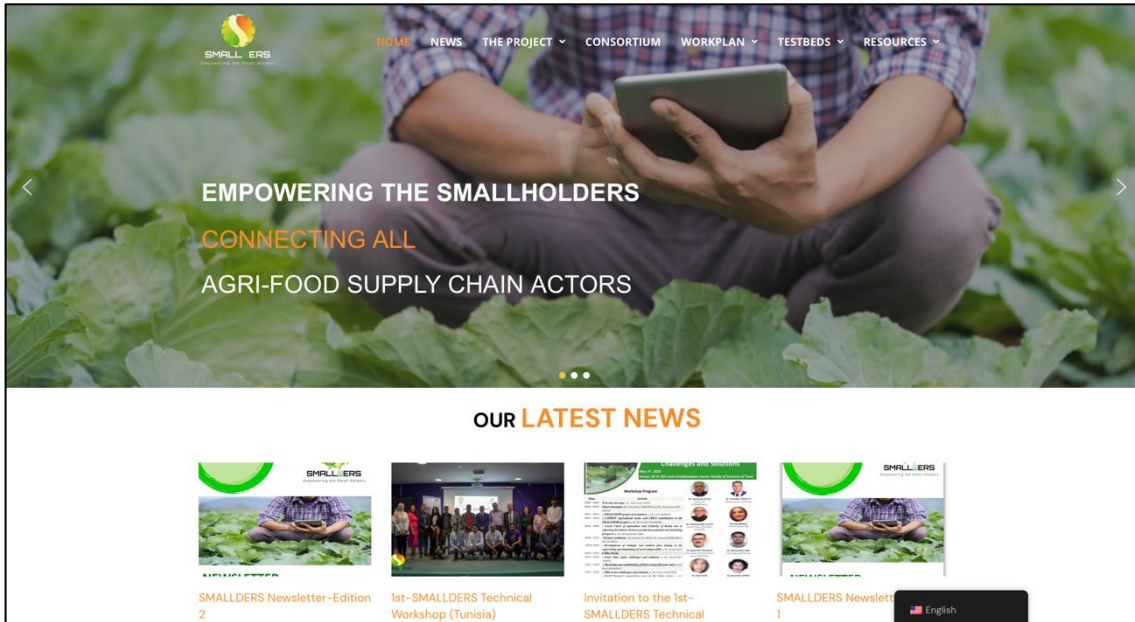


2.2. SMALLDERS website

The main aim of the project website is to act as an information hub about the SMALLDERS project. In fact, this website provides information about the project, its progress, and its results to various audiences on a global level such as all actors in the agri-food supply chain, scientists and the general public. The activities and

the events organized by SMALLDERS are also announced through this website. Published open access scientific outputs as well as some deliverables are also available on the project website: <https://smallders.com>

Figure 2. SMALLDERS website



2.3. SMALLDERS social media

SMALLDERS is active on social media through different channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (formerly known as Twitter). More information is available in the following links:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SMALLDERS>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/smallders-project>
- X: The SMALLDERS activity on X is disseminated through SMALLDERS members' personal accounts

Figure 3. SMALLDERS page on LinkedIn

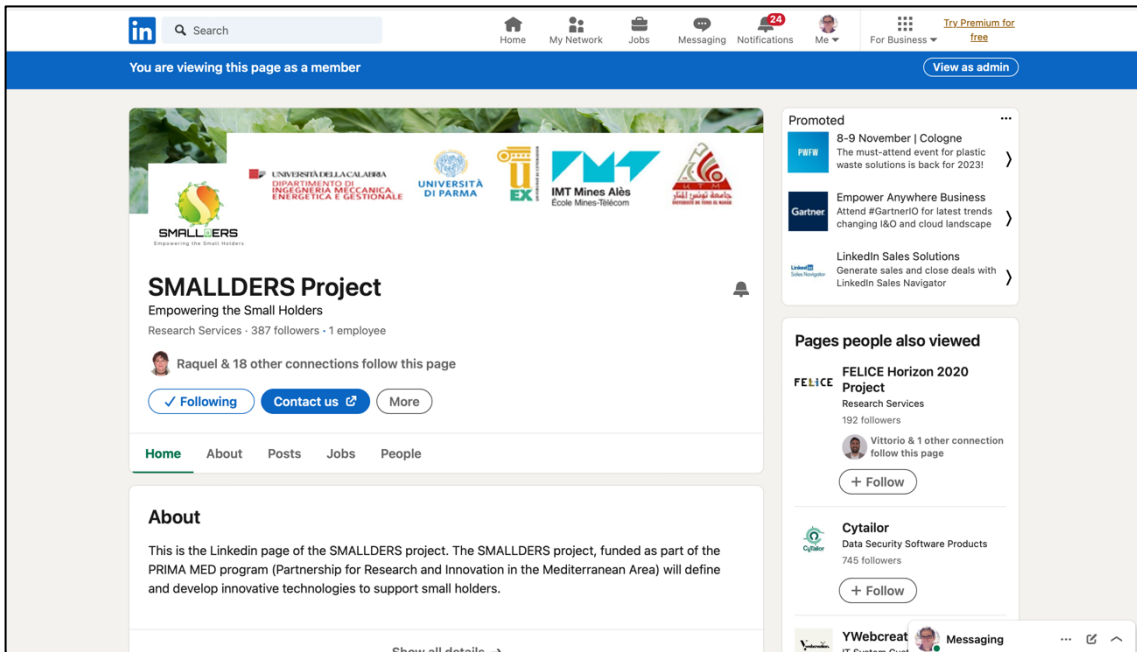


Figure 4. SMALLDERS page on Facebook

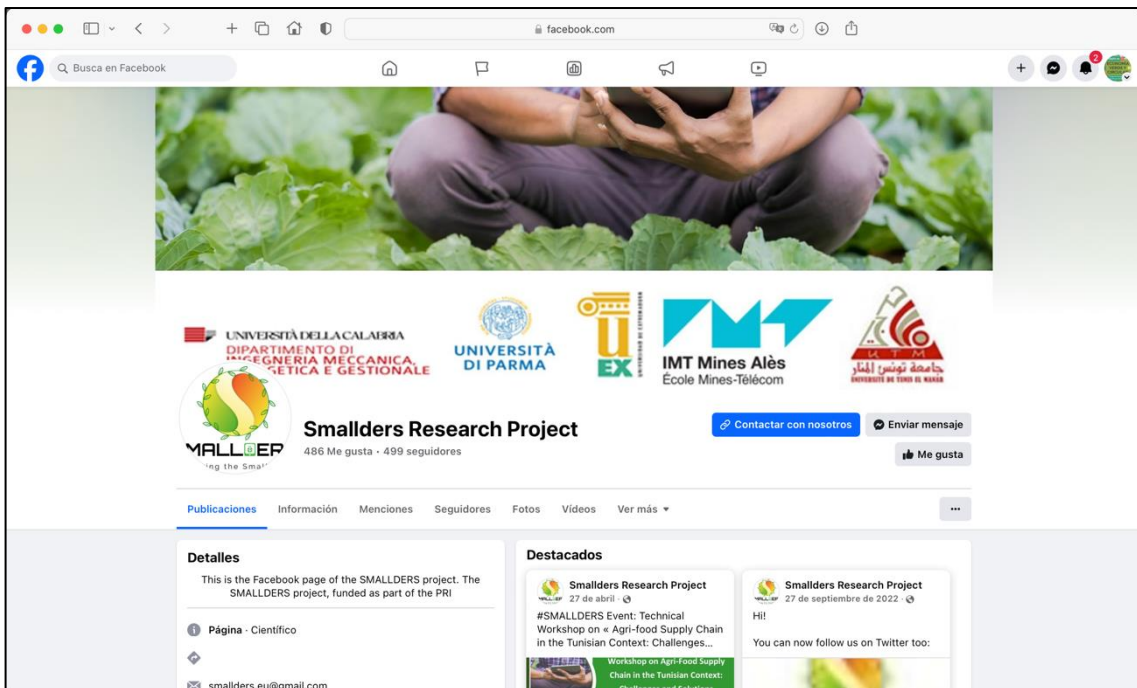
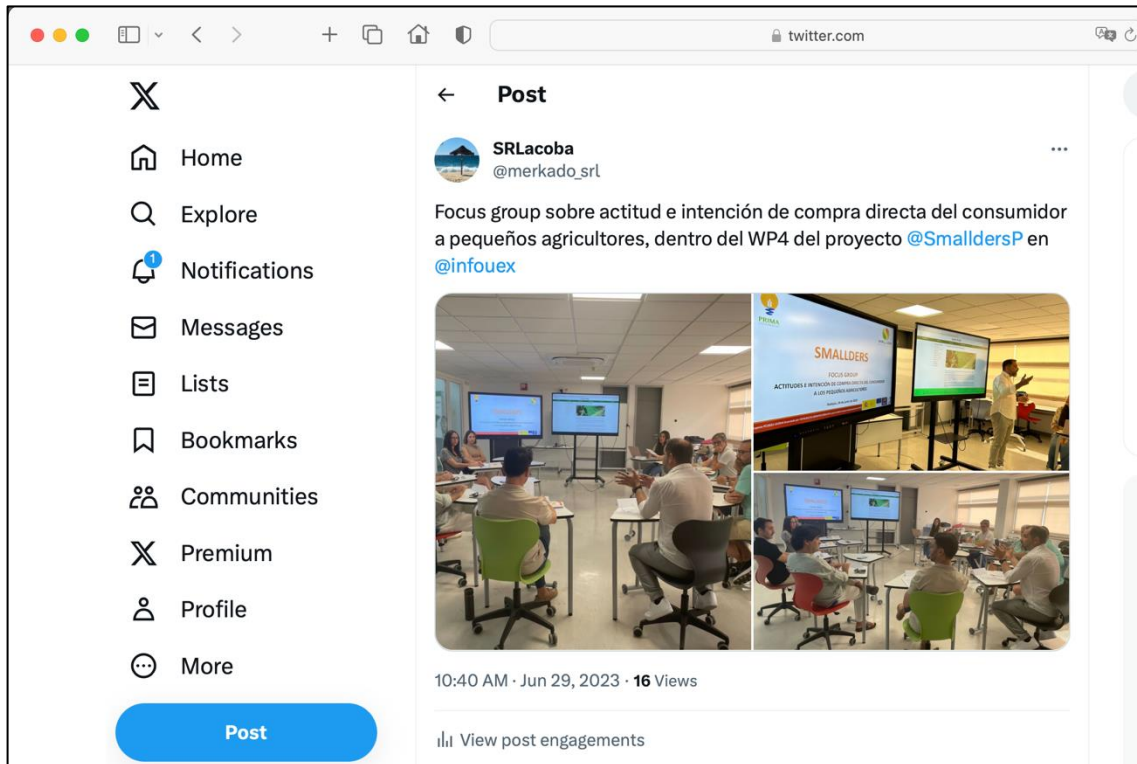


Figure 5. SMALLDERS activity on X



3. Publications

The partners in SMALLDERS are expected to produce contributions in specialized and high impact journals as this will increase the visibility of the work across a broader spectrum, promote accessibility and promote acknowledgement by research communities, industry, the general public and policymakers. Since the beginning of the project, several papers have been published derived from the activities of research developed by the members of the consortium. A description of these publications is provided on Table 1.

Table 1: Publications.

Authors	Title	Journal	DOI
Cimino, A., Longo, F., Solina, V., Verteramo, S. (2023)	A multi-actor ICT platform for increasing sustainability and resilience of small-scale farmers after pandemic crisis	British Food Journal	https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-01-2023-0049
Miranda, F.J., García-Gallego, J.M., Chamorro-Mera, A., Valero-Amaro, V, Rubio, S. (2023)	A systematic review of the literature on agri-food business models: critical review and research agenda	British Food Journal	https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-12-2022-1102

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at:
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/0007-070X.htm>

A multi-actor ICT platform for increasing sustainability and resilience of small-scale farmers after pandemic crisis

ICT platform
for increasing
sustainability

Antonio Cimino

*Department of Innovation Engineering, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy, and
Francesco Longo, Vittorio Solina and Saverino Verteramo
Department of Mechanical, Energy and Management Engineering,
University of Calabria, Rende, Italy*

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper proposes an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platform to increase the sustainability and resilience of smallholders to face supply chain disruptions in the event of COVID-like crises. The platform facilitates interactions between smallholders and buyers, workers and freight transport companies in agri-food ecosystems. Furthermore, this research work presents the implementation of the freight transport companies' platform module.

Design/methodology/approach – The research work begins with a literature review aiming at analyzing current available ICT solutions supporting smallholders and other actors in the agri-food supply chain. This analysis identifies the research gaps which have to be filled by the platform. Then, the authors proceed with the analysis of the operational scenarios of each platform actor by interacting with experts and operators working in the agri-food sector. The results of such analysis resulted in a comprehensive, unambiguous and consistent set of specification being used to define the platform structure and modules architecture. The platform modules have been developed by using the web-application framework Laravel.

Findings – Preliminary tests show that the proposed platform is usable and promises to improve the resilience and economic, social and environmental sustainability of agri-food supply chains, with a focus on smallholders.

Originality/value – The research work allows players in the agri-food supply chain and in particular small local producers to react and mitigate the impact of COVID-like crises through development of a platform in which smallholders, citizens (buyers and workers) and freight transport companies are simultaneously present.

Keywords ICT platform, Food supply chain, Smallholder, Freight transport company, Sustainability, Resilience

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The recent COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the limited resilience of supply chains globally (Alabi and Ngwenyama, 2023). Many actors have had to rethink their business model and operating practices to profitably face the new challenges caused by the pandemic (Longo et al., 2023). The players in the agri-food sector have suffered enormously from the occurrence of these unexpected and disruptive events, considering that the products have the specific characteristic of being perishable and having to meet strict quality and safety standards (Kumar et al., 2022). In many cases, the high spread of the infection has limited the manpower available in the fields, with the consequence of not being able to harvest fruit and vegetables in time. On the other hand, the countermeasures taken by several governments have led to the closure of multiple distribution channels (e.g. shopping malls, school canteens, open-air



This work is part of the research project entitled "Smart Models for Agrifood Local vaLue chain based on Digital technologies for Enabling COVID-19 Resilience and Sustainability" (SMALLDERS), co-funded by the PRIMA Program–Section 2 Call multi-topics 2021.

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A systematic review of the literature on agri-food business models: critical review and research agenda

Agri-food
business
models

F. Javier Miranda, José Manuel García-Gallego,
Antonio Chamorro-Mera, Víctor Valero-Amaro and Sergio Rubio
*Department of Business Management and Sociology, University of Extremadura,
Badajoz, Spain*

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this study is to identify the way in which research on new business models in agri-food sector has been developed, in order to identify the main lines of work followed and determine a future research agenda in this field.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic review of the literature is carried out, by applying the PRISMA method to identify and classify the main articles published on agri-food business models in journals included in the Web of Science Core Collection database.

Findings – The systematic literature review has identified three main forms of business models in the agri-food sector: sustainable business models, technology-based business models and cooperative business models. The three types of new business models are complementary and can sometimes be adopted together. The identification of these types of business models and the variants included in each of them is a valid starting point for new developments in this field.

Research limitations/implications – The limitations of this study are those typical of any literature review and derived from the methodology used. The establishment of criteria relating to time, language, type of publication or database chosen means that this review may have left out relevant studies in this field of research. It is therefore recommended that new reviews be carried out with different criteria in the coming years in order to supplement the results obtained in this study.

Originality/value – Some research gaps were identified that should be further explored in the future. First, the relationship between digitisation and technological innovation in agri-food business models and the level of implementation of sustainable objectives in these business models has not been researched thoroughly. In addition, and despite the fact that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has boosted innovation in agri-food business models, the authors have detected a lack of papers focused on solving problems arising from the shortage of raw materials or labour, possible energy crises or external dependence on local markets when it comes to meeting demand. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the limitations of international markets, mainly the European market, when it comes to dealing with problems arising from this type of crisis.

Keywords Literature review, Agri-food, Business model, Sustainability, Digitalisation

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The term “business model” first appeared in the academic literature in the work of Bellman *et al.* (1957), although it is a concept that has gradually gained in importance, and which Osterwalder (2004) defines as: “. . . a conceptual tool that contains a set of elements and their relationships and allows expressing a company’s logic of earning money. It is a description of

This work is part of the research project entitled “Smart Models for Agrifood Local vaLue chain based on Digital technologies for Enabling covid-19 Resilience and Sustainability” (SMALLDERS), co-funded by the PRIMA Program - Section 2 Call multi-topics 2021. The authors acknowledge the grant PCI2022_132924 funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and by the “European Union NextGenerationEU/PRTR”, and the grant GR21078 funded by Junta de Extremadura and FEDER. The authors thank the reviewers and the Editor for their helpful suggestions.



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An open access version of the paper by Miranda, et al. (2023) is available on the institutional repository of the Universidad de Extremadura:
<http://hdl.handle.net/10662/18455>

4. Conferences, workshops and events participation and organization

Throughout the first half of the project, the partners have organized specific special sessions, workshops, and conferences to support dissemination and reach the expected impacts. Table 2 displays the main events on this regard.

Table 2: Events organized by the consortium.

Type of event	Title	Date	More information
Conference	The 19th Multidisciplinary Modeling & Simulation Multiconference. I3M 2022. Rome, Italy	19-21 September 2022	https://www.msc-les.org/conf/i3m2022/i3m2022_FinalProgram.pdf
Conference	The 20th Multidisciplinary Modeling & Simulation Multiconference. I3M 2023. Athens, Greece	18-20 September 2023	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
Workshop	Tunisian SMALLDERS Technical Workshop: "Agri-Food Supply Chain in the Tunisian Context: Challenges and Solutions" University of Tunis El Manar, Tunisia	3 May 2023	https://smalllders.com/1st-smalllders-technical-workshop-tunisia/

At the same time, the members of the project have attended conferences and workshops with contributions derived from the activities developed within the SMALLDERS project. These contributions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Participation to conferences.

Conference	Title	Contributors	More information
I3M 2022 Rome (Italy) 20 Sep 2022	Special Session: The SMALLDERS project	Longo, F., Vignalli, G., Sidhom, L., Zacharewicz, G., Rubio, S.	https://www.msc-les.org/conf/i3m2022/I3M2022_FinalProgram.pdf
ISM 2022 Linz (Austria) 4 Nov 2022	An overview of approaches and methodologies for supporting smallholders: ICT tools, blockchain, business models, sustainability indicators, simulation models.	Longo, et al.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2022.12.393
	The digital supply chain twin paradigm for enhancing resilience and sustainability against COVID-like crises.	Longo, et al.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2022.12.394
I3M 2023 Athens (Greece) 19 Sep 2023	The SMALLDERS Project – General Overview	Solina, V.	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
	A digital model application to optimize water consumption in agriculture.	Preite, L., Solari, F., Vignalli, G.	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
	Selection of 4.0 sensors for small holders: the compromise between	Stefanini, R., Preite, L., Bottani, E., Belli, L.,	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31

	the advantages and the costs of the implementation.	Davoli, L., Ferrari, G., Vignali, G.	/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
	An asexual genetic algorithm for the smallholders' demand selection problem.	Germanos, M., Ben-Ammar, O., Zacharewicz, G.	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
	Agri-food supply chain sustainability from the consumer perspective: a survey-based study in the Tunisian context.	Chabouh, S., Sidhom, L., Amamou, A., Mami, A.	https://www.msc-les.org/i3m2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023/09/I3M2023_FinalProgram.pdf
20 th IEEE International Conference on Networking, Sensing and Control. Marseille, (France). 25-27/10/23	Small-producer selection and order allocation in the agri-food supply chain.	Germanos, M., Ben-Ammar, O., Zacharewicz, G.	https://easychair.org/smart-program/ICNSC23/2023-10-25.html#talk:240844
The 17 th International Conference on Innovation in Intelligent Systems and Applications. INISTIA 2023. Hammamet, (Tunisia). 20-23/09/2023	Sustainability-based Multi-capital Approach for the Agri-Food Supply Chain: Research Trends Based on Bibliometric Review.	Amamou, A., Sidhom, L., Alaeddine, Z., Mami, A.	https://conferences.sigappfr.org/inista2023/final-program/
ROADEF 2023 - 24 ^{ème} Édition du Congrès	Modelling and optimization approaches for	Germanos, M., Ben-Ammar, O.,	https://roadef2023.sciencesconf.org/program

Annuel de la Société Française de Recherche Opérationnelle et D'aide à la Décision Rennes (France) 20-23/02/2023.	smallholders: A systematic review.	Zacharewicz, G.	
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5. External involvement

The partners involved in the project have developed a well-established network of stakeholders (companies, associations, food industries, policymakers, etc.) through which they are building links to the project and enabling dissemination. Such a fruitful collaboration with external partners will create new relations and links with smallholders' associations, retails companies, transportation companies as well as citizens and policymakers. This activity is indeed crucial to support a better evaluation and experimentations of the SMALLDERS platform, as well as to prove the platform readiness and usability. At this point of the project, the following activities involving external partners were developed.

5.1. Stakeholders Info Days

During 2023, the partners of SMALLDERS project developed several meetings with different stakeholders to provide them with information about the activities to be carried out, and what type of collaboration is expected.

On May 2023, different meetings between the University of Tunis El Manar (LAPER), the Regional Commissariat for Agricultural Development (CRDA) of Nabeul, and different stakeholders of the agri-food supply chain (smallholders and a transport company) were held (Figure 8). In these meetings, the aims of the SMALLDERS project were presented, and the tasks being performed by LAPER detailed. After rich discussions on various points such as select of the agricultural sector and the small farmer, TESTBED pilot test, a road map was defined to identify the next activities with all these agri-food supply chain agents.

Regarding the University of Extremadura (UEX), a first meeting with its external partner, AFRUEX (Association of Fruit Growers of Extremadura), was held on 31 May 2023 (Figure 9). A summary of the objectives of the project as well as a description of the activities being carried out by UEx were presented. In addition, some aspects related to the selection of smallholders for the implementation of possible new business models aimed at small farmers, as well as for the TESTBED pilot test, were discussed. Likewise, issues of interest for the SMALLDERS project were also discussed: analysis of the fruit sector in Extremadura, waste generation, carbon footprint, etc. As a result of this meeting, new contacts were made with other stakeholders. On September 2023, the UEX team met EXPLUM, one of the

most important cooperatives of plums at regional level, who showed very interested in SMALLDERS activities (Figure 9). They provide us with contacts of smallholders who might be interested in the SMALLDERS platform as potential users. Finally, a meeting with the Directorate General of Cooperatives and Social Economy of the Regional Government was held to update them about the activities developed so far, and the coming ones (Figure 11).

Figure 8. Info Day in Tunisia



Figure 9. Info Day in Spain



Figure 10. Meeting EXPLUM-UEx-AFRUEx



Figure 11. Meeting UEx and Policymakers



Within the SMALLDERS project, the University of Parma (UNIPR) is responsible for the selection of sensors and the design and deployment of the blockchain (WP5). Environmental, water consumption and soil status sensors have been recommended and presented to the other partners of the project in several online meetings. Regarding the contacts with external partners, UNIPR has developed the following meetings.

- Several online meetings were scheduled with EcorNaturaSi to select one of their smallholders, namely Ca'Magre. Then, UNIPR visited Ca'Magre and met their agronomists two times.
- On 15 March 2023: The SMALLDERS project and its main objectives were presented to Ca'Magre agronomists. Potential plants on which to install sensors were evaluated.
- On 27 and 28 July 2023: the selected sensors and the gateway were installed in the cultivation of aubergines, and the correct functioning was tested; same procedures will be followed for strawberry cultivation.

Figure 12. UNIPR visit to Ca'Magre



Finally, the IMT Mines Alès team (LSR) visited “Le Potager d’Aubrespin” on the 13th of July 2023. The main goal of this visit was to understand the farmers' practices and assess their sustainability. The researchers also worked towards a possible collaboration with the farmers to integrate agricultural technology into the work of the farmers, as well as to improve their sustainability and resource management. The objectives of this meeting are enumerated as follows:

- Gain insights into the sustainable agricultural practices employed at “Le Potager d’Aubrespin”.

- Understand the farm's resource management strategies and environmental impact.
- Identify potential areas of collaboration between IMT Mines Alès and "Le Potager d'Aubrespin".

After touring the acres of "Le Potager d'Aubrespin", the IMT Mines Alès team discussed the possibility of collaboration with "Le Potager d'Aubrespin". These discussions highlighted on different points such as: smart agriculture technologies, sustainable water management, renewable energy integration.

Figure 13. LSR visit to Le Potager d'Aubrespin



5.2. Other events and dissemination activities

Within the context of the Work Package 4 "New Business Model in the Smallholders' Supply Chain" of the SMALLDERS project, the aim is to understand the needs of consumers, among other stakeholders. To this end, a series of focus group sessions were planned with the aim of going deeper into the selection behavior of food purchasing channels, with special reference to online procurement, as well as identifying barriers that motivate direct purchasing from small farmers through e-market platforms, among other aspects.

A total of 6 focus group sessions were developed from July to October 2023, with a participation of 40 people of different profiles, ages, and backgrounds, but a common characteristic: being responsible for fruit and vegetable purchasing

decisions at homes. More information on this regard is available on the deliverable D4.2 of this project and in our last newsletter (see figure 15).

Figure 14. Focus Group sessions at the UEX



Finally, as a way of disseminating the activities developed by the SMALLDERS consortium a newsletter has been produced. So far, two numbers were published on the SMALLDERS website (<https://smallders.com/smallders-newsletter-edition-2/>) and disseminated through the SMALLDERS social media.

Figure 15. SMALLDERS newsletter



6. Conclusions

Since its kick-off on May 2022, the project SMALLDERS has developed an intense activity in different scenarios, mainly focused on producing the work packages defined in the approved proposal. At the same time, diffusion and dissemination activities have been observed as key elements for the success of the project. Table 4 presents the main communication outputs generated by the project so far, comparing them to the objectives defined initially.

Table 4: SMALLDERS communication activities.

	Objectives by the end of the project	Produced until this report
Articles in journals	4	2
Scientific papers in International Conferences	8	2
Participation to Conferences and Workshops	5 part./year	1 (2022) 8 (2023)
Organization of Special Sessions	6	2
Organization of Technical Workshops	4	1
Co-organization of Conferences	3	2
SMALLDERS website visits	250 visits/month	228 visits/month
Number of references from external websites	20	2
Number of followers on Facebook	250	500
Number of followers on LinkedIn	250	392

According to these figures, the project SMALLDERS seems to be in a good position for achieving their dissemination objectives, thanks to the effort of the whole consortium in producing valuable results from the activities developed and disseminating them among different groups of interests.