

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## *“Energy Community Myrmidones”*

*Farmers taking charge in the energy crisis.*

(Greece)



## 1 Case Study/ Policy Recommendations: 'Energy Community Myrmidones'

### 1 Implications for policy and farming support

#### 1.1 The Challenge & Needs – What is the situation?

The key challenge and bottlenecks that need to be addressed in realizing Energy Communities include weaknesses in the legal environment, lack of specialized services, lack of funding, and a lack of cooperation culture among farmers.

In terms of the **legal environment**, the current laws related to Energy Communities are seen as a barrier to the creation of such communities. As one farmer stated, *"The legal framework is complex and confusing, which makes it difficult for us to create our own energy community."* A policy or institutional support instrument should address this by simplifying the legal procedures and providing clear guidelines for the creation and operation of energy communities. It is worth mentioning that during the project's duration the National legislative framework on energy communities changed 5 times. The first Law<sup>1</sup> introducing energy communities was in 2018, with a number of articles added and altered since then and in 2020 a new Law<sup>2</sup> changed again the scene raising several conflicts and public debate<sup>3</sup>.

The **lack of specialized services** is also a major challenge for farmers. As one farmer highlighted, *"We need specialized services and support to develop and operate our own energy community."* A policy or institutional support instrument should provide access to specialized services and support for farmers, such as technical assistance, financial advice, and training programs.

**Lack of funding** is another need expressed by farmers looking to create energy communities. As one farmer noted, *"We need funding to invest in renewable energy technologies and infrastructure."* A policy or institutional support instrument should provide financial support for the creation and operation of energy communities, such as grants, loans, and tax incentives.

Finally, the lack of cooperation culture among farmers is a significant challenge to the development of energy communities. As one farmer stated, *"We need to develop a culture of cooperation and trust among farmers to create and operate energy communities."* A policy or institutional support instrument should promote cooperation and collaboration among farmers, by providing opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, and building relationships between farmers.

By providing support in areas such as legal, financial, technical, and cooperative aspects, such an instrument can help farmers successfully co-create and co-operate contributing to their social and economic wellbeing.

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<sup>1</sup> N.4513/2018

<sup>2</sup> N.4759/2020

<sup>3</sup> [Development of energy communities in Greece: challenges and policy recommendations \[in Greek\]](#)



## 1.2 Support framework – What is needed?

**Access to funding:** Energy Communities need funding to invest in renewable energy projects, develop the necessary skills and knowledge, and build partnerships with other stakeholders. But to ask for fund the whole range of benefits deriving from energy communities has to be communicated.

**Legal and policy support:** Governments need to provide a supportive legal and policy environment that enables the growth of energy communities, including access to energy markets, grid connection, and regulatory support. In addition, the consistency of the legal framework is very important.

**Technical support:** Energy Communities need technical support to develop and implement renewable energy projects, including access to expertise in engineering, project management, and financing and people – facilitators that really know how to work with groups-especially coming from farming communities.

**Community engagement:** Energy Communities need to engage with local communities, building trust and support for their projects and raising awareness of the benefits of renewable energy.

**Gender balance:** Rural women can and should be included in the energy sector either in mixed cooperatives or within Women's Energy Communities can help overcome the specific needs of rural areas by empowering women to take a leading role in the transition to clean energy, providing additional income streams for farming communities, and building social cohesion through community ownership of renewable energy projects.

The added value of Energy Communities with reference to the SROI outcomes includes improved access to energy, reduced energy costs, increased income for rural communities, and social benefits such as increased community cohesion and empowerment. The added value of Women's Energy Communities with reference to SROI outcomes includes the creation of social, economic, and environmental benefits for women and their communities.

Some quotes highlighting the positive outcomes of participating in Energy Communities include:

- # *"The Myrmidones Energy Community is an initiative with limited risks and anxieties, that requires skills, easily achieved by farmers."*
- # *"Energy Communities have the potential to drive large parts of the population out of energy poverty risk (especially small farmers) and to ensure sustainable growth for local communities."*
- # *"Main outcomes for the farmers refer to provision of opportunities for them to be part of the energy production, development of skills that relate to clean energy, actual production of clean energy, increased energy autonomy, empowerment, and resilience by providing a long-term additional income and local control over finances, in areas where there are few options for generating wealth."*
- # *"Main outcomes for the rural area/farming community apart from increasing family income, are the strengthening of relationships and social capital."*



### 1.3 Recommendations – What needs to be done to realise the support needed?

Governments, NGOs, and private sector organizations should support the establishment and scaling up of Energy Communities and similar social innovations.

Financing mechanisms such as grants, loans, or crowdfunding can be used to support the development of these communities and enable women to invest in renewable energy technologies.

Policy instruments such as tax incentives, subsidies, and feed-in tariffs can be used to support the uptake of renewable energy and help reduce energy poverty.

Capacity-building and training programs can help increase the technical and entrepreneurial skills of women in energy and enhance their access to markets, finance, and networks.

Partnerships between different stakeholders, such as women's organizations, energy providers, financial institutions, and government agencies, can help leverage resources, share knowledge and expertise, and create synergies.

Specialized support organizations such as women's groups, energy agencies, and impact investors can help provide technical assistance, funding, and networking opportunities to Women's Energy Communities and similar initiatives.

Policymakers can adopt enabling policies and regulatory frameworks that promote gender equality, renewable energy, and social innovation, and ensure that women's voices and needs are taken into account in energy decision-making.

Collaboration and advocacy efforts can help raise awareness about the benefits of Women's Energy Communities and catalyze support from a broad range of stakeholders.

Learning from successful cases of Women's Energy Communities in different contexts and sharing best practices and lessons learned can help replicate and scale up these initiatives.

### 1.4 Existing environments where this is already happening

One of the major “players” in the energy community ecosystem that helped this case study develop was Electra Energy part of the REScoop.eu, the European federation of energy cooperatives. REScoop team has developed a [toolbox](#) with policy papers on energy poverty and [Electra Energy](#) several publications within the Greek context.

Another initiative happening is the **WEnCoop**, the first women energy cooperative in Europe and globally and can serve as a best practice example on how an Energy Community has positively impacted the local community. It is an award-winning project, one of the most influencing projects in 2022 according to The Women & Gender Constituency from United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Their achievements and their scope were presented to the farmers of the Myrmidones energy community as a good example of gender balance within the energy sector.



### Farmer interview questions

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** In your opinion, what are the main needs of farmers in the context of social innovation that should be addressed through support?

**A (Farmer):** *One of the main needs of farmers is access to information and training on new, innovative practices that can help improve their farming techniques and increase their productivity. Farmers also need support in terms of access to resources and technology, such as improved irrigation systems, that can help them mitigate the impact of climate change on their crops. Additionally, social support is crucial, including access to mental health resources and assistance with navigating the complex bureaucratic systems that often govern farming practices and regulations.*

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** What do you think needs to happen to make similar support actions available to farmers and their social innovations a reality?

**A (Farmer):** *I believe there needs to be greater collaboration and partnership between farmers, NGOs, and government agencies. This includes increased funding for social innovation projects that benefit farmers, as well as greater investment in research and development to identify new, effective farming practices. There also needs to be more support for networking and knowledge-sharing between farmers, so that we can learn from each other and adopt the most effective approaches to farming and social innovation.*

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** Who do you think should take responsibility for organizing and funding these support actions for farmers and their social innovations?

**A (Farmer):** *I think there is a shared responsibility between government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to provide support for farmers and social innovation projects. It's important to have a collaborative approach and involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure that support is effectively targeted and reaches those who need it most. Additionally, there should be greater involvement of farmers themselves in decision-making processes, so that the support provided is more tailored to their specific needs and priorities.*

### Farmer interview questions

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** *Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. Can you tell us a bit about your experience as a farmer and some of the challenges you face in your work?*

**A (Farmer):** *Of course. I've been farming for over 20 years now and it's been a tough road. There are so many challenges that come with the job, from unpredictable weather conditions to market fluctuations that make it hard to make a living. But I think one of the biggest challenges we face is the lack of support for farmers, especially when it comes to issues like mental health and wellbeing.*



**Q (FARMWELL partner):** *That's certainly something we've been looking into with our social innovation project. What are some of the main needs of farmers that you think should be addressed through support?*

**A (Farmer):** *Well, I think mental health is a big one. Farming can be a very isolating profession, and the stress of trying to make a living can take a toll on your mental wellbeing. It would be great to have more resources available for farmers to help them cope with these challenges. Another big issue is access to resources and training. As farming practices evolve, it can be hard to keep up with the latest technology and techniques. It would be great to have more support available to help farmers stay up-to-date and improve their operations.*

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** *Those are certainly important needs. What do you think needs to happen to make similar support actions available to farmers and social innovations a reality?*

**A (Farmer):** *I think it's going to take a lot of collaboration between farmers, organizations, and policymakers. We need to work together to identify the needs of farmers and come up with innovative solutions to address those needs. It would also be helpful to have more funding available to support these initiatives. Farming is such an important industry, but it often gets overlooked when it comes to funding and support.*

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** *That's a good point. Who do you think should take the lead in funding or supporting these initiatives?*

**A (Farmer):** *I think there's a role for everyone to play. There are some great organizations out there that are doing great work to support farmers, and it would be great to see more support for those groups. At the same time, I think policymakers need to step up and provide more funding and support for the industry as a whole. We need to recognize the importance of farming and invest in the future of our farmers.*

**Q (FARMWELL partner):** *Lastly, what is social innovation for you in the context of farming?*

**A (Farmer):** *I think social innovation is all about finding new and innovative ways to address the challenges that farmers face. It's about coming up with new solutions to improve the wellbeing of farmers and their families, and to make farming a more sustainable and profitable industry.*

*For me, social innovation is about bringing together farmers, organizations, and policymakers to work together to find solutions that really work. It's about investing in the future of farming and making sure that our farmers have the support they need to thrive.*

