European Commission

European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency

LIFE OLIVARES VIVOS+

Turning biodiversity into a market value for Mediterranean olive oil

Olive groves cover more than 5.3 million hectares across the EU - the most widespread crop in the Mediterranean - yet decades of intensification have driven severe biodiversity loss. At the same time, farmers who invest in nature rarely see a financial return: they do not always have a robust way to demonstrate biodiversity gains and translate them into market value.

LIFE Olivares Vivos+ addresses both gaps by combining measurable biodiversity restoration with a science-backed certification seal. Coordinated by SEO/BirdLife, the project works with olive farmers across Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece to develop tailored action plans, restoring native ground cover, reducing pesticide use and installing fauna structures. Farms are assessed before and after the intervention, and only those that show measurable biodiversity gains receive the Olivares Vivos certification. This gives producers a credible, science-backed way to demonstrate biodiveristy gains and differentiate their products in the market.

LIFE OLIVARES VIVOS+ objectives:

- Halt biodiversity loss in EU olive groves by scaling a proven agri-environmental model across Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece
- Develop and consolidate a science-based certification seal that links measurable biodiversity recovery to the commercial value of olive oil
- Validate a bio-economic model demonstrating that biodiversity conservation and farm profitability are complementary goals
- Expand the model to cooperatives and new crops, and design a replication strategy for other Mediterranean EU countries
- Contribute to inform and support integration of the model's proven practices into CAP eco-schemes and rural development plans

Results so far:

- Selected to pitch the biodiversity certification model to investors at the Re:Invest in Nature session during EU Green Week 2026, following pitch preparation and investor-readiness support from the LIFE close-to-market (C2M) team
- Builds on LIFE Olivares Vivos, winner of the 2026 LIFE Special Award for its work on olive-grove biodiversity
- More than 70 olive groves follow the model with around 40 brands using the Olivares Vivos seal across Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece
- Within three years of applying the model: olive groves can achieve a 10‑15% increase in species richness and an average 40% in species abundance
- Approximately 5,500 hectares are managed under the model
- Implementation costs represent less than 4% of total farm operating costs over a 10 year period

"The C2M support has been very concrete and complementary to the broader support provided by the LIFE Programme. It challenged us to look at the project from a much more commercial perspective - we needed a simpler message, very clear figures, and a convincing explanation of how the model can grow and deliver results. This has been a very useful exercise for the future development of the certification and for our communication with potential partners and investors."

Carlos Ruiz González, LIFE OLIVARES VIVOS+

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