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VALERECO Research Project: One Year of Field Implementation to Promote Legume Cultivation

As European agriculture faces rising input costs and increasing pressure from climate change, the Horizon Europe–funded project **VALERECO** has reached an important milestone with the successful launch of its **Living Labs** across Europe. Following a productive first year of on-farm experimentation, the project now invites **farmers and agricultural advisors** to engage with early findings on how legume crops can contribute to improved **soil health, biodiversity, and overall farm performance**.

A First Year Grounded in Practice

During its first year of implementation, VALERECO established **nine Living Labs in Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Serbia**, laying the foundations for long-term, farmer-oriented research. Within this framework, farmers, agricultural advisors, and researchers co-define priorities and test solutions under real on-farm conditions. The first growing season delivered tangible results, including:

- **Diverse crop trials:** Field experiments were carried out across a wide range of legume crops, including **chickpea, faba bean, lentil, sulla, clover, vetch, lupin, lucerne, and soybean**.
- **Practical assessments:** The Living Labs focused on evaluating these crops under **local soil and climatic conditions**, testing **weed management practices**, and assessing the potential **reduction of agricultural inputs**, such as fertilisers.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Each Living Lab held its **first annual board meeting**, formally integrating farmers and advisors into the **decision-making process** related to experimental design.

Why This Matters for European Farmers

At the core of VALERECO is the ambition to quantify the **Ecosystem Services (ES)** provided by legumes and turn that scientific data into practical tools for farmers. For the farming community, the initial findings and ongoing trials offer critical insights into:

- **Reducing Costs:** Identifying how legumes can lower dependence on synthetic nitrogen fertilizers and herbicides.
- **improving Resilience:** Testing drought-resistant varieties and management strategies that help farms adapt to climate change.
- **Economic Opportunity:** Exploring the marketability of legume crops and diversifying income sources.

Looking Ahead: Digital Tools and Knowledge Transfer

With the Living Labs fully operational, VALERECO is moving into the next phase of its work, focusing on knowledge transfer and decision support. Upcoming developments include a **Digital Legume Information Hub (DLIH)** and a **Decision Support System (DSS)**, designed to provide region-specific, data-driven guidance for farmers and advisors.

As the project enters its second year of implementation, on-farm demonstrations, technical meetings, and dissemination activities will intensify, offering increased opportunities for direct engagement with results in real field conditions.

About VALERECO

VALERECO (Valorization Legumes Related Ecosystem Services) is a 4-year project funded by the European Union. It aims to promote the understanding and adoption of legume crops in diversified farming systems. The consortium consists of 15 partners from 11 countries, coordinating efforts to enhance the environmental and economic value of legume ecosystem services. The project has a four-year duration, is funded by the European Union, and is coordinated by Associate Professor Ilias Travlos of the Agricultural University of Athens.

Notes to editors

At a glance - Key facts and figures	
Instrument	Horizon Europe
EC Funding	4,899,856.25 €
Duration	4 years, 2024-2028
Consortium	15 partners from 11 countries

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