

# From niche to volume with integrity and trust CASE STUDY FACT SHEET

## Bio-distretto Cilento - Italy

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### Basic facts

It is not by chance that the first Italian bio-district was developed in Cilento, land of nature, culture, history and food traditions. The long-term commitment and the remarkable efforts of various private and public stakeholders in support of Cilento Bio-distretto have produced, over time, a number of interesting results. *First*, some important progress has been experienced in the development in the Cilento area of the organic sector, both in terms of operator numbers and land area. *Second*, the establishment of short supply chain outlets like, organic farmers' markets, organic purchase groups and green public procurement and a number of other initiatives specifically targeting tourists have contributed to create stable market outlets for local organic products, thus meeting farmers' need for viable market opportunities which was originally the intention of the creation of the Bio-distretto initiative. *Third*, through its continued active presence in the area and its multiple initiatives, the Bio-distretto project contributed to the protection of local foods and traditions as well as of the Mediterranean Diet heritage.

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*"A bio-district is a geographical area where farmers, citizens, tourist operators, associations and public actors sign an agreement for the sustainable management of local resources, based on organic principles and practices, aiming at the fulfillment of the economic and socio-cultural potential of their territory. (IN.N.E.R. President)*

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*Fourth*, the Bio-distretto Cilento succeeded in creating relatively permanent socio-economic links between inland and coastland areas as well as between agriculture and other promising economic sectors in the region. *Fifth*, as a result of the many initiatives, it is claimed that the turnover of local organic farms and enterprises participating to the Bio-distretto activities has increased by about 20% on average in these years. *Sixth*, the presence of Bio-distretto project contributed to spread the "green economy and lifestyle" culture in the area (differentiated waste collection, renewable energies, bio-architecture). *Seventh*, many of the activities carried out under the Bio-distretto umbrella have managed to test and introduce innovative solutions to local problems and to broaden horizons



The geographical location of Bio-distretto Cilento

The present factsheet has been produced in the framework of the Agreement on association of CIHEAM-Bari with the HealthyGrowth consortium.



with innovative projects, like care farming.

## Historical development

Three main phases could be identified in the development of Bio-distretto Cilento:

- 1. 2004-2009: The emergence of the “bio-distretto” idea and the setting up of a favourable institutional environment and inclusive process at the local level to support its development**  
Between 2004 and 2007, with the support of the Campania regional branch of AIAB (Associazione Italiana per l’Agricoltura Biologica), various public events with local stakeholders including citizens, environmental, social and cultural associations, agricultural producers, enterprises, local authorities and research and education institutions were organised. These discussion fora, designed to identify weaknesses, needs and potentialities of the Cilento territory and to share ideas about prospects for a sustainable development of the area, actually represented the first crucial step of a long participatory process which eventually led to the creation of Bio-distretto Cilento.
- 2. 2009-2012: Operationalisation and multi-dimensional development of the “bio-district” concept and promotion of the initiative.** In 2009, a core group of private and public actors signed an official Memorandum of Understanding for the creation of the “Bio-distretto of Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park”. The MoU was published in the official Regional Bulletin of the Campania Regional Authority and partners signing it committed themselves to contribute to and co-finance the implementation of a number of priority activities. In the following years, various projects were implemented in the bio-district area, allowing a consistent, though somehow fragmented development of multiple dimensions of the bio-district concept. As the activities grew, the need became stronger for some kind of coordination and coherent planning of the whole project. Therefore, in June 2011 a non-profit association – the Bio-distretto Cilento Association – including some of the core founding actors, was established, to ensure some kind of structured and coordinated governance of the “Bio-distretto Cilento” project. The association is currently coordinated by AIAB Campania.
- 3. 2013-present: Promotion of the “bio-district” concept as an innovative model for sustainable local development and setting up of the national and international network (IN.N.E.R.).** The claim to become a model for sustainable local development and an open air laboratory for social innovation has always been in the spirit of the Bio-distretto Cilento since its early stages. A number of good occasions timely have emerged since 2013, for Bio-distretto Cilento, to start fulfilling its “role model” ambition. In 2012, a comprehensive report of the Bio-distretto Cilento initiative was published, in five different languages, in the framework of the UN-supported cooperation program IDEASS-Innovation for Development and South-South cooperation. In 2014, based on the pioneer model experience of Bio-distretto Cilento, AIAB launched the AIAB “Bio-Distretto®” label, conceived as a tool of collective territorial promotion and associated with specific guidelines where the experience made in the Cilento has been codified into a stepwise approach for the establishment and management of other bio-district initiatives. In December 2014, the International Network of Eco Regions (IN.N.E.R.) was officially established, with the aim to share the experience of Bio-distretto Cilento and other Italian bio-districts with similar organic-based territorial initiatives in EU and developing countries.

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**For full reports,** visit the HealthyGrowth [2014-2016] project website [www.healthygrowth.eu](http://www.healthygrowth.eu)

**Legal form:**

Association

**Date of foundation:**

2009 (signing of MoU for the creation of "Bio-distretto of Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park")

**Homepage:**

<http://www.biodistretto.net>

<http://www.biodistretto.it>

**Logo:****Members:**

≈ 50

**Area:**

3,196 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:**

270,000

**Percentage - organic farms:**

23% of the total organic operators in Campania region

**External communication****examples:**

Bio-distretto Cilento Guide  
IN.NER at EXPO 2015 (Bio-districts Week, 1-6 Sept)

**Flagship enterprises:**

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**Facebook likes:**

216 (12 June 2015)

**Google hits:**

4,770 (12 June 2015)

## Membership structure

The setting up of a permanent network and a continued exchange linking all interested (public and private) stakeholders is a mainstay principle of the Bio-distretto project and, after a decade of efforts in this direction, quite an important achievement of the core group which has worked at the project, making sure in these years that decisions were taken through a broad participatory process and therefore shared with concerned parties.

Apart from the National Park Authority, many of the founding actors are now included in the core group gathered in the Bio-distretto Cilento non-profit Association which is currently composed of various private and public stakeholders, namely:

- 32 municipalities gathered into 3 associations corresponding to the three main geographical areas of the bio-district, Cilento coastland, Alburni mountains, Vallo di Diano plains
- Associazione Italiana per l'Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), Campania branch, which is also co-ordinating the association's activities
- Associazione Bio-Logica
- Associazione Biodinamica
- Legambiente (one of the most important Italian environmental associations), Salerno branch
- Associazione per la Dieta Mediterranea
- Coldiretti (one of the most important farmers' unions in Italy)
- Cooperativa Mediterranea (established out of the Login-BIO project and mainly acting as the local logistic platform for the short supply chain)
- Il Corbezzolo organic purchase group
- 11 individual organic operators

Since no specific budget is allocated at the regional/national level for bio-districts, the members of the Bio-distretto Cilento non-profit Association directly contribute to the management costs of the association with their own budgets. Financial resources needed to carry out Bio-distretto's activities have, up to now, derived from different projects. A multi-level governance and bottom-up approach is adopted in decision-making concerning Bio-distretto Cilento.