

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND SOLUTIONS FOR SDGs

Zero Roadmap of SDGs and European Green Deal
adoption in the agro-processing sector in Albania

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Authors

Prof. Dr. Renata Kongoli

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Orjon Xhoxhi

Coordination and Support

Eno Ngjela

Tiphaine Lucas

Drilona Toslluku

Jiyoung Nam

Aurora Cicillini

Barbara Battioni Romanelli

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
Introduction	7
1. The Zero Roadmap	10
Objectives and Methodology	11
2. SDGs and EU Green Deal in Albania	14
3. Findings and Proposed Action	18
4. Zero Roadmap of Adoption of SDGs and European Green Deal in the Agro-processing Sector in Albania	22
5. Way Forward	31
Conclusions	33
Reference	35

List of Tables

Table 1 2023 SDG Index ranking and score, by country	15
Table 2 Findings and proposed actions	19
Table 3 Zero Roadmap of SDGs and European Green Deal adoption in agro-processing sector in Albania	23
Table 4 Key activities linked to the SDGs	30

ACRONYMS

ARDA	Albanian Lek	KII	<i>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
ARTI	Common Agricultural Policy	KPI	National Institute of Statistics
EU	Common Country Analysis	MoARD	International Olive Council
EGD	Consumer Price Index	MoFE	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
FAO	European Green Deal	MoHSP	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
FBO	European Union	NFA	Key Informant Interview
FGD	Food Agricultural Organization	NSDEI	Leave No One Behind
GAP	Food Business Operator	SDG	Medicinal and Aromatic Plants
GMP	Focus Group Discussion	SMEs	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
GoA	Global Agenda	SWOT	Nearest Neighbour
HEI	Good Agricultural Practices	UN	olive-mill wastewater
INSTAT	Gross Domestic Product	UNDP	olive press cake
IPARD	Greenhouse Gas		

Executive Summary

The agro-processing sector plays a pivotal role in driving Albania's economic development, contributing significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product and employment opportunities. Over the past decade, the sector has experienced growth and emerged as one of Albania's primary economic pillars.

To sustain growth and progress, the sector must adopt sustainable and resilient practices, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and European Green Deal. Such alignment is crucial to addressing challenges and external shocks related to food security, environmental sustainability and climate change.

The Government of Albania has demonstrated its commitment to sustainability by endorsing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It integrated the European Green Deal objectives and SDG principles into the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015–2020 (NSDI 2015–2020), and also into the new National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030 (NSDEI II 2030). These strategic documents align the European Integration agenda with sustainable economic and social development, firmly connecting with the SDGs. Despite progress and commitment, the sector faces numerous challenges. To address these challenges, the present Zero Roadmap outlines essential future interventions that the agro-processing sector in Albania must undertake to ensure its resilience and alignment with SDGs and the European Green Deal.

The Zero Roadmap was developed following a qualitative approach based on six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and ten Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with agro-processing industry representatives. Additionally, data from secondary sources and assessment of four case studies from the agro-processing industry were utilized. Also, a stocktaking report, which provides essential information for the proposed interventions in this Zero Roadmap, has been prepared and should be read alongside this document.

The proposed Zero Roadmap objectives focus on enhancing capabilities for sustainable production, promoting circular economy principles¹ and fostering cooperation among stakeholders. Detailed actions, indicators and timelines are presented to achieve these objectives, requiring effective coordination and cooperation among stakeholders.

Financing strategies and mobilizing resources will be vital for successful implementation. The present Zero Roadmap serves as a proactive toolbox designed to align the agro-processing sector with the SDGs and the European Green Deal, emphasizing sustainability as a driving force for economic growth and resilience.

1. Fassio and Tecco (2019) Circular Economy for Food: A Systemic Interpretation of 40 Case Histories in the Food System in Their Relationships with SDGs, *Systems*, 7(3), 43

Introduction

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the European Green Deal and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans by the agro-processing sector in Albania has emerged as a critical priority for fostering sustainable growth in the local economy.

The agro-processing sector plays a strategically significant role in the country's economic development and offers significant employment potential. Over the past decade, this sector has exhibited substantial growth, though ongoing support is required to ensure its continued sustainable expansion.

By embracing the SDGs, the sector can enhance its resilience to external shocks, including challenges related to food security, environmental sustainability, the impact of climate change and overall competitiveness. A new way of viewing the economic, social and ecological aspects of the SDGs is suggested and how they are all linked to food.² Nevertheless, this industry demands substantial actions and investments to facilitate adoption of the SDGs and the European Green Deal principles to unlock the potential for growth. In recognizing this challenge, the present Zero Roadmap has been developed to outline the necessary interventions that the agro-processing sector must undertake in Albania to align with the SDGs and the European Green Deal. According to Albania's National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the country's Gross Domestic Product in the fourth quarter of 2022 increased by 4.73 percent in terms of volume compared with the corresponding quarter of 2021.¹ During this quarter, the total number of employees increased by 4.2 percent compared to 2021 and decreased by 0.4 percent compared to the third quarter of 2022.¹ Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Albania was reported at 36.09 percent in 2020.³

The Government of Albania (GoA) integrated the objectives of the European Green Deal and the principles of the SDGs into the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015–2020 (NSDI)⁴ and also into the new National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022-2030 (NSDEI) (approved on 22 February 2023).⁵ These strategic documents effectively align the European Union (EU) integration agenda with sustainable economic and social development, firmly reinforcing the country's alignment with the SDGs. With the goals and objectives of NSDEI II 2030 in mind, the present road-mapping exercise seeks to pioneer collaboration between agro-processing companies with the various stakeholders. It presents a clear set of objectives, supported by actionable steps and well-defined roles of all stakeholders. The Zero Roadmap aims to facilitate the widespread adoption of SDGs and the European Green Deal in the agro-processing sector. The promotion of sustainable food

2. Rockström and Sukhdev (2016) How food is linked to all the SDGs, EAT Forum.

3. INSTAT <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/>

4. The Government of Albania (2013) The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015–2020 (NSDI).

5. RTSH RTI National Strategy for European Integration 2022-2030, OSCE: a fundamental document

production and quality through a competitive and innovative agri-food sector is an objective of the National Strategy of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (2021–2027).⁶ Furthermore, the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development (IPARD) provides support for investments, process modernization and marketing of agricultural and fishery products. The programme commits to reaching up to 270 beneficiaries by 2027 and focuses on rural areas and the agri-food sector, offering financial and technical assistance, and aiming to enhance capabilities and promote sustainable practices aligning with the EU’s common agricultural policy.⁷

In recent years, an increase in awareness and interest of the agro-processing industry has been noted, particularly on issues related to **sustainable production**, **socio-economic impact** and **environmental protection**. Agro-processing companies are demonstrating a commitment to enhancing their business performance across these areas. Given these efforts, the Zero Roadmap will serve as a guiding document for future interventions and initiatives, providing a clear set of objectives, actions and roles for all stakeholders to maximize the adoption of the SDGs and European Green Deal in the sector. The proposed Zero Roadmap **Objectives**, in line with the goals of the NSDEI relating to agriculture, are as follows:

1

Enhancing agro-processing industry capabilities for sustainable production and innovative applications.

Providing continuous improvement of business models oriented towards circular economy principles.

2

3

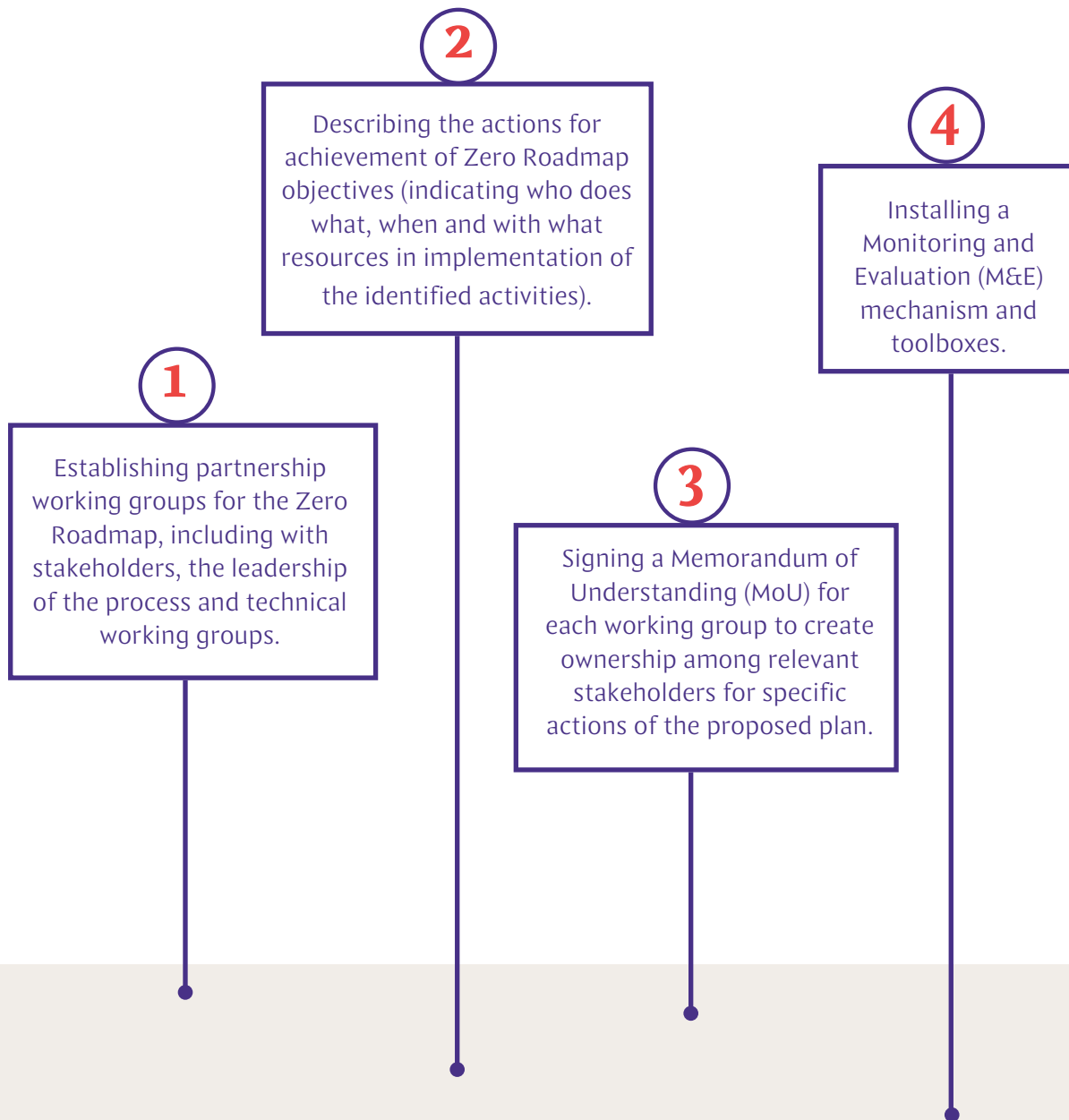
Upgrading cooperation for sustainable partnership among value chain actors (from farmers to final consumers), policymakers and other stakeholders.

6. The Government of Albania (2022) The National Strategy of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (2021–2027). Albanian version. alb211951.pdf (fao.org). English abstract available: <https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/al/national-legislation/strategy-agriculture-rural-development-and-fisheries-2021-2027>

7. EU (2021) The common agricultural policy: 2023-27 [CAP 2023-27 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/)

These objectives are further elaborated in Chapter 4 Table 3, where they are presented as a matrix with outputs, actions, indicators, stakeholders and a timeline.

Following approval of the Zero Roadmap and agreement on the specific actions for each objective, a detailed **Action Plan** as a **way forward** will be undertaken by interested parties (stakeholders, policymakers, international organizations, agencies, education institutions), with the following activities :





1

ZERO ROADMAP

Objectives
Methodology

Objectives

The Zero Roadmap, formulated following analysis and findings of the Stocktaking report, has three defined Objectives, each supported by a range of actions tailored to the specific context of Albania's agro-processing sector companies. *The proposed Objectives, in line with NSDEI 2023–2030, are as follows:*

OBJECTIVE 1:

ENHANCING AGRO-PROCESSING INDUSTRY CAPABILITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS

- Promote and support implementation of EU standards for quality and food safety, nutrition and health, as well as plant and animal health and welfare. This includes inspection along the entire food chain, with a focus on traceability and labelling of food products **(SDG 2, 3, 4, 12)**.
- Promote innovative practices centred on research, technology and digitalisation, and encourage a transition to renewable energy sources **(SDG 2, 8, 9, 12)**.

OBJECTIVE 2:

PROVIDING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF BUSINESS MODELS ORIENTED TOWARDS CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

- Promote and support environmentally friendly production activities, continuous improvement of technology, natural and organic farming, eco-systems preservation and water management **(SDG 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13)**.

OBJECTIVE 3:

UPGRADING COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP AMONG VALUE CHAIN ACTORS (FROM FARMERS TO FINAL CONSUMERS), POLICYMAKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Promote the transfer of innovative technologies to enhance competitiveness, create fair value chains and bolster human resource capacities. This should be achieved through collaboration across the institutional framework, involving policymakers, higher education institutions, other educational institutions, entrepreneurship and agricultural holdings **(SDG 4, 8, 12, 15, 16, 17)**.

Methodology

Based on these objectives, a set of actions is proposed, aligned with the SDGs and the European Green Deal, and complemented by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tailored to the agro-processing sector in Albania, and includes a timeline and stakeholders.

However, achieving sustainability in the industry necessitates addressing further several SDGs that serve as crucial enablers for others, including the following: **SDGs 8** (Decent work and economic growth), **9** (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), **12** (Responsible consumption and production), and **13** (Climate action), which are covered well within the National Strategy of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (2021–2027); **SDG 7** (Affordable and clean energy), which is being addressed but needs further attention; **SDGs 4** (Quality education), **5** (Gender equality), and **17** (Partnerships for the goals), which are key enablers for the other goals.⁸

The Zero Roadmap is designed to span a **eight-year** period, from **2023 to 2030**, and encompass a set of activities, methodologies and tools that are recommended for implementation by relevant stakeholders in the agro-processing sector. *The Zero Roadmap drafting process comprised three phases:*



8. INSTAT SDGs <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/sdgs/>

THE FIRST PHASE COMPRISED THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- Desk research into the SDGs and European Green Deal implementation by FBOs in Albania.
- Mapping of relevant stakeholders with direct and indirect roles, and the impact of SDGs and European Green Deal within the agro-processing sector.
- Preparation of guidance and questions for the preparation of six FGDs and ten KIIs.
- Preparation of the second phase: Fieldwork.
- Selection of representatives from six agro-processing sectors: Milk and dairy food, Meat processing, Drinking water, Fresh fruit and vegetable export and processing, Olive oil production, and Flour and bakeries.
- Selection of KIIs.

THE SECOND PHASE COMPRISED THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- Organisation of six FGDs involving 30 representatives of the most prominent companies in the six agro-processing sectors.
- Conducting of ten KIIs.
- Four case study visits to agro-processing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Meat processing, Milk processing, Olive oil production, and Fresh fruit and vegetable export.


THE THIRD PHASE COMPRISED THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- Gathering of feedback, recommendations and suggestions through FBOs, FGDs and KIIs, summarized in the FGDs Summary Report, and KIIs Summary Report.
- Data analysis and assessments of SDG and European Green Deal alignment for each selected agro-processing sector.
- Preparation of Stocktaking Report, including a SWOT analysis.
- Zero Roadmap for the SDGs and the European Green Deal in the agro-processing industry in Albania.

THE FOURTH PHASE:

Comprised open discussions of the actions and KPIs with interested parties: e.g. policymakers, international organizations, agencies and education institutions.

Following production of the Zero Roadmap, the development of an Action Plan and a Monitoring & Evaluation Toolbox should be prioritized.




2

**SDGs AND EU
GREEN DEAL
IN ALBANIA**

All 193 member states of the United Nations (UN) have committed themselves to addressing the world’s most significant challenges by 2030: ending global poverty, safeguarding our planet and ensuring a life of dignity for all.

The Agenda 2030 encompasses 17 SDGs, which serve as a blueprint for collective action to be implemented by every country and all stakeholders, working together in collaborative partnerships. Albania has embraced the 2002 World Summit Declaration on Sustainable Development, demonstrating commitment to the SDGs. However, the COVID-19 pandemic created a setback for sustainable development not only in Europe, but across the world. An observed decline in the SDG Index score in 2022 comes after years of progress on the SDGs but with candidate countries performing poorly, with an average score in 2022 of just above 66 percent, driven notably by weaker performance on SDG 1 and SDGs 3–9 (socio-economic goals) and SDG 16 (justice, peace and strong institutions).⁹ In the latest tables, Albania ranks 54th with a score of 73.5 on the SDG Index and Dashboard for implementation of SDGs in national policy, as reported in Table 1.¹⁰ The SDGs Report of Albania for 2022 indicates that the country’s performance aligns more closely with SDGs 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 12 and 13, but lags behind with regard to SDGs 2, 5, 8, 9, 14, 15 and 17.^{11,12} The country’s actions towards SDGs with an environmental dimension focus primarily on SDGs 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14 and 15.

Table 1 2023 SDG Index ranking and score, by country

	Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
	1	Finland	86.8	45	Kyrgyz Republic	74.4
	2	Sweden	86.0	46	Cuba	74.1
	3	Denmark	85.7	47	Bosnia and Herzegovina	74.0
	4	Germany	83.4	48	Israel	74.0
	5	Austria	82.3	49	Russian Federation	73.8
	6	France	82.0	50	Brazil	73.7
	7	Norway	82.0	51	Argentina	73.7
	8	Czechia	81.9	52	Costa Rica	73.6
	9	Poland	81.8	53	Azerbaijan	73.5
	10	Estonia	81.7	54	Albania	73.5
	11	United Kingdom	81.7	55	Vietnam	73.3
	12	Croatia	81.5	56	Armenia	73.3
	13	Slovenia	81.0	57	Fiji	72.9
	14	Latvia	80.7	58	Tunisia	72.5
	15	Switzerland	80.5	59	Cyprus	72.5
	16	Spain	80.4	60	North Macedonia	72.5
	17	Ireland	80.1	61	Bhutan	72.3
	18	Portugal	80.0	62	Dominican Republic	72.1
						

9. UN (2017) SDG Index and Dashboards 2017: Sustainable Development Report.

10. UN (2023) SDGs Dashboard: Track, Monitor and Report Data on Global Goals.

11. UN (2022) Sustainable Development Report 2022 - Sustainable Development Report.

12. INSTAT (2023) Sustainable Development Goals Albania 2022.

GOA AND THE UN SYSTEM HAVE OUTLINED THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- A. Human capital development and social inclusion
- B. Sustainable, resilient and green economic growth and resource management
- C. Effective, people-centred governance, rule of law, human rights and gender equality.

NSDEI II 2030 AIMS TO REFLECT THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

- ✎ Harmonization of implementation of NSDEI 2030 with the achievement of the SDGs, a critical part of the 2030 Agenda, to which Albania is fully committed
- ✎ Building and executing a long-term vision for the country's development
- ✎ Extending some vital sector strategies' approval or preparation process until 2030
- ✎ Building a long-term strategy that aids Albania's integration into the EU within a clear and stable strategic framework
- ✎ Supporting the medium-term budgeting process by creating long-term projections for budget expenditures, aimed at achieving strategic goals and policy objectives for the country's development.

In line with the EU's ambition to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the region and country have also committed to reaching carbon neutrality by 2050 and aligning with the European Green Deal's key elements by endorsing the Green Agenda of the Western Balkans.¹³

The Summit in Sofia in 2020 drafted the Agenda, Declaration and Action Plan, which outlines concrete steps, supporting organizations and structures, and an indicative timeframe for each measure to be implemented. The Action Plan for Sofia Declaration implementation takes into account the main political processes, international frameworks and agreements, legislative and non-legislative acts adopted at the EU level, including the European Green Deal (EGD:EU climate framework, EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Farm to Fork Strategy, 55 percent Fit Package, Zero Pollution Action Plan, among others).

It also considers energy and climate targets in the Western Balkans for 2030, aligning with the EU's intermediate climate targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent, among other objectives.

The Action Plan is structured to encompass the seven components of the Sofia Declaration (Climate Action, Energy, Transport, Circular Economy, Pollution, Sustainable Agriculture, Nature and Biodiversity Protection) grouped into five pillars: Decarbonization, Circular Economy, Depollution, Sustainable Agriculture and Protection of Nature and Biodiversity.¹⁴

13. RCC Green Agenda of the Western Balkans.

14. RCC Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030.

GoA collaborates with the UN to commit to a Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework aimed at achieving the SDGs.

THIS COMMITMENT IS REFLECTED IN THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL POLICY STRATEGIES:

- ✎ **NSDEI**, which has four pillars as strategic priorities for selected SDGs and targets
- ✎ Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, 2021–2030
- ✎ National Strategy for Waste Management, 2010–2025
- ✎ Cross-sectorial National Strategy for the Environment, 2014–2020
- ✎ National Plan for European Integration, 2020–2022, based upon the European Commission Opinion and Analytical Report
- ✎ Economic Reform Programme, 2021–2023
- ✎ The human rights commitments of Albania and other agreed international and regional development goals and treaty obligations.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework builds upon the successes of past cooperation, and represents a joint commitment to working in close partnership to achieve concrete results. These efforts aim to create a more prosperous and sustainable economy, along with a fairer and more liveable society for all people in Albania.

The background features several thick, wavy, overlapping lines in various colors: purple, pink, orange, yellow, green, and red. A large, hollow, purple-outlined number '3' is positioned in the upper right quadrant.

3

**FINDINGS AND
PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Table 2 reports the key findings and proposed actions derived from the Stocktaking Report, with a particular focus on the analysis of six FGDs, ten KIIs and four case studies.

Table 2 Findings and proposed actions

Industry	Findings	Proposed actions
 <p>Milk and dairy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↘ Lack of subsidies in rural areas has led to a reduced interest of farmers in animal breeding. This situation has had adverse effects, including undermining animal welfare, causing a gradual loss of agro-biodiversity, due to the use of a few, highly specialized breeds, increasing the risk of animal disease and contributing to poverty and hunger by hindering progress in animal production systems (SDG 1, 2) ↘ Working conditions at the SMEs for employees are poorly managed (SDG 3) ↘ Lack of study programmes oriented towards providing applicative knowledge for the agro-processing sector, market demand and sustainability (SDG 4) ↘ Issues concerning primary production waste and lack of effective manure management (SDG 6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↘ Increase interest and awareness in animal breeding and reproduction to produce healthy and robust animals while enhancing animal welfare and preserving genetic diversity. ↘ Establish a subsidy scheme or micro-financing programme for smallholder farmers focused on animal breeding and balanced breeding. Such an initiative would aim to improve the quality, disease resistance, robustness, fertility and longevity of animals, while also reducing environmental impacts. Such efforts create benefits for farmers, consumers and the environment (SDG 1, 2) ↘ Enhance working conditions at SMEs to prioritize employee health and well-being (SDG 3) ↘ Enhance training programmes tailored to the agro-processing sector to increase the interest and cooperation of agro-processing businesses (SDG 4) ↘ Provide financial support for investments in modern technologies related to waste and manure management (SDG 6)
 <p>Meat and meat processing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↘ Limited collaboration between private companies and education institutions has resulted in an academic curriculum that does not align with the market needs, leading to a shortage of specialists in various agricultural sectors. ↘ There is an absence of targeted policies for supporting innovation in SMEs. ↘ In rural areas, there is a lack of specific policies aimed at promoting employment opportunities. ↘ Scarcity of local raw materials and absence of subsidies have reduced farmers' interest in animal breeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↘ Foster active cooperation between private companies and education institutions. ↘ Implement tailored policies to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs (SDG 3). ↘ Increase production capacity in areas near manufacturing companies to positively impact local employment opportunities. ↘ Develop policies to support SMEs in reducing informality. ↘ Implement tailored policies for rural employment to reduce labour migration (SDG 1, 2). ↘ Establish a subsidy scheme to support initiatives in animal breeding.

Industry	Findings	Proposed actions
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Production and processing of fruits and vegetables

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges persist for businesses to find full-time and part-time staff, regardless of their economic needs (SDG 1). Field experiments organized by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and FBOs provide young people with practical knowledge (SDG 4). There is a shared awareness among FBOs of the critical need for investments in clean energy sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional level planning of agricultural produce can promote cooperation among farmers, reduce costs, alleviate poverty, minimize waste and protect the environment (SDG 2). To ensure consumers' health, official inspection bodies should carry out their responsibilities with diligence and competence, in compliance with national food legislation (SDG 3). Financial support can be provided and a legal basis established for SMEs to sell excess energy that is produced (SDG 7). |
|---|---|




Olive oil production


- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Olive Oil sector has a great need for seasonal workers (SDG 1). Training of farmers and cooperation services provided by regional extension centres are needed (SDG 2). Awareness raising and provision of training to farmers are vital for safety issues and consumer protection (SDG 3). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with professional schools and universities to offer Vocational and Education Training (VET) programmes in partnership with FBOs. Short-term courses can enhance employee performance in the workplace (SDG 4). Implement waste treatment systems and provide financial support (SDG 6). |
|---|---|



Drinking water

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lack of social and economic policies that target less developed regions. Investments in training and employment opportunities for young people are insufficient. Despite positive experiences shared by FBOs, there is still room for improvement in achieving gender equality, both in the workplace and within the community (SDG 5). Adequate waste treatment systems and financial support are needed and requested (SDG 6). Managing and disposing of plastic materials pose challenges for companies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft social and economic policies targeting less developed regions to prevent migration to urban areas (SDG 1). Make investments in youth mobilization and employment opportunities (SDG 2). Provide trainings for logistics employees (e.g., sales agents, transport workers) (SDG 3). FBOs should be members of HEI boards and contribute to the development of curricula (SDG 4). Gender equality practices in the workplace and in communities should be improved (SDG 5). Development of modern waste treatment practices should be financially supported (SDG 6). |
|--|---|

Industry	Findings	Proposed actions
 <p data-bbox="236 416 319 510">Flour and bread</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="418 322 874 403">✎ Bakeries face difficulties in reallocating unsold bread and utilizing it for those in need (SDG 1, 2). <li data-bbox="418 430 874 510">✎ Cleaning and sanitation practices, and customer service procedures are scarce (SDG 3). <li data-bbox="418 537 874 645">✎ Employees in the agro-processing sector require better training opportunities to support skills development (SDG 4). <li data-bbox="418 672 874 824">✎ Poor infrastructure affects the quality of produce delivered to consumers, highlighting the need for improvements by official control bodies, according to the Food Law (SDG 6). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="884 322 1359 430">✎ Improve coordination with municipalities for the daily distribution (transport, storage) of unsold bread to social canteens for next-day consumption (SDG 1, 2). <li data-bbox="884 456 1359 537">✎ Promote traditional production, hurdle technologies in rural areas and the ‘slow food’ movement. <li data-bbox="884 564 1359 649">✎ Coordinate with municipalities to collect the remaining produce to reduce poverty, hunger and food waste (SDG 2). <li data-bbox="884 676 1359 757">✎ Implement proper cleaning and sanitation practices, along with customer service procedures (SDG 3). <li data-bbox="884 784 1359 837">✎ Offer regular training and qualifications to enhance employee performance (SDG 4). <li data-bbox="884 864 1359 972">✎ Strengthen the capacity of official inspection bodies to ensure the quality and safety of food products along all food chains.

 <p data-bbox="236 1184 370 1301">All 6 Agro-processing sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="418 1068 874 1122">✎ FBOs recognize the importance of investing in clean energy sources. <li data-bbox="418 1149 874 1234">✎ Low wages have led to a trend of Albanians emigrating in search of better opportunities (SDG 8). <li data-bbox="418 1261 874 1467">✎ Success stories of investments in gas emission reduction, photovoltaic systems, green landscaping, noise reduction, electric vehicles, biodegradable packaging and waste treatment systems exist but require more replication and broader awareness (SDG 11). <li data-bbox="418 1494 874 1628">✎ National Food Authority (NFA) and other official control institutions occasionally demonstrate incompetence and insufficient structural strength. <li data-bbox="418 1655 874 1709">✎ Lack of subsidies and informality are major obstacles (SDG 16). <li data-bbox="418 1736 874 1870">✎ A considerable number of companies have a vision of the future in terms of development and growth with a primary focus on the local market due to the nature of their produce (SDG 17). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="884 1068 1359 1149">✎ Provide financial support and establish an adequate legal framework to enable FBOs to sell excess energy (SDG 7). <li data-bbox="884 1176 1359 1261">✎ Set up research and development innovation departments, focusing on environmental protection, alternative energy sources and traceability (SDG 9). <li data-bbox="884 1288 1359 1373">✎ Recognize the importance of syndicates, associations and unions in protecting human rights, promoting equality and ensuring welfare (SDG 10). <li data-bbox="884 1400 1359 1628">✎ Enhance transparency of FBOs. This includes ensuring responsible production and consumption, covering aspects such as food quality, safety, nutrition, traceability, authenticity, labelling information (including expiry dates), and promoting consumer awareness and rights. Supporting government policies for protecting local produce is also crucial (SDG 12). <li data-bbox="884 1655 1359 1709">✎ Support the adoption of alternative energy sources by FBOs through financial assistance (SDG 13). <li data-bbox="884 1736 1359 1789">✎ Allocate funding to support recycling and waste treatment systems (SDG 14). <li data-bbox="884 1816 1359 1870">✎ Improve the management of natural water sources and other natural resources (SDG 15). <li data-bbox="884 1897 1359 1951">✎ Institutions should influence the regulation of the veterinary system to increase the efficiency of FBOs. <li data-bbox="884 1977 1359 1986">✎ Consider VAT reduction for the dairy sector.
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4

**ZERO ROADMAP
FOR ADOPTION
OF SDGs**

Zero Roadmap for adoption of SDGs and European Green Agenda in the agro-processing sector in Albania

In accordance with the established objectives, a matrix (Table 3) is utilized to propose outputs and activities. These activities are supported by relevant stakeholders and assessed through associated performance indicators. Additionally, each proposed activity is aligned with specific SDG targets, while a clear timeline has been set.

Table 3. Zero Roadmap for adoption of SDGs and European Green Deal in agro-processing sector in Albania, by 2030

Objective 1: Agro-processing sector capacities for sustainable production and innovative applications are enhanced				
Output	Activity	Indicator in the Albanian context	SDG target	Responsible stakeholder
1.1 Technical assistance provided for shifting to natural and organic agriculture and any other environmentally friendly production practices is provided	- Raise awareness and conduct information campaigns on SDG targets and European Green Deal for companies	- No. of companies trained in natural and organic production, GAP, GMP and organic standards and certifications	2.a, 2.c, 9.3, 12.8	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD), Ministry of Entrepreneurship, FBOs, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), NGOs, UN agencies, EU</i>
	- Provide training for natural and organic products, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and organic standards and certifications	- Percentage of waste recycled		
	- Implement recycling and circular practices for agricultural surpluses, packaging materials and waste treatment	- No. of practices implemented to support agrobiodiversity		
	- Offer incentives to preserve native germplasm and initiate certification process for native cultivar propagation materials	- No. of pasture management action plans developed by 2030		
	- Explore efficient input utilization in agriculture and farming to maximize yields, increase mechanization, produce high-quality crops, integrate management with new techniques to reduce waste and promote sustainability			
	- Develop new pastures management action plans			

Objective 1: Agro-processing sector capacities for sustainable production and innovative applications are enhanced

Output	Activity	Indicator in the Albanian context	SDG target	Responsible stakeholder
1.2 Financial support provided for investments in SMEs in line with the SDGs to help increase competitiveness and cost efficiency is provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement financial support and loans for companies - Increase government funding for scientific research in agricultural development in Albania - Mobilize additional official development assistance for the agriculture sector - Promote investments in modern agriculture technologies, organic production, processing and storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of companies that receive financial support or loans for investments (per category or type of investment) in agro-food sector - Total official flows (official development assistance plus other official flows) to the agriculture sector - Number (and volume) of investments made to update agriculture technologies, organic production, processing and storage 	2.a, 2.c, 9.3, 12.8	<i>IPARD, UN agencies, EU, International development partners, Agriculture and Rural Development Agency, MoARD, MoFE, FBOs</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide financial support for awareness raising and promoting of production and consumption of healthy products - Promote educational campaigns and programmes for elementary and high schools, and HEIs - Conduct efficient official inspections of domestic markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of companies certified with ISO standards - No. of indicators established for data on food composition - No. of educational campaigns conducted and students impacted - Comprehensive record established of findings of official inspection of domestic markets 	2.2	<i>FBOs, Agency of Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI), NFA, Veterinary and Plant Protection Authority, Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP)</i>

Objective 1: Agro-processing sector capacities for sustainable production and innovative applications are enhanced

Output	Activity	Indicator in the Albanian context	SDG target	Responsible stakeholder
1.4 External quality produce attributes promoted: marketing, sustainable production systems, environmental impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote food product labelling with information compliance with regulations - Improve the legislation on food - Increase consumer awareness of food regimes, programmes and smart and edible, recycled packaging - Implement traceability systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of food products that have labelling in compliance with regulations in place by 2030 - Traceability systems implemented by 2030 	3.9	NFA, ARTI, MoARD, MoE, HEIs
1.5 Implementation and assessment of EU standards for food safety in all stages of value chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct third-party quality assessments - Provide training for employees in quality and safety issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of non-compliance incidents, complaints, preventive or corrective actions, and feedback regarding food products safety and quality - No. of employees trained in quality, food safety issues - Hours of training per year 	2.4	FBOs, NFA, ARTI, MoHSP, General Directory of Accreditation, MoARD, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN agencies
1.6 Initiatives for vulnerable people at risk of developing malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft urban food policies - Implement funding initiatives, associations and activities for vulnerable people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban food policy framework developed by 2030 - No. of institutional actors share or define the future of Food Policy in compliance with Food 2030 - No. of people reached with food donation programmes or similar activities 	2.1	MoHSP, FAO, European Food Safety Authority, UNDP, NGOs, municipalities

Objective 2: Business models are oriented toward circular economy principles

Output	Activity	Indicator in the Albanian Context	SDG Targets	Responsible Stakeholders
2.1 Technological processes that have a positive impact on air quality and climate are promoted	- Promote and support investments in wastewater treatment units	- No. of companies invested in wastewater treatment	9.4, 13.2	<i>FBOs, NFA, MoARD, MoE, ARTI, Certification bodies</i>
	- Develop alternative techniques for waste treatment	- No. of companies that adopt alternative techniques for waste treatment		
	- Improve manure and breeding waste management	- Total CO ₂ emissions, greenhouse emissions, gas emission footprint (production, packaging, transport)		
2.2 Natural organic farming, reduction in synthetic chemical products used in food production, and preservation of ecosystems, halting of biodiversity loss and investments in renewable energy are supported	- Draft new legislation on renewable energy, plastic packaging and agriculture inputs	- No. of new pieces of legislation on renewable energy, plastic packaging and agriculture inputs developed by 2030	2.4, 2.5, 7.2, 15.a	<i>Agriculture Transfer Centres, ARTI, MoARD, Rural Development Agencies</i>
	- Develop new plant and animal varieties and races, protect endangered species and undertake initiatives to support biodiversity	- No. of initiatives implemented to support biodiversity (new plant, animal varieties and races, protection of endangered species)		
	- Suppliers employ sustainable agriculture projects, usage of regenerative agriculture practices	- Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture		
		- Renewable energy use (GWh), % of renewable energy as share of total energy, charging stations for electric vehicles, fleet with alternative fuels		
		- Percentage of planted area, certified according to Global GAP, organic certification		

Objective 2: Business models are oriented toward circular economy principles

Output	Activity	Indicator in the Albanian Context	SDG Targets	Responsible Stakeholders
2.3 Sustainable water supply for human use, ecosystems, wastewater management practices, reused and recycled practices are secured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New investments for wastewater management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total water use, consumption, extraction, abstraction, portion of withdrawn water permanently lost from source - Total water withdrawn (Megaliters, ML) - Total recycled, reused water, number of stores with water loop (water saving systems: e.g. drip irrigation systems) - No. of suppliers engaged in water management practices - Total wastewater discharged, reduction in wastewater, chemical products for water treatment, emissions to water, (Biological Oxygen Demand, Chemical oxygen demand; tonnes) 	3.9, 6.1, 6.3, 6.a	<p>MoE, ARTI, MoARD,</p> <p>FBOs, FAO, UN agencies</p>
2.4 Waste management system for reduction, recycling and reuse practices for agro-processing companies ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop waste management system for agro-processing companies - Promote sustainable packaging solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total solid waste generated, reduction and composition, (kt) - Total food and packaging waste disposed of, incinerated (t), - Total food and packaging waste recovered, recycled (t) - Rate of recycling (% of waste recycled, recyclable) - Proportion of utilized waste per disposed waste - Sustainable packaging solutions taken (no. of reusable cups, shopping bags, average packaging weight reduction (t), amount of hard-to-recycle materials removed (t), reduction in absolute packaging CO₂ emissions) 	11.6, 12.2, 12.5, 12.6	FBOs, NFA, ARTI, MoE, MoARD

Objective 3: Cooperation for sustainable partnership is upgraded

Outputs	Activities	Indicators in the Albanian context	SDG Targets	Responsible Stakeholders
3.1 Cooperation with scientific institutions, and education and business and agricultural holdings facilitate transfer to innovative technologies, ensuring competitive value chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop curricula and implement training and workshop programmes to assist enterprises in innovative technologies for their value chain - Development of new project proposals by HEIs in collaboration with the private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of training programmes - No. of assisted enterprises - No. of workshops - No. of trainees in workshops - No. of curricula prepared in cooperation with stakeholders - No. of innovative ideas of young entrepreneurs 	9.5	<i>FBOs, NFA, ARTI, MoARD, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, MoE</i>
3.2 Labour rights, employee welfare and decent standard of living for smallholder farmers are in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revise, ensure compliance, update and modify supplier code of conduct and human rights policy - Provide financial support to local farmers with matching grants, donations and interest-free loans - Develop and implement education programmes to ensure safe and sustainable crop management practices and provide useful information and expertise - Establish employee unions - Draft a development strategy for rural areas to curb labour emigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of farmers receiving funds, financial grants, donations - No. of work-related fatalities - Total recordable injury frequency rate - Strategy of rural areas developed to curb labour migration by 2030 	4.7, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.10	<i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs MoFE</i>

Objective 3: Cooperation for sustainable partnership is upgraded				
Outputs	Activities	Indicators in the Albanian context	SDG Targets	Responsible Stakeholders
3.3 Cooperation with government institutions to undertake actions to reduce informality, improve legal framework and regulation for the benefit and sustainability of local producers and traditional products ensured	- Adopt legislative framework for each agro-food sector	- Percentage of agro-food companies that adopt legislative framework	8.3, 17.16, 17.17	<i>Governmental Institutions,</i> <i>Ministry of Justice</i> <i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</i> <i>Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs,</i> <i>MoARD</i>
	- Strengthen the VET system	- Official control system operated through NFA and municipalities by 2030		
	- Strengthen official control system through NFA, municipalities, local structures	- No. of farms registered in system		
	- Strengthen role of environmental agency in protecting ecosystems and reducing pollution	- VAT rates		
	- Complete the farm registration system and farm register functioning	- Amount or rate of subsidies for smallholder farmers		
	- Reduce VAT	- Regulation of origin protection developed by 2030		
	- Increase subsidies for small farmers			
	- Promote local and traditional products, and draft regulations for origin protection			

Table 4 reports the links between key activities outlined in the Zero Roadmap and the SDGs. Direct links are represented by full circles, while indirect links are indicated by arrowed empty circles. The level of impact of each sector is denoted by the darkness of the boxes.

Table 4 Key activities linked to the SDGs

Key activities	1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Investment in greener & environmentally friendly companies		●							●			●	●				●
Healthy products, marketing and lifestyle		●	●					↻	●			●				↻	
Nutrition and food safety to EU standards		●	●						●			●	●				●
Impact of air and climate technology processes									●				●				●
Raw materials and sourcing								●	●			●				↻	
Water consumption			●			●			●			●					●
Industry waste management			↻				↻	↻	●			●	●			↻	
Energy consumption							●	●	●				↻				
Greenhouse gas emissions							●		●			●	↻				●
Employee welfare					↻			●		↻		●					●
Social engagement			●	●								●				↻	●

SDG 11 is not in the scope of work, therefore the information for the column SDG 11 is not included.

Legend: ● Direct Link ↻ Indirect link ■ ■ ■ Impact: strong to less

The image features a white background with several thick, wavy, overlapping lines in various colors: purple, green, pink, orange, red, and yellow. A large, hollow outline of the number '5' is positioned in the upper right quadrant.

5

WAY FORWARD

Numerous tools and measures have been developed globally to help achieve the SDGs and associated KPIs. These include approaches and methodologies developed by individual countries and international organisations.

The following paragraphs outline some of the tools applicable in the Albanian context. Crucially, the Zero Roadmap must gain consensus among all stakeholders, who should integrate it into their respective agenda for implementing the proposed objectives. Once the Zero Roadmap receives approval and agreement is reached on specific actions for each objective, a revised and more detailed Action Plan should be prepared to ensure attainment of the goals identified during the Zero Roadmap updating.

TO FOSTER ROBUST PARTNERSHIPS AND FACILITATE ADOPTION OF THE SDGs AND EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL IN ALBANIA'S AGRO-PROCESSING SECTOR, THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE CARRIED OUT:

1. Establishment of working groups for each objective outlined in the Zero Roadmap.
2. Development of actions to achieve the specified Zero Roadmap objectives clarifying responsibilities, timelines and resource allocation.
3. Signing of an MoU for each working group to create ownership among relevant stakeholders for specific actions in the proposed plan. Consistent **monitoring** and periodic **reporting** are required to assess the status of implementation and achievement of the objectives.

Efforts should concentrate on strengthening **collaboration with businesses** through regular visits to enterprises for measuring the KPIs, monitoring progress towards sustainability, methodology implementation, regular reporting and training, improvements and modifications as needed, and attending the various activities proposed in the Action Plan.

Implementation of the Zero Roadmap should encompass a **Communication and Dissemination Strategy**, which includes training and media tools such as workshops, TV appearances, promotion of success stories and visibility activities. Such a strategy would aim to engage a broader audience in the process while ensuring transparency in the actions.



CONCLUSIONS

This **Zero Roadmap**, dedicated to the adoption of the SDGs and the European Green Deal in the agro-processing sector in Albania, serves as **a proactive toolbox** to ensure continuous evaluation and maximization of the sector's potential contribution to sustainability.

It is important to recognize that the SDGs currently represent the gold standard and serve as the benchmark against which businesses should assess their performance, underscoring the purpose of the Zero Roadmap, which is to assess the current efforts within the agro-processing industry and align future initiatives with the SDGs and European Green Deal.

Effective coordination and cooperation among relevant stakeholders means **taking into consideration the interests and contributions of the various key stakeholders and linking them on a journey that connects governance with strategy, operations with performance, and partnerships with solutions for SDGs.**

In this effort, implementers and actors must acknowledge differences among sub-sectors and the unique organizational structures and processes of most agro-processing companies. To enhance genuinely the sustainability of agro-processing systems, attention must be directed towards both large and small businesses, with a focus on transforming sustainability challenges into opportunities.

Smaller companies need support in their ongoing transformation process, including sustainability training and the demonstration of the benefits that emerge from adopting sustainable practices. Sharing best practices from other companies and providing guidance on integrating metrics and targets into their governance and management systems would be invaluable.

Furthermore, the implementation of the SDGs and the European Green Deal requires substantial financial resources. A robust financing strategy is imperative, while exploring creative and innovative financing options is equally important. Mobilizing financial resources will play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the 2030 agenda.

Looking ahead, it is essential that awareness raising, advocacy and implementation and monitoring of the SDGs involve the entire agriculture and agro-processing sector in Albania.

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