



## Conference Reports

### Executive Summary

The Thessaly AgriBusiness Forum 2025, highlighting “The Future of Thessaly’s agriculture in the Green & Digital Era” convened on September 30 – October 1, 2025, at the Municipal Art Gallery of Larissa. Co-organized by the Geo Routes Institute NPO, the Region of Thessaly, the Municipality of Larissa, and the Chamber of Larissa, also in cooperation with the Association of Industries of Thessaly & Central Greece and the Thessalian Enterprises & Industries Association, the Forum brought together high-level stakeholders to address sectoral challenges, promote strategic growth, and facilitate international collaboration.

Over 45 distinguished speakers shared insights across 8 thematic chapters, covering topics from sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation to water management, climate adaptation, animal health, and international market positioning. The Forum hosted 301 delegates representing businesses, cooperatives, banks, academia, international organizations, and local authorities. Feedback highlighted high satisfaction rates, with the majority rating the event as “excellent”. The Forum concluded with a field visit to the “Enipeas” Agricultural Cooperative in Farsala, reinforcing practical engagement with Thessaly’s agri-food ecosystem.

### 1) Purpose

In a period marked by challenges (including the aftermath of natural disasters, zoonotic diseases, water scarcity, soil degradation, and the absence of long-term targeted policies) the Thessaly AgriBusiness Forum 2025 aimed to:

- a) Provide an evidence-based assessment of the sector’s current state;
- b) Offer concrete proposals for addressing or resolving key issues;
- c) Highlight strategies to promote Thessaly’s products inbound & outbound;
- d) Foster communication channels and collaboration with third countries;
- e) Present actionable conclusions to relevant authorities.

## 2) Focal areas

The Forum comprised 8 chapters, each addressing high-priority topics for Thessaly:

- **Chapter-1, Financial Instruments, Primary sector & Tourism, Exports**  
*Agri-food & tourism integration; Branding maturity; SMEs access to global markets; Agricultural inputs/environmental safety; Funding and Banks*
- **Chapter-2, Value Chains' responsible & sustainable entrepreneurship**  
*Chambers-Associations and development; Financing-Entrepreneurship & ESGs; Clusters & incubators; Human/labor workforce upskilling & reskilling; Key-players' strategies*
- **Chapter-3, Policy talks**  
*Priorities for Thessaly agriculture (subsidies, water management, cooperatives); Demographic regeneration; Rural entrepreneurship; Long-term vision & strategy for Greece's agriculture*
- **Chapter-4, Transformative Innovation: Towards a development roadmap for Thessaly AgriFood Sector**  
*Smart Specialization; Agri-food Complex; Regional Innovation Policy; Systemic Approaches; Multilevel Governance*
- **Chapter-5, Innovation, Synergies, New Technologies in primary production**  
*The triple helix between farming-academia-business sectors; AI & digital technologies from production to consumption; The future of precision farming*
- **Chapter-6, Livestock & Dairy, Biosafety**  
*Animal diseases & biosafety; Illegal imports; Livestock subsidies; Feed resilience in times of crises; High-quality animal products & exports*
- **Chapter-7, Water management, Climate, Environment, Energy**  
*Measures to address water scarcity in Thessaly; Climate crisis, agricultural production, adaptation; Critical infrastructure for Thessaly agriculture: Circular economy-energy autonomy in agricultural facilities; Natural disasters-agricultural regeneration*
- **Chapter-8, Thessaly meets the world**  
*Thessaly's profile abroad; Invest in know-how transferability to Thessaly; EU green transition and Thessaly; Cross-border opportunities & cooperation; Thessaly agri-food connection with high-quality tourism; labor workforce*

## 3) Speakers

The Forum hosted 45 high-level speakers, representing the full agri-food value chain, including policymakers, business leaders, academics, journalists, diplomats, and executives from international organizations. Among notable speakers featured (by appearance at the forum):

1. Dimitris Kouretas, Governor of Thessaly
2. Giannis Balakakis, Chair AgriBusiness Forum
3. Dimitris Tsetsilas, Regional Vice-Governor for Primary Sector & Rural Economy, Region of Thessaly
4. Anastasia Adamopoulou, Regional Vice-Governor for Tourism, Region of Thessaly
5. George Pontikas, President & CEO Syngenta Hellas
6. Alexandros Dimitrakopoulos, Mandate Manager Greece-Cyprus, European Investment Fund
7. Kyriakos Pozrikidis, CEO, TIF-Helexpo
8. Anthony D. Papayannides, Journalist
9. Angeliki Kavga, Professor, Agricultural Science, University of Patras
10. Stellios Sarantis, President Hellenic Dairies, BoD member Thessaly & Central Greece Industries Assoc.
11. Ioanna-Alexandra Saitis, CEO Intercomm Foods, Secretary General Larissa Industries' Association
12. Alexandra Palli-Giannakopoulou, Chair of the Board, CSR HELLAS
13. Ismini Papakirillou, Chief Executive Officer, Hellenic Development Bank
14. George Merlemis, Head of Credit, Karditsa Cooperative Bank LLC
15. Christos Giakouvis, President, Chamber of Larissa

16. Xenophon Kappas, General Director, Konstantakopoulos Foundation
17. Sotiris Polyzos, General Manager, TRT News
18. Sokratis Famellos, President, SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance
19. Athanasios Mamakos, Mayor of Larissa
20. Stathis Arapostathis, Professor, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens
21. Panayiotis Kalfountzos, General Manager, Thessaly Agricultural Cooperative ThesGi
22. Antonis Politis, Director Communications, Agricultural Cooperative of Zagora-Pelion
23. Dimitris Goussios, Professor, Planning & Regional Development, Thessaly University
24. Dimitris Vlachostergios, Director, Institute of Industrial & Forage Crops, ELGO
25. Yiannis Tolia, Managing Partner, Innovatia Systems
26. Geert Wilms, Director, LIB/ZLTO (South Holland Farmers Organization)
27. Vaios Ganis, Winemaker, Vaios Ganis Organic Wines
28. Dimitris Rousseas, President, Hellenic Fertilizer's Association
29. Fotis Tekos, CEO, FoodOxys
30. Nikos Gousios, President, Enipeas Agricultural Cooperative
31. Nikolaos Asproulis, Dpt. Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies
32. Ioanna Karra, Breeder & Co-Founder, Stalos farm
33. Yiannis Bouras, President, Hellenic Pig Farmers Association
34. Alexandros Triantafyllou, Vice-President BIOZOKAT SA
35. Vicki Douma, CEO Douma Vital Farm | Bio Breeding Farmer
36. Ioannis Kaimakamis, Farmer, Agribusiness Consultant, B' VP, OPEKEPE
37. Panagiotis Tsiampalis, Operations Director, Veterinary Public Health, Region of Thessaly
38. Theofanis Gemtos, Professor Em., Farm Mechanization, Thessaly University
39. Nicholas Dercas, Professor AUA & President Thessaly Water Mgmt Organization
40. Vasilis Moraitis, Operations Manager, APOSTEIROSI SA (Helector-Motor Oil group)
41. Alex Papachatzis, Head, Dep. Agricultural Agrotechnology, Thessaly University
42. Athanasios Loukas, Professor Hydrology & Water Resources, AUTH
43. HE. Arif Mammadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan
44. HE. Nahida Rahman Shumona, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
45. HE. Timur Sultangozhin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan

#### 4) Conference delegates

The audience included representatives from business associations, enterprises, cooperatives, banks, international organizations, political parties, local authorities, producers, academics, and students. Participation was either via registration fee or invitation by the Region of Thessaly, Municipality of Larissa, Chamber of Larissa, or the AgriBusiness Forum.

#### 5) Registration & Participation

- a) Invitations issued: 330 (Region of Thessaly: 170, Municipality of Larissa: 50, Chamber of Larissa: 30, AgriBusiness Forum: 80)
- b) Checked-in delegates: 301 over the two-day Forum (September 30 – October 1, 2025)

## 6) Field visit

On October 2, 2025, a technical field visit took place at the “Enipeas” Agricultural Cooperative in Farsala. Twenty participants received detailed briefings from President Nikos Gousios on operations, strategy, and prospects, as well as lectures by Professors D. Gousios and D. Gaki on regenerative agriculture.

## 7) Conference conclusions

**At a glance:** The Thessaly AgriBusiness Forum 2025 highlighted the strategic importance of Thessaly to the Greek economy, with the region's primary and secondary sectors contributing over 30% of its GDP. The conference emphasized the need for a Radical System Redefinition of the agri-food model to address the impacts of the climate crisis (Daniel/Ianos floods) and severe sanitary challenges in livestock.

### A. Critical Challenges & Crisis Management

- i. **Water Resources & Scarcity:** Water scarcity remains the number one problem. Over-pumping of underground aquifers is unsustainable, necessitating the immediate completion of water storage and transfer projects. The newly established Water Management Organization of Thessaly (H.V.A./O.DI.TH.) aims to modernize networks and provide scientific guidance to producers.
- ii. **Biosecurity & Livestock:** The livestock sector is severely affected by sheep pox (evlogia) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (panoli). The forum stressed the need for farmer education (only 0.6% have higher education), staffing of veterinary services, and stricter border controls.
- iii. **Demographics & Labor Force:** An aging agricultural population and labour shortages threaten the social fabric of rural areas. Proposed solutions include youth attraction programs and the utilization of legal migrant labour through bilateral agreements (e.g., with Bangladesh).

### B. Innovation & Digital Transformation

- i. **Triple Helix Model:** Collaboration between Academia, producers, and the Regional Government is vital for knowledge dissemination. The establishment of an **Agricultural Innovation Hub** was recommended.
- ii. **Cutting-edge Technologies:** Precision agriculture, drones, AI for yield prediction, and regenerative agriculture are tools for reducing costs and increasing added value.
- iii. **Certification & Global Reach:** The Region has submitted 12 applications for new PDO/PGI products (e.g., chestnuts, pears) to enhance international competitiveness.

### C. Financing & Entrepreneurship

- i. **Funding Tools:** Programs from the Hellenic Development Bank (micro-loans up to €25,000 for disaster recovery) and the European Investment Fund (80% loan guarantees) were presented.
- ii. **Sustainable Business:** Large food industries are adopting ESG criteria and circular economy practices (e.g., water recycling, carbon footprint reduction), positively impacting their value chains.
- iii. **Cooperatives:** Success stories like Thesgi, Zagorin, and Enipeas demonstrate that collective action reduces costs and enables investments in R&D.

## D. Policy Recommendations

- i. **National Agricultural Strategy:** Link CAP subsidies to productivity and resilience.
- ii. **Infrastructure:** Accelerate flood protection works and major dams (Skopia, Pyli, Mouzaki).
- iii. **Energy:** Support energy communities and net-metering for farmers.
- iv. **Institutional Framework:** Modernize PDO specifications (e.g., Feta) to meet contemporary production needs.

## 8) Online presence & communication

- a) Official website bilingual (GR/EN): [Website](#) - [Agenda](#) - [Speakers](#) - [Venue](#) - [Field Visit](#)
- b) Social media: [Facebook](#) - [LinkedIn](#) - [Twitter](#)
- c) Videos from the sessions: [YouTube](#)

