Turning rural assets into competitive value chains

How opportunities under Cohesion Policy can be leveraged to help rural businesses innovate, scale and compete

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European Commission

THE FUNDING BASE

Cohesion Policy funding support

€56bn

estimated ERDF framework for research and innovation in 2021-2027

Delivery

Regional/national programmes
Grants & financial instruments
Calls shaped by programme priorities

For rural businesses, the opportunity extends beyond a single R&I grant

01

Strengthen capacity

Research infrastructure - Applied R&I - Test beds and Demonstration

02

Enhance technology Uptake

Technology transfer - Advisory support - Technology diffusion and adoption

03

Digitalise and grow SMEs

SME innovation Digital and green solutions - Scaling - Access to new markets

04

Build skills for transformation

Skills for Industrial Transition - Entrepreneurship - Innovation management

Smart Specialisation (S3)

2014-2020

Ex-ante conditionality

required before ERDF support to research and innovation

2021-2027

Enabling condition

'Good governance of S3' linked to ERDF SO 1.1 and SO 1.4

A strategic and integrated competitiveness framework for steering innovation and industrial policies and funding towards productive investments that generate economic transformation

1 Identify

territorial strengths, capabilities and emerging opportunities

2 Concentrate

resources on a limited set of strategic priorities with transformational potential

3 Coordinate

funding and policies using a multistakeholder approach across industrial ecosystems

4 Connect

connect sectoral transformation to wider European priorities

WHAT REGIONS PRIORITISE

Rural priorities are already central to Europe’s S3 portfolio

82

STRATEGIES

agri-food sector

67

STRATEGIES

tourism, culture and creative industries

52

STRATEGIES

food security, natural resources and bioeconomy

By embedding rural priorities in their S3 strategies, territories are turning rural assets into competitive advantage - unlocking new opportunities for innovation and industrial investment and strengthening their position in European and global value chains

FIND PARTNERS AND BUILD A PIPELINE

S3 Agri-food partnerships

8

active partnerships

- Biosolutions for sustainable agriculture
- Food for positive health impact
- Food packaging
- High Tech Farming
- Ingredients for the Bioeconomy
- Plant-based food innovation
- Smart Solutions for Agri-food
- Traceability & Big Data

1. Match S3 priority
2. Join/form TSSP
3. Build joint investment pipelines
4. Leverage funding opportunities

THE SCALE-UP ROUTE

I3 turns interregional collaboration into investment

€490m+

2021-2027 funding period

Up to €10m / project

70% EU contribution

Close-to-market: TRL 6-9

1

Strand 1

Investment-ready consortia in shared S3 areas

2a

Strand 2a

Value-chain development with less-developed regions

2b

Strand 2b

Capacity to build interregional business cases

2026 calls open: 13 May → 12 November

Green · digital · smart manufacturing

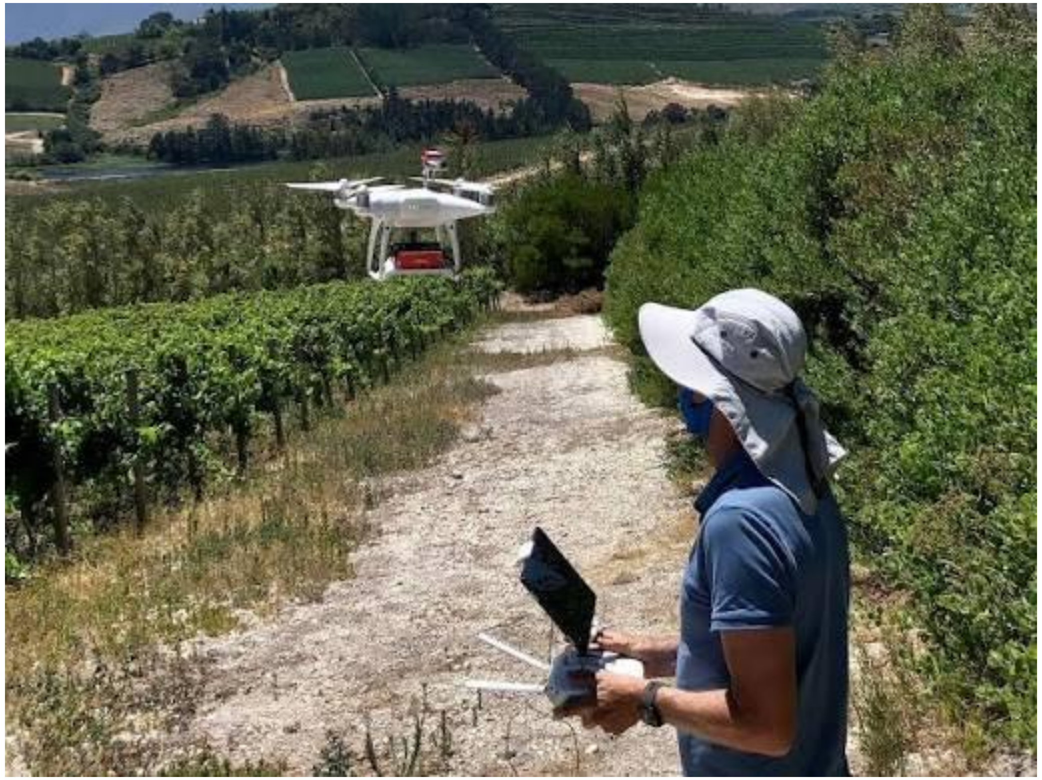
THE USE-CASE

SmartVitiNet

Through the I3 Instrument, SmartVitiNet is deploying drones, hyperspectral imaging, sensors and AI directly in vineyards, moving technologies beyond research and testing into real-world use.

Partners from Norte & Grande Lisboa • Peloponnese & Attica • Midi-Pyrénées • Cyprus

€2.83 million investment



Thank you!

Discussion