



3rd project workshop oriented to overcoming barriers present in the Italian region

The third workshop focused on the Italian demonstration site of the BONEX project was successfully conducted on 14th January 14 2025, through the joint efforts of the Italian teams.

The event saw active engagement from a diverse range of stakeholders representing key sectors within the **Water, Energy, Food, and Ecosystems (WEFe) Nexus**. Participants included major national enterprises and companies interested in the water and energy sector of the area, alongside farmer associations, regional authorities, irrigation consortia, environmental NGO etc.

The workshop served as a platform for discussion and assessment of three BONEX interventions done within the Italian demonstration project (DP), a large irrigation district in the Emilia-Romagna region. The district has a surface of 22.500 ha and faces different problems related to agricultural production, mainly due to climate change and water scarcity. The intervention foreseen for the DP included:

1. Closure of the water balance in the DP - to identify different components of water balance and select those that need to be modified
2. Implementation of nature-based solutions aimed at improving irrigation water quality.
3. Assessment of the effect that wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) discharges have on irrigation water quality.

In the second workshop, the participants identified the main barriers that could limit the implementation of the above-mentioned intervention. The third workshop built on those results and therefore the stakeholders were asked to propose **solutions to those barriers**, commenting on how they could improve the overall situation. This exercise was done in a modality of **world-café** where in total there were three tables, one for each intervention, and the participants divided in three groups went around these tables. The second exercise aimed at the identification of the main stakeholders important for the implementation of the three interventions, as well as establishing what are their interest and influence in the short, medium and long-term.

The methodology applied proved highly effective in achieving the workshop's goal and it fostered a productive discussion among stakeholders. The workshop led to the development of concrete activities, initiatives, and actions aimed at **overcoming implementation difficulties**. The stakeholders expressed different points of view that enriched the debate and made it positively heterogeneous. On certain arguments there was some disagreement among stakeholders but, also thanks to the mediation of the DP leaders, a constructive discussion always resulted from these situations.

An important point that was raised during the workshop was the lack of effective communication among institutions responsible for the various sectors of the WEFe Nexus. Fortunately, this workshop offered a crucial opportunity to enhance that collaboration, and to continue joint initiatives to improve the sustainability of the agricultural sector in the Mediterranean region.



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Stakeholders provided excellent feedback on the workshop, agreeing that the project's initiatives are vital for developing the WEF nexus and overall sustainability in the DP area. The primary message that emerged was the necessity of disseminating project outcomes to launch an awareness campaign. Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted that inter-entity collaboration is essential for optimising both cost-sharing and activity management. Bringing together stakeholders from different work environments and social spheres was a key success factor of the workshop, enabling the DP leaders to gather a broader spectrum of results and consider a richer diversity of viewpoints.

