



Press Release

Alpha Bank and the American Farm School support access to education for tomorrow's producers

The Group CEO, Vassilios Psaltis, visits the School's facilities

The Alpha Bank Group CEO, Vassilios Psaltis, had the opportunity to meet with the Administration of the American Farm School and with students who attend it benefitting from the Alpha Bank scholarships program, at the campus of the Non-Profit Educational Organization in Pylea, on Friday, November 11, 2022, as part of the Alpha Bank Management's three-day tour of Thessaloniki and Central Macedonia.

In the framework of its multilevel cooperation with the American Farm School, the Alpha Bank Group has been consistently supporting, since 2014, the education and the vocational training of girls and boys from all over Greece through the School's scholarship program, while at the same time contributing to the entry of young, specialized staff in the agri-food sector.

Mr. Psaltis was welcomed at the School by the **President of the American Farm School, Dr. Jeff Lansdale**, who showed him around the premises. During his visit, the CEO of the Alpha Bank Group spoke with the young students of the Vocational High School, was informed about their curriculum, the knowledge and the valuable experiences they are gaining by participating in the **internship program implemented at the School's Educational Farm** and listened with great interest to their future plans and professional ambitions.

In his discussions with the students, **Mr. Psaltis** remarked, among other things, that ***"the agri-food sector is a key component in the engine of the national economy, making a crucial contribution not only to strengthening the Greek society's food security but also to the extroversion of our economy vis-à-vis the international markets. Concepts such as digital transformation, sustainability and the protection of the natural ecosystem are here to stay and, together with the adoption of modern production methods and business efficiency rules, will determine the future of the agri-food sector, thus creating new opportunities for employment, growth and value creation for local communities. Therefore, the knowledge and the know-how that you gain from your participation in the American Farm School's model educational program and from the up-to-date farming methods are of crucial significance and we, at Alpha Bank, are really proud to be supporting your effort to realize your dreams and to breathe new life into our country's agri-food industry"***.

During their private meeting, Mr. Psaltis and Dr. Lansdale confirmed the **excellent level of cooperation between Alpha Bank and the American Farm School** and exchanged views on the future of the agri-food sector as well as on the importance that educating young people has for the growth and competitiveness of the sector and, consequently, of the national agricultural product. ***"At Alpha Bank, we are committed to embracing every initiative that creates value for the national economy and we will continue to support your work,"*** the CEO of Alpha Bank said.

For his part, **Dr. Lansdale** stressed that education is the answer to all the challenges facing the agri-food sector, which in Greece is characterized by a number of problems and peculiarities, ***"such as the small size of the farms, the low level of cooperation, the minimal adoption of technological innovation and the second lowest level of agricultural education in the European Union! Especially***



regarding the latter, as the representative of a Non-Profit Educational Institution focusing on the agri-food sector, I can assure you of its significant positive impact on the Greek agri-food industry. **Since 1904, the American Farm School has been a beacon of knowledge for the Greek farmers and has made significant contributions to the improvement of production, the adoption of modern agricultural practices and the transformation of farmers into modern entrepreneurs. It is clear that more needs to be done.** Today, the deficit in Greece's agricultural education is not only reflected on studies but is also an obstacle to moving forward. **The country has enormous potential in the agri-food sector. Yet, this potential is diminished because the sector's workforce is not adequately and properly trained,**" he said, going on to add that: "Greeks who wish to work in the agri-food sector should go back to school. They must consolidate their knowledge of the capabilities of modern technology, learn to utilize networks, adopt good agricultural practices, **manage their field as a business. Education and training are the catalysts that can ensure that production and marketing are aligned with the needs and opportunities emerging on the market.**"

As part of the visit, Mr. Psaltis toured the "**Aliki Perroti**" educational center of the American Farm School's Perrotis College, as well as the School's Educational Farm. It is reminded that, in order to enhance the competitiveness of agri-food businesses and to create healthy conditions for their operation, **Alpha Bank and the American Farm School's Perrotis College have joined forces,** providing agri-food producers and businesses with **specialized advisory guidance** on products of the Greek land with high nutritional value, which strengthen the national agricultural brand. This advisory support cooperation is part of Alpha Bank's offer of the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) Guarantee Facility of the European Investment Fund.