



# ORGANICS EUROPE YOUTH EVENT



Organic And You(th)  
Building Resilient Food Futures



in collaboration with



# Sustaining communities: the potential of Biodistricts in nurturing rural vitality

8 July 2024, 16:45 – 17:30



# Organic Districts: a definition

' a geographical area where farmers, the public, tourist operators, associations and public authorities enter into an agreement for the sustainable management of local resources, based on organic principles and practices '.

(EU Organic Action Plan, EU Commission, 2021)



The Principle of Health.



The Principle of Ecology.



The Principle of Fairness.



The Principle of Care.

*place-based*

*holistic vision of organic farming*

*people-centred*

*multi-sector & multi-actor*

*relation-based*

# Organic Districts: key development steps

- preliminary mapping of resources and context analysis (pre-/feasibility check)
- diversified, cohesive, committed promoting group (including leaders, catalysts)
- intense participatory process (open consultations, bottom-up but also top-down approach)
- well-thought, context-specific strategy & plan
- effective governance solution
- institutional recognition
- diversified funding sources (membership fees, public support, private sponsors, payment for services provided by the biodistrict, fund raising, international, national, local projects)
- knowledge sharing, influential networking
- monitoring & evaluation



# Organic Districts: the Italian experience

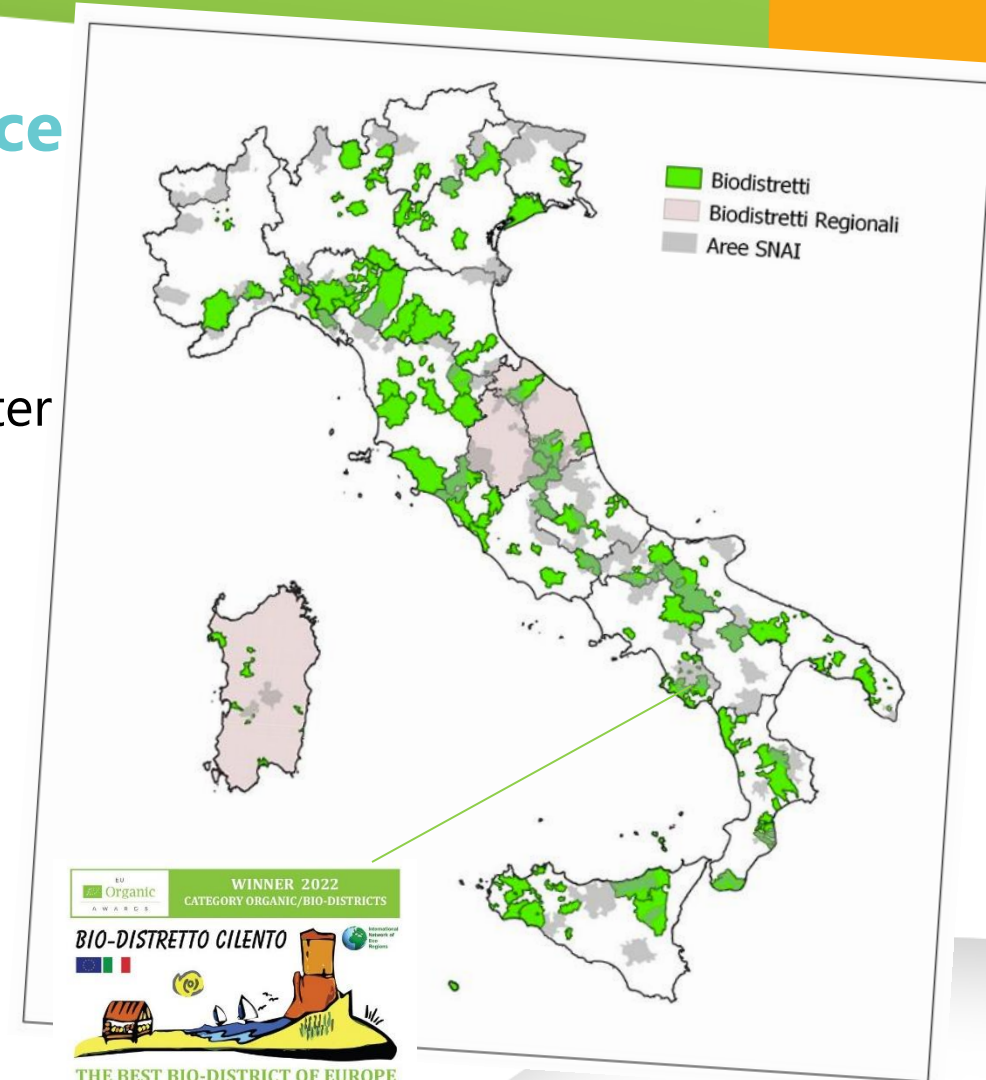
- About 31% of the national territory
- More than 80 initiatives, 48 in national ministerial register
- Pioneers and active promoters of the concept globally



International  
Network of  
Eco  
Regions



- Institutionalization of the concept
  - Devoted article in the National Organic Law
  - Devoted support funds for development
  - Included in NOAP and in CAP National Strategic P.
  - Included in national strategy for inner areas (SNAI)



# Field experiences - 1

## BIODISTRICT PLAN

- Relocalisation of food, energy and waste systems
- Sustainable tourism
- Circular economy and decarbonization of pottery manufacturing
- Traditional crafts for sustainable productions
- Digitalisation
- Environmental education in the schools
- Cultural and sport activities



- established in 2011
- legal recognition (regional law) in 2019
- 13 municipalities
- 600 organic producers
- 2,000 ha - 42% certified organic land area



## Field experiences - 2

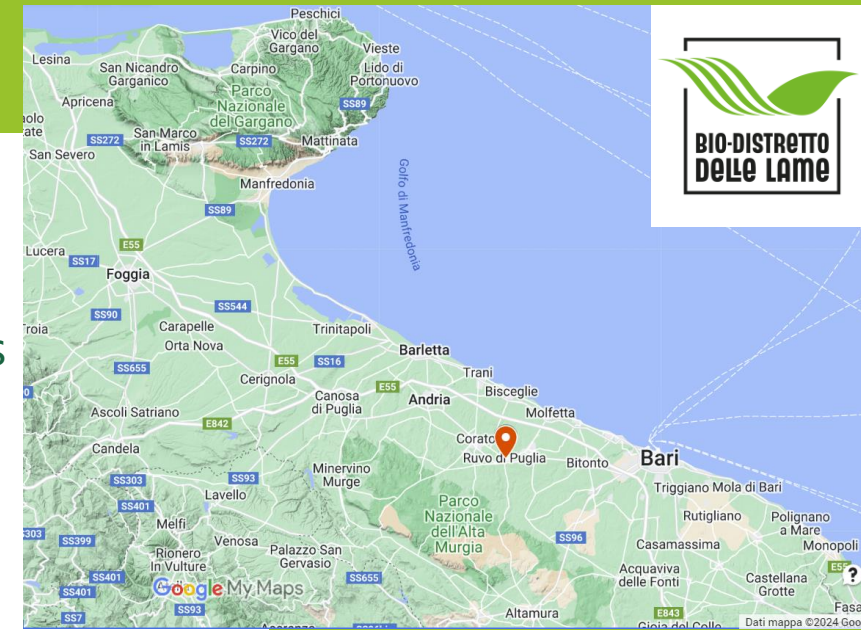
A diversified promoting group, dominant local agri-food value chains but also socio-cultural actors

- big local agricultural enterprises
- agricultural cooperatives
- local associations (tourist, environmental, cultural)
- one social cooperative
- one public theatre

One shared vision for the future of their territory: reconnecting 'the rural' and 'the urban'



a Living Lab of rural women innovators



- established in 2016
- legal recognition (regional law) in 2021
- 3 municipalities, approx. 370 km<sup>2</sup>
- more than 200 organic producers

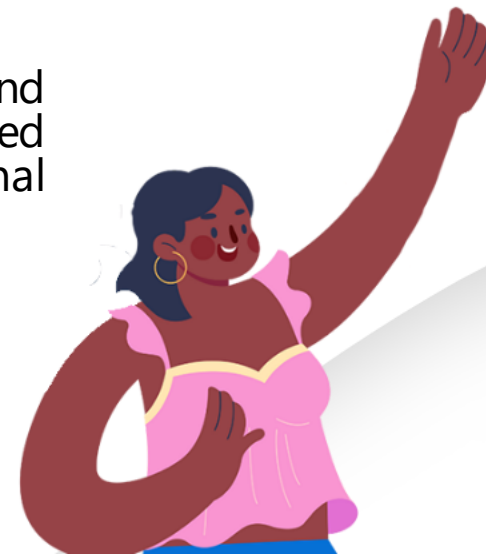
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# Organic Districts: the Italian experience

## SOME ISSUES & CHALLENGES

- Role of the organic sector in the biodistricts (organic land area requirements, organic operators' presence in governance mechanisms)
- Geographical scale (from 1 municipality to a whole region)
- Active participation of the local community needed
- Reliance on voluntary work vs professionalisation
- Relationship of the biodistrict with local political powers
- Biodistricts can play a crucial role in coordinating use and integration of national and EU funds & programmes based on shared place-based strategies and improving institutional dialogue





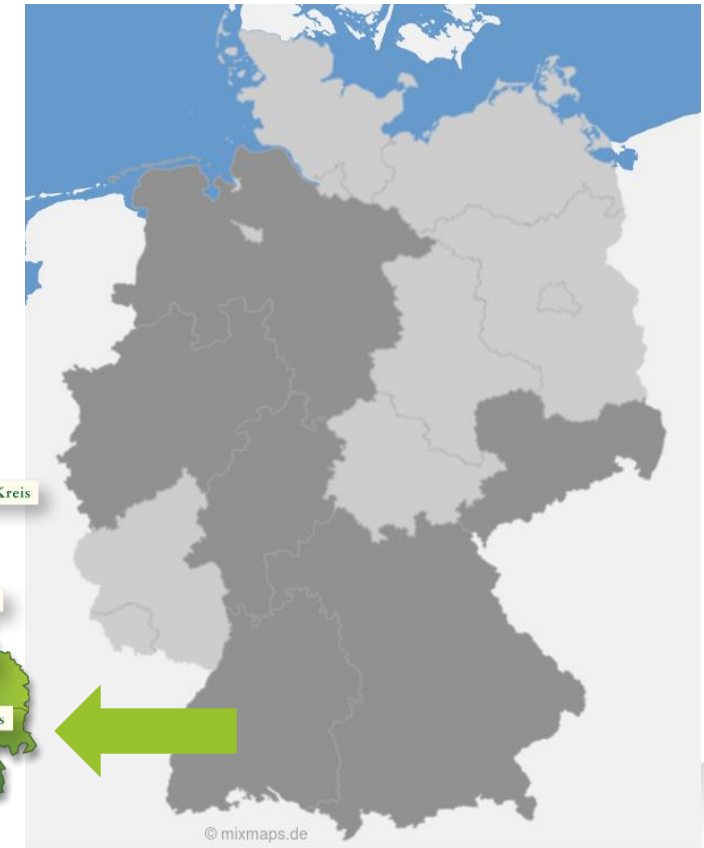
Project funded by Italian cooperation and implemented by CIHEAM Bari



# Biodistricts in Germany

- Not organised by the country, but the federal states
- 6 out of 16 federal states have Biodistricts plus 26 organic cities

→ They all are intended to build regional organic value chains, promote awareness of organic farming and support networking between regional actors



# Community engagement/bringing people together

- Round tables and excursions for kitchen staff
- „Kitchen party“ and speed dating
- Weekly and annual markets
- Support direct trade on the farms



## Educational projects

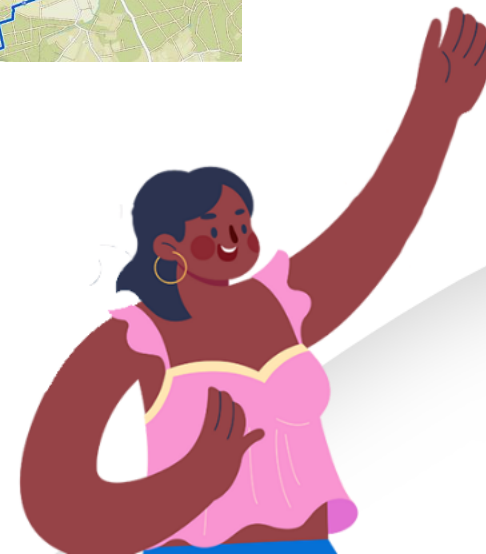
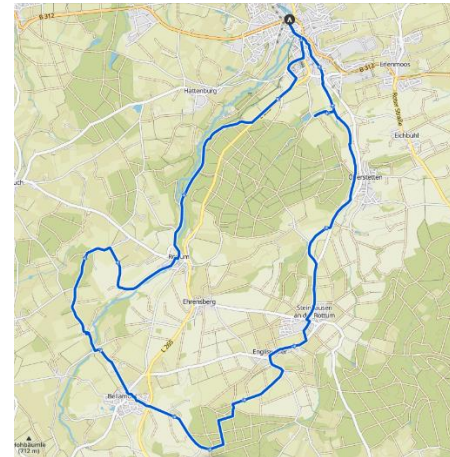
- Information organic certification process
- Demonstration farms and fields
- Lectures about organic farming/organic labels
- Cooking and baking workshops with organic products
- Publicity
- Visits on organic farms for consumers





## Tourism – bike tours

- An instrument to bring people out to farms, meet the farmers and get to know the principles of organic farming
- Biberach: five tours with information boards on the farms  
→ guided and unguided possible
- New approach this summer: school classes and clubs





## New (or old 😊) products & cooperative enterprises

- Cultivation of millet, chickpeas and black beans and new sale channels for them
- Focus on niche products like goats milk&meat
- Cooperatives to finance mobile slaughter units



# Challenges

- Just one person for a region as a manager
  - not enough man/womanpower
  - creative input/new ideas
- Participation needed from people with little time (farmers, kitchen staff,...)
- Economic challenges and risks for regional actors
- Economic situation in general
- Work in our own bubble – no need to reinvent the wheel

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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