

Winter 2018

## LIFO Magazine's Interview with Dr. Panos Kanellis, President of the American Farm School & Perrotis College

*Dr. Panos Kanellis, President of the American Farm School and Perrotis College, with Ginger on his lap. His office is an attractive space on the first floor of the imposing Princeton Hall. After all, the whole campus is so carefully maintained that it makes you wonder if you are in Greece or in a major educational institution in Europe. The truth is that what you find at the American Farm School is unique and there are many who say it is a model educational institution for the western world.*

### - What makes the American Farm School so special?

Love and passion for what we do. We are a special school. Our youngest student is only 2.5 years old and the oldest ... over 60! Both have chosen us for our long and successful educational history, but above all for the fact that we remain pioneers and innovators in all the educational programs and services we provide. After 114 years, we continue to apply the beliefs and ideals of our founder Dr. Henry House, but with a more modern and up-to-date approach.



### - What's missing?

We do not have a middle school yet. And I stress "yet" because our middle school is already under construction, the principal and teachers are on board, and the curriculum design well underway. The Vasilios S. and Aphrodite B. Haseotes Middle School will receive its first incoming class in September. This is the only "missing" link in the school's educational chain that now includes preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, general and vocational high schools, the post-secondary Institute for Vocational Training, Perrotis College with undergraduate and graduate degree programs, experiential adult seminars, extension services advising and assisting thousands of young and professional farmers across the region every year. And everything we do, whether it's a STEM class in Elementary or a college level course at Perrotis College, is based on holistic and experiential education principles.



### - How did you make the American Farm School a living entity in Thessaloniki?

For more than a century the school and Thessaloniki have been evolving hand in hand. But since I took the reins I wanted to make the School more extroverted. To remind Thessaloniki and the rest of Greece what our school currently represents and what its mission is. Every year we welcome thousands of visitors, students, teachers and ordinary citizens in educational, social, charity and scientific events to our campus. But these

are but a small part of the school. As I mentioned, in the last 10 years we have expanded the educational structures and significantly developed our tertiary level, Perrotis College which now includes both undergraduate BSc Programs as well as graduate MSc degree programs, all of course focused on the agri-food sector. We have invested in infrastructure and

scientific staff and we are strengthening scientific research, innovation and entrepreneurship. And we are training and advising thousands of young and professional farmers every year, helping them implement sustainable farming practices, reduced the use of scarce resources, and improve yields. And with the effects of climate change now beginning to impact our ability to feed the earth's growing population, our teaching in the classroom, the experience in our educational farm, our work with farmers in the field, and our research in the laboratories are all more crucial than ever.



**- The School's turkeys have become a Christmas tradition. Why are they special?**

Our turkeys are indeed the "must" for Christmas. Their taste is unmatched because they are raised with special care and proper nutrition, feed that's carefully designed and made on campus at our educational farm. But it's not just the turkeys. Consumer favorites include our famous fresh milk, omega3 eggs, traditional Greek yoghurt, and other quality products produced by our farm. You should know that our Holstein dairy cattle are among the highest ranked herds in the world.

**- Is it not a little strange for a school to produce and market products?**

No, it's not, because there are two important details to keep in mind. First, income from the sale of products strengthens the American Farm School's extensive scholarship program. Secondly, these are product of our educational farm, which is still the heart of the school and its philosophy, which is experiential education. The farm truly is our best school. Not because we're educating farmers but because we're using it in educating the young men and women who have entrusted us with their futures.

**- Is it "in" to be involved with the environment?**

The truth is that agri-food entrepreneurship has become fashionable in recent years. The economic crisis has led many to turn their focus back to the land and its products. And we do believe it is a tremendous area of opportunity and competitive advantage for Greece and Greek youth. However, today there is a significant difference with the past. Now we are talking about knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and research. While many would call this alternative, we are actually pioneers in education.

**- That is to say that the School does not focus only on the needs of farmers?**

Of course not. Our graduates prepare for and excel in many disciplines apart from agronomy. Nature can be a guide for many sciences. You would be surprised at how much an engineer, a physician or a lawyer has to learn from nature. So, we are not only educating farmers, but we are using the land and interaction with nature experientially to educate. Elytis said it better than me, "... knowledge is surpassed, technique always, nature never".



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## Extension Services Making an Impact

The American Farm School & Perrotis College have in recent years expanded the scope of Extension Services and, with the expanded scope also came a dramatic increase in the impact the School is having in the region.

One current example is the program in the Trikala area involving the **implementation of sustainable practices and precision farming technology in the cultivation of oregano as a medicinal plant**. The American Farm School, in collaboration with Rutgers University, and with support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, is advising young producers in the villages of Koziaka with the aim of improving the performance and quality characteristics of the produced oregano and concurrently implementing technological solutions that will help farmers reduce cost and the use of scarce resources. The municipality is also fully engaged and supporting this effort as it hopes to attract and retain young farmers in the area and has joined the American Farm School & Perrotis College and other local organizations to create the PROREGANO Operational Group to help improve collaboration across the area and support the cultivation of key phenotypes of local oregano plants. The AFS team is assisting with the introduction and training in technologies including weather stations and sensors, pest and



disease prevention, soil pH measurements and electric conductivity, GIS mapping, defining production ‘zones’ based on soil and climate conditions, etc.



In parallel, the American Farm School is implementing a program promoting sustainable ruminant farming in the Greater Kalambaka Region. Ruminants (sheep, goats and cattle) are important for income generation and security, food supply and for the empowerment of rural livelihoods, especially in mountainous and marginal regions such as Kalambaka. The Extension Services team is helping the local ruminant farming community to implement optimal sustainable livestock management practices aiming to increase productivity, reduce production costs, ensure animal hygiene and welfare, and ultimately produce high-quality meat and dairy products (milk) while concurrently ensuring maximum environmental protection and sustainable practices are integrated throughout the farmers’ operations.

The training program, supported by the KDK Foundation and run in collaboration with the Kalambaka Library, involves 40 livestock farmers from the areas around Larisa, Trikala and Kalambaka. The program involves classroom and on-farm hands-on training and is coupled with tailored consultancy support delivered individually at each participant’s farm. It is designed to have both immediate and practical impact, directly touching many families that operate ruminant farms. The emphasis is on practical methods of herd management, breeding and genetic improvement aimed at improving the herd’s productivity, nutrition and preparation, evaluation and costing of rations, stable design and maintenance, disease prevention and herd hygiene, and farm waste management. The training also addresses key issues relating to dairy farming such as the conditions necessary to ensure not only the production of the highest quality milk, but also the necessary practices and technologies involved in securing that quality through the storage - sampling – shipping stages.



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## Distinction for Perrotis College Professor Dr. Kiki Zinoviadou

Dr. Kiki Zinoviadou, Perrotis College Professor in the Food Science and Technology Department and Chair of the graduate program “New Food Product and Business Development” has been appointed as an Ambassador of the Global Harmonization Initiative, a prestigious organization on food safety and security.

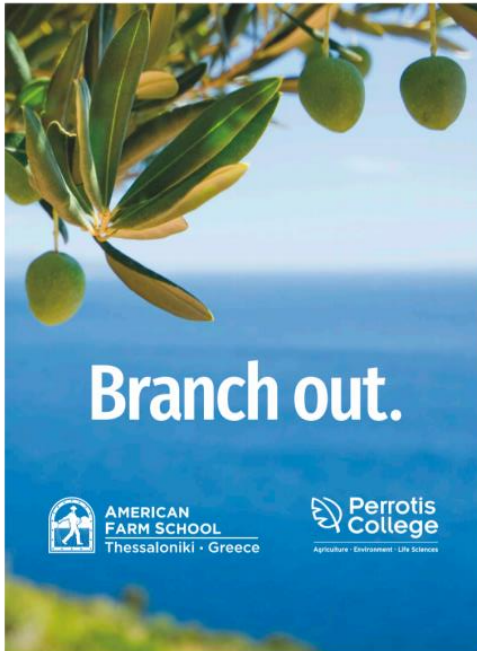
The Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) is an international, non-profit network of individual scientists and scientific organizations working together to promote coordination of global food safety regulations and legislation through science. It was founded in 2004 as a joint activity of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) International Division and the European Federation of Food Science and Technology (EFFoST). GHI’s objective is to achieve consensus on the science that underlies food regulations and legislation to ensure the global availability of safe and wholesome food products for all consumers.



Dr. Zinoviadou is the third ambassador from Greece. She joins Prof. Petros Taoukis and Prof. Magdalini Krokida from the National Technical University of Athens (Metsovio). For more information on the organization please visit: <https://www.globalharmonization.net/>

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# Greek Summer



In July, an international group of high school students arrived at AFS for the annual Greek Summer program, aiming to learn about local food production and consumption as well as rural traditions and customs. During the homestay and service learning portion of the program students were hosted at Stavroupoli, a small rural village near Xanthi on the North western part of the country. Students spent ten days living with local families and hosting an English-language camp for elementary school students. After taking in the sites around Thessaloniki, climbing Mt. Olympus, visiting the Macedonian tombs and ruins at Vergina and the thousand-year-old monasteries at Meteora, the program concluded with 5 days sailing the Sporades islands.

Recruitment is now under way for Greek Summer 2019. The program is open to teenagers aged 15-17. This exciting program combines service learning with an introduction to Greek language, culture, and current issues – from the importance of food and agriculture in the local economy, to social issues related to refugees, peace, and conflict resolution. Participants gain a holistic view of the Greek experience, broaden their perspectives, and expand their horizons. Learn more about the program at [www.afs.edu.gr/greeksummer-program/](http://www.afs.edu.gr/greeksummer-program/) or check out

[www.facebook.com/AmericanFarmSchoolThessaloniki/](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanFarmSchoolThessaloniki/). For even more information or to apply please contact Greek Summer Admissions at [greeksummer@afs.edu.gr](mailto:greeksummer@afs.edu.gr).

**Greek Summer will mark its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020! To commemorate this momentous milestone, the School will be organizing a series of events across the United States to bring together Greek Summer alumni to celebrate this unique and life-changing program. If you are a GS alumnus, please contact us on [greeksummer@afs.edu.gr](mailto:greeksummer@afs.edu.gr) to update your contact information so that we can be in touch.**



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# New Bicycle Track



Thanks to a generous gift from the General Mills Foundation, the Elementary School's Cycling Club now has a new destination on their weekly rides. A 130m long Bicycle Track encircles a beautiful garden next to the School's other athletic facilities (outdoor basketball/volleyball courts, soccer field, running track and tennis court). The new Bicycle Track offers American Farm School students a safe area to engage in physical activity, develop their cycling skills and learn about the many benefits cycling has to offer (reduced carbon emissions, easing traffic congestion, in addition to improving physical fitness, learning development and mental health). The facility also includes several traffic signs to educate students on the importance of road safety and the traffic code.



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# Introducing...Moo Moo!

The American Farm School has a new mascot, Moo Moo the cow! To the delight of children and adults alike, Moo Moo has made live appearances at numerous events held on the School's beautiful grounds this year. For fans of Moo Moo and for those further afield, Moo Moo t-shirts are available. Simply make a gift to the School of \$250 or more and we will contact you to arrange delivery (so be sure to include an email address). Available in two different styles, in pink or black, and in sizes children's 4 to adult XXL.

For more information please contact [info@afs.edu.gr](mailto:info@afs.edu.gr) or 212-463-8434.



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