

## A new era for an old challenge:

### Legume supported food and feed chains in Europe

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#### Abstract

The prevalence of legume-supported cropping-systems in Europe remains very low, covering less than 3% of cropped area. The European protein requirement is mainly satisfied by soybeans imports produced in Americas, delivered in bulk and mainly for animal feed use. The current negative state began with the historical choice by the EU to identify and encourage grain-legumes as a main commodity for animal feed and meat production, placing them in direct competition with imported soybeans. If more profitable aggregation of European legume production is still to offset soybean imports, the development of grain legumes for human consumption is a new challenge to foster sustainable food diets. This can be achieved for a broad range of species such as chickpea, lentil, pea and faba bean. Furthermore, of the numerous initiatives to improve farmer gross margins, such uptake is also aimed to enhance valuable regional food cultures as alternative visions through more profitable short supply chains to sustain local development in the long term. Such small operations will need to be balanced against large-scale aggregation, and tailored to ambitions identified by European, national and regional strategic development programs.

Several projects, funded by the EU Horizon2020 Programme, started in 2017, and will contribute to the development of legume-based value chains throughout Europe. We report here on the innovation projects TRUE ([www.true-project.eu](http://www.true-project.eu)) and LegValue ([www.legvalue.eu](http://www.legvalue.eu)), and outline their common ambitions and early insights towards identifying how legumes may be placed as the foundation of new transition paths to sustainable development of food systems in Europe and in the Mediterranean region.



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