



THE SOUTHERN LIGHTS PILOT FARM

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location of farm	Greece, Region of Peloponnese, Skala Laconias
Name of the farmer	Sheila Darnos
Size of farm	1,4 Ha
Permanent staff	0
Main products of farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Blackberries○ Goji berries○ Oranges○ Lemons○ Lime○ Tangerines○ Peaches○ Plums○ Loquats○ Olives○ Figs○ Pears○ Apples



CURRENT REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PRACTICES ON THE FARM

Farmland cultivated with RA practices	1,4 Ha
Crops produced with RA practices	All
Duration of using RA practices	2015- today

Description of RA practices used in the farm

Agroforestry practices are applied. The main practices are as follows:

- *Succession planting, combining trees or plants that live longer with ones that have a shorter life span, while taking into consideration the needs of the plants in each phase of their life. In the forest, a young, freshly sprouted tree is usually growing underneath other trees, grasses or shrubs, but it's rarely exposed to sun and wind. When the tree grows bigger, it outlives the shrub that was protecting it while it was young. This shrub on the other side is bringing fertility to the soil through its decomposing organic matter. With increasing fertility, the complexity of the system (forest) is increasing.*
- *Integration of companion species, integrating plants with the role of supporting trees and plants for production. Throughout the farm you can find Mulberries, Fig trees, Acacias and many others whose function it is to support the system by providing organic matter, made available through intensive and frequent pruning, or by binding nitrogen from the atmosphere and making it available to other plants and trees. Furthermore, they can provide habitat for predators of pests and therefore contribute to a balanced ecosystem.*
- *Regenerating the soil. Soil plays a crucial role for the health of a farm, for the resilience of the ecosystem and for the nutrients of the food it produces. Planting trees in-between that grow, produce a lot of organic matter and don't mind intensive pruning, is a key element of the way we manage our farm. Additionally, we shred all the prunings of all our trees and leave them on the soil. Through applying these practices that build and support a healthy soil for thirty years now, we can demonstrate the outcome of these practices in the long run.*

STARTING AND MOTIVATION BEHIND REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Main motivation

We noticed that in our farm the forest started to grow, while in the mountains around the farm, 11 years after the wildfires that destroyed the forest, the forest was not returning. That made us think. We were fortunate that in the 35-year-old organic farm we could observe how a forest grows and fortunately, we stumbled upon the terms "food forest", "agroforestry" and "regenerative farming". Our journey began. In essence, it was the farm itself that made the transition to agroforestry, as many of the supporting species such as fig trees and mulberries were developed without human intervention. We simply observed this development and realised why it occurred and how



	beneficial it was. We then systematically supported it and found ways we can manage it.
Learning the RA farming practices	Trained in Seminars abroad by NGOs offering training in Regenerative Agriculture (in Spain, Italy, France, Portugal)
Did the farmer receive training?	Yes
Did the farmer receive financial support?	No

RESULTS OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Benefits of using RA practices

We work on a farm with a lot of biodiversity, and this alone has therapeutic impacts on us. Our farm is more resilient, and the fact that we can trade many products over the year gives us financial security and reduces the feelings of insecurity and stress. There are also other commercial opportunities such as tourism — although we have not yet moved in this direction, we believe that it holds great potential.

Also, implementing models such as Regenerative Agriculture has both personal and social benefits for the producer. These include the personal satisfaction that the conscious producer feels for contributing to the fight against climate change and the protection of the environment, and the recognition of his/her contribution, along with participating in networks of people with the same philosophy. It's like being part of a large family of people who will help you in a difficult time. "Even if our farm was destroyed by a wildfire, I know I can go anywhere else and start again".

Because of the fact that the Southern Lights farm is regarded as a pioneer and a good practice in regenerative agriculture, educational events are organised in the framework of Erasmus+ projects with the participation of mainly youth workers from all over Europe. Additionally, during the year the farm receives visitors who may stay from one day up to months, to learn. The farm does not have any financial benefits from these actions. Regarding the participation of volunteers, some reconstruction is necessary because it is not sustainable — while volunteers cannot practically contribute to the farm, their participation uses up resources (human resources, energy, etc.).



Obstacles of using RA practices

The main difficulty is the lack of know-how and specialists (agronomists) in Greece that can help in the transition to Regenerative Agriculture. This means that information/solutions need to be sought abroad from the producers themselves. Also, there are no other producers in the region who apply RA to share concerns and experiment together to find solutions. Regarding the marketing of RA products to consumers, we should follow the example of other countries such as France, where RA producers do not sell their products to wholesalers, but directly to conscious consumers (Community Supported Agriculture).

Is the farmer happy overall with RA?	Yes
Does the farmer intend to continue RA?	Yes
Does the farmer intend to introduce changes in RA methods or crops?	<p>Southern Lights participates as a partner in an important project to promote Regenerative Agriculture in Greece. The project was launched in 2021 in order to bring Regenerative Agriculture to Greece and has created 6 pilot farms in different areas of Greece and with different crops, while offering through its website www.regenerativefarminggreece.org important information and educational material for Regenerative Agriculture. The project aims to continue in the future, “until the transition to Regenerative Agriculture is made by all”. The next step of the project is the promotion and diffusion of the know-how about RA through seminars and local learning groups, as well as the operation of an online platform with educational videos. In a next step, it is necessary to create a network that will also include researchers, decision makers and policy-makers in the agricultural sector, educational institutions, traders, etc. besides farmers, in order to find joint solutions for the promotion of RA in Greece, such as the issue of the distribution of products to consumers.</p> <p>We would like to avoid the adoption of a certification model for RA products, as certification processes increase costs for no reason and would create problems. We prefer to bring the consumer closer to the producer so that there is a direct relationship, feedback and mutual benefit.</p>



Regenerative agriculture.
An innovative approach towards mitigation
of climate change through multi-tier learning.

