

	<p>Mrs. Ioannidou Despina</p> <p>president of Women's Agricultural Cooperative</p>
<p>Region</p>	<p>Thessaloniki - Greece</p>
<p>Nomination as an Ambassador</p>	<p>Despina Ioannidou is the president of the Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Agios Antonios which was founded in 1999 with the sole purpose of creating employment for local women while further continuing and disseminating culinary traditions. Furthermore, she has helped to highlight the progress and development of the village of Agios Antonios through the production and promotion of a line of traditional handmade products.</p> <p>Married to the priest and also teacher of the local school, mother of four children, she is also involved in growing organic wheat as well as pulses.</p> <p>Having many plans and a vision as to how to develop the forgotten countryside of Greece and especially the women's lost culinary art, she fought for the complete production and management of products that come from this land. A glowing example is the creation of the cooperative where the women transform flour into traditional pasta products. A second example is their café where anyone can taste the local authentic tastes and food.</p> <p>Daily she meets with women from all over Greece helping them to discuss matters that will help them overcome problems in creating co-ops that can help accentuate their town and create places of employment for women.</p> <p>She lectures to students of all educational levels that visit the co-op talking about its successful run and in cooperation with teachers informs the students about returning to healthy eating. In addition, she is constantly informed of all the developments in the European programs while managing production and day-to-day operations.</p>

<p>About the company</p>	<p>The Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Traditional Products of Agios Antonios was founded in June of 1999 and was the first women's co-op of the county of Thessaloniki.</p> <p>The purpose of the Co-op is the employment of women farmers, reinforcing family income, the development of the village, the preservation and dissemination of tradition through the production and availability to the public of quality handmade, healthy food products made with great care.</p> <p>The constantly decreasing income from farming has driven the women to create the co-op. At this time the co-op consists of 14 members and employs another 6 local women part time.</p> <p>The Co-op produces traditional handmade products of high quality with ingredients and recipes that reflect the cultural heritage of the village. Their products include Perek, a pie made of handmade phyllo cooked over an open fire, siron, ivristo, makarina (all pontian foods). Moreover they make pasta trachana, jams and preserves from fresh fruit without any preservatives. The products can be found in selected stores throughout the county of Thessaloniki, Athens and other cities in all of Greece. All the pontian products are made organically and are certified.</p> <p>The Co-operative using many European programs has updated its facilities, certified the production process with Haccp certification and founded the café at the entrance of Agios Antonios on 5 acres of land which was granted to them by the township of Vasilika.</p>
<p>Further information</p>	<p>For more information about the Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Agios Antonios please visit our website at: www.aianton.gr</p> <p>Email: agantoni@otenet.gr</p>