

BERAT

Olives and Olive Oil

The Learning Academy

An academy in the groves

The Learning Academy is the farmer-training arm of the Berat Olive Cluster, created within the CRAD pilot of the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, financed by the World Bank and implemented by CRONO with the Municipality of Berat. It is not a classroom course: it is a season-long programme held directly in the groves of the cluster members, following the olive tree from winter pruning to harvest.

Sessions are led by Prof. Shpend Shahini and Prof. Adhurim Lazaj (QTTB Vlorë), coordinated by agronomy expert Pandeli Pasko, and are built on the five parts of the Integrated Olive Production Protocol of Berat. Field demonstrations go together with group discussion and the farmer's field book, where every operation is recorded.

77

farms adhering to the cluster

44

farms mapped in the
baseline survey

7

field sessions, February–
October 2026

4.9/5

farmers' rating of the
agronomic training

The 2026 field calendar

February Drobonik · Perondi <i>dormancy, pruning</i>	March Bilçe <i>vegetative restart</i>	May Drobonik <i>flowering</i>	June <i>field session fruit set</i>	August <i>field session fruit growth</i>	October <i>with quality experts harvest & milling</i>
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What farmers take home: Integrated Pest Management

The core of the knowledge transfer is a change of method: from spraying by the calendar to treating only when field monitoring shows it is needed. The Academy teaches the six principles of EU Directive 2009/128/EC, as translated into practice by the Berat protocol.

- 1 Prevent**
Prune for light and air, fertilise in balance, clean tools, keep living cover on slopes.
- 2 Monitor**
Pheromone and food traps, regular fruit sampling, observation tied to each growth stage.
- 3 Go natural first**
Mass trapping, beneficial insects such as *Opius concolor*, *Beauveria bassiana*, *Bacillus thuringiensis*.
- 4 Act at the threshold**
Treat only when the intervention threshold set for each pest is exceeded.
- 5 Choose selective products**
Only listed active substances, within the permitted dose, number and timing of treatments.
- 6 Check and record**
Verify that each treatment worked and write it in the field book.

BERAT *Field notes for the 2026 harvest*

Key threats and when to act

Intervention thresholds and preferred means taught in the field, from the plant protection table of the Berat protocol.

Threat	How to monitor	Act when	Preferred means
Olive fruit fly <i>Bactrocera oleae</i>	Food and pheromone traps; regular fruit sampling from summer	Oil olives: 10–15% of fruits with eggs or young larvae. Table olives: 4–5%	Mass trapping, protein bait, Beauveria bassiana, Opius concolor releases
Peacock spot <i>Spilocaea oleagina</i>	Early leaf diagnosis in July–August	Before bud break and at 3–4 leaf nodes; again in September if diagnosis is positive	Airy canopy; copper, max 4 kg active substance/ha per year
Olive moth <i>Prays oleae</i>	Pheromone traps to follow the flight curve	Near the end of the flight, before stone hardening	Bacillus thuringiensis, azadirachtin
Black scale <i>Saissetia oleae</i>	Count live nymphs on leaves in summer	5–10 live nymphs per leaf; treat at peak hatching, July–August	Prune infested parts, limit nitrogen; mineral oil
Anthraxnose <i>Colletotrichum</i>	Watch ripening fruit in humid autumns	Only in plots where the disease has been found	Open the canopy, harvest earlier; copper

No calibration, no treatment. Sprayers must be checked and calibrated together with their tractor at an authorised centre; no treatment without a valid certificate (re-inspection every 6 years).

Campaign alerts

The quality of Berat oil is decided in the last weeks before milling. Ten points the Academy asks every grower to keep in mind this season.

- 1 Harvest earlier for quality.** Early-picked olives give fresher oil, richer in antioxidants. The harvest window is recommended by variety by a joint council of project specialists and farmers.
- 2 Watch the fly to the last olive.** Late attacks damage the fruit and the oil: keep traps active and sample fruit until harvest.
- 3 Respect safety intervals.** Check the pre-harvest interval on the label of any product used before picking.
- 4 Nets, always.** Olives must never touch the ground; fruit fallen naturally is not collected.
- 5 Crates, not sacks.** Carry olives in rigid crates or baskets so the pulp is not crushed.
- 6 To the mill within 12–24 hours.** Every hour of waiting costs aroma and raises acidity.
- 7 Finish by 20 December.** The protocol sets this as the last harvest date.
- 8 No foliar feeding after 15 October.** Late applications are not permitted.
- 9 After harvest, protect the wounds.** Remove cankered branches in dry weather; copper only for severe infections, as after frost or hail.
- 10 Write it down.** Treatments, harvest dates and mill deliveries in the field book: the basis for traceability and a future Berat designation.