

# National Report

## Italy

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# SnailVille

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## REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1	2020-1-UK01-KA204-079017	SnailVille Proposal
2		

## APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Context

Despite being among the most prolific consumers of snails in the world, European countries that consume snail meat do not produce sufficient quantities domestically and must instead rely on import to cover demand. Given this, in addition to its apparent profitability, rapid return on investment, and low capital required for an initial investment snail farming (Heliculture) could be a good fit for those who may be low-skilled, unemployed, farmers without substantial capital, or other who aspire to augment their income.

## 1.2 Project Objectives

The Snailville project aims to develop a heliculture training game for low-skilled marginalised adults that can help them set up cooperatives in rural areas. This training game will function as a single information point guiding a potential snail farmer on how to start a profitable business depending on their situation (financial capability, business skills, geographical location, etc.) by minimising the risks associated with traditional snail farming (snail diseases, egg hatching, formulation of the best feed, mortality rate).

The project also hopes to contribute to the preservation of the snail population in the wild by promoting heliculture.

## 1.3 Project Target Group

There are a few main target groups – most centrally low-skilled adults from rural areas that can support heliculture, heliculture enthusiasts, and of course snail farmers themselves. More broadly, assorted persons and organisations in the field of agriculture will be targeted, including for example university or college agriculture departments, government ministries or agencies relating to agriculture, or rural development organisations.

Aside from this, game developers may also be targeted for the more technical aspects of the project relating to development of the game.

# 2. National Report

## 2.1 The Objectives of the Report

The national report concerns the identification of the current state of play in the heliculture sector in each partner country, and in particular the identification of barriers that heliculturists face in each country. These national reports will form the basis of the Snailville training game, influencing its structure and content, that will guide users and target groups to gain the skills necessary for and surmount the barriers to success in snail farming.

Therefore, the National report will examine the current situation in partner countries with reference to snail farming and the barriers to successfully undertaking it (the "AS-IS" situation). The next step comprises the identification of the actions, skills, and context required for the ideal situation in which to practice heliculture (the "TO-BE" situation).

## 2.2 The methodology

Partners will conduct desk research on the current situation around heliculture and the barriers to it in their own country. They will identify qualitative and quantitative data to describe their national “AS-IS” situations, and may present good practices in the field that will be used as examples to provide motivation and ideas to the project participants.

Good practices from countries outside of the partnership will also be identified, setting out the TO-BE situation, with particular support from the domain experts on the project at UTH.

Lastly, a comparative report will be put together based on the findings of the National reports to identify the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the partner countries.

## 2.3 The results

### 2.3.1 Briefly outline the size, importance, and general context of snail farming in your country

In Italy, the development of snail farming is relatively recent compared to the farming of other animals. Over the years, snails have always been harvested for their meat. These animals lived freely in nature and were collected during the spring.

In Italy, snail farming was introduced in the 1970s for different reasons: the natural habitat of snails has been progressively threatened by the extensive farming and soil pollution. In addition, the demand for snails has grown on the market, especially for the world market of the gastronomy that could not be satisfied by the limited availability of the product from nature. Today, snails found in nature are no longer considered as a food source, actually the wild snails' meat can be dangerous as food because these animals can absorb poisonous substances from the ground.

Snail farming is becoming increasingly important. Today, the business of snails in Italy creates a turnover of 290 million euro. According to the latest data collection (2019), there are 870 farms in Italy on 500 hectares of land and about 8,900 people employed directly or indirectly in this kind of agriculture. In the last 10 years, the consumption of snails increased by around 320% (from 2010 to the end of 2019) and the price of snails grew up from 3 to 5 euro per kilo.

Among the various species of snails, the *Helix aspersa* is the most common species of farmed edible snail in Italy.

The size of snail farms in Italy depends on the category of the breeder.

People who breed snails for a hobby, employ an area of around 1000 to 2000 square metres because the amount of these animals is low compared to larger farms.

You need around 3000 to 10,000 square metres if the farm represents an alternative to another enterprise.

Large-scale commercial snail farmers usually start in units of 2 hectares and can build up to 30 hectares as their business increases.

Usually, farmers have an extra area outside the "snail area" for the growing of supplemental vegetables.

In Piedmont, a region in the north of Italy, is located The Snail Breeding Institute of Cherasco, that represents one of the excellences in the snail farming world. The Institute is a non-profit organisation and it was founded in 1972 by Giovanni Avagnina, the President of the National Association of Snail Farmers. This structure is a symbol of excellence in the field of research and in developing the most efficient method for raising snails.

The Institute is also a reference point for potential snail farmers that want to have a technical assistance and the support in this kind of industry. The aim of this Institute is to multiply snails in the most efficient way possible to be used in different areas: from gastronomy to the cosmetic, but also in the pharmaceutical field and alternative medicine. A series of guidelines has been created for the optimal husbandry, to provide information from birth to harvest of the snails and to the initial preparation of the ground and structures.

### 2.3.2 What laws or standards do heliciculturists follow in your country (local, regional, national, or EU level)?

If you decides to open a snail farm you must follow some legal steps that are mandatory: he has to have a VAT number and decide that he work as an individual or as a company; he have to register his activity at the Chamber of Commerce in the Register of Agricultural Enterprises. If the activity includes the sale of snails in addition to the breeding, the owner of the farm must obtain the HACCP and the sanitary authorization by the ASL (The Local Health Authority).

More in general, in Italy doesn't exist specific legislation about the Heliciculture, that is considered by the law as a marginal zootechnical activity. The rules have to avail of other legislation relating to zootechnical productive animals. The heliciculture as an agrozootechnical activity is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MIPAAF), while in terms of health is under the responsibility of the Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Health (ATS / ASL).

The experts in this field with the Italian Ministry of Health have promoted work tables to create a reference manual with all guidelines for all the chain of heliciculture called "Manuale di Corretta Prassi Operativa in Materia di Elicoltura". The handbook has been approved in 2016 by Commission of the Ministry for Validation at the Department of Veterinary Public Health, Food Safety and Collegial Bodies for the Protection of Health of the Ministry of Health.

### 2.3.3 What are the main barriers preventing people from starting snail farming, in particular as a business?

Snail farming is an important and attractive business, but this kind of activity remains an agricultural activity, not a commercial enterprise. Especially the start-up phase of the activity is very delicate and laborious. The economic return start after above one year.

People might be intimidated by this first stage and give up the opportunity of this business before starting.

### 2.3.4 What are the main barriers preventing snail farmers from growing their business, earning money from their snail farming, or otherwise becoming more successful?

To carry on an activity in the field of heliciculture it is necessary to be aware of how a snail farm works, starting from the ground to the needs of snails. Reasons for failure are due to inadequate management of the farm and the lack of awareness in this field and at the same time, the secret of success is to respect the rules of farming.

- The preparation of the ground requires manual work and the knowledge of how developing the correct habitat for snail. If the fences or the limits of the snail's area are inadequate, the snails can escape or the predators can kill your animals.
- As an "open production", the farm is conditioned by the climate change and seasons.
- The snails are a vulnerable animal and their reproduction may present some obstacles due to their complex biology, so it is important to know how to grow and treat them.
- To have a good product it is necessary to respect the complete cycle of snails. The snails that are put on the market are born from the snails that have been raised in the breeding. Accelerate this natural cycle by buying eggs or baby snails to be grown and sold is counterproductive because the product will lose its value.

### 2.3.5 What are the particular strengths of the way snail farming is done in your country?

In Italy, the more common way of producing snails is the "open production" system, this type of production growing snails in open areas is less labour intensive and more cost-effective than other types of breeding. Compared to indoor or greenhouse production, the open production system has lower production costs.

Italian breeding is characterized by being an organic system where snails live as much as possible in their natural habitat. This type of farming is more sustainable compared to the indoor production and it is ethically more respectful of the environment and of the animal.

In addition, snails raised in this type of natural habitat are a more valuable product than snails that raise artificially and the meat is fleshier and tastes better.

### 2.3.6 Is there any heliciculture-focused training offered in your country?

As already mentioned, the International Helicultural Institute of Cherasco is an authority in the heliciculture field, not only for their role in the research activity but also because the Institute is the reference point for expert or beginners snail farmers. Every year, the structure hosts conferences and publishes materials on snail farming, as journal (*The Snail Breeding Journal*).or books. The Institute promote also the "ON THE JOB" training, a two-days course dedicated to technical training aspect in the heliciculture field and to administrative, health and marketing aspects.

Other snail farmer companies provide training courses for snail farming. Lumaca Madonita, another Italian excellence, is a company located in Sicily. This company offers short learning cycles as the "helix day" and a professional course to become a professional snail farmer.

## 2.4 Conclusions

During the last years in Italy, snail farming is becoming increasingly important. The demand for snails on the market has increased both for food consumption and for the application in the cosmetic field. The potential for farming snails is really significant if the farmers continue to follow the biological cycle of breeding.

In Italy, this sector provides work for many people and many young people have decided to try this type of activity for the economic benefits that it can bring. Similarly, this business could be a great opportunity for low-skilled adults that are in a situation of disadvantage. It is essential to provide

support and training for these people in the first stages of this activity. Otherwise, the risk to fail and waste money is high, and this condition could permanently ruin people in difficulty. Italian farmers can count on a network of expertise at the national level and a centre of excellence such as The International Helicicultural Institute of Cherasco.

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