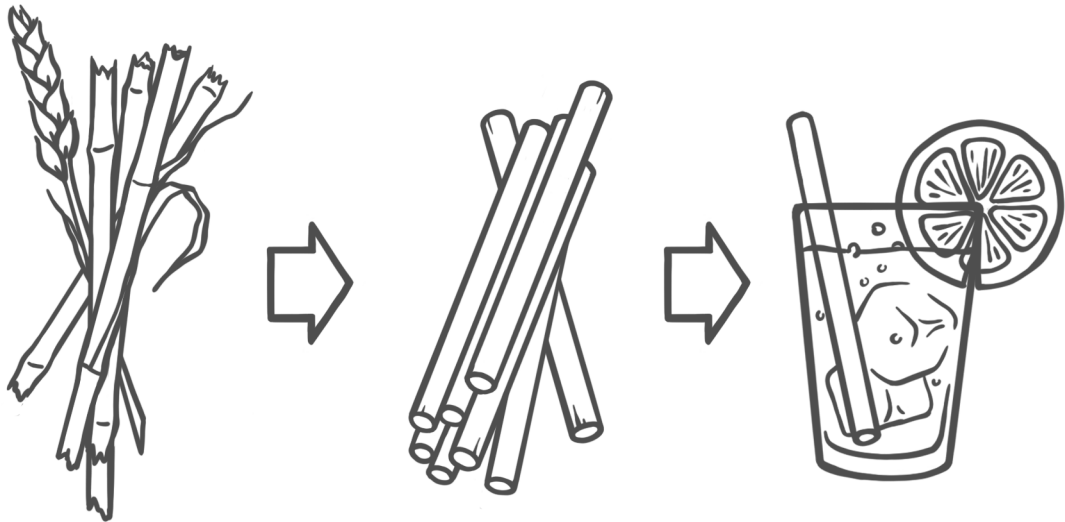


Staramaki Social Cooperative



The Spark

Within the agricultural plains of Northern Greece, in the Kilkis region, rural communities struggled with economic decline due to youth migration to urban areas, leading to agricultural stagnation and rising poverty rates. In response, a group of local people founded Staramaki in 2018, a social cooperative dedicated to the production of biodegradable straws made from wheat-stem as a sustainable alternative to plastic.

By transforming agricultural waste into a product Staramaki intends to reduce plastic waste. Additionally, they reinvest their profits into local development such as the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil quality and promote biodiversity.

Governance Model

As a social cooperative, Staramaki operates under a governance model valuing equity, inclusion and transparency. The Gini Index is zero, meaning that salaries and decision power are equal across all levels in the company's hierarchy. This ensures a fair distribution of economic benefits and strengthens the cooperative's commitment to social equity. 65% of the company's profits are reinvested in the company, while 30% are allocated to employees and the remaining 5% is reserved for future security.

Social Impact

The cooperative fosters social inclusion and economic resilience. It initially provided employment opportunities to six refugees and still supports more than 30 local farmers by purchasing wheat stems, which offers them an additional means of income and promotes sustainable agricultural practices.

Furthermore, the cooperative also contributes to education on sustainability in local communities, where it encourages people to acknowledge the value of agricultural waste, demonstrating how discarded materials can be transformed into valuable goods.

Impact Numbers

1,000 Mio.

Plastic Straws are consumed
in Greece every Year

72 %

of the Land in the Kilkis Region
has a Decline in Soil Fertility

Source: Website Staramaki <https://www.staramaki.gr/en/faqamaki>

Environmental Impact

The core mission of Staramaki is the reduction of plastic waste by substituting plastic straw with biodegradable straws made from wheat-stem, requiring minimal processing and no synthetic additives. The company integrates regenerative agriculture by testing crop rotation, soil enrichment and water conservation techniques, while complying with European and national regulations on food safety.

Another significant innovation in Staramaki's circular economy model is its partnership with InCommon, an NGO based in Thessaloniki. Together, they mix coffee waste from local cafés with straw residues to produce natural fertilisers for use in wheat fields. This collaboration not only reduces waste but also supports soil generation and long-term agricultural sustainability.

Replicability Potential

Overall, Staramaki's model demonstrates a high potential for replication for instance in wheat growing areas, which are found widely across Europe. Their strategy could be adopted in other countries, provided there's adequate policy and financial support for social initiatives.

Besides financial scalability, Staramaki also collaborates with research institutions (e.g. Aristotle University and the Soil & Water Institute) to improve the quality of wheat steams, composting techniques and production efficiency. Finally, the cooperative is also working with major retailers and food companies to expand its distribution channels, and hence make sustainable alternatives more accessible.

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Website: www.staramaki.gr/en

Sources:

- BioRural. (n.d.). Staramaki. <https://biorural.eu/success-stories/staramaki>
- Staramaki Social Cooperative. (n.d.). Social Innovation. <https://www.staramaki.gr/en>



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