Valorization Legumes Related Ecosystem Services

D1.8: Synergies plan (Version 2)

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[1] *Please consult the Grant Agreement: R: Document, report; DEM: Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs; DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.; DATA: Data sets, microdata, etc; DMP: Data management plan; ETHICS: Deliverables related to ethics issues; SECURITY: Deliverables related to security issues; OTHER: Software, technical diagram, algorithms, models, etc.*

[2] *Please consult the Grant Agreement: PU – Public, fully open, e.g. web (Deliverables flagged as public will be automatically published in CORDIS project's page); SEN – Sensitive, limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement; Classified R-UE/EU-R – EU RESTRICTED under the Commission Decision No2015/444; Classified C-UE/EU-C - EU CONFIDENTIAL under the Commission Decision No2015/444; Classified S-UE/EU-S – EU SECRET under the Commission Decision No2015/444*

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VALERECO Consortium

No.	Participant organization name	Short name	Country
1	GEOPONIKO PANEPISTIMIO ATHINON	AUA	GR
2	ESC DIJON BOURGOGNE	BSB	FR
3	DELPHY BV	DELPHY	NL
4	UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA	UC	PT
5	REFRAME FOOD ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIRIA	RFF	GR
6	INSTITUT ZA RATARSTVO I POVRTARSTVO INSTITUT OD NACIONALNOG ZNACAJA ZA REPUBLIKU SRBIJU	IFVCNS	RS
7	GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ UNIVERSITAET HANNOVER	LUH	DE
8	STICHTING WAGENINGEN RESEARCH	WR	NL
9	INSTITUTO NAVARRO DE TECNOLOGIAS E INFRAESTRUCTURAS AGROALIMENTARIAS SA	INTIA	ES
10	AgriFood Lithuania DIH	AFL	LT
11	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE	UNIFI	IT
12	UNIVERSITA DI PISA	UNIPI	IT
13	AG FUTURA TECHNOLOGII DOOEL SKOPJE	AGFT	MK
14	SCUOLA SUPERIORE DI STUDI UNIVERSITARI E DI PERFEZIONAMENTO S ANNA	SSSA	IT
15	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation	HELVETAS	CH

Executive Summary

The VALERECO Synergies Plan aims to enhance the project's impact by connecting its ecosystem with other EU-funded initiatives and networks focusing on legumes, agroecology, and soil health. By building on the active involvement of consortium partners in Horizon, PRIMA and national projects, VALERECO establishes a strong collaborative network that supports innovation, knowledge exchange and coordinated dissemination.

Key objectives include strengthening cross-project cooperation, aligning communication and dissemination efforts, and promoting mutual evaluation of activities and outcomes. Through these synergies, VALERECO contributes practical outputs, such as decision support tools, datasets, and its digital hub, to related initiatives, enriching the broader scientific and agricultural community.

During the first phase of VALERECO, synergies were initiated with more than twenty projects working on legumes, diversified cropping systems, agroecology and ecosystem services. These collaborations emerged through bilateral exchanges and participation in joint activities such as webinars, workshops, conferences and field days. Consortium partners also engaged in reciprocal dissemination efforts, shared methodological insights, and established links with project platforms and repositories, strengthening interaction across the wider research landscape.

These early actions form a solid foundation for deeper cooperation in the coming years. As research activities progress, VALERECO will intensify collaboration on methodological exchange, ecosystem-service assessment, Living Lab processes and policy-relevant outputs. This expanding synergy framework supports collective learning, enhances visibility and contributes to a coherent European effort to advance legume-based and agroecological farming systems.

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List of abbreviations

EU	European Union	**CAP**	Common Agricultural Policy
DSS	Decision Support System	**GIS**	Geographic Information System
AWM	Agroecological Weed Management		

1. Introduction

The VALERECO project aims to develop an EU-wide legume ecosystem that identifies barriers and enablers of legume adoption and highlights the economic and environmental benefits of integrating legumes into European agricultural systems. This approach supports biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable farming practices across the EU. Synergies are a core activity of the VALERECO project, designed to extend the impact of its activities by linking the project to other initiatives, addressing scientific and policy perspectives, and creating a collaborative network of research and innovation.

Deliverable 1.7, submitted at Month 3, outlined the initial strategy for connecting the VALERECO ecosystem with other funded projects, thematic networks and upcoming EU initiatives working on legume research, agroecology, and soil health. It established the first mapping of relevant projects, initiated early bilateral contacts, and identified areas for future collaboration. These initial steps provided the baseline for the further development of synergies during the first eighteen months of the project.

Building on this foundation, Deliverable 1.8 reports the progress achieved between Months 1 and 18. During this period, VALERECO expanded its network of interactions with more than twenty European and national projects, strengthened knowledge exchange and participated in joint activities including workshops, webinars, conferences, field days and reciprocal dissemination. The consortium's involvement in major Horizon and PRIMA projects, such as LEGVALUE, LEGU-MED, GOOD, OPER8 and others, continued to facilitate methodological exchange, mutual learning, and alignment of dissemination efforts. This extensive engagement positions VALERECO as an active contributor within the wider European research landscape and enhances its visibility across related initiatives.

Bilateral exchanges and the cooperation meeting supported the structured development of these synergies, enabling the presentation of project objectives, the mapping of complementarities and the identification of concrete pathways for joint activities. These collaborative efforts help to enhance cross-project synergies, strengthen communication and dissemination activities, and support the integration of VALERECO's outputs, such as datasets, decision-support tools, and the digital hub, into broader European knowledge ecosystems.

Deliverable 1.8 provides an updated overview of the synergies established to date, the collaborative activities carried out in the first eighteen months and the added value these interactions bring to VALERECO's research and Living Labs. A final update will be delivered on Month 36 to report consolidated outcomes and long-term cooperation.

2. Participants

All VALERECO consortium partners have played a crucial role in the contribution of the Deliverable 1.8 "Synergies Plan (version 2)" leveraging their active participation in related projects and networks. Their involvement in these initiatives enables them to provide specialised expertise, facilitate connections and establish collaborations with aligned projects. By drawing on the knowledge and experiences gained from

their engagements in these projects, consortium members strengthen VALERECO's collaborative framework, enriching the project's research and innovation efforts through cross-project insights and best practices.

3. Methodology

The development of synergies within VALERECO follows a structured, partner-driven approach. Consortium members collected information on relevant European and national projects, thematic networks, and research infrastructures, many of which they already participate in. This process enabled the establishment of initial links, the exchange of knowledge on legumes and their ecosystem services, and the identification of shared interests and complementary activities.

The VALERECO methodology emphasizes co-creation and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders across Europe to support the integration of legumes into farming systems. This participatory approach ensures that researchers, advisors, farmers, and policymakers can contribute to the research design and to the development of practical and context-specific outputs.

VALERECO initiated a series of bilateral meetings followed by a cooperation meeting involving projects funded under the same topic and other relevant projects. This meeting provided a structured setting for presenting project objectives, discussing potential areas of collaboration and identifying pathways for coordinated activities. Together, these steps support the alignment of communication, dissemination and exploitation actions and ensure that the information needs of scientific, advisory and policy audiences are addressed through appropriate channels.

4. Synergies with Projects

Establishing synergies with complementary initiatives is essential for creating an enabling environment that strengthens research, innovation and impact across Europe. Throughout the first eighteen months, VALERECO initiated collaborations with projects working on legumes, agroecology, ecosystem services, sustainable farming, digital tools and participatory research. Additional potential collaborations were identified and will be further explored as VALERECO's research progresses.

VALERECO's synergies are built on strategic interactions with other projects, enabling the exchange of best practices, knowledge and data. These connections draw on existing networks, shared research infrastructures and complementary methodological frameworks. Together, they enhance the project's capacity to evaluate and integrate the ecosystem services provided by legumes, improve the relevance of decision-support tools and contribute to the advancement of sustainable agriculture across Europe.

4.1 Projects linked with VALERECO

The VALERECO project is strategically linked with numerous national and international initiatives that enhance its research, impact, and dissemination activities. These collaborations allow VALERECO to draw from a wealth of existing knowledge, data, and methodologies, strengthening its capacity to innovate and deliver effective solutions for legume-based agricultural systems.

The linked projects span various regions across Europe and beyond, each offering expertise in areas such as agroecology, biodiversity, ecosystem services, sustainable farming practices, and digital tools. By engaging with these initiatives, VALERECO benefits from complementary research efforts and contributes to the broader understanding of the environmental, economic, and social value of legumes.

The synergies fostered through these partnerships enable VALERECO to:

- **Leverage shared resources and expertise:** Accessing datasets, tools, and innovative methodologies developed by other projects helps VALERECO refine its research design and implementation strategies, ensuring the integration of best practices.
- **Enhance knowledge exchange and learning:** Regular interactions and collaborative activities with project partners facilitate the continuous exchange of knowledge, allowing VALERECO to stay updated on the latest advancements and challenges in legume research and agroecological transitions.
- **Promote cross-project innovation:** By actively participating in the broader ecosystem of research initiatives, VALERECO can co-create innovative solutions tailored to diverse farming systems, enhancing the project's capacity to address complex agricultural and environmental challenges.
- **Support policy and market integration:** Many of the linked projects work on bridging the gap between scientific research and policy or market adoption. VALERECO benefits from these connections by aligning its outputs with policy needs, market demands, and stakeholder expectations, making its findings more applicable and impactful.
- **Strengthen communication and dissemination efforts:** Through joint dissemination activities, VALERECO extends its reach to wider audiences, including farmers, policymakers, researchers, and the general public, ensuring that its results contribute to ongoing dialogues on sustainable agriculture and ecosystem management.
- **Foster a network of living labs and stakeholder engagement:** VALERECO's involvement with these projects allows it to participate in Living Labs and other participatory research environments, where practical, on-the-ground testing of research outputs takes place. This interaction helps validate VALERECO's approaches and fine-tune solutions to meet real-world needs.

Overall, these connections enrich VALERECO's scientific and operational scope and position it within a dynamic European research landscape dedicated to advancing legume-based and agroecological farming systems.

Below is a list of key projects linked with VALERECO, each contributing specific knowledge, methodologies, and collaborative opportunities that support the broader objectives of the VALERECO initiative:

LEGU-MED | Legumes in biodiversity-based farming systems in Mediterranean basin	
Type of project	Applied research project
Leading organisation	University of Firenze
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: 3 IT, 1 DE, 1 HR, 1 ES International Partners: 1 DZ, 1 LB, 1 TN, 1 TR
Main contact(s)	Federico Martinelli (UNIFI)
Website	https://www.legumedunfi.it/
Short Description of the Project	LEGU-MED aim is to valorize, restore and manage legume biodiversity in future Mediterranean farming systems with enhanced environmental sustainability. This purpose will be obtained through: 1) an agronomic, phenotypic and molecular evaluation of wild relatives, land races, neglected genotypes, elite cultivars of lentil and chickpea obtained from different regions of the Mediterranean basin, 2) development of improved traditional farming systems using different strategies: i) diversification, ii) multi-crop rotations, iii) biological regulation of ecosystems, iv) enhanced plant-microbe symbiosis, v) natural resource conservation. We have assembled a multi-disciplinary consortium composed by 11 partners from 8 countries and consisting of 5 public universities, 5 research centers and 1 company. Our activities are designed to increase ecosystem services, maintain soil fertility, minimize the use of synthetic chemical compounds, and maintain a satisfactory and steady income for growers. LEGU-MED will use a participatory process where a subset of stakeholder's community will be involved in the co-creation of innovative solutions. The proposal is structured in 4 work packages (WP). In WP1, we will recover, collect and characterize a wide germplasm collection of lentil and chickpea. An agronomic and genomic characterization of 125 genotypes (25 per 5 countries) for each crop will be performed in controlled conditions. The best 10 genotypes for each country will be evaluated in 5 different geographic areas of the Mediterranean basin (two years). In WP2, we will

	develop and test new legume-based farming systems to enhance ecosystem services and their environmental sustainability. In WP3, improved rhizobial genotype-specific strains and low-impact agro-technological measures will be developed. In WP4, a detailed plan of socio-economic analysis, management and dissemination of outputs will be performed.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** LEGUME-MED provides empirical knowledge on associated biodiversity and cultural ecosystem services of pulse crops in Mediterranean environments, along with methodological approaches relevant to legume diversification and sustainable farming. Outputs from the previous LEGU-MED project funded by PRIMA (2020–2024), including its final report coordinated by UNIFI, offer useful reference material that supports the contextual understanding of ecosystem-service mapping in VALERECO. Additionally, the genomic and epigenomic analytical pipelines developed within LEGUME-MED represent established methodological resources of relevance to VALERECO's work on climate-adaptive legume varieties.

LEGVALUE | Fostering sustainable legume-based farming systems and agri-feed and food chains in the EU	
Type of project	RIA – Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	Terres Inovia
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European Partners: 12 FR, 2 NL, 3 DE, 3 IT, 2 DK, 2 PT, 1 LT, 1 LV, 2 UK Associated Partners: 1 CH
Main contact(s)	Daniele Antichi (UNIPI)

Website	http://www.legvalue.eu/
Short Description of the Project	The agricultural industry plays a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of populations and meeting their food requirements. It is also a significant component of various value chains, supplying essential goods. Therefore, it is essential to introduce innovations that can minimise its environmental impact and enhance its overall sustainability, thereby mitigating the impact of climate change. The EU-funded LEGVALUE project aims to develop and implement new farming systems based on legumes that are both sustainable and competitive. The project's objective is to integrate these systems into European food chains and agri-feed systems. To accomplish this, the project will highlight the economic and environmental benefits of these legume-based farming systems and provide evidence of their positive Impact on a list of 20 value chains.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** LEGVALUE provides several outputs relevant to the broader context of legume ecosystem services and valorization, including its review of knowledge gaps related to legume-linked ecosystem services, the European Grain Legume Yield Dataset, and analyses of European legume markets and policy needs. Although not directly applied within the project's technical activities, these resources offer complementary background knowledge that helps situate VALERECO's work within ongoing European efforts to enhance the understanding and utilization of legumes.

OPER8 | European thematic network for unlocking the full potential of operational groups on alternative weed control	
Type of project	CSA-Coordination and Support Actions
Leading organisation	Agricultural University of Athens

Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Greece European Partners: 2EL, 1IT, 1FR, 1SW, 2 LV, 1SP Associated Partners: 2UK
Main contact(s)	Spyros Fountas (AUA)
Website	https://www.oper-8.eu/
Short Description of the Project	By building upon the outcomes of eight Operational Groups across Europe, the Oper8 Thematic Network will establish stakeholder engagement processes to set up and connect national networks in each partner country. It will also uncover the drivers, barriers and root causes for the lack of non-chemical weed control adoption. The network will collect, analyse, validate, and widely disseminate non-chemical weed solutions (Oper8 Inventory, Best Practices), and establish cross-fertilisation activities (workshops, demo farms) within and across the national networks. The aim will be to co-create, showcase and evaluate non-chemical weed control methods. It will also deploy knowledge transfer tools and techniques (training and policy recommendations) to adapt, disseminate and scale-up alternative weed control solutions and ensure their diffusion within countries and across Europe.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** Collaboration with OPER8 has enabled the exchange of practical insights on non-chemical weed management and agroecological field practices. The project's focus on operational groups and best practices provided relevant examples that complement VALERECO's work on diversified cropping systems and ecosystem-service delivery. **Collaboration and joint activities** An exploratory meeting in August 2024 between VALERECO, OPER8 and GOOD initiated a structured channel for cooperation and exchange of expertise. This was followed by a Joint Field Day in Central Greece in May 2025 involving OPER8, GOOD, NeutraWeed, ForestAgriGreenNudge and ONE GREEN partners. The event facilitated hands-on comparison of approaches, showcased practical demonstrations, including drone-based

	applications, and supported discussion on shared challenges across projects.

GOOD | Agroecology for weeds	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	University of Coimbra
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Portugal European Partners: 4GR, 2FR, 4IT, 1PT, 1CY, 1BE, 2ES,1LV, 1NL, 1IE, 1RS
Main contact(s)	Alexandros Tataridas (UC)
Website	https://www.goodhorizon.eu/
Short Description of the Project	The overall objective of GOOD is to co-create innovative, systemic and sustainable AWM solutions through the deployment of LLs and to encourage a long-term and large-scale transition to sustainable biodiversity- based agri-food systems through the development of the AWM Network (AWMN).
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** GOOD contributes knowledge on barriers, drivers, and challenges in sustainable legume production through surveys and Living Labs in countries shared with VALERECO. VALERECO will provide annotated weed density maps to support the improvement of GOOD's AI-based weed-detection models and the AWM Toolbox. Integrating these datasets will expand model coverage across pedoclimatic zones and strengthen validation, enhancing the digital foundations of both projects. **Collaboration and joint activities**

Collaboration includes participation in the Joint Field Day in Central Greece (May 2025), involving GOOD, VALERECO and other projects, enabling practical demonstrations and comparison of field methods. Further joint activities are planned in Portugal (UC) and Greece (AUA), where both projects run Living Labs.

Joint communication and dissemination initiatives

GOOD and VALERECO jointly contributed to several dissemination actions, including a session at the 5th Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP) Conference (Nov 2024), the co-hosted webinar “Agroecological Weed Management: EU Project Results” (Apr 2025), and the launch of the VALERECO × GOOD two-part webinar series dedicated to weed–legume interactions, covering (i) Weed Management in Legumes (September 2025) and (ii) Leveraging Ecosystem Services in Legume Production (October 2025).

CropMix	
Type of project	CropMix is a five-year research programme, running from 2023 to 2027, funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO). The programme is part of the National Science Agenda and is known under file number NWA.1389.20.160.
Leading organisation	Wageningen University & Research
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: The Netherlands 35 partners from NL
Main contact(s)	Daniel de Jong (WR)
Website	https://cropmix.nl/en/
Short Description of the Project	CropMix promotes the transition to more robust agri-food production ecosystems, in which biodiversity and resilience are the starting points. Sustainable arable farming is based on the ecological principle of (crop) diversity, but the transition to ecology-based agriculture requires changes in technology, knowledge, values and regulations in addition to changes in ecology. Therefore, in CropMix, researchers from various disciplines (ecology, economics, social sciences) work together with various chain partners, such as governments, crop protection organisations, breeders, nature organisations, banks, food chain partners, green education and other partners who play a role in helping to accelerate the transition in practice. Central to the research programme are 25 arable farms working on crop diversity using strip cropping.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** CropMix assesses diversified cropping and rotation systems, including strip-cropping, intercropping and legume-based diversification, to reduce pesticide use and support climate-change mitigation. These themes align with VALERECO's objectives on legume-based diversification and

	ecosystem-service enhancement, making CropMix a relevant project within the broader landscape of sustainable farming approaches.

EcoStack | Stacking of ecosystem services: mechanisms and interactions for optimal crop protection, pollination enhancement, and productivity	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	University of Napoli "Federico II" Italy
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: 1 SE, 1 DK, 1 FR, 4 DE, 2 FI, 1 BG, 1 RS, 1 BA, 1 PL, 1 PT, 1 ES Associated Partners: 1 FI
Main contact(s)	Rui Oliveira (UC)
Website	https://ecostack-h2020.eu/
Short Description of the Project	Agriculture has to face the great challenge of balancing the demand for high productivity, imposed by the global increase of human population, with environmental impacts and social acceptability of new production strategies. EcoStack will develop ecologically, economically and socially sustainable crop production strategies via stacking of biodiversity service providers and bio-inspired tools for crop protection, within and around agricultural fields, in order enhance sustainability of food production systems across Europe. Activities completed
Synergies Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** EcoStack generates knowledge on ecosystem services delivered through measures such as mulching and the use of cover crops across different cropping systems. As UC participates in both EcoStack and VALERECO, the experience and insights gained from these tested measures provide a

	relevant reference point for improving ecosystem-service strategies within VALERECO's Living Labs.

BENCHMARKS | Building a European Network for the Characterisation and Harmonisation of Monitoring Approaches for Research and Knowledge on Soils	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	Wageningen University
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: The Netherlands European Partners: 3ES, 3NL, 2DE, 2IT, 4FR, 1FI, 1PT, 1SI, 2CZ, 2AT, 1NO Associated Partners: 2UK, 2CH
Main contact(s)	Rui Oliveira (UC)
Website	/https://soilhealthbenchmarks.eu/
Short Description of the Project	Soils provide food, clean water, habitats for biodiversity and other important services. There is no life without them. In this context, the EU-funded BENCHMARKS project will co-design an Integrated Soil Health Monitoring Framework, which will build upon the assessment of soil-based ecosystem functions to co-develop an interactive soil health dashboard. The aim is to guide the selection of appropriate soil health indicators, soil health assessment and indexation, and recommendation of management practices to support soil health. The dashboard will be designed for different stakeholders in urban, agricultural and forestry land use systems. Its proposed indicators (sample-based measurements and data, and model-derived statistics), space and citizen science observations will be tested in landscape case studies across Europe.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools**

	BENCHMARKS provides work on soil-health indicators that is thematically relevant to VALERECO. With UC participating in both projects, the indicator frameworks developed in BENCHMARKS offer useful reference points for understanding soil-health evaluation approaches that align with VALERECO's Living Lab assessments.

Firmen Fördern Vielfalt (Companies Foster Biodiversity)	
Type of project	National research project
Leading organisation	Leibniz University Hannover
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Germany All partners were based in DE
Main contact(s)	Christina von Haaren (LUH)
Website	https://www.umwelt.uni-hannover.de/de/sybertz/forschungsprojekte/forschungsprojekt-detailansicht/projects/firmen-foerdern-vielfalt-1
Short Description of the Project	The aim of the "Companies Promote Diversity" research project is to develop easily recordable indicators for measuring biodiversity on supplier farms of food-producing companies and to determine their informative value through on-site recording. By assessing the biodiversity services provided, a basis is to be created for sustainably maintaining or improving biodiversity on the farms.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** Firmen Fördern Vielfalt provides key easy-to-record indicators for biodiversity assessment at plot scale, together with modelling approaches that refine habitat-value evaluations by incorporating management

	factors. These elements offer methodological insights that can inform VALERECO's evaluation and valorization work. The project also contributes perspectives linked to knowledge and innovation systems, behavioural design, cost–benefit analysis and precision agriculture, which align with VALERECO's broader assessment context.

EU-FarmBook | Supporting knowledge exchange between all AKIS actors in the European Union	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	Ghent University
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Belgium European Partners: 5 BE, 4 NL, 1 GR, 3 ES, 1 RO, 1 FI, 1 SE, 1 LA, 1 DK, 1 PT, 3 DE, 1 IE, 1 IT, 1 FR, 1 EE, 1 POL, 1 AT, 1 HU
Main contact(s)	Hercules Panoutsopoulos (AUA)
Website	https://welcome.eufarmbook.eu/
Short Description of the Project	An online, open-source, European knowledge reservoir about agriculture and forestry practical solutions was developed by two EU projects, EURAKNOS and EUREKA. The EU-funded EU-FarmBook project will further develop this digital platform, making it easy to search for and share practical knowledge about farming and forestry from regional, national and EU research and innovation projects. This is the first long-term, EU-wide digital knowledge reservoir. The EU-FarmBook platform will connect many AKIS actors, provide training materials as an input to the advisors and serve education institutes. In terms of dissemination, EU-FarmBook will form links to traditional channels, such as agricultural journals. The overall aim is for the platform to stimulate knowledge exchange, user interaction and collaboration, ultimately resulting in innovation for

	environmentally, socially and economically sustainable agriculture and forestry.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** VALERECO will make its practice-oriented outputs and knowledge materials accessible. The project's curated database of solutions will be prepared for long-term availability through the EU-FARMBOOK knowledge reservoir, ensuring preservation, accessibility, and reuse beyond the project lifetime. This linkage positions EU-FARMBOOK as a key tool supporting the structured exchange of VALERECO's practice-ready information. **Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** VALERECO will share its research results, datasets, and open-access publications through EU-FARMBOOK alongside other FAIR data repositories such as Open Research Europe and Zenodo. Integration into EU-FARMBOOK ensures that VALERECO outputs are findable, supported by persistent identifiers and rich metadata, and easily accessible to practitioners, advisors, and other knowledge actors. This contributes to wide visibility and long-term dissemination of VALERECO's results within the European agricultural knowledge ecosystem.

IPM Decisions | Stepping-up IPM decision support for crop protection	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	ADAS UK
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: United Kingdom European Partners: 1 GB, 1 SE, 1 NO, 1 LT, 1 FI, 1 NL, 1 DE, 1 IT, 1 FR, 1 GR, 1 SI, 2 DK
Main contact(s)	Mark Ramsden (ADAS)

Website	www.platform.ipmdecisions.net / www.ipmdecisions.net
Short Description of the Project	The aim of IPM Decisions is to development of a platform for DSS. Ambition is to make DSS available for all farmers and advisors across Europe. DSS for pests, diseases and weeds. Currently approximately 25 DSS available.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** IPM Decisions works on understanding why farmers and advisers do or do not adopt integrated pest management solutions, using approaches that are comparable to VALERECO's work on adoption of legume-based and ecosystem-service–oriented practices. With AUA, BSB and DELPHY involved in both projects, the analytical experience from IPM Decisions offers a useful methodological outlook for VALERECO's work on decision-making and behavioural aspects.

IPMWORKS | An EU-wide farm network demonstrating and promoting cost-effective IPM strategies	
Type of project	CSA - Coordination and support action
Leading organisation	INRAE
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European Partners: 2 DK, 4 FR, 4 ES, 1 RS, 1 PT, 2 NL, 1 CH, 2 BE, 1 GR, 2 DE, 1 SE, 1 SI, 1 PL, 3 GB, 1 FI, 2 IT, 1 IE, 1 DK
Main contact(s)	Spyros Fountas (AUA)
Website	www.ipmworks.net

Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** IPMWORKS has developed the IPM Resource Toolbox, a practical repository designed to support integrated pest management across Europe. This platform offers a suitable channel for potentially hosting VALERECO's practice-oriented materials, ensuring that applied knowledge on weed management and legume-based systems can be made accessible to practitioners and advisors. **Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** IPMWORKS participated in the joint webinar *"Agroecological Weed Management: EU Project Results"* (29 April 2025), contributing an overview of its resources for integrated weed management, including e-learning modules and farmer experiences. This provided a shared dissemination space for presenting complementary results from both projects.

AgroServ | Integrated SErvices supporting a sustainable AGROecological transition	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	ANALYSIS AND EXPERIMENTATION ON ECOSYSTEMS ERIC
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European Partners: 1 AT, 9 BE, 1 BG, 3 CZ, 2 DK, 2 FI, 5 FR, 5 DE, 1 GR, 6 IT, 1 IE, 1 LT, 2 NL, 1 NOR, 1 PL, 5 PT, 1 RO, 1 RS, 1 SI, 5 ES, 1 SE, 2 SUI, 6 UK, 4 EU
Main contact(s)	Jegor Miladinović (IFCNS)
Website	https://agroserv.eu/

Short Description of the Project	AgroServ aims to provide the scientific community with large, high profile research services to facilitate and enable interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in agroecology and foster open science and innovation.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** AgroServ aims to strengthen the agroecology research community and foster cross-fertilization of knowledge across European initiatives. The insights and methodological approaches developed within AgroServ provide a relevant knowledge base that can inform VALERECO's demonstration activities and capacity-building efforts in agroecological practices.

REVINE | Regenerative agricultural approaches to improve ecosystem services in Mediterranean vineyards	
Type of project	RIA - Research & Innovation Action
Leading organisation	CREA
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: 5 IT, 3 CY, 1 EG, 1 FR, 2 GR, 3 PT, 1 TN
Main contact(s)	Nikos Georgantzis (BSB)
Website	https://mel.cgiar.org/projects/revine
Short Description of the Project	The overall objective of REVINE is to prove that the application of regenerative agriculture practices in farms located in the Mediterranean area is capable of preserving water resources and soil fertility, controlling

	soil erosion, and creating the soil physio-chemical conditions that favour the presence of beneficial microorganisms.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** REVINE develops regenerative agricultural approaches to enhance ecosystem services in Mediterranean vineyards and conducts socio-economic assessments. The project's outputs on cost-effectiveness, market valuations and broader economic analysis are relevant reference points for VALERECO and can inform its work on the valorization and assessment of ecosystem services in legume-based systems.

MANUELA | Management System Nature Conservation for Sustainable Agriculture	
Type of project	Research cooperation/group fed by several national research projects
Leading organisation	Leibniz University Hannover
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Germany
Main contact(s)	Christina von Haaren (LUH)
Website	https://www.umwelt.uni-hannover.de/en/research/cooperations/manuela-nature-conservation-management-system-for-sustainable-agriculture
Short Description of the Project	Development of algorithms and an open-source software for environmental impact assessment of agriculture on the environment, especially focussing on biodiversity. The software supports farms in particular in: (i) the presentation and evaluation of farm performance with regard to biodiversity and the biotope connectivity, (ii) the analysis of agricultural management effects and (biotope) development potentials, (iii) the estimation of water consumption and related costs, and (iv) the derivation of measures to optimise sustainable operational management.

Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** MANUELA is an open-source GIS-based decision model developed by LUH to assess farm biodiversity and evaluate management impacts at plot scale. VALERECO will build directly on this existing model to develop its Decision Support System for biodiversity-friendly legume cropping systems. The knowledge base, spatial algorithms and modelling approaches from MANUELA form the foundation for transforming the tool into an easy-to-use, GIS-independent web platform tailored to legumes. VALERECO will adapt and extend the MANUELA model using agronomic, socio-economic, and environmental indicators generated by the project's Living Labs, enabling end-users to explore legume management strategies under site-specific conditions.

BEATLES | Behavioural Change Towards Climate-Smart Agriculture	
Type of project	RIA - Research & Innovation Action
Leading organisation	Agricultural University of Athens (AUA)
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Greece European Partners: 2 NL, 2 DK, 1 BE, 1 SE, 2 GR, 1 DE, 2 ES, 3 LT, 1 SI Associated Partners: 1 UK
Main contact(s)	Spyros Fountas (AUA)
Website	https://beatles-project.eu/
Short Description of the Project	BEATLES aspires to identify the individual, systemic and policy lock-ins and levers that influence entire food systems behavioural change and to develop transformation pathways of change to accelerate the systemic

	and systematic transition to climate-smart agriculture and smart farming technologies, fully aligned with the ambitions of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, and the new CAP at regional and EU levels.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** BEATLES analyses the barriers that limit the adoption of sustainable cropping strategies and identifies practical solutions to support behavioural change in farming systems. The insights generated in BEATLES provide relevant knowledge that will be shared with VALERECO partners and can contribute to understanding adoption dynamics in legume-based and ecosystem-service–oriented systems.

REECAP | Research network on Economic Experiments for the Common Agricultural Policy	
Type of project	Network
Leading organisation	n/a
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: n/a European Partners: FR, SWE, GER, PL, NL, PT, SP, SL, AUST, UK, IR
Main contact(s)	Ann-Kathrin Koessler (LUH)
Website	https://sites.google.com/view/reecap/about
Short Description of the Project	REECAP is a EU-wide informal consortium created in 2017, with the objective to bring together researchers, experts and policy makers interested in the use of economic experimental approaches to evaluate and improve the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** REECAP applies experimental economic approaches to support evidence-based design and evaluation of CAP-related policies. The methodological perspectives developed in REECAP are relevant to VALERECO's work on policy analysis and adoption dynamics. While not directly used during the reporting period, the project provides useful background knowledge for tasks exploring behavioural and economic drivers linked to ecosystem-service integration.

4.2 Other projects under the same topic

Online meetings were held separately with projects funded under the VALERECO topic (LegumES and Legendary), as well as a cooperative meeting involving both projects. These exchanges built on the participation of LegumES and LEGENDARY in the VALERECO Kick-off Meeting in June 2024. The aim was to exchange best practices, implement synergies, and deliver added value in communication, dissemination, and exploitation activities. During the cooperative meeting, VALERECO and the two sister projects presented their objectives, project structures including work packages and tasks. Subsequently, a productive discussion ensued to define potential synergies among the projects, such as organising joint workshops and events, sharing data, establishing a shared MS Teams environment for project presentations, detailing work packages and their leaders, scheduling regular meetings among project coordinators to discuss, plan, and implement collaborative opportunities, and exchanging experiences related to project management, communication, and research activities.

In the months that followed, the collaboration continued through regular online meetings aimed at maintaining alignment and supporting the implementation of the identified cooperation areas. This included the creation of a shared workspace to facilitate coordination and the ongoing exchange of information as the three projects advanced their research activities. In March 2025, VALERECO participated in the annual meetings of both sister projects, contributing updates and discussing approaches in key thematic areas. In June 2025, LEGENDARY and LegumES attended VALERECO's first Annual Meeting, reinforcing reciprocal engagement and supporting the planning of future joint actions.

Cooperation was further strengthened in November 2025, when both sister projects joined the VALERECO cooperation meeting to review progress across the topic and discuss coordinated activities for the next phase. Separately, the three projects also contributed to a comparative mapping exercise, which examined their work package objectives and identified clear areas of complementarity across ecosystem-service assessment, socio-economic analysis, environmental methods, Living Lab activities and digital tools. The results of this exercise provide a solid basis for continued coordination and alignment among the three projects as they move forward.

LEGENDARY | KnowLEdGE creation and iNcreasing acreage of legumes in Diversified cropping systems by quAntification of theiR ecosYstem services	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	Ghent University, Belgium
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Belgium European Partners: 4 BE, 1 IT, 2 DK, 3 CH, 2 LU, 2 DE, 1 EL, 2 UK, 1 ES, 1 NL, 2 RS
Main contact(s)	Geert Haesaert, Steven Maenhout (UGent)
Website	https://www.legendaryproject.eu/
Short Description of the Project	The objective of LEGENDARY is to remove the barriers that hamper a significant and stable increase of the growing area of legumes in Europe. LEGENDARY has the ambition to develop tools and methods going considerably beyond the state-of-the-art to quantify Ecosystem Services (ESs) of perennial and of annual legumes in different agro-climatic zones. Based on co-creation, LEGENDARY aligns its research strategy with the actual needs. Field experiments will be monitored by a combination of traditional observation methods and advanced sensing technologies whose sensor reads are translated to ES trait values by means of dedicated statistical and machine learning models. These data will be fortified with results from past/ongoing projects. Valuation of the provisioning ESs will mainly be based on historical data, as the focus is to develop tools/methods for the valuation of the regulating services as well as for the valuation of cultural/social services including recreation, education and aesthetic values. These tools/methods will provide ready-to-use indicators to better equip farmers/advisors to evaluate and appreciate the benefits of legumes, including enhanced fertilising regimes, management of noxious organisms as well as recommendations to strengthen crop diversification and longer rotation cycles with crops beneficial for the environment, the farmer and the consumer. A user-friendly Collaborative Multicriteria Decision Support System will be developed, to assist farmers

	in the choice of legume species and cropping systems suitable for their farm. LEGENDARY's results will contribute to develop guidelines for science-policies bodies. Consequently, the results and implementation actions provided will ultimately contribute to achieve five of the 17 UN's Sustainable Development Goals and to accelerate the transition required by the European Green Deal. LEGENDARY's legumes have the ability to promote soil health and will thus contribute to the Soil Deal for Europe.

LegumES | Valorising and balancing the ecosystem service benefits offered by legumes, and legume-based cropped systems	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Science coordination), The James Hutton Institute (administrative coordination)
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Portugal European Partners: 1 MK, 2 HU, 4 DE, 1 BE, 2 ES, 2 PT, 2 SI, 1 DK, 1 FR, 1 IT Third countries: 1 UK, 2 CH
Main contact(s)	Pietro Iannetta (JHI)
Website	www.legumes-project.eu
Short Description of the Project	The legumES will ensure: 1, the uptake of best practices in agrobiodiverse legume-based cropped systems; 2, the uptake of methodologies and tools to quantify and balance the environmental and economic ecosystem service (ES) benefits provided by legumes; 3, that the ES benefits and cost offered by legumes are quantified across scales from field, farm, regional, national, and global levels; and 4, ES will be assessed to identify those conditions which are able to meet the EU targets: to decrease agrichemical inputs and losses, combat climate change, reverse biodiversity loss, and ensure the best nutritional provisioning. To achieve this, legumES offer a

	multi-disciplinary consortium comprising 22 partners from 12 EU- and third countries (UK, CH) and including: 7, academic institutions; 6, Research and Technology Organizations; 5, SMEs (or micro-SMEs); 2, non-governmental organisations; and 2, large commercial companies. The individuals comprising legumES offer skills which include agricultural-crop and -environment (ES) monitoring, life cycle assessment, economic- and socioeconomic-modelling, social-science, EU-agricultural and environmental policy, and law, plus decision support systems. The legumES research and innovation strategy centres on the use of a multiactor action-research approach, that is, where legume-facing stakeholders, and especially producers though all value chains actors, can 'operate', 'collaborate' and, reflect critically' on the measured ES benefits and costs of legume-based cropped systems, including legumes use in marginal lands; so that an optimal balance of ES can be achieved with success locally, and globally. To help achieve this LegumES also centres activities on a suite of 25 innovative legume-based Pilot Studies which use a wide range of legume species and types, plus different cropping approaches and linked value chains spanning the pedoclimatic regions of Europe.

4.3 Other relevant projects

The VALERECO project aims to connect with other relevant projects to share best practices, establish synergies where possible, and enhance the effectiveness of communication, dissemination, and exploitation activities. In this context, the consortium has maintained awareness of a wider set of European and national initiatives working on legumes, agroecology, soil health, biodiversity, sustainable cropping systems, and digital support tools.

During the reporting period, the project monitored relevant initiatives, attended selected thematic events, and maintained light exchanges with project teams where mutual interest existed. These contacts helped identify areas in which practices, tools or results from external projects may inform VALERECO activities. As the project advances, these interactions will continue on an as-needed basis to support visibility, avoid duplication, and reinforce the alignment of VALERECO's work with the wider research landscape.

VALPRO PATH | new VALue landscapes for plant PROtein Pathways	
Type of project	HORIZON Innovation Actions

Leading organisation	TEAGASC - AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Ireland European Partners: 1 DK, 6 IT, 4 GR, 1 RS, 3 DE, 1 NL, 3 IE, 1 ES Associated Partners: 1 UK
Main contact(s)	Ewen Mullins, Richard Lynch (TEAGASC)
Website	https://valpropath.eu/
Short Description of the Project	The current European plant-protein landscape is flawed. Heightened societal awareness of the environmental impact of consuming animal-based protein is driving the public's awareness of alternative, sustainable sources of dietary protein. Yet, production systems are focussed heavily on the production of feedstock for direct transfer into animal sectors in an attempt to counter the EU's over-dependency on imported feed. In essence, there is an absence of premium supply chains - farmers miss out on added-value opportunities that exist within the crops they already grow across Europe. There is a need to increase resilience in farming systems to mitigate against increasingly volatile climate patterns and to support farming systems to meet Farm-to-Fork strategic objectives. Built on the principles of co-creation, innovation and demonstration, VALPRO Path will design, validate and deliver sustainable and competitive plant protein crop systems and value chains. Focussed on underpinning economic value for all actors in the supply chain, it will exploit beyond state-of-the-art innovations, demonstrating and evaluating potential across 5 multi-stakeholder 'living lab' innovation production systems (IPSs). With strong industry involvement, the project will deliver a stronger ecosystem for plant protein production, supported with robust evidence of the social, economic, environmental, climate and health benefits. VALPRO Path will deliver new, sustainable business models, showing how focussed research can come into practice. Sustainable diversification of rotations with grain legumes will support the transition to more environmentally sustainable farming. European agriculture is at a juncture in regard to the sustainable provision of dietary protein. It can embrace opportunities presented through existing innovations that are integrated into real-life scenarios to support stakeholders realise the new market opportunities that exist for indigenous, fully traceable plant protein.

Synergy Overview	**Collaboration and joint activities** VALERECO participated in the VALPRO Path PME in 2024 and in the Annual General Meeting held in Athens in November 2024. Follow-up discussions in February 2025 helped define concrete links between the projects and supported planning for potential joint initiatives. **Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** As part of the February 2025 exchanges, VALPRO Path proposed that VALERECO present its work within the Horizon4Proteins (H4P) Cluster, providing a coordinated opportunity to increase the visibility of VALERECO within the broader EU protein and value-chain research community.

D4AgEcol | Digitalisation for agroecology	
Type of project	CSA-Coordination and Support Action
Leading organisation	Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy (ATB)
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Germany European Partners: 2 AT, 1 CY,1 DK, 4 DE, 1 GR, 1 PT, 1 FI Associated Partners: 1 GB
Main contact(s)	Evangelos Anastasiou (AUA)
Website	https://d4agecol.eu/
Short Description of the Project	The overall D4AgEcol objective is to provide knowledge for the transition to agroecological farming by identifying appropriate digital tools and technologies and suggesting measures to adapt and exploit their potential to the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems. The project

	is driven by the vision of the rapid digitalisation of agriculture, which strengthens the agricultural sector. D4AgEcol will show the potential of digitalisation as enabler for agroecological farming systems in Europe based on available knowledge and actors and stakeholders' co-innovation capacity. The Partners will assemble a holistic evaluation of digital tools and technologies based on indicators for agroecology, economic considerations and investigations about perceived benefits for users and stakeholders.
Synergy Overview	**Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** VALERECO was represented in the National Policy Workshop organized by the D4AgEcol project in December 2024, contributing to the session on agroecology and sustainable farming practices. This participation supported the dissemination of VALERECO's perspectives within a policy-oriented audience and strengthened visibility in discussions on digitalization for agroecology at national and European level.

ForestAgriGreenNudge | GREEN NUDGEs for sustainable FORESTry and AGRIcultural practices post 2027	
Type of project	HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	Burgundy School of Business
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European Partners : 2 PT, 2 FR, 1 EL, 1 ES, 1 FI, 1 SI, 1 SE, 1 PL, 1 LT International Partners: 2 UK, 1 RS, 1 TN
Main contact(s)	Nikolaos Georgantzis (BSB)

Website	https://greennudge.eu/
Short Description of the Project	Behavioural and cognitive biases reduce the ability of decision makers to adopt the best solutions among the alternatives available. Borrowed from pre-existing knowledge in psychology on priming, "nudges" are defined as gentle interventions in a decision maker's choice architecture (default choice, information, presentation, framing etc.), which enhance the likelihood of optimal choices. ForestAgriGreenNudges will first review initiatives and projects which explicitly or implicitly use Green Nudges to promote the use of sustainable practices in farming and forestry. It will then assess each type of nudge according to two types of criteria: 1) Criteria associated with efficacy in promoting the use of the desired practices over a sufficiently long period and 2) Criteria dictated by ethics and good practice principles (transparency, nudge awareness, participation/self-regulation, actor-specificity, etc.) that guarantee the quality of the implementation process. Nudges will then be tested in the field and assessed on a grid, reflecting the desiderata of efficacy and implementation quality. The set of successful nudges will be enriched by innovative nudges based on information regarding attitudes and strategies of actors along the entire value chain. The resulting set of nudges together with their corresponding implementation guidelines, and the business models and market conditions which favour their application in agroforestry will be collected on an online tool (iNUDGE Academy) whose target audience will include policy makers, wholesalers, retailers, farmers and foresters. The tool will associate each nudge with implementation rules, possible domains of application and possible risks in terms of efficacy, good practice and trade-offs. Diffusion of the results among farming and forestry experts, policy makers, and actors along the value chain will maximise the impact of the project, enhancing the adoption of sustainable practices in the farm and in the forest.

Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** Discussions between VALERECO and ForestAgriGreenNudge highlighted potential complementarities, particularly in relation to VALERECO's Task 2.3 on behavioural drivers and nudging approaches. Possible methodological inputs from ForestAgriGreenNudge and data generated within VALERECO were identified as areas that could support future mutual benefit. **Collaboration and joint activities** ForestAgriGreenNudge participated in the Joint Field Day organized by VALERECO, alongside Oper8, GOOD, NeutraWeed and ONE GREEN. The event featured drone demonstrations and hands-on workshops on agroecological practices and annual crop management, providing a shared space for practical exchange among multiple EU-funded projects.

OPTIM | Opportunities through Technologies and Innovation in Moldova	
Type of project	Market System Development
Leading organisation	OPTIM is the mandate of the Swiss Government, implemented by Helvetas in Moldova.
Region(s)/Country(s)	Moldavia
Main contact(s)	Bojan Kolundzija, Nenad Celarevic, Katarina Jesic (Helvetas)
Website	https://www.optimproject.md/en
Short Description of the Project	Agrifood - the most significant sector in the Moldovan economy. It is the sector where the largest share of the population is employed but offers the lowest income across all sectors. In agriculture, OPTIM will seek to leverage

	the developing cooperation and association models to strengthen access to high-value markets for smallholder farmers or agricultural laborers, while also promoting stronger public-private dialogue spaces. It will strive to offer access to information, knowledge, finance, and digital literacy. Also, since 2019, OPTIM has been addressing the issue of fragmentation of the agricultural sector in Moldova with positive results. OPTIM has contributed to the adoption of efficient agricultural practices and new production technologies through the development of diverse services for small farmers all over the country, The introduction of innovative monitoring and field intervention solutions contributed to the decrease of farmers' expenditures by 40% and increased their income.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** During VALERECO's first Annual Meeting, the OPTIM project manager shared insights on legume cultivation practices, adoption barriers, and innovation uptake in Moldovan smallholder systems. These perspectives provide useful background for VALERECO's work on farmer decision-making, behavioural drivers, and legume promotion strategies in WP2.

LEGUMINOSE | Legume-cereal intercropping for sustainable agriculture across Europe	
Type of project	Research and Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	University of Florence
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European partners: 4 ES, 1 PL, 1 IT, 3 DE, 2 AU, 2 DE, 1 CZ, 1 BE International partners: 1 PK Associated Partners: 2 UK
Main contact(s)	Shamina Imran Pathan (UNIFI)

Website	www.leguminose.eu
Short Description of the Project	Growing two or more crops in proximity is a way to produce a greater yield on a given piece of land. This intercropping practice is also more sustainable compared to traditional cropping systems. For instance, intercropping boosts biodiversity, makes maximum use of land and optimises biogeochemical cycles in agroecosystems. However, it is still not widely accepted by European farmers. The EU-funded LEGUMINOSE project will identify the obstacles to intercropping and boost awareness and acceptance among farmers by providing knowledge and demonstrations that promote economic, environmental, and social benefits of legume-cereal intercropping. To overcome barriers to intercropping implementation, the project will establish a network of six field trials and farm labs across Europe and in Egypt and Pakistan.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** The integration of Greek field trial data into the LEGUMINOSE Digital Farming Portal was scheduled for June 2025, supporting interoperability and creating a direct pathway for sharing field-level information between the two projects. This exchange strengthens the technical basis for future alignment of digital tools relevant to legume-based systems. **Collaboration and joint activities** The LEGUMINOSE coordination team also participated in VALERECO's first Annual Meeting in Pisa (June 2025), where they introduced the project and explored concrete opportunities for collaboration with our Work Packages. **Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** VALERECO presented its progress during the LEGUMINOSE General Assembly in September 2025, in a joint session also involving the LEGENDARY and IntercropValuES projects. This contributed to cross-project visibility, facilitated the exchange of experiences, and strengthened communication links among related European initiatives working on legume-based farming systems.

NBS EduWORLD | Nature-Based Solutions Education Network	
Type of project	Coordination and Support Actions
Leading organisation	EUN Partnership AISBL
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Belgium European partners: 1 LT, 1 DE, 1 SRB, 1 ES, 1 GR, 1 NL, 2 IE, 1 MD, 1 PT, 2 FR International partners: 1 TR Associated Partners: 2 UK
Website	http://www.eun.org/
Short Description of the Project	Nature-based solutions (NBS) are means of mitigating socio-environmental challenges through sustainable management of natural features and ecosystem services. The EU-funded NBS EduWORLD project seeks to foster a knowledgeable NBS society, advocating a just transition into a sustainable future. It will do this by establishing an NBS community of professionals and educators that will work together and by providing everyone with free and easy-to-access NBS data and resources. The project will assess existing and future initiatives in Europe, thereby making guidance and policy recommendations. NBS EduWORLD will review NBS demonstrators to support the testing and development of approaches and resources and provide opportunities for NBS practitioners to engage with educators and encourage Europeans to choose NBS as a career path.
Synergy Overview	**Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** VALERECO contributed to the EduWORLD Workshop on Nature-Based Solutions in December 2024, sharing perspectives on legume-based approaches and engaging with a broader community working on education and innovation for sustainability. This participation strengthened cross-project visibility and supported the exchange of ideas on nature-based transitions.

Neutraweed: Understanding Neutral Weed Communities	
Type of project	MSCA Staff Exchange
Leading organisation	School of Advanced Studies of Pisa
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European partners: 3 IT, 1 FR, 1 GR, 2 NL, 2 ES, Partners: 1 USA, 2 AR, 1 CN, 1 KE
Main contact(s)	Marco Esposito (SSSA)
Website	https://www.neutraweed.com/
Short Description of the Project	Identifying new sustainable approaches to reduce intensive soil tillage and pesticides and increasing ecosystem services and biodiversity is crucial. With the support of the Maria Skłodowska Curie Actions programme, the NEUTRAWEED project will establish an international network of 16 organisations across Europe, Africa, Asia and America to study new robotic systems and AI algorithms able to recognise weed species and selectively remove them to attain neutral weed communities (NWCs). NWCs are weed communities that can coexist with crops without reducing their yield and quality compared to weed-free conditions. A central research topic will be understanding the interactions between NWCs and crops from the agroecological, molecular, physiological and microbiological perspectives.
Synergies Overview	**Collaboration and joint activities** NeutraWeed participated in the Joint Field Day organised by VALERECO in the Peloponnese (May 2025), alongside ForestAgriGreenNudge and ONE GREEN. The event included drone demonstrations and showcases of agroecological innovations in annual cropping systems, providing a shared

	platform for hands-on comparison of approaches and practical knowledge exchange among the participating projects.

AgriFood4Future Erasmus+	
Type of project	Erasmus+ Programme
Leading organisation	Catholic University of the Sacred Heart Milan Italy
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European partners: 3 IT, 3 ES, 4 FR, 4 PT, 3 GR, 3 BE, 2 DE
Main contact(s)	Mike Kaminiaris (AGENSO)
Website	https://agrifood4future.com/
Short Description of the Project	Strengthen networks of Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, universities, and industry in the agri-food sector, focusing on sustainability, digital transformation and innovation.
Synergy Overview	**Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** VALERECO took part in the AgriFood4Future online workshop in July 2025, contributing to a lively exchange on agroecological innovation and sustainable plant-health strategies. The event offered a valuable opportunity to present VALERECO's perspectives to a wider community of researchers and practitioners, strengthen its visibility, and connect its work with parallel efforts advancing agroecological transitions across Europe.

BIOFIN| Protecting And Restoring Biodiversity Using Mainstream Finance	
Type of project	Research & Innovation Action (RIA)
Leading organisation	University Of Limerick
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Ireland European partners: IE, 2 NL, SE, GR, 2 PT, BA, 2 IT, FR, BE Associated partners: UK
Main contact(s)	John Garvey (UL)
website	https://www.biofin.org/
Short Description of the project	As biodiversity faces a decline, it is necessary to redirect financial resources towards nature-positive investments. The dynamics of the financial system, prioritising certainty, and efficiency, pose a formidable obstacle. In this context, the EU-funded BIOFIN project will introduce a new framework and technology to standardise nature-positive investment processes and accelerate the green transition required to accomplish biodiversity goals set out by the EU. By streamlining decision-making, the project will create the enabling conditions for large-scale finance. Through real-life case studies, BIOFIN's approach is expected to provide evidence-based recommendations and propel a green and digital transition essential for achieving the EU's biodiversity goals
Synergy Overview	**Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** A common workshop brought together the BIOFIN-EU and VALERECO projects to explore synergies between innovative nature-positive investments and sustainable agroecological practices in Synergy Days 2025. It discussed how agroecological innovations can become investable solutions for biodiversity restoration, and how financial frameworks can support their scale-up. A joint policy brief summarizing the workshop's

	outcomes is currently under preparation, further strengthening the link between the two initiatives.

In4Art – Hungry EcoCities | S+T+ARTs Project	
Type of project	Independent research and development organization
Leading organisation	Brno University of Technology
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Czech European partners: 2 NL, 1 BE, 1 CZ, 1 IT, 1 PO, 1 DE
Main contact(s)	Lija Groenewoud van Vliet
Website	https://www.in4art.eu/news/hungryecocities/
Short Description of the project	Hungry EcoCities puts forward a high-level alliance between science, technology, and the arts, to effectively explore how digital technologies & applications can lead in turn to reduced food waste, more sustainable value chains, eco-friendly attitudes, and a more ethical food consumption. How can we develop ways of creating a more healthy, sustainable, and affordable agri-food system for all? In Hungry EcoCities, studios, universities, growers, and agricultural specialists team up with, artists and creative thinkers to come up with new ideas for the future food system. Hungry EcoCities will host 20 S+T+ARTS residencies and for 42 months will be working towards defining, designing, and developing AI-enabled responsible, art-driven solutions for the end-users in the agri-food industries.
Synergy Overview	**Joint communication and dissemination initiatives** The workshop in Synergy Days 2025, explored how multidisciplinary living labs create innovative pathways by connecting business, science, arts, and

	communities for sustainable agri-food transformation. It focused on matchmaking mechanisms to enable cross-disciplinary collaboration, from identifying expertise to facilitating knowledge co-creation.

ONE GREEN | Addressing One Health and EU Green Deal targets with the agroecological transition of society and crop production	
Type of project	National project
Leading organisation	Agricultural University of Athens
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Greece GR
Main contact(s)	Ilias Travlos (AUA)
Website	https://www.onegreen.gr/
Short Description of the project	ONE GREEN is a 24-month initiative dedicated to establishing the Greek Agroecological Network (GAN), an ecosystem of six Living Labs (LLs) across all regions of Greece. By strengthening knowledge co-creation, supporting farmers' decision-making, and increasing acceptance of agroecological practices, the project aims to enhance both sustainable farming and national food security.
Synergy Overview	**Collaboration and joint activities** One Green participated in the Joint Field Day organized by VALERECO, alongside Oper8, GOOD, NeutraWeed and ForestAgriGreenNudge. The event featured drone demonstrations and hands-on workshops on agroecological practices and annual crop management, providing a shared space for practical exchange among multiple EU-funded projects.

	Joint communication and dissemination initiatives VALERECO contributed to the ONE GREEN workshop on *"Agroecological Approaches to Crop and Weed Management"*, participating in discussions that brought together researchers working on sustainable cropping systems and weed management strategies. The workshop provided an opportunity to share VALERECO's perspectives on legume-based agroecological practices and to exchange insights with partners developing complementary approaches to crop–weed dynamics, digital tools and ecological intensification.

AGROFIG | **Fostering agroforestry benefits through fig tree cultivation in the Mediterranean**	
Type of Project	PRIMA project (Horizon Europe)
Leading Organization	University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: ES, IT Associated Partners: TN, TK
Main Contact(s)	Tommaso Giordani (UNIPI)
Short Description of the Project	AGROFIG supports the agroecological transition in Mediterranean farming by promoting fig-based agroforestry systems that enhance soil health, water conservation, carbon sequestration, and overall ecosystem services. The project tests selected fig genotypes, adapted to drought, salinity, and other climate-related stresses, across multiple demonstration sites to assess their agronomic performance and contribution to soil fertility using chemical and microbiological indicators. In parallel, AGROFIG facilitates the adoption of agroforestry through Living Labs that engage farmers, advisors, policymakers and market actors in co-

Synergy Overview	creation, knowledge exchange, and barrier identification. These activities aim to strengthen technical capacity, improve access to markets and finance, and support wider uptake of agroforestry practices. AGROFIG builds on results from the earlier PRIMA project FIGGEN, integrating its improved fig cultivars into field trials to demonstrate the potential of fig-based agroforestry systems across Mediterranean environments. **Collaboration and joint activities** Participation in the "Agroecology Day" event (May 2025, Centro Ricerche Agroambientali "E. Avanzi", Pisa), an open day on agroecological practices co-organized with local partners and related EU projects, including AGROFIG and SUNRISE. VALERECO was featured among the event partners, supporting visibility and dissemination of legume-based agroecological approaches to farmers, advisors, and students. The event included field demonstrations showcasing ongoing agroecological and legume-based trials.

PROJECT – SUNRISE | SUpporting the agroecological traNsition thRough livIng labS nEtworks	
Type of project	European project (Horizon Europe - Agroecology Partnership)
Leading organisation	Sant'Anna School of Advances Studies, Pisa, Italy
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: EE, 2 DE, IS, IT, NL, RO, ES, SK, CY, SE Associated Partners: CH
Main contact(s)	Paolo Bàrberi (SSSA)
Website	https://www.agroecologypartnership.eu/sunrise

Short Description of the Project	SUNRISE aims to accelerate the agroecological transition by establishing a network of Agroecological Living Labs (AELLs) across 10 European countries, building on both existing and emerging multi-actor initiatives. Each AELL brings together farmers, advisors, companies, civil society organizations, policymakers, and researchers within a multi-actor team (MAT) to co-create, evaluate and share innovative agroecological practices. Research and innovation activities take place both in research infrastructures (on-station testing) and on pilot farms (on-farm testing), which serve as "Local Lighthouses" for demonstration and training. Across diverse farming systems, including arable, vegetable, fruit, livestock and agroforestry, SUNRISE supports the co-design and validation of solutions addressing region-specific agronomic challenges. MATs drive all stages of innovation development, from priority-setting to testing, evaluation and knowledge-sharing, while also contributing to guidelines on Living Lab operation and policy recommendations. The project's overarching ambition is to consolidate these efforts into a long-term European network of AELLs, enabling the upscaling of successful agroecological practices from local to EU level.
Synergy Overview	**Identification and exchange of relevant practices and tools** Within the Italian Living Lab, we will evaluate legume-based practices (e.g., cover crops, intercropping) that capitalize on their ecosystem services across arable, horticultural, and vineyards systems, with the aim of advancing the agroecological transition. Participants from both projects, researchers and stakeholders, will exchange expertise and disseminate novel outcomes. **Collaboration and joint activities** Participation in the "Agroecology Day" event (May 2025, Centro Ricerche Agroambientali "E. Avanzi", Pisa), an open day on agroecological practices co-organised with local partners and related EU projects, including AGROFIG and SUNRISE. VALERECO was featured among the event partners, supporting visibility and dissemination of legume-based agroecological approaches to farmers, advisors, and students. The event included field demonstrations showcasing ongoing agroecological and legume-based trials.

4.4 Additional projects monitored for potential future synergies

In parallel with the active collaborations established during the first 18 months, VALERECO continues to monitor a broader set of European and international projects whose thematic focus, methodological approaches or stakeholder networks may offer opportunities for future alignment. These projects do not currently involve formal collaboration but have been identified by partners as relevant to VALERECO's objectives due to shared interests in legumes, agroecology, ecosystem services, sustainability assessments or participatory research. Maintaining visibility of this wider project landscape ensures that VALERECO remains well positioned to establish new synergies where appropriate, avoid duplication and capitalise on emerging opportunities as the project progresses.

IntercropValuES | Developing Intercropping for agrifood Value chains and Ecosystem Services delivery in Europe and Southern countries	
Type of project	RIA - Research and Innovation action
Leading organisation	Centre de cooperation internationale en recherche agronomique pour le developpement (CIRAD)
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European Partners: 6 FR, 2 ES, 1 NL, 2 DE, 2 IT, 1 GR, 2 BE, 2 SE, 2 DK, 1 AT, 1 RS, 2 UK International Partners: 1 MZ, 1 CN
Main contact(s)	Eric Justes (CIRAD)
Website	https://intercropvalues.eu/
Short Description of the Project	IntercropValueES aims to exploit benefits of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, environmentally friendly cropping systems acceptable to farmers and actors in the agri-food chain. It will develop both a scientific research action for better understanding and modelling intimate intercrop functioning and a detailed analysis of lock-ins and levers at the value chain level to identify credible solutions that can be adopted by farmers and value chain actors.

	As a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, it brings together scientists and local actors representing food value chain. It includes 27 participants from 15 countries (3 continents) from a wide diversity of organizations and stakeholders. IntercropValuES organizes its activities in 6 objectives, to: 1) support the design of locally relevant, legitimate and innovative agri-food chains, through 13 Co-Innovation Case Studies; 2) understand the functioning and G*G*E*M interactions allowing the selection of compatible ideotypes and the optimization of machinery and management strategies for maximizing the productivity and delivery of ecosystem services with better soil health and mitigation of GHG (meta experiment 15 sites); 3) produce novel information, improved methods and tools for intercrop management and the assessment of their performance and profitability; 4) unravel intercropping performance by modelling; 5) analyze grain and sanitary quality of cereal-legume intercrops, functional qualities for food processing and new products, 6) uncover key barriers and levers at the value chain level to boost development, and identify new market avenues and solutions to increase economic added-value of intercrops.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	Insights from IntercropValuES on ecosystem-service performance, soil-health benefits and economic outcomes of intercropping may support VALERECO's decision-making framework and contribute to comparative assessments in diversified legume-based systems.

LFMWB | Landscape Fire Management in the Western Balkans	
Type of project	Climate-resilient development and Sustainable management of natural resources
Leading organisation	The LFMWB Programme is financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – SDC and coordinated by Farmahem (acting as Regional Executive Agency (REA)) from Skopje, with backstopping support from Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.
Region(s)/Country(s)	Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo

Main contact(s)	Farmahem, Nenad Celarevic, Katarina Jesic (Helvetas)
Website	https://www.lfmwb.net/
Short Description of the Project	The overall goal of the LFMWB is to increase resilience of Western Balkan forests and landscapes against fires benefit the people who depend on these landscapes for their livelihoods and socioeconomic development using a participatory approach that includes the local population in the processes, promotes gender equality, and further strengthens public awareness of the importance of safeguarding natural resources.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	LFMWB's strong participatory and multi-actor structure provides opportunities to broaden the stakeholder base of VALERECO in the Western Balkans. Its networks could support outreach to local authorities, rural communities, and environmental organisations, enhancing the regional transferability of VALERECO's ecosystem-service approaches. Insights into risk management and landscape-level planning may also contribute to contextual understanding in relevant Living Labs.

HELVETAS in Ukraine	
Type of project	Livelihoods. Economic recovery. Resilience.
Leading organisation	HELVETAS
Region(s)/Country(s)	Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo
Main contact(s)	Petr Case, Nenad Celarevic, Katarina Jesic (Helvetas)

Website	https://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/what-we-do/where-we-work/partner-countries/ukraine_EN
Short Description of the Project	The aim of Helvetas' presence in Ukraine is to create long-term prospects. Helvetas has therefore, in addition to humanitarian response, extended its activities in three areas: reconstruction of damaged houses and infrastructure, enabling new job perspectives and support of community rooted projects. The Ukrainian agricultural and food industry is also heavily affected by the war – including the organic sector, which Helvetas supported before the war. This support continues. Organic farming families are contributing to healthy and sustainably grown products. With support, the producers don't lose their livelihoods and instead have opportunities to expand their business relationships and hire more workers.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	Through its active involvement in Ukraine's agri-food sector, Helvetas could facilitate targeted dissemination of VALERECO outputs to advisory services, organic farming groups, and local institutions once conditions allow. The initiative's experience with resilience building in disrupted agricultural systems may also provide valuable perspectives on adoption barriers, stakeholder needs, and incentive structures relevant to VALERECO's research on behavioural and socio-economic drivers.

RECONOMY	
Type of project	Market System Development
Leading organisation	Helvetas and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Region(s)/Country(s)	RECONOMY is implemented in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia).

Main contact(s)	Paulo Rodrigues, Nenad Celarevic, Katarina Jesic (Helvetas)
Website	https://www.reconomyprogram.com/
Short Description of the Project	The core of RECONOMY is using current knowledge and practices and encouraging learning and sharing between countries. The program accomplishes this by involving a variety of stakeholders, including public institutions, nonprofits, academia, and businesses. While doing so, the program focuses on common issues that countries of both regions face as well as shared actors that may step up and support systemic improvements. Since RECONOMY acknowledges that people live in countries, not regions, the program looks at local-regional processes and relationships. Without a place-sensitive frame of view, development efforts that ignore these facts frequently fall short.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	RECONOMY's extensive network of agri-food stakeholders across 11 countries offers a potential platform for disseminating VALERECO findings to markets outside the EU. Its experience with value-chain diagnostics and systemic bottleneck analysis could also support VALERECO's work on economic and market-related drivers of legume uptake, particularly when assessing scaling pathways for legume-based ecosystem services.

Belis: Breeding European Legumes for Increased Sustainability	
Type of project	Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment France
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: France European participants: 1 BE, 2 IT, 4 ES, 1 BG, 2 DE, 8 FR, 1 NL, 2 DK, 1 NO, 2 RS, 1 LT, 1 HR, 1 PT, 1 PL, 1 CZ

	International partners: 1 LB Associated partners: 2 CH 1 UK
Main contact(s)	Bernadette Julier, INRAE
Website	https://www.belisproject.eu/
Short Description of the project	The legume industry requires improved varieties tailored to various regions and applications to address existing challenges. The EU-funded BELIS project aims to enhance competitiveness in legume breeding by refining methodologies and governance structures. Additionally, it facilitates the dissemination of genetic advancements to industry players and farmers, ultimately boosting biodiversity and ecosystem services. The project focuses on 14 versatile crops used for feed and food for ruminants and monogastric animals, as well as ecosystem services. BELIS is actively developing cost-effective breeding programmes and tools, providing breeders with proofs of concept, and navigating economic and regulatory environments. The BELIS platform has a goal of promoting innovation transfer, fostering connections among breeders, researchers and industries, and offering training opportunities.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	VALERECO and BELIS share a strong thematic alignment in legume biodiversity, genetic improvement, and ecosystem-service enhancement. BELIS provides methodological and governance frameworks for legume breeding, together with genetic resources and tools that are relevant to understanding legume performance under diverse agro-ecological conditions. These outputs can inform VALERECO's work on ecosystem-service traits, variety selection, and climate-resilience considerations within its Living Labs. Future exchanges may focus on the identification of complementary practices, data, and methodological approaches, with the possibility to explore joint communication or outreach activities where appropriate. Maintaining awareness of BELIS' advancements will support VALERECO in situating its research within the broader European innovation landscape on legume improvement.

PROSPER | **Promoting Resilient Orphan Legumes for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security**	
Type of project	RIA - HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions
Leading organisation	University of Pavia
Region(s)/Country(s)	Lead: Italy European Partners: 4 GR, 1 DK, 3 IT, 3 FR, 4 PT, 3 ES, 1 SE, 1 BE, 1 PL, 1 RO, 1 DE, 1 TN, 1 BG, Associated Partners: FI
Main contact(s)	Prof. Federico Martinelli (UNIFI)
Short Description of the project	As climate change disrupts traditional farming systems, Europe's reliance on a narrow set of crops puts both biodiversity and food security at risk. With this in mind, the EU-funded PROSPER project is turning to hardy, underused 'orphan' legumes to help diversify European agriculture. By promoting resilient cultivars adapted to different soils and climates across Mediterranean, Central and Northern Europe, PROSPER aims to boost productivity and value chains. Working closely with farmers, food producers, and policymakers, the project combines cutting-edge research with local know-how. Its digital tools will support smarter decisions, while on-the-ground demonstrations will showcase sustainable practices. In doing so, PROSPER brings biodiversity, climate resilience, and innovation together to future-proof European farming.
Potential Synergy Identified by Partners	Partners indicated interest in establishing contacts with the PROSPER project due to its strong relevance to legume diversification and resilience. A potential joint meeting with the PROSPER consortium has been discussed, given the project's focus on promoting resilient orphan legumes across diverse European environments. Opportunities for mutual participation in project events were noted, for example, the possible attendance of the VALERECO Coordinator at the PROSPER annual meeting planned for 2026.

5. Synergies from the Cooperation Meeting

The cooperation meeting held in November 2025 served as a key mechanism for exchanging best practices, identifying complementarities, and strengthening topic-level coordination among projects working under and alongside the VALERECO topic (table 1). Representatives from LEGUMINOSE, LegumES, LEGENDARY, GOOD and OPER8 participated, providing a consolidated overview of ongoing activities in legumes, agroecology, ecosystem-service assessment, socio-economic analysis, and digital decision-support tools.

Building on the bilateral exchanges undertaken during the first project year, the meeting enabled the participating consortia to review progress, compare methodological approaches, and identify areas where coordinated action would provide added value. Each project presented its current work, stakeholder interactions, and upcoming priorities, creating a clear picture of overlapping across research themes and implementation contexts.

A set of concrete synergy pathways emerged from the discussion. All projects expressed interest in continuing and expanding joint communication and dissemination activities. GOOD proposed extending the existing joint webinar series into 2026, and both LegumES and LEGUMINOSE indicated readiness to co-organize additional webinars or thematic sessions at scientific and stakeholder-oriented events. Participants also highlighted the value of joint demonstrations or field-based exchanges, particularly where Living Lab activities take place in overlapping regions, drawing on GOOD's recent experience with joint field events.

Data exchange was identified as a particularly feasible and impactful area for collaboration. LEGUMINOSE and GOOD reported that exchanges with VALERECO were already underway and pointed to opportunities to further integrate datasets for modelling, ecosystem-service assessment, and the development of digital tools. LegumES and LEGENDARY outlined complementary work in progress and expressed their willingness to extend data-sharing arrangements. Participants recognized that improved interoperability would support joint scientific outputs, including perspective papers, thematic syntheses and publications drawing on comparable case studies.

From a policy and value-chain standpoint, LEGUMINOSE signalled opportunities for joint policy briefs and participation in upcoming policy-oriented events and invited interested projects to contribute. LegumES stressed the benefits of coordinated expert statements or synthesis pieces to help strengthen the visibility and coherence of topic-level messages on legumes, agroecology, and ecosystem services. Participants also acknowledged the usefulness of a shared space for exchanging insights on market development and value-chain barriers.

The meeting further supported alignment of Living Lab and co-creation approaches across the participating projects. Several consortia operate in similar regions or use comparable participatory methodologies, and it was agreed that closer coordination would enhance stakeholder engagement, avoid duplication and open opportunities for shared dissemination activities at regional and national levels.

Finally, the projects expressed willingness to continue participating in each other's consortium or annual meetings, link communication channels where appropriate and explore options for connecting digital repositories and platforms in the longer term. This coordinated approach aims to enhance topic-level visibility, reinforce the contribution of each initiative and support continuity of impact beyond individual project timelines.

As an immediate next step, VALERECO will circulate a follow-up table to collect project-specific contributions and priorities and to prepare a structured cooperation roadmap for 2026.

Table 1. Participant list in the cooperation meeting

Project	Topic
VALERECO	HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-16-Valorisation of ecosystem services provided by legume crops
GOOD	HORIZON-CL6-2022-FARM2FORK-02-01-two-stage-Agroecological approaches for sustainable weed management
OPER8	HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-23-Broaden EIP Operational Group outcomes across borders by means of Thematic Networks, compiling and sharing knowledge ready for practice
LEGUMINOSE	HORIZON-CL6-2022-BIODIV-01-05-Legume-cereal intercropping for sustainable agriculture across Europe
LEGENDARY	HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-16-KnowLEdGE creation and iNcreasing acreage of legumes in Diversified cropping systems by quAntification of theiR ecosYstem services
LegumES	HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-16- Valorising and balancing the ecosystem service benefits offered by legumes, and legume-based cropped systems

6. Joint Activities and Cross-Project Knowledge Exchange

Throughout the reporting period, VALERECO participated in a series of joint events organized with other EU-funded initiatives, supporting technical exchange, cross-project learning, and wider stakeholder engagement on agroecology, weed management, biodiversity, and legume-based systems. The activities took place in the form of webinars, workshops, and field demonstrations, enabling partners to compare methodologies, share preliminary findings and strengthen cooperation with projects working in similar thematic areas.

The first joint activity was the webinar "Agroecological Weed Management: EU Project Results" (April 2025), organized under the GOOD project and featuring contributions from AGROSUS, CONSERWA, IPMWORKS and VALERECO. The agenda included presentations on ecological weed-control strategies, early lessons from agroecological pilots and farmer-led training resources for integrated weed management. VALERECO contributed preliminary insights from its Greek Living Lab, including weed-dynamics observations in legume-based systems. The event demonstrated the alignment of approaches across participating projects and supported early-stage knowledge exchange.

Figure 1. Agenda of the webinar "Agroecological Weed Management: EU Project Results"

Collaboration continued on 19 May 2025 with a Joint Field Day in Central Greece, involving VALERECO, ONE GREEN, GOOD, OPER8, ForestAgriGreenNudge and NEUTRAWEED. Guided visits to field sites showcased crop and weed interactions under diversified systems, with trial demonstrations on UAV-based weed detection, functional traits, emergence patterns, and crop–weed competition. Behavioural aspects influencing farmer decision-making were also discussed. VALERECO contributed across multiple demonstrations, reinforcing the connection between experimental trials and shared methodological challenges. The day's agenda included practical sessions and field presentations, providing a structured setting for hands-on comparison of techniques.

Figure 2. Agenda of the Joint Field Day on agroecological crop and weed management held in Central Greece.

In September 2025, VALERECO and GOOD co-organized the webinar "Part I: Weed Management in Legumes", which brought together living-lab results from Portugal, Greece, and Serbia. The session agenda included VALERECO's updates on barriers to legume adoption and trial outcomes from sulla, lentil and soybean systems, as well as GOOD's results on stakeholder perceptions and agroecological weed-management experiments. By presenting complementary data from different regions, the webinar contributed to more coordinated development of weed-management strategies for legume production across Europe.

Figure 3. Agenda of the webinar "Part I: Weed Management in Legumes".

VALERECO also contributed to two workshops held during Synergy Days 2025 (Rotterdam). The first workshop, jointly organized with Hungry EcoCities, examined how multidisciplinary living labs can accelerate innovation by linking agronomic research with creative, digital, and community-driven approaches. VALERECO presented progress from its European Living Labs, including evaluations of weed management, soil fertility, biodiversity, and climate-related effects. Complementary dissemination tools developed by Hungry EcoCities were showcased as examples of how creative methods can support communication and stakeholder engagement. The session followed a structured agenda focusing on integrating agronomic experimentation with broader ecosystem and societal perspectives.

A second workshop, co-organized with BIOFIN-EU, explored how sustainable finance mechanisms can facilitate the wider adoption of legume-based agroecological systems. Discussions addressed agronomic, economic and policy barriers, including yield variability, transition costs, value-chain bottlenecks and limited advisory capacity, and examined enabling conditions that could support uptake at farm and market level. The agenda guided participants through four thematic domains (policy, infrastructure, business models, and societal acceptance), facilitating a structured identification of measures that could

strengthen enabling environments. VALERECO provided insights from its Living Labs and assessments of ecosystem-service delivery.

Figure 4. VALERECO-Hungry EcoCities Workshop at Synergy Days.

Finally, in October 2025, VALERECO and GOOD delivered a second joint webinar, “Part II: Leveraging Ecosystem Services in Legume Production”, focused on the contribution of legume-based systems to key ecosystem services. The agenda included VALERECO’s findings on pollination, soil-health effects, and diversified legume-system performance, alongside GOOD’s early results from cowpea trials in Portugal. The session concluded with a comparative synthesis across datasets, demonstrating how coordinated analysis can strengthen the collective understanding of ecosystem-service provision in legume systems.

Figure 5. Agenda of the webinar "Part II: Leveraging Ecosystem Services in Legumes Production"

Together, these events provided VALERECO with multiple opportunities to exchange knowledge, align methodologies, engage stakeholders, and strengthen synergies with complementary Horizon and PRIMA initiatives. The integration of agendas within these activities ensured clarity of focus, coherence across sessions and transparent documentation of the collaborative actions undertaken during the reporting period.

7. Horizon4proteins (H4Proteins) Cluster

The Horizon for Proteins Cluster is a cluster of 11 EU funded projects, who are developing alternative protein foods and feed to respond to this increasing demand. The alternative proteins being explored on the projects include plant proteins, insects, microalgae, bacterial single cell proteins, and more. The Cluster seeks to demonstrate the suitability and economic viability of next generation proteins as part of food and feed value chains by:

- Developing high quality, safe, nutritious, sustainable food ingredients, such as microalgae, single cells, insects, and protein crops
- Developing novel technologies and production processes to meet the criteria of EU regulatory framework and safety constraints

With an eye towards ensuring consumer's acceptance for alternative protein foods. These results will support the EU's objective to set a path to transition towards a more sustainable and resilient food system with a reduced footprint in terms of land use, emissions, energy, and water from farm to fork.

The projects specifically that participated or participate in the time being in the cluster are: Giant Leaps, Like a Pro, VALPRO Path, NextGen Proteins, Sushichain, PRO Future, Innoaqua, Smart Protein, Feasts, Epic-shift and VALERECO. Monthly meetings take place in the framework of the Cluster.

Beyond the regular monthly exchanges, VALERECO also contributed to the Horizon4Proteins cluster workshop held in October 2025, which provided a structured forum for deepening collaboration across the projects. The workshop focused on three thematic areas that are highly relevant to the cluster's mission: policy, assessments, and consumer insights. The policy deep dive aimed to lay the foundation for a collective H4P policy strategy. All participating projects recognized that they share an ambition to produce policy recommendations and to contribute meaningfully to EU debates on sustainable protein systems. The discussion highlighted the need for coordinated messaging, joint policy briefs and shared participation in policy-focused events, ensuring that the cluster delivers coherent and impactful inputs to policymakers. Aligning policy-oriented outputs would increase the visibility and influence of the cluster and help accelerate the transition toward more sustainable food and feed systems.

The assessments deep dive focused on developing recommendations for conducting circularity and sustainability assessments across EU Innovation Projects working on alternative protein sources. The projects contributed a concise overview of their environmental and socio-economic assessment tasks, including methodological approaches, planned deliverables, and any early results, as well as barriers and best practices encountered. The exchange provided a clear picture of the diversity of assessment methods used within the cluster and created a basis for stronger alignment in how sustainability performance is analyzed, compared, and communicated across Horizon4Proteins projects.

The consumer-insights deep dive was coordinated by VALERECO. The session brought together consumer-research teams from participating projects to exchange evidence on consumer perceptions, acceptance drivers, behavioural barriers, and the methodological approaches used to study attitudes toward alternative proteins. Projects presented their target groups, research tools, and preliminary findings, as well as the challenges encountered during data collection and the solutions adopted. The discussion focused on identifying best methodological practices, comparing approaches across countries, and highlighting opportunities for greater harmonization. A dedicated segment on synergies explored how projects could jointly communicate consumer-insights results, align future research activities, and make effective use of the extensive combined dataset available within the cluster. These exchanges laid the groundwork for shared guidelines on consumer-research methods and for the coordinated dissemination of insights supporting sustainable and protein-diverse diets in Europe.

Together with the regular monthly exchanges, the workshop reinforced the coordinated way of working within the Horizon4Proteins Cluster. The cluster continues to function as a structured platform for alignment across policy, sustainability assessments, and consumer behaviour, enabling the participating projects to jointly address common challenges and contribute more effectively to the EU's transition toward sustainable and diversified protein systems.

8. Conclusions

The VALERECO project continues to establish meaningful synergies with European research initiatives, strengthening its contribution to legume-based systems, agroecology and ecosystem-service assessment. These collaborations form a coherent network that supports innovation, knowledge exchange and effective dissemination, ultimately enhancing the project's scientific and practical impact. Deliverable 1.8 provides an updated overview of these interactions and outlines how cooperation is being systematically advanced. The main conclusions anticipated from these efforts are:

1. Enhanced Cross-Project Collaboration: VALERECO's engagement with Horizon Europe, PRIMA and other relevant initiatives has substantially improved cross-project cooperation. Shared methodologies, complementary datasets and coordinated activities contribute to more integrated research outputs and support a broader understanding of ecosystem services in legume-based systems.

2. Mutual Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange: Regular interactions, through bilateral exchanges, cooperation meetings, and participation in joint events, promote mutual evaluation and knowledge exchange. These processes support methodological alignment, strengthen scientific coherence across projects, and ensure that project outcomes contribute to wider EU policy and research ambitions.

3. Effective Communication and Dissemination: Collaboration in joint workshops, webinars and shared communication platforms increases the visibility, reach and impact of VALERECO's results. Coordinated dissemination ensures that insights are communicated effectively to researchers, policymakers, practitioners and other key stakeholders.

4. Strengthening the Agricultural Research Network: VALERECO's participation in multi-project Living Labs, thematic clusters and regional activities reinforces its role within the European agroecology and ecosystem-services research landscape. These connections facilitate real-world testing of VALERECO approaches and help integrate external expertise into the project's co-creation activities.

5. Opportunities for Future Synergies: The project will identify multiple avenues for future collaboration, including expanding its network to new partners and projects. This ongoing commitment to synergy-building will continue to enhance the project's contributions to sustainable agriculture in Europe. Deliverable 1.8 highlights several emerging links and outlines steps for expanding the synergy network.

The VALERECO project's strategic approach to fostering synergies will yield substantial benefits, enhancing research quality, facilitating knowledge exchange, and driving the adoption of sustainable farming practices. Sustained collaboration, as outlined in Deliverable 1.8, will ensure that VALERECO continues to

contribute meaningfully to European efforts aimed at promoting resilient, environmentally sustainable and economically viable agricultural systems.

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