Factors Affecting the Development of Small Agricultural Enterprises in Rural Greece: Cases from Crete, Eastern Macedonia, Peloponnese, Epirus, and Thessaly.

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Abstract: This paper aims to identify the factors that support small olive oil farms, honey-producing units, vegetable and fruit enterprises, and grape and wine corporations in specific Greek regions, including Crete, Peloponnese, Eastern Macedonia, Thessaly, and Epirus. After analyzing the unique characteristics and current industry trends in these areas, the author distributed a questionnaire to 23 cooperatives. Quota sampling was employed to ensure representation from all geographical regions, highlighting characteristics essential for the development of small agribusinesses among farmers and entrepreneurs. Subsequently, the author utilized data analysis and the SMART framework to assess the findings. The results revealed several similarities and differences across regions and markets. Southern Greek farmers and entrepreneurs expressed concerns regarding government funding, price stability, and export opportunities, while their northern counterparts identified a need for improved technology, equipment, and staff training. Given the limited research on the overall significance of factors influencing small agribusinesses in the Greek countryside from the perspective of farmers/entrepreneurs especially after the changes expected from the validation of the EU-Mercosur partnership, the author considers this study to be beneficial for policymakers, funding organizations, agricultural chambers, chambers of commerce and industry, participating cooperatives, and farmers. Future researchers may use these findings to explore similar phenomena in other Greek agricultural regions and sectors.

Key-words: Decision Analysis, Agribusiness, farming, strategy

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1. Introduction

The present paper aims to evaluate the unique factors influencing the establishment of small agribusinesses in Greece. While Dimitriadou et al. (2021) calculate efficiency scores for small businesses in Greece, their primary focus is on the accommodation industries in non-coastal rural areas. Additionally, although Zaridis et al. (2015) explore determinants of the agribusiness market in Greece—such as customer intimacy, funding sources, production and distribution availability, consumption, technology, and competition—their research relies on secondary data. It does not incorporate primary sources that investigate these factors directly by asking entrepreneurs or farmers. Furthermore, despite the useful discussion of the demand for various agribusiness products, including dairy, vegetable, and olive oil farms, Zaridis et al. (2015) do not provide a specific rating to assess farmer motivations for establishing small agribusinesses in different regions of Greece. Moreover, while the role of competition is discussed in Zaridis (2018) and leasing and funding opportunities for small-sized agribusinesses are examined in Zaridis and Karamanis (2015), none of these studies attempts to measure the specific factors that influence the establishment of small agribusinesses in Greece from the perspective of the entrepreneur/farmer. In addition to these difficulties, it is not clear what the priorities will be for the small Greek agribusiness after the agreement between the European Union and Mercosur (Southern Common Market) partnership is validated, especially when it comes to prices and competition (Przybylska-Maszner, 2025). Likewise, even though Mavridis et al (2019) stress the need for training personnel in new technologies such as adopting AI, Smart Farming Sensors, Precision Agriculture, Digital

Agriculture, Cloud Services, and Modular Agricultural Robotics, the authors provide no primary evidence regarding specific agribusiness industries and the precise agricultural regions in Greece in need of such developments.

The studies mentioned above primarily rely on published data analyses and do not include primary investigations. Furthermore, while Goulas (2025) offers an informative review of the relationship between tradition and innovation in Greece's agribusiness, emphasizing sustainability and strategic management through insights from interesting focus group discussions, it is crucial to note that this analysis is limited to data collected in Thessaly and does not account for other agricultural regions in the country. Additionally, none of the previously mentioned works utilize techniques that assess the various factors promoting entrepreneurship in agribusiness or categorize these factors to align with different types of small-sized agribusinesses across different regions of Greece. There is no weighted scale available to evaluate factors from marginal to vital, which would help identify the motives for starting an agribusiness in various agricultural production areas across diverse geographical regions.

The above-mentioned studies do not engage in a discussion on how to establish agribusiness firms for various agricultural products in different sectors of Greece from the perspective of younger farmers/entrepreneurs. The present paper aims to fill this gap by surveying local farmers and entrepreneurs of various age ranges using a specially designed agribusiness questionnaire. The selected geographical regions are Eastern Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Crete, and Peloponnese. Previous work by Tziolas et al. (2025) has justified this selection by highlighting the considerable potential for the agrifood business in these areas. The results will be analyzed to identify the primary motivations for initiating agribusinesses across various sectors, including olive oil production, grapes and wine, vegetables and fruits, and honey, particularly in light of the current notable aversion to farming in these domains (Tziolas et al., 2025). The methodology employed will be the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique (SMART), which is effective in identifying the best alternative among multiple options and has demonstrated its utility in various practical applications (Dewi and Siallagan, 2023).

2. Olive oil farms

Greek olive oil production has varied significantly, ranging from 175,000 metric tons in 2023/24 to 346,000 metric tons in 2017/18, with a 10-year average of 264,800 metric tons (IOC Statistics). The food export sector in Greece heavily relies on olive oil, which comprises 50–60% of total output and accounts for 20% of export value (Trading Economics). By 2025/26, Greece is projected to consume 110,000 metric tons of olive oil, translating to approximately 12 liters per person (IOC Statistics). According to SEVITEL, around 70–80% of Greek olive oil is classified as extra virgin, recognized for being the tastiest and healthiest grade (Trading Economics). These figures underscore the essential contribution of olive oil to Greece's economy and its significance in Mediterranean cuisine. The trends in olive oil production and consumption reflect Greece's agricultural heritage and the global demand for quality olive oil.

Nevertheless, research indicates several challenges that impede Greek olive farming. First, the industry requires comprehensive reform due to its small size and fragmentation, while nutritional quality and acidity are additional concerns (Tsolakou et al. 2025). Regarding industry fragmentation, Pazarskis et al. (2023) studied the potential of mergers and acquisitions, but farmer motivation for such solutions is not clear in the study. Secondly, the implementation of marketing standards and favourable trade regulations necessitates a shift from bulk to branded Greek olive oil in both local and export markets (Kionaris and Agiangkatzoglou, 2027). There is a need to enhance exports and integrate Greek olive oil more effectively into global value chains (Balis, 2021). However, the literature has not yet assessed to what degree it will be possible, especially after the partnership of Mercosur-EU (Przybylska-Maszner, 2025). Third, a strategy for olive oil quality must be developed that recognizes the positive externalities from extensive and semi-extensive Greek cultivation systems, which utilize environmentally sustainable practices and preserve local olive tree cultivars (Zampounis and Karanikolas, 2024). In conclusion, enhancing sector coordination and governance involves improving the operational efficiency of inter-professional organizations and fostering collaboration, but a study on factor motivation is essential before proceeding to any of these solutions.

3. Grapes and wine

Greece has a rich, millennia-old wine tradition and has developed a modern viticulture sector that incorporates international vine varieties while also producing unique wines from nearly 300 local varieties, including Assyrtiko, Moschofilero, Agiorgitiko, and Xinomavro grapes (Athanasoglou et al., 2025). Greek wine grape production reached a peak of 605.66 thousand tons in December 2015 but fell to 337.85 thousand tons by December 2023 (Trading Economics). Greek wine is cultivated across 11 regions: the Peloponnese, Central Greece and Euboea (which includes Attica and Boeotia), the Dodecanese, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Epirus, Crete, the Aegean Islands, the Ionian Islands, and the Cycladic Islands. Greece boasts 120 Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs) and over 30 Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs). White wines comprise 70% of production, while red wines constitute the remaining 30%. Traditional Retsina accounts for 30% of total wine production and is primarily consumed domestically. In 2024, Greece produced 2.2 million hl of wine (Sommelierwinebox).

Despite its ancient heritage, Greek wine production faces major challenges: severe climate change impacts (droughts, frost), slashing yields, an aging grower population with few successors, small vineyard sizes, outdated regulations, reliance on EU funding, and competition from cheap imports, all challenging quality, modernization, and the sector's future (Mamalis et al., 2024). In addition to long-term deterioration, underreported desertion and rising imports are also difficulties (Greek Reporter). Research also demonstrates an import-export imbalance. Imports grew over 200,000 hl every four years (2009, 2013, and 2017) before declining. However, exports decreased below 300,000 hl every four years (2008, 2012, and 2016), then rose (Vlachos, 2017). Greek wine (domestic and foreign) turnover is less than EUR 400 million (approximately USD 466 million), less than the Athenian Brewery's turnover. Beyond scale, the sector has structural and external difficulties, such as the average vineyard area of 4,000 square meters. The average age of a winegrower is 58, and there are not many young people coming into the business (Koutroupi et al., 2015). Moreover, Greece has not fully realized its wine export potential, unlike other Southern European Union countries. This disadvantage is particularly threatening to Greek wine exports, especially after expected competition from Mercosur countries through the EU-Mercosur partnership (Rudloff et al., 2025). For the moment, studies indicate that tourism drives grape and wine demand seasonally (Alamanos, Kuznesof, and Ritson, 2016), but again no attempt is made to identify the factors that would expand seasonality and increase exports in any of the regions examined in the current paper.

4. Vegetables and Fruits

The 2025 Greek fruit and vegetable processing market is valued at EUR 3.4 billion. The industry comprises 905 companies and has experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.5% from 2020 to 2025. During the same period, the market size has grown at a CAGR of 2.5%. This sector includes frozen and prepared vegetables (Ibisworld factsheet, July 2025). Open-field vegetable harvests primarily meet local demand, except for exports of asparagus, sweet peppers, and processed cucumbers. Conversely, out-of-season crops such as watermelons, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplants are in high demand in both local and foreign markets, commanding high prices and making them economically significant for Greece (Olympios, 2002).

However, in 2025, the Greek fruit and vegetable agribusiness faces numerous challenges, including competition from cheap imports, severe impacts of climate change (such as droughts and floods), and a labor shortage that requires an additional 70,000 workers (Dimas, 2025). Other challenges include small farm sizes, pesticide misuse (including illegal imports), technology gaps, and supply chain issues related to food loss and distribution. Pazarskis et al. (2021) argued that potential mergers would diminish small-sized farms and the shortage of labor, but no specific study has been done regarding the willingness of younger farmers/entrepreneurs to participate in such schemes. Additionally, the sector grapples with an aging farming population and economic instability that favors export-led growth while struggling against domestic competition (Batzios, Tsiouni, and Kountios, 2025). However, export-led growth is still uncertain for the next couple of years due to the EU-Mercosur partnership, as imports from South America at a Pan-European level, including Greece, cannot yet be accurately forecasted (Arrighini, 2025).

Likewise, the declining labour productivity within the Greek vegetable and fruit industry is particularly concerning. Since 2020, the gross value added per person employed has dropped significantly, reversing previous gradual growth since 2008, and it has reached a 15-year low of EUR 13,465 in 2023 (Μακαντάση και Βαλέντης, 2024). The average yearly drop is 0.42%. Agriculture employed 461,400 individuals (11%) in 2023, an increase from 2020, but still below the levels seen in 2008–2010 (Karabetsos, 2025). This suggests that while more people are engaged in agriculture, overall output has decreased. Furthermore, significant issues include inadequate cash flow and technological investment, small and fragmented land holdings, and unfavourable conditions in Greece's energy market (Μακαντάση και Βαλέντης, 2024).

5. Honey

Greek honey's renowned superior quality stems from the diverse array of plants used in its production. The predominant kinds are pine, comprising 65% of total production and exhibiting a slow crystallization rate; thyme, largely sourced from Crete; and fir, orange, and heather honeys. This sector is characterized by nomadic beekeeping practices, a significant concentration of bee colonies, increasing professionalism, and emerging export markets (Kasapidou and Papatzimos, 2025). Significant manufacturers are located in Chalkidiki, Thassos, and Evia, where they create unique products with local ingredients like saffron and mastic (The Craftsmanship Initiative). Greek honey output is projected to attain 26,000 metric tons by 2026, indicating a 1.6% annual increase. Since 1966, the production of Greek honey has increased at an annual rate of 2.6% (Reportlinker). In 2023, Greece ranked as the 20th largest honey exporter globally, with exports valued at $27.1 million. In that year, Greece imported $18.6 million worth of honey, placing 21st among 212 countries (OEC World).

\Nevertheless, the Greek beekeeping industry faces several challenges, including climate change, rising production costs, unfair competition from inexpensive imports, and an influx of contaminated honey (Michailidis and Nikouli, 2025). These challenges adversely affect the Greek honey production industry. Recent polls indicate that over fifty percent of Greek honey sold is mixed with less expensive honey from other countries, particularly China and Ukraine (ekathimerini.com). The threat of competition from South America as a result of the partnership between the EU and Mercosur is also present (Rodriguez and Luciano, 2025). Competition from Africa is also rising (Abiola and Adefabi, 2022). Moreover, in 2025, honey production had diminished by almost fifty percent due to natural disasters and adverse weather conditions. This decrease jeopardizes the employment and livelihoods of beekeepers (Papatzimos, Kampouri, Kasapidou, 2025). Notwithstanding assistance from the CAP 2023-2027 apiculture program, beekeepers often encounter difficulties in generating sufficient income to sustain the sector (Parliamentary issue, European Parliament, December 15, 2024). An additional problem is a shortage of labor. Chanziioannidis and Partalidou (2024) have suggested ways to attract foreign labor, but it is not clear whether such a solution is among the decisive factors for adopting such strategies among Greek honey industry farmers and entrepreneurs.

6. Methodology

The research instrument employed in this paper is quantitative research. Quantitative research employs numerical data to identify significant patterns and utilize statistical methods to uncover important relationships between variables (Crossman, 2020). This approach is particularly effective for exploring connections between various factors, such as the relationship between honey production in a specific region and the level of government support (Pinho et al., 2012). In the first part of the study, the researcher distributed in person a short questionnaire to a sample of 1700 farmers/entrepreneurs at 23 agricultural cooperatives in Crete (4), Eastern Macedonia (5), Epirus (4), Peloponnese (5), and Thessaly (5) over a period of 11 months. Table 1 (Appendix) below illustrates the short questionnaire. The research method was quota sampling. Quota sampling involves setting specific targets for the individuals to interview or the subjects to study (Iliyasu and Etikan, 2021). For example, it may require interviewing a certain number of people from different regions, ensuring that the sample includes individuals from various groups, or selecting a specified number of employees with diverse job roles within a company (Giorgetti and Sebastiani, 2003). Research indicates that a significant advantage of quota sampling is its lack of dependence on a sampling frame or rigorous random sampling techniques (Futri, Risfandy, and Ibrahim, 2022). This characteristic makes quota sampling a faster and more straightforward method compared to others (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

In the present work, quota sampling was complemented by cluster sampling. In cluster sampling, the population is divided into groups known as "clusters," which are convenient for the research. These clusters can include villages, towns, neighbourhoods, sections of a factory, or any other relevant grouping that suits the study (Rangarajan et al., 2004). The researcher distributed the questionnaire to 340 farmers from each geographical area. Once the data was collected, it was compiled in an Excel sheet, and data analysis followed, presenting the trends.

Next, to identify the primary factor that farmers/entrepreneurs thought would give them the utmost benefit in developing their business, the author employed decision analysis tools. The tool selected is the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique (SMART). When decisions are without uncertainty, the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique (SMART) is effective (Maitland and Sammartino, 2015). Value functions are employed to score SMART alternatives (Goodwin and Wright, 2005). The process consists of eight steps. In the first step, the researcher identifies a decision-maker, who could be a business executive, a customer group, or any relevant participant in the process (Atan, Atan, and Gökmen, 2024). Phase two involves investigating alternatives after this identification. Paths forward may be unclear at this stage (Carli, Dotoli, and Pellegrino, 2018). When researchers are uncertain about how to proceed, they utilize a "screening process" to narrow down a vast list of options to a manageable number of suitable choices. In step three, decision-makers identify criteria related to the problem. Phase four evaluates each option, enabling the evaluator to compare them based on each criterion. This evaluation technique is referred to as "scoring" (Liesiö, 2014). In phase five, the decision-maker or makers assign weights to each criterion. Phase six produces a weighted average for each option based on the scores. This calculation reveals how each alternative performs across the established criteria. Finally, in Phase 7, decision makers can make conditional decisions (Corner and Corner, 1995).

Government funding, local demand, exports, price stability, equipment and technology, training, loans, and workforce availability were identified as the alternative factors, while the four industries—vegetables and fruits, olive oil farms, grapes and wine, and honey—were categorized as the attributes. A previous study by Kyrkilis and Semasis (2015) served as a reference for determining the alternatives factors. Accordingly, the selection of the four industries was based on their significance to agribusinesses in the identified areas, as noted in earlier research by Dagalidis (2014). The analysis examined each of the five geographical areas individually to discover any variations in preferences of alternative factors. The findings are illustrated through SMART models for each of the selected regions developed by the researcher in Excel, which evaluate the alternative factors on a scale from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Data collected from question 4 of the agribusiness questionnaire informed these calculations. The researcher determined the percentage weights for each of the four industries across the geographical areas using the weights provided by the respondents in question 3 of the agribusiness questionnaire. Next, the scores were multiplied by the weights. The final scores were calculated by multiplying scores by the weights for the various combinations, thereby identifying the optimal alternative factor or a couple of the top alternative factors for all five geographical regions.

7. The findings: data analysis

The Agribusiness Questionnaire was conducted anonymously, as requested by most respondents. Figure 1 presents the results of Question 1, which inquired about the respondents' ages. As shown, a significant majority—56 percent—fall within the age range of 41 to 60 years. Twenty-six percent of farmers and entrepreneurs are between the ages of 19 and 40, while eighteen percent are 60 or older. This age distribution is noteworthy; the researcher distributed the questionnaire to all farmers and entrepreneurs registered in the 23 agricultural cooperatives visited, and it appears that most registered members are within the 40 to 60 age range, suggesting that these are largely established agribusinesses. Additionally, the increasing percentage of younger farmers and entrepreneurs is encouraging.

Furthermore, Figure 2 shows the replies to Question 2 regarding the types of various

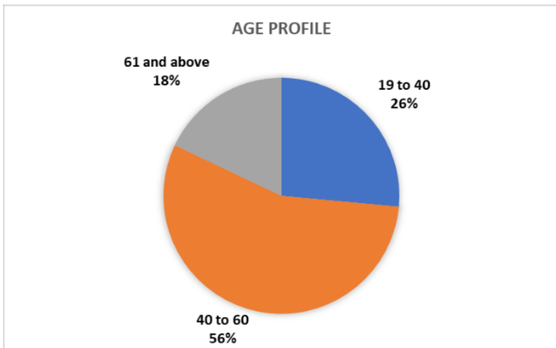


Fig. 1: *Age profiles of the respondents*

agribusinesses interviewed. Again, the results are intriguing, as the largest farmer/entrepreneur groups are those who run olive oil farms, with 40 percent, and those who run grape and wine businesses, with 31 percent. While the number of farmers/entrepreneurs that run vegetable and fruit firms is not bad, being at 23 percent, the result for producers of honey is alarming, with

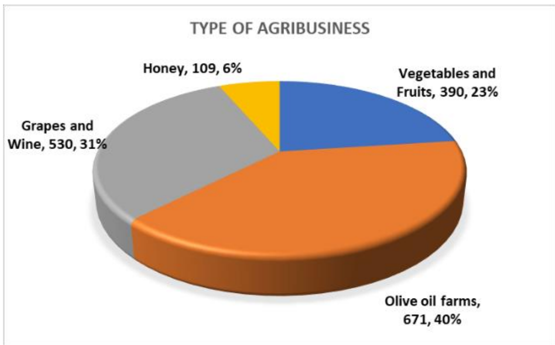


Fig. 2: *Type of Agribusiness*

a low 6 percent. The reason for this very low percentage needs to be investigated, and the SMART analysis that follows below aims to do that, as well as to find explanations for the rest of the percentages.

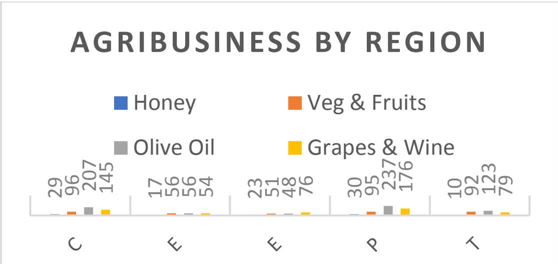
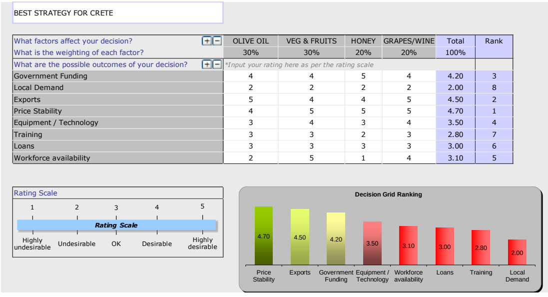


Fig. 3: *Agribusiness types by regions*

For the time being, a more complete picture regarding agribusiness types examined is given in Figure 3, where the researched regions are shown by type for each of the five selected regions. Here, the reader can see, from left to right, the numbers for each agribusiness type in the different regions, starting from Crete, then Eastern Macedonia, Epirus, Peloponnese, and lastly Thessaly. The numbers for honey agribusinesses in Thessaly (10) and Eastern Macedonia (17) are alarming, and one needs to understand why such businesses are underdeveloped in these regions. Moreover, the numbers for vegetable and fruit firms in Eastern Macedonia (56) and Epirus (51) are also worrying, as such firms in these two regions used to be much more vigorous in the past (Olympios, 2002). Investigating the reasons behind the shrinkage of these agribusiness types in these two markets is also crucial. The author proceeds to do so in the following section.

8. The Findings: SMART results

The results of the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique reveal significant differences in respondent preferences across various regions and even within the same region. Starting with Crete, weights were assigned unequally according to the average responses in Question 3 of the Agribusiness questionnaire. Here, olive oil and vegetables/fruits each received a weight of 30 percent, while honey and grapes/wine were weighted at 20 percent each (see Figure 4). Consequently, the top priority for Cretan farmers and entrepreneurs is price stability, which received a cumulative average score of 4.70 on the 5-point rating scale. This indicates that, based on the calculations, price stability is the foremost concern for Cretan agribusinesses, followed closely by exports (option 2), which scored 4.50. In contrast, for the Peloponnese



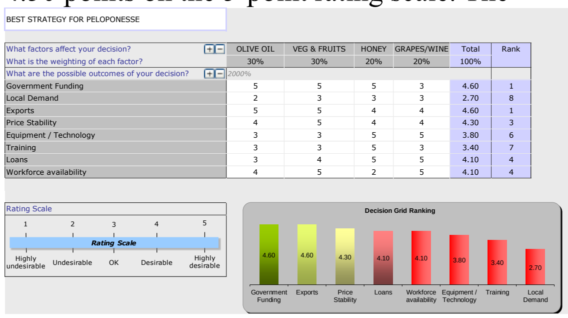
BEST STRATEGY FOR CRETE

What factors affect your decision?	OLIVE OIL	VEG & FRUITS	HONEY	GRAPES/WINE	Total	Rank
What is the weighting of each factor?	30%	30%	20%	20%	100%	
What are the possible outcomes of your decision?	*Input your rating here as per the rating scale					
Government Funding	4	4	5	4	4.20	3
Local Demand	2	2	2	2	2.00	8
Exports	5	4	4	5	4.50	2
Price Stability	4	5	5	5	4.70	1
Equipment / Technology	3	4	3	4	3.50	4
Training	3	3	2	3	2.80	7
Loans	3	3	3	3	3.00	6
Workforce availability	2	5	1	4	3.10	5

Fig. 4: *SMART result for Crete*

region, the primary issues of concern are government funding (option 1), with a cumulative score of 4.60 out of 5, and exports, which received the same score. Figure 5 illustrates these findings along with the other results. As shown, exports (Option 3) are also significant for this region. However, the preference for government funding over price stability—unlike the situation for Cretan agribusiness—suggests that the Peloponnese faces liquidity problems that are pressing for policymakers.

In Eastern Macedonia, the situation appears to differ slightly. Here, exports (option 3) and equipment/technology rank highest, each scoring 4.50 points on the 5-point rating scale. The

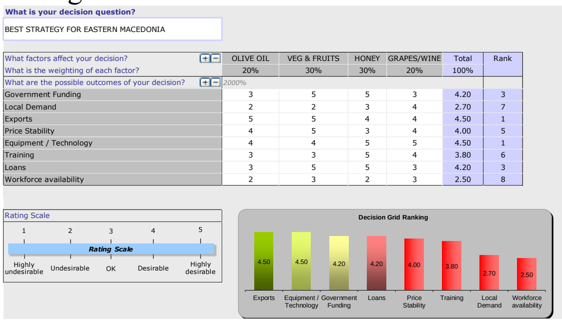


BEST STRATEGY FOR PELOPONESSE

What factors affect your decision?	OLIVE OIL	VEG & FRUITS	HONEY	GRAPES/WINE	Total	Rank
What is the weighting of each factor?	30%	30%	20%	20%	100%	
What are the possible outcomes of your decision?	2000%					
Government Funding	5	5	5	3	4.60	1
Local Demand	2	3	3	3	2.70	8
Exports	5	5	4	4	4.60	1
Price Stability	4	5	4	4	4.30	3
Equipment / Technology	3	3	5	5	3.80	6
Training	3	3	5	3	3.40	7
Loans	3	4	5	5	4.10	4
Workforce availability	4	5	2	5	4.10	4

Fig. 5: *SMART results for Peloponnese*

those in Eastern Macedonia, as training (Option 6) shares the top position with equipment /data indicate that exports are becoming a significant issue across many of the regions examined. Furthermore, the emphasis on equipment and technology suggests that agribusinesses in



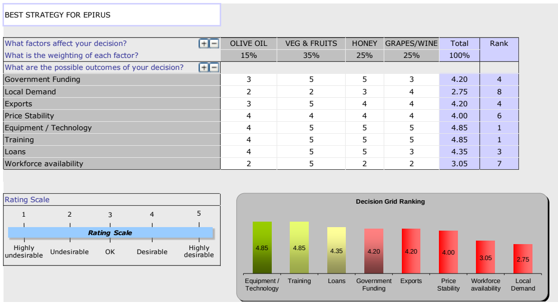
What is your decision question?

BEST STRATEGY FOR EASTERN MACEDONIA

What factors affect your decision?	OLIVE OIL	VEG & FRUITS	HONEY	GRAPES/WINE	Total	Rank
What is the weighting of each factor?	20%	30%	30%	20%	100%	
What are the possible outcomes of your decision?	2000%					
Government Funding	3	5	5	3	4.20	3
Local Demand	2	2	3	4	2.70	7
Exports	5	5	4	4	4.50	1
Price Stability	4	5	3	4	4.00	5
Equipment / Technology	4	4	5	5	4.50	1
Training	3	3	5	4	3.80	6
Loans	3	5	5	3	4.20	3
Workforce availability	2	3	2	3	2.50	8

Fig. 6: *SMART Results for Eastern Macedonia*

Eastern Macedonia require substantial upgrades and the adoption of new technologies to maintain production levels (see Figure 6). This finding raises concerns for policymakers at both the national and EU levels. Similarly, the results for Epirus (see Figure 7) show equipment/



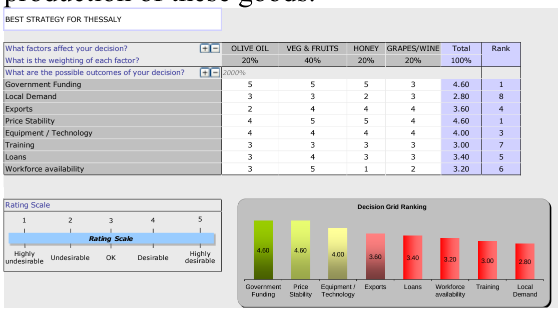
BEST STRATEGY FOR EPIRUS

What factors affect your decision?	OLIVE OIL	VEG & FRUITS	HONEY	GRAPES/WINE	Total	Rank
What is the weighting of each factor?	15%	35%	25%	25%	100%	
What are the possible outcomes of your decision?						
Government Funding	3	5	5	3	4.20	4
Local Demand	2	2	3	4	2.75	8
Exports	3	5	4	4	4.20	4
Price Stability	4	4	4	4	4.00	6
Equipment / Technology	4	5	5	5	4.85	1
Training	4	5	5	5	4.85	1
Loans	4	5	5	3	4.35	3
Workforce availability	2	5	2	2	3.05	7

Fig. 7: *SMART Results for Epirus*

technology leading with a score of 4.85. The circumstances in Epirus are equally alarming compared to technology. Although the weightings differ slightly among products in these areas, the ongoing production issues indicate that Epirus urgently needs to focus on training agribusiness personnel. The results of the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique reveal significant differences in respondent preferences across various regions and even within the same region. Starting with Crete, weights were assigned unequally according to the average responses in Question 3 of the Agribusiness questionnaire. Here, olive oil and vegetables/fruits each received a weight of 30 percent, while honey and grapes/wine were weighted at 20 percent each. Consequently, the top priority for Cretan farmers and entrepreneurs is price stability, which received a cumulative average score of 4.70 on the 5-point rating scale. This indicates that, based on the calculations, price stability is the foremost concern for Cretan agribusinesses, followed closely by exports (option 2), which scored 4.50. In contrast, for the Peloponnese region, the primary issues of concern are government funding (option 1), with a cumulative score of 4.60 out of 5, and exports, which received the same score. Figure 5 illustrates these findings along with the other results. As shown, exports (Option 3) are also significant for this region. However, the preference for government funding over price stability—unlike the situation for Cretan agribusiness—suggests that the Peloponnese faces liquidity problems that are pressing for policymakers.

The results for Thessaly (see Figure 8) confirm those of the Peloponnese, indicating that price stability—ranked second in the Peloponnese calculations with a score of 4.30—and government funding are the primary concerns, both scoring 4.60. Although the weighting differs, with Thessaly allocating 40 percent to vegetables and fruits while Peloponnese assigns 30 percent to vegetables and fruits and another 30 percent to olive oil, the profiles of these two regions remain similar. This similarity is expected, given their advanced development in the production of these goods.



BEST STRATEGY FOR THESSALY

What factors affect your decision?	OLIVE OIL	VEG & FRUITS	HONEY	GRAPES/WINE	Total	Rank
What is the weighting of each factor?	20%	40%	20%	20%	100%	
What are the possible outcomes of your decision?	2000%					
Government Funding	5	5	5	3	4.60	1
Local Demand	3	3	2	3	2.80	8
Exports	2	4	4	4	3.60	4
Price Stability	4	5	5	4	4.60	1
Equipment / Technology	4	4	4	4	4.00	3
Training	3	3	3	3	3.00	7
Loans	3	4	3	3	3.40	5
Workforce availability	3	5	1	2	3.20	6

Fig. 8: *SMART Results for Thessaly*

9. Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the attributes that contribute to the development of small olive oil farms, honey-producing units, vegetable and fruit businesses, and grape and wine firms in selected regions of Greece. The geographical areas examined include Crete, Peloponnese, Eastern Macedonia, Thessaly, and Epirus. After discussing the unique characteristics of these regions and the recent developments in the aforementioned industries, the author distributed a questionnaire to 23 cooperatives in these areas. Using quota sampling, the geographical regions were equally represented in the sample, which led to the identification of factors important for the development of small agribusinesses from the perspective of farmers and entrepreneurs. Following this, the writer analyzed the results using data analysis methods and the Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique (SMART). Both the data analysis and SMART results revealed numerous similarities among the examined regions and markets while also highlighting significant differences. Farmers and entrepreneurs in southern Greece expressed greater concerns about government funding, price stability, and exports, whereas those in northern Greece indicated a pressing need for technology and equipment upgrades, as well as personnel training. Given the lack of prior studies assessing the overall importance of factors affecting the development of small agribusinesses in the Greek countryside through the eyes of the farmers/entrepreneurs, especially after the changes expected from EU-Mercosur partnership, the author believes that the insights from this study will be valuable to policymakers, funding organizations, agricultural chambers, chambers of commerce and industry, the cooperatives that participated in the study, and the farmers themselves. The findings also pave the way for future researchers to explore similar cases in other agricultural regions and industries in Greece and beyond.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: *Agribusiness Questionnaire*

1. What is your age range? (encircle)	*18 to 40* *40 to 60* *60+*
2. In which of the following industries do you specialize? (You may tick more than one): *Vegetables and Fruits* *Olive oil farms* *Grapes and Wine* *Honey*	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
3. Assign a % weight to each one of these 4 industries according to the importance that they have for you (the total weight must not exceed 100%) *Vegetables and Fruits* *Olive oil farms* *Grapes and Wine* *Honey*	_____ _____ _____ _____
4. Rate from 1 (worst) to 5 (best) each of the following factors that you think will help you to develop your business: *Government Funding* *Local demand* *Exports* *Price stability* *Equipment/Technology* *Training* *Loans* *Workforce availability*	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
5. In which geographical region(s) do you operate?	____________________________