



## Farmer Interview

# Nikos Pouloupoulos

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*Messini / Greece*

**Programme:** Erasmus+ Bees and More

**Roles:**

- Nikos (Student – Researcher)
- Aris (Student – Researcher)
- Nikos Pouloupoulos (Farmer)

### Interview Transcript

Student 1: Good evening. We are from EPAL Messinis and we would like to thank you for the time you have devoted so that we can ask you some questions about your profession. My name is Nikos.

Student 2: My name is Aris.

Farmer: My name is Nikos Pouloupoulos. I am a farmer, mainly working with olive cultivation. I come from Trikorfo Messinias, a mountainous village. You can ask me whatever questions you like.

Student 1: How many years have you been involved in agriculture?

Farmer: I have been professionally involved in agriculture since 2014. However, since I was a child I had contact with the fields, because both my father and my mother worked in agriculture and they used to take me with them. I truly love what I do and I do not do it only for financial reasons.

Student 2: Is this your main profession?

Farmer: Yes, it is my main profession. I make my living from it and I really love what I do.

Student 1: In which area do you operate?

Farmer: My production and my fields are located in Trikorfo Messinias and that is where I operate.

Student 2: What crops do you cultivate?



Farmer: I mainly cultivate olives. We grow the Koroneiki olive variety for olive oil production and the Kalamon olive variety, which is a table olive for consumption. In addition, I cultivate a small amount of raisins and some figs.

Student 1: What production system do you follow? Organic or conventional farming?

Farmer: I follow conventional farming. I am not an organic producer; I work with the conventional system.

Student 2: Do you think this helps you more?

Farmer: In terms of production, I believe that conventional farming performs a little better than organic farming because it allows us to apply more fertilization, such as nitrogen, which helps our trees become more productive and more vigorous. In organic farming, trees go through an adjustment period until you learn how to use fertilizers and the new products properly. Some farmers who have been practicing organic farming for many years may have reached a level where their crops perform well, but we have not become accustomed to it yet.

Student 1: Do you make more profit?

Farmer: I do not look at it from a profit perspective. I do not think about whether I should switch to organic farming to earn a few euros more or remain in conventional farming for a little less. I look at it more from the point of view of the health and vitality of the trees.

Student 2: Based on the way you practice agriculture, how important do you consider bees for farming?

Farmer: Bees are very important for agriculture. For olive trees, as mentioned in the previous interview, they do not directly help with pollination. However, they help significantly with the pollination of the grasses that grow under the trees. These grasses enrich the soil with valuable nutrients. When they are incorporated into the soil, they create natural fertilization that is necessary for soil fertility. In addition, bees also work in the forests of the area, such as thyme, and in general they pollinate the entire region of Messinia.

Student 1: Have you noticed better production when bees are present in your fields?

Farmer: Yes, mainly through the grasses. The grasses enrich the soil and provide it with nutrients that we need. Soil that is bare and dry does not produce the same results. When there is vegetation that has been pollinated, it mixes with the soil and acts as natural fertilization, which significantly helps production.

Student 2: Do you think environmental factors or farming practices, such as the use of pesticides, affect bees?

Farmer: They affect them a lot. We must be very careful with spraying. For example, spraying at midday is prohibited when there are beehives nearby. We must inform



beekeepers so they can move the hives to a safe place. There are specific procedures that must be followed and we respect them.

Student 1: In your fields, do you allow other plants to grow so that there is flowering and biodiversity for bees?

Farmer: Yes, as I mentioned before, we allow grasses and other vegetation to grow because we need them for soil fertilization and to support biodiversity.

Student 2: What plants do you allow to grow?

Farmer: Mostly various grasses. These help bees a lot, providing them with pollen and food and contributing to honey production.

Student 1: Over time, have you noticed any change in bee activity or population?

Farmer: I cannot say for sure. However, I have heard of cases where incorrect spraying caused losses in beehives. These are isolated incidents. Usually beekeepers try to increase the population to achieve better production. I do not know exactly whether there is an overall decline.

Student 2: Would you be interested in participating in a programme that combines agriculture and beekeeping?

Farmer: Yes, I would be interested, but I would first need to learn things that I do not currently know. It is a different process. For example, I know that in some greenhouses beehives are used for pollination, but this requires special knowledge and organization. It is a completely different type of cultivation from ours.

Student 1: Thank you very much.

Farmer: All the best.