

# SMEOrigin

## Newsletter

Issue 1 / August 2023



Dear reader,

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter series of the **SMEOrigin** project, which aims to make a difference in one of the most special industries in the European Union and worldwide – the agri-food industry.

European countries offer a unique heritage of regional food traditions and a diverse landscape of specialties, reflecting their rich history of multi-ethnic and cultural development. Regional food represents a common European cultural heritage and is therefore a major economic asset for many European regions. These products have a tremendous impact on local development, they are a cultural asset and they generate cooperation between various sectors such as tourism and agriculture.

In the following pages, you will find material on the overall context and objectives of the project, as well as information on the latest and upcoming developments and events. We will also keep you informed about our progress and key outcomes through the project website, thematic events, and newsletters.

The **SMEOrigin** project team

### In this issue:

- Kick-off meeting
- Good practices: Rice of Calasparra
- Stakeholder meetings
- Forthcoming activities

The overall objective of the SMEOrigin project is to improve regional development policies and funding programmes aiming at increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the food sector. More specifically, the project has been designed to foster products with a geographical indication in the involved regions by improving the quality standards of SMEs, fostering their digital transformation, and promoting the authenticity of the products.

€  
1.40 M  
EU FUNDING

Mar 2023  
May 2027

*SMEOrigin aims to  
improve regional  
development policies to  
increase the  
competitiveness of food  
SMEs specialised in  
geographical indication.*



## Kick-off meeting of the SMEOrigin project



The ***kick-off meeting*** of the SMEOrigin project was hosted by Calasparra Municipality in the region of Murcia, Spain, on 10 – 12 May 2023. It focused on presenting the main goals, opportunities and challenges before the consortium and the partners in regard of the project.

Each partner made a presentation introducing the region and entity to which they belong. **The partners presented the products with certified geographical indication that are present in each region** and also highlighted national products of relevance. The partners also presented the **good practices, policies, regulations or initiatives** that are remarkable and relevant for the purpose of the project, considered as good practices that should be considered to boost the exchange with the consortium and the potential areas for improvement that can be highlighted.

During the 3-day event, the partners made study visits to the famous rice fields of Calasparra and the Murcia Food Brokerage Event 2023, where the latest creations in the agrifood sector were presented.





# GOOD PRACTICES



## Study visit: Rice of Calasparra

The partners made a study visit to the **rice fields of Calasparra**, where a particular rice with protected denomination of origin is grown. The participants visited the [Calasparra Virgen de la Fuensanta Rice Cooperative](#), where they learned first-hand about the high-quality production of the product, how the spaces and procedures are organised according to the type of rice involved or even the packaging of the product with its distinctive seal.

Afterwards, the partners visited the various locally produced rice fields. One of the characteristics that make this product from Calasparra so special is the fact that the water in the rice plantations is not stagnant, which allows a constant flow that increases the quality of the final product, unlike other types of plantations.



The partners visited the **Museum of Calasparra** in the Tourist Office of the Municipality, where they were introduced to the different recreational and tourist activities that are organised around the production of rice, as a differentiating element and an enhancer of local development.



The Mayor of Calasparra Teresa García welcomed the SMEOrigin consortium, making a presentation of Calasparra, its ecosystem around the production of Calasparra Rice.



# STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

interreg Europe



SMEOrigin

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In Semester 1 all the SMEOrigin partners held their first stakeholder meetings with the goal to present the project to their local communities and start exploring the local challenges and opportunities for development. The discussions primarily evolved around analyzing existing GI products in the partners' regions, the potential for new registrations and the opportunities for building business networks and stimulate regional and interregional cooperation between SMEs.



*If you are a food/wine SME in any of the partnering regions, [find your regional partner](#) to learn how you can benefit from SMEOrigin project.*

# FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES



## Second interregional meeting: Patras, Greece



The second interregional meeting will take place in Patras, Greece in the beginning of September 2023.

This event will evolve around the policy-related work initiated in Semester 1 and sharing good practices for development of the sector. Invited industry experts will provide examples of how farming businesses can contribute to regional development strategies aiming at boosting competitiveness, strengthening value chains, supporting and promoting digital transformation and improving product labelling.

The partners will make a study visit to PDO producers of wine, cheese and olives in the region of Patras city and Achaia province.



# FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES



## Food and wine events and fairs in Autumn 2023

In Semester 2 partners will take part in various events, oriented around SME competitiveness and the food sector. Autumn is the season for multiple food and wine fairs which present many opportunities for contact with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of the SMEOrigin project.

Dedicated dissemination activities like info days, presentations, etc., are also planned, as well as the regular stakeholder meetings which will take place at least once per semester.



Here are some examples of such events worth visiting:

**STARA ZAGORA, BULGARIA: AVGUSTIADA - Festival of Wine and Cultural Heritage,** 15 – 17.9.2023, Stara Zagora. SZ-REDA will make a presentation on the opportunities GI registration presents for SMEs

**SAVONLINNA, Finland:** Next year will be a celebration of delicious and high-quality food from Lake Saimaa and Savonlinna. It is time to create cooperation between local companies and stakeholders, when the entire Lake Saimaa region brings the best to the table – for locals and tourists visiting Savonlinna. The unique gastronomy and culture of Eastern Finland are celebrated with rich experiences that combine the purest food in the world and the original culture.

**Contact the SMEOrigin partner in your region to learn more about local initiatives.**



SMART



## GET INVOLVED:

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorigin>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SMEOrigin>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/smeorigin/>

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/smeorigin/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/SMEOrigin>

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

[Steirische Wirtschaftsförderungsges.m.b.H. \(AT\)](#)

[Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency \(BG\)](#)

[Opolskie Centre for Economy Development/ Opolskie Voivodeship \(PL\)](#)

[Savonlinna Development Services \(FI\)](#)

[University of Patras \(EL\)](#)

[Municipality of Calasparra \(ES\)](#)

[INTERBIO Aquitaine/ Limousin/ Poitou-Charentes \(FR\)](#)