

“The support of the Marshall Plan and aid towards the Greek cooperatives’ development in the 1950’s and how the Greek Agricultural Cooperatives could nowadays adopt a reform and innovation path”

Dr Apostolos Vetsopoulos
University College London

During the post-war period the US launched an international plan to provide economic aid for the reconstruction of Western Europe. This economic tool was called Marshall Plan. In Greece, the Marshall Plan experts provided loans for small business enterprises as well as for large Cooperatives. However, because the Agricultural Cooperatives were not able to contribute their own share of 25% for the total expenses projects, in 16th March 1950 a proposal of the Agricultural Cooperatives Union was submitted to the Central Loan Committee of the Marshall Plan-Aid in order to diminish the cooperatives’ share. With favourable terms Marshall Aid provided loans for several Greek Agricultural Cooperatives through the Agricultural Bank of Greece, such as “*Cooperative of Aspropyrgos’ cattle-raisers*”, “*Cooperative Sales and Processing Horticultural (Fruit and Vegetables) Products Amaliados*” and “*Central Cooperative Union fig-growers-The Sikiki*” in Kalamata. Nowadays, after a decade of financial crisis in Greece, the Greek Agricultural Cooperatives, laying aside their past pathogenic practices, should make efforts toward the adoption of necessary reforms and shape an innovation path. Such a convenient model is the “Agricultural Cooperative ‘*The Union*’ of Agrinion” that decided to develop its activities. After receiving a license by the authority in charge, this Cooperative organization tried to establish a renewable energy source, such as generating Renewable Energy Sources (RES) units in the mountains of Aetoloakarnania prefecture of the Region of Western Greece. Furthermore, other innovation ways of cooperatives were the efforts to establish a network among the Cooperatives to create a Union of stock-farmers which would undertake the processing of primary production in order to seek for domestic and foreign markets through the adoption of commercial symbols. All in all, the Greek society and members of Cooperatives must support Financial and Banking Cooperatives in order to provide loans for the development of Cooperatives. This objective could be accomplished through the promotion of school cooperatives by the Greek Ministry of Education.