

eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

EIP-AGRI: 7 years of innovation in agriculture and forestry



- An overview of EIP-AGRI network results
- Addressing future challenges
- And many network voices from across Europe



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"We greatly appreciated the activities organised by the EIP-AGRI in which representatives from other countries and regions participated. Especially the first years, when everything was new and we had to create rules, routines and instructions, it was very valuable to exchange ideas and suggestions with others who were in the same phase. As the various project groups got started in different countries, it has enabled contacts and meetings across national borders between group members."

Inger Pehrson and Johan Ascard, Swedish Rural Network

FOREWORDS

JANUSZ WOJCIECHOWSKI

EU COMMISSIONER FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



"Since 2012, agriculture and forestry in Europe and worldwide are still facing the same great challenges. However, as these challenges are becoming ever more urgent, there is an increasing need for future-proof, sustainable agriculture, forestry and rural sectors that can contribute to providing safe and healthy food, reaching climate-neutrality and preserving ecosystems. This is why the European Commission has given these sectors centre stage in delivering on the objectives of the EU Green Deal and its ensuing strategies, particularly those on Farm to Fork and Biodiversity. However, successfully addressing challenges such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, decarbonising the economy, the substantial reduction of chemical pesticides and antimicrobials, safeguarding biodiversity and so on, will only be possible if we continuously optimise the way knowledge is produced, shared and used."

The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) has been working hard to lay solid foundations for this transition since 2012. The Common Agricultural Policy post-2020 is building on the achievements of the EIP-AGRI and its network, making it a spearhead for innovation to ensure well-functioning agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) in all EU Member States. This goes hand in hand with competent and inclusive advisory services, more networking and a broader uptake of digital solutions. This report shows that the effort of everyone involved has paid off, we dared to innovate and we have succeeded! Now it's time to step up our efforts and do more with the useful tools that we already tried and tested. If you are looking for inspiration, this is a great starting point."

WOLFGANG BURTSCHER

DIRECTOR-GENERAL AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



"The Commission launched the EIP-AGRI – in addition to four other EIPs – in 2012, to contribute to the European Union's strategy 'Europe 2020' for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The plan was to make the EU agricultural and forestry sectors more knowledge-intensive and ready to meet the urgent sustainability challenges of our time. This essentially means ensuring that farmers and foresters are involved in research and innovation to apply on the field and in the forest, and also to guarantee that their needs are addressed through new EU research and innovation actions."

Seven years is a relatively short time for fully assessing whether we have delivered on such objectives, but we have certainly come a long way. Thanks to the EIP-AGRI, we have channelled unprecedented attention and resources into boosting the uptake of agricultural research and innovation in Europe, and we have seen to it that such efforts were made through collaboration and partnership. Partnership between the EU and its Member States at all levels: national, regional and local. But also partnership between people all across Europe – farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers, civil servants and others. This report presents a great amount of evidence of this. Together we have proven that agriculture and forestry are sectors building on innovation and knowledge."◀

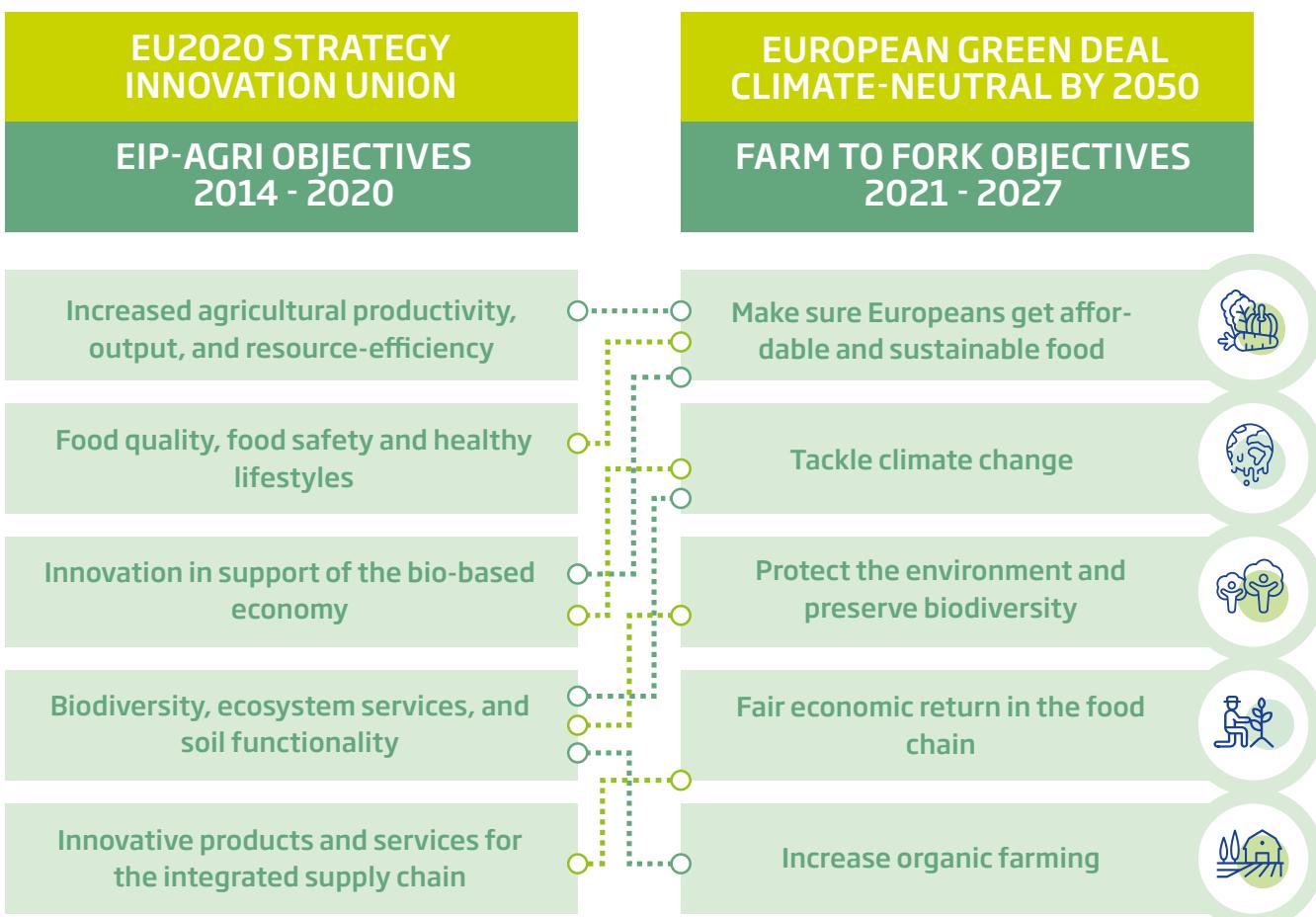
A European Innovation Partnership for future-proof farming and forestry

The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) was set up in 2012, as one of five innovation partnerships between the European Commission and the EU Member States. It aims to catalyse innovation in EU agriculture and forestry to produce 'more with less', making these sectors more resilient, sustainable and competitive. Many people were involved in shaping the EIP-AGRI, and some of these 'godmothers and -fathers' share their views here.

Martin Scheele was Head of the European Commission's DG AGRI unit, which developed the EIP-AGRI concept, and dealt with setting up the EIP-AGRI Service Point. On the need for this partnership, he says: "Looking at the challenges, business as usual is no option: farmers, researchers, agri-business, and civil society should be encouraged to cooperate in a European Innovation Partnership to create innovations

that work on the ground and that underpin the viability and sustainability of EU agriculture." Rob Peters, Head of Unit following up Martin, helped the EIP-AGRI network grow. He adds: "In my view the EIP-AGRI is one of the main policy tools at EU level to help put the agri-food sector on a more sustainable path. It does so through funding for innovative bottom-up approaches in the Rural Development Programmes, by networking agri-innovators at EU level, and by linking closely with EU-funded research and innovation in agriculture and feeding into knowledge creation."

Anikó Juhász is Co-chair of the European Union's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Strategic Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), which shaped some of the first ideas on EIP-AGRI. She stresses the need for innovation and networking for EU farming to survive: "We have to create a vision of farming that is sufficiently attractive for





the new generation, and innovation, especially climate-friendly digital innovation can help us to do this.” She continues to highlight bridges between research and practice: “We now have almost 80 EIP Operational Groups in Hungary. They cover topics such as revitalising degraded soils. This challenge is unquestionably important for farmers. Hungarian research and innovation has solutions that can really help.”

“The EIP-AGRI demonstrates that fostering the enthusiasm, creativity and co-creation of knowledge by people working on the ground is the strongest force for finding viable solutions. This has been the most valid argument for continuing and widening this approach also in the future.”

Martin Scheele



EIP-AGRI AND THE EU GREEN DEAL PRIORITIES

Kerstin Rosenow, current DG AGRI Head of Unit dealing with the EIP-AGRI, sees how it contributes to the EU Green Deal: “Looking at the range of innovations that EIP projects are working on, I can say with a certain pride on behalf of all those involved, that the EIP-AGRI invented the Green Deal before the EU Green Deal! With over 60% of Operational Groups working on innovative solutions to pressing environmental and climate challenges, the EIP-AGRI is already contributing to making the Common Agricultural Policy a key instrument to deliver on the Green Deal objectives.”



“The astonishing number of projects and innovations brought about by the EIP-AGRI all over Europe: it has translated a policy headline – getting knowledge and innovation down to the ground while achieving more with less – into tangible results for all European farmers and foresters. EIP-AGRI may not be the only reason that today’s agriculture and forestry are more competitive and sustainable, but there certainly is more knowledge used on the field or in the forest than sitting on dusty shelves in researchers’ laboratories. It is farmers who say: “I found an innovative solution for my farm and guess what: other farmers in the area are picking up on it or, my challenge is now being tackled by the best researchers all over Europe!” This makes me believe in the future of the EIP!”

Kerstin Rosenow



“The EIP-AGRI has brought together so many innovation actors throughout the EU, creating a ‘spirit of innovation for sustainability’” Rob Peters

"All EIP-AGRI seminars have been extremely important for the capacity building of our Network Coordination Unit team as well as for our stakeholders. Examples of good practices on implementing EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, especially the different approaches to programming, as well as the exchange of knowledge and experiences between different Member States on the implementation, monitoring, dissemination and impact assessment, were inspiring for the role of the National Rural Network and for a broader view of the AKIS national system." Maria de São Luis Centeno, National Rural Network, Portugal



Building the EIP-AGRI

EIP-AGRI BUILDING BLOCKS

The EIP-AGRI network is open to anyone with an interest in innovation to make agriculture and forestry more sustainable and competitive. Furthermore, the EIP-AGRI promotes interactive innovation through different types of projects: Operational Group projects (OG) supported under the EU Rural Development Programmes, and multi-actor research projects and thematic networks funded by the Horizon programme. Connecting these projects has been key to build the EIP-AGRI network.

OPERATIONAL GROUPS: INNOVATIONS FOR FARMERS AND FORESTERS

Supporting Operational Group projects was a novelty under the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020. The European Commission and the EIP-AGRI Service Point organised a series of events in 2013 and 2014 to introduce this new opportunity. Five regional workshops allowed Rural Development Managing Authorities and National Rural Networks from all EU

Member States to exchange on and discuss how to implement these projects. Operational Groups were taken up in almost all of the Rural Development Programmes. Find [information on Operational Group projects](#) in the EIP-AGRI projects database, or the interactive map on the EIP-AGRI website www.eip-agri.eu.

On 4 November 2020 there were 1 600 Operational Groups in the database, and the number is growing.

Did you know that the very first EIP-AGRI seminar was organised in Madrid, Spain, and that 77 participants from 25 EU Member States discussed how to implement the Operational Group measure effectively? ['Programming innovation - How to use the Rural Development Toolkit most effectively for the implementation of the EIP'](#)

The European Commission, together with the EIP-AGRI Service Point, organised several further capacity building and networking events for EU Member States. These included for example: the workshop '[Networking for innovation under measure 16 in Rural Development Programmes](#)' (Estonia, 2015), '[Operational Groups: first experiences](#)' (Italy, 2016), '[Moving EIP-AGRI implementation forward](#)' (Greece, 2017), and '[From Operational Group project to impact](#)' (Italy, 2018). Find the full list [here](#). ▶

Theme	OGs dealing with the theme	
	%	n.
Plant production and horticulture	31%	477
Farming / forestry competitiveness and diversification	27%	430
Animal husbandry and welfare	24%	388
Food quality / processing and nutrition	22%	363
Supply chain, marketing and consumption	21%	334
Pest / disease control	19%	300
Fertilisation and nutrients management	17%	275
Soil management / functionality	16%	252
Biodiversity and nature management	14%	222
Farming equipment and machinery	13%	204
Climate and climate change	13%	203
Water management	12%	198
Landscape / land management	10%	161
Waste, by-products and residues management	9%	154
Genetic resources	5%	88
Forestry	5%	88
Energy management	5%	79

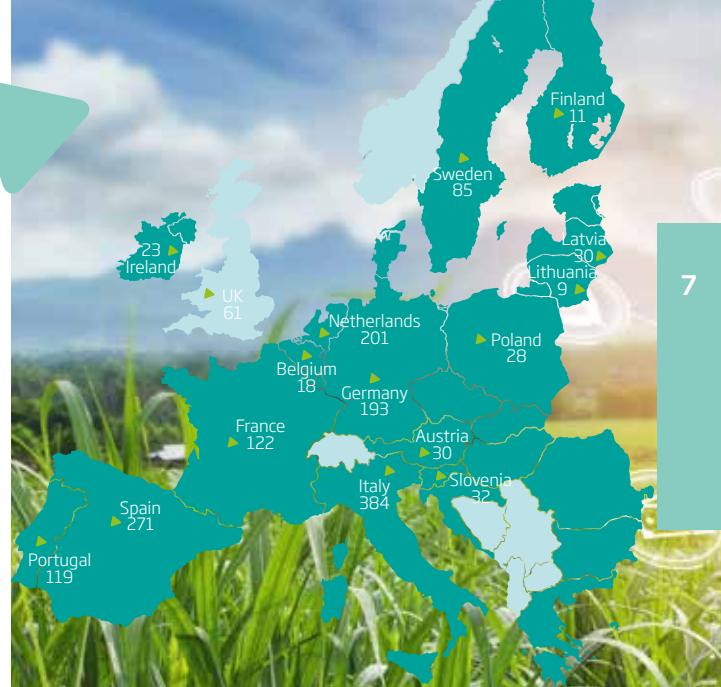
Operational Group projects per theme.

NOTE: One OG project may be counted under several themes.
Source: European Commission, November 2020



"The seminars are very beneficial. Listening to, and discussing with experts from all over Europe is very inspiring to improve the EIP process in our own country. For example, I gathered a lot of ideas that helped us to realise a better bottom-up approach. You always use what you have learned during the seminar. It helps that the seminars are very interactive and excellently facilitated. Everybody is approachable, pragmatic and open. I met experts from abroad with similar questions and problems whom I contacted afterwards. And without the seminars we would not have had the opportunity to organise very interesting cross-border activities with the Netherlands, Germany and Poland."

Els Lapage (Belgium), Flemish Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



Total number of Operational Groups: 1 617

Source: European Commission, Nov. 2020



Operational Groups - First Experiences video



Working for the innovation support service, Michael brings people with complementary expertise together...

Innovation support services animated video



Maria and her partners get started...

Operational Groups animated video



HORIZON MULTI-ACTOR PROJECTS: RESEARCH TO FIND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Multi-actor projects actively involve the users of the research results throughout the project, to ensure that the results will be applicable in practice. The EU has allocated around one billion euros to fund around 190 multi-actor projects of interest to agriculture, forestry and rural development in the seven years of Horizon 2020 (2014-2020). EIP-AGRI Focus Groups helped to identify relevant questions to address. Find the list of multi-actor research projects per theme on the EIP-AGRI website.

Thematic networks are a specific kind of multi-actor projects which collect existing knowledge and best practices on a given theme to make it available in easily understandable formats for end users such as farmers, foresters, advisers and others. See the overview of thematic networks on the EIP-AGRI website.

The results of these projects are being made available through practice abstracts in the EIP-AGRI database, in addition to the project websites.

"First, of course, is the capacity building – you always go home wiser and more knowledgeable. The overview of what has been done across different Member States offers a number of already existing functional solutions to some of the issues you might have struggled with otherwise, and all you need to do is choose the best option and adapt it to your needs. No need to invent the wheel in each country again and again."

Secondly, these events proved an irreplaceable opportunity to build a contact network of the most relevant people and your closest colleagues across Europe. This is the communication component. For example, when Estonia was preparing to launch a specially dedicated call for cross-border EIP-AGRI Operational Groups cooperation, these seminars were the place to get feedback to this idea, to inform others about our intentions, and, ultimately, to exchange the experiences. A call for cross-border cooperation is more than cooperation of Operational Groups from different countries, it's also an existing cooperation "project" for the Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, Rural Networks, etc.

Thirdly, all these seminars mean a great company of wonderful people, so it's not only educational and practical gain, it's also sheer fun! And fun turns into motivation once back in the office."

Helena Pärenson, Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia





BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE THROUGH EIP-AGRI EVENTS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The EIP-AGRI Network brought together farmers, foresters, advisers, agribusiness, civil servants, IT specialists, and others in [43 Focus Groups](#), to discuss ways to address very varied challenges such as:

- How to make High Nature Value farming profitable, to safeguard the biodiversity that depends on diverse agricultural landscapes?
- How to reduce the use of antibiotics and antimicrobials in pig and poultry farming?
- How to deal with weeds in an economically viable way, without using herbicides?
- And much more!

In addition, the Service Point and the European Commission organised a range of thematic events. They brought together experts from practice and research working in different types of innovative projects, including Operational Groups, thematic networks and multi-actor projects, to exchange experience and knowledge and promote cooperation.

Reports, presentations, videos, brochures and factsheets helped to promote the results, in addition to social media campaigns drawing attention to the work.

The following thematic chapters provide some examples of this work and of all the activities initiated by people in the network. ▶



EIP-AGRI Focus Groups bring together selected experts from practice and research to explore practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities on specific topics. For more information see <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/focus-groups>

EIP-AGRI Network in a nutshell: facts and figures

BUILDING THE EIP-AGRI NETWORK

The EIP-AGRI Network connects everyone with an interest in innovation and a sustainable future for EU agriculture and forestry. It was first set up in 2013, and has grown into a thriving network built by its participants from all over Europe.

"Being part of the EIP-AGRI feels like truly being part of an EU team working towards an innovative present. Ever since its set-up, the EIP-AGRI has proven that practice makes perfect together with research and local resources, with farmers' needs at the core of their actions. Furthermore, it has shown that every contribution counts."

Nancy Samargiu and Liviu Popescu (Romania), National Rural Network and Rural Development Programme Managing Authority

To build the network, the EIP-AGRI Service Point and DG AGRI started by organising events all over Europe. These ranged from thematic Focus Group meetings to workshops and seminars to promote the EIP-AGRI interactive innovation approach and to bring people from different countries and backgrounds together.

"In a nutshell, the EIP-AGRI events have been a mix of three "new"-s: new knowledge, new contacts, and new inspiration."

Helena Pärenson, Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Each event sought to bridge the gap between research and practice and to create innovation by looking at questions from different angles. Farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers, agribusiness, as well as civil servants and NGOs have attended EIP-AGRI events.



The Romanian National Support Unit translated 18 EIP-AGRI publications, as well as all the EIP-AGRI monthly newsletters since July 2016 into Romanian.

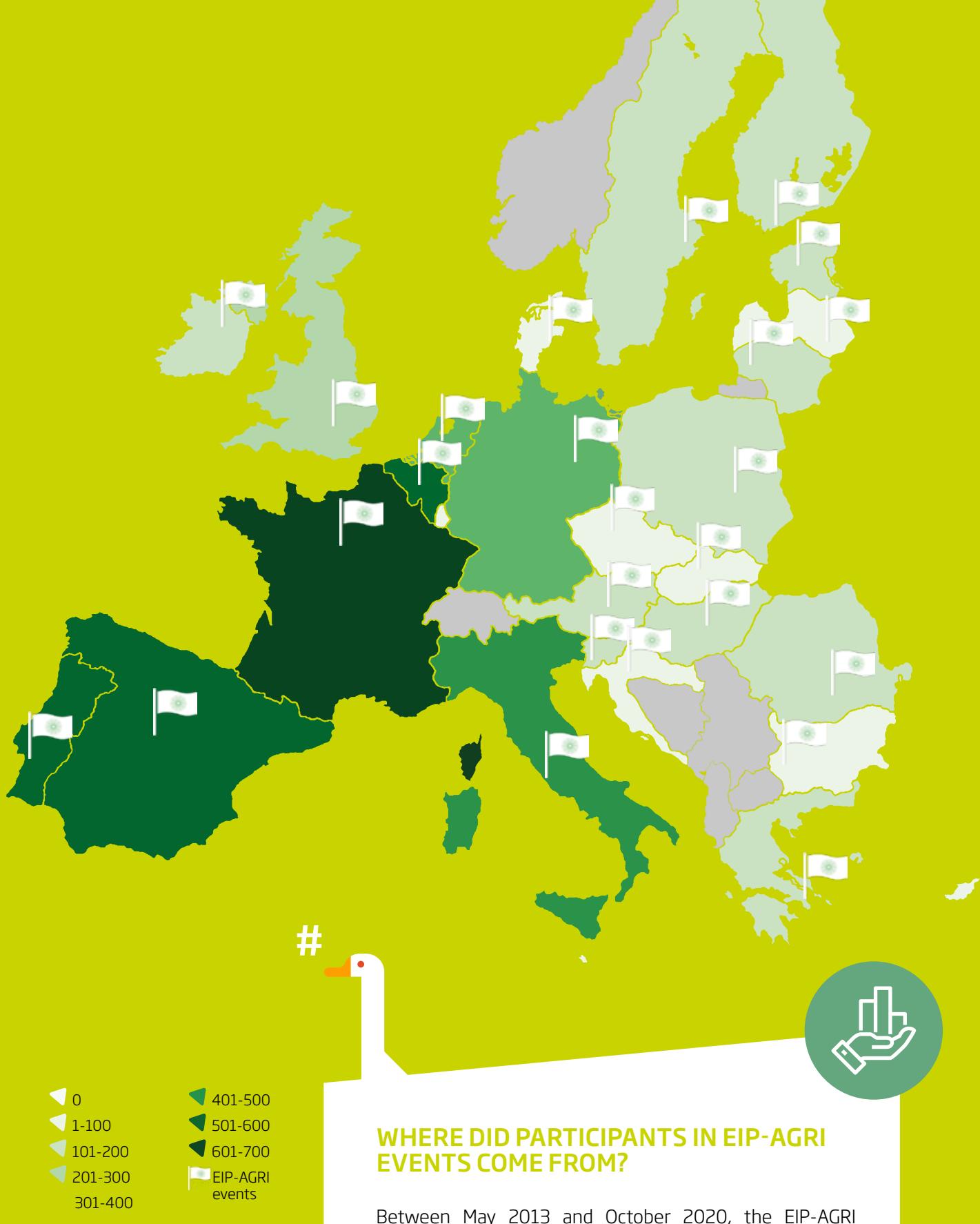
Nynke de Jong, Netherlands, Province of Groningen, participated in the EIP-AGRI seminar in Athens: "The meeting made me realise that we are all working on the same things and that cooperation does not need to stop at national borders. Concretely, I met colleagues from Niedersachsen (Germany) and we are now creating an international farmers' network to exchange knowledge about soil health."

The mix varied, depending on the type of event and the topic. Twenty-five EU Member States have hosted EIP-AGRI events.

"Hosting the seminar 'Moving EIP-AGRI implementation forward', in Athens, May 2017, was a unique opportunity for the country to advance and to boost the setting-up of Operational Groups under Measure 16 of the RDP, to reach a common ground with European colleagues and to further develop exchanges among Greek stakeholders! Thanks to the EIP-AGRI Network, each seminar is so useful and fruitful. It gives inspiration and energy to be further engaged, to be connected, to deeper advance in this huge and amazing world of knowledge exchange and innovation for farmers and agriculture!"

Maria-Christina Makrandreou, Greek National Rural Network





Number of participants in EIP-AGRI events.

NOTE: in 2019 the Agri-Innovation Summit in Normandy, France brought together around 300 participants from France alone.

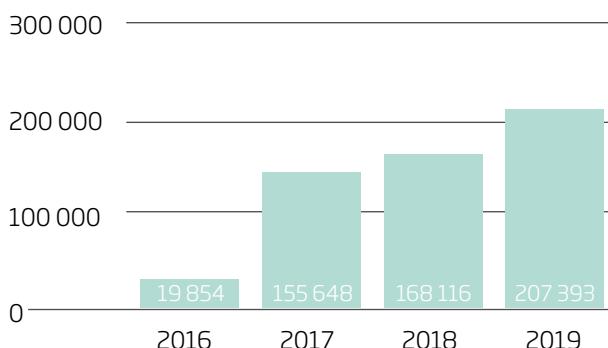
WHERE DID PARTICIPANTS IN EIP-AGRI EVENTS COME FROM?

Between May 2013 and October 2020, the EIP-AGRI mobilised over 6 400 experts from the EU and beyond to participate in events to discuss innovation in different fields of agriculture and forestry. These experts included farmers, foresters, advisers, innovation support agents, civil servants, researchers, agribusiness and more.

NOTE: In addition to the participants from EU countries, there were at least 29 participants from non-EU countries.



FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE NETWORK

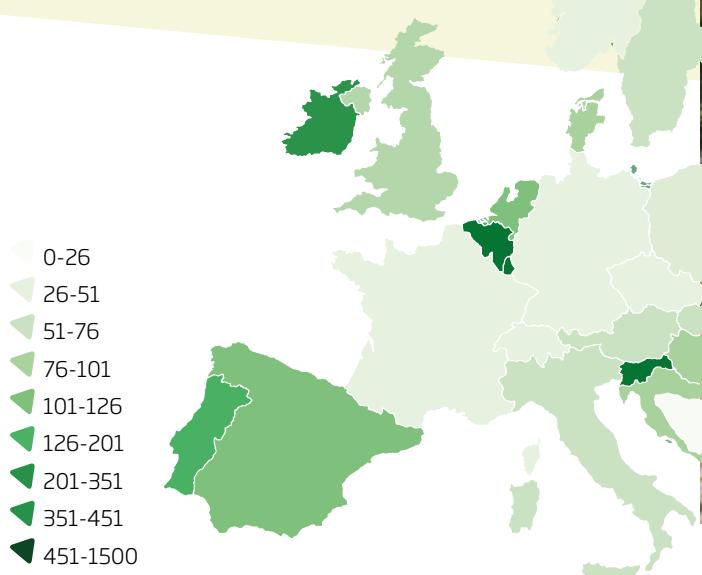


Number of visits to the EIP-AGRI website per year

*The EIP-AGRI website was launched in 2014. Statistics are available as of November 2016.

The EU Member States also support EIP-AGRI networking at national level, and beyond, either through the National Rural Networks, or through dedicated EIP-AGRI networks. The French National Rural Network has for instance published a video to explain the EIP-AGRI and the German National Rural Network has organised a study visit to Flemish Operational Groups, together with the National Rural Network units of Flanders and the Netherlands. [Read the article in the Agrinovation magazine.](#)

To support the network in sharing knowledge, finding innovation partners, and in catalysing innovation in EU agriculture and forestry, the EIP-AGRI Service Point has developed several parallel and complementary communication channels. It has explored new ways to improve, following feedback from network participants.



Number of website visitors per country per 100 000 inhabitants (2016-2019)*

NOTE: The national and regional EIP-AGRI Support Units in France, Poland and Germany provide a lot of information on the EIP-AGRI in their own language, and Romania only recently started developing the first Operational Groups.

This includes improving the way the EIP-AGRI website works, and its opportunities for interaction, as well as new channels such as short YouTube videos on innovative farm practices. These were introduced in response to requests from farmers and advisers.

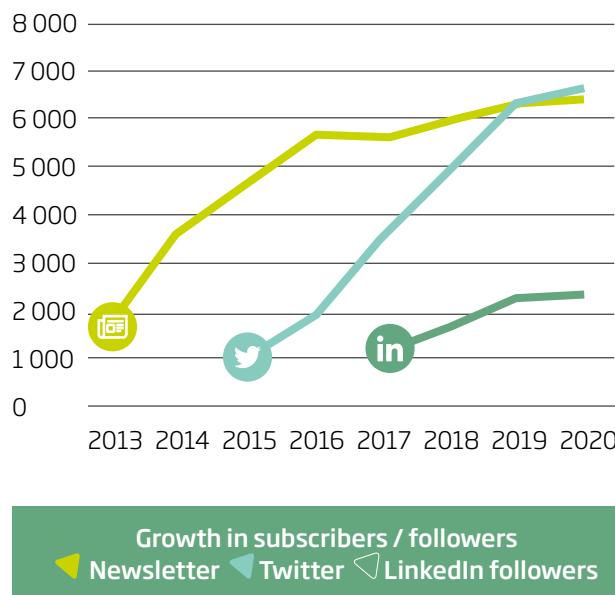


The French National Rural Network published a video to explain the EIP-AGRI in French



	News letter	Twitter	LinkedIn
2013-2014	1 731	0	0
2014-2015	3 449	0	0
2015-2016	4 547	964	0
2016-2017	5 686	1 978	0
2017-2018	5 600	3 220	1 044
2018-2019	5 926	4 837	1 526
2019-2020	6 253	6 253	2 123
2020-July	6 224	6 722	2 299

EIP-AGRI newsletter subscribers, Twitter and LinkedIn followers per year.



The EIP-AGRI website includes many downloadable documents, 7 Agrinnovation magazines, brochures, factsheets, reports; 226 EIP-AGRI publications in total (October 2020). Website visitors clearly appreciate them: between January 2018 and October 2020 they downloaded publications 658 176 times. Eighteen documents were downloaded more than 1 000 times. These were mostly publications dealing with funding or general information on the EIP-AGRI, such as the brochures on multi-actor projects, on Focus Groups, and on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovations Systems.

EIP-AGRI publications have been translated into 23 EU languages by national Support Units for EIP-AGRI, Focus Group experts and others. This illustrates the interest in the materials and the commitment by these EIP-AGRI network

With 6 700 followers (July 2020), the number of Twitter followers has just exceeded the number of subscribers to the monthly EIP-AGRI newsletter. The EIP-AGRI only started posting actively on LinkedIn in 2016, and the number of followers there has now grown to over 2 000. Furthermore, as of October 2020, the EIP-AGRI website counts 5 465 registered users, who can share information on their projects, project ideas and research needs, and connect with other registered network members through the website.

Also in the online community, there is a strong engagement with the EIP-AGRI as illustrated by the 5 300 retweets and 8 500 likes of the 1 100 tweets by the EIP-AGRI Service Point.◀

Number of visits from social media to the EIP-AGRI website (14 June 2016 to 31 October 2020)

Facebook	6 667
Twitter	6 127
LinkedIn	3 809

Social media, especially the Facebook account of the European Commission's DG AGRI, and Twitter are an important source of visitors to the EIP-AGRI website.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Agricultural productivity and resource-efficiency



"It was very useful to learn from, and share knowledge with so many fellow agroforestry practitioners from so many countries and backgrounds. The EIP gave me the knowledge and the confidence to extend both my on-farm and off-farm agroforestry actions."

William Considine (Ireland), farmer and expert in the '[Agroforestry](#)' Focus Group

PRODUCING MORE FROM LESS

Producing sufficient food, feed, fibre and other materials for the (bio)economy while protecting the environment is a challenge for foresters and farmers in Europe and elsewhere. Finding ways to produce more from less can help create competitive farming and forestry systems that also protect the soil, water and biodiversity which are essential for the future of agriculture and our life on earth. Much of the work that is done by [EIP-AGRI Focus Groups](#) and by [a range of EIP-AGRI projects](#) tackles these issues. The EIP-AGRI workshops on '[How to make protein crops profitable in the EU?](#)', '[Tools for environmental farm performance](#)', and '[Connecting innovative projects: Water & Agriculture](#)' brought together people working in these fields to promote knowledge exchange and collaboration. [Find the full list of EIP-AGRI activities on this theme here.](#)

PROMOTING DIVERSITY FOR RESILIENT SYSTEMS

Well-designed and diverse agricultural systems such as agroforestry, or crops and livestock in mixed systems use resources efficiently and are productive. They also foster biodiversity and are more resilient in the face of threats posed by climate change. They can be more complex to manage than 'simple' systems, and experts in the Focus Group on '[Mixed farming systems](#)' addressed the question on how to develop livestock / cash crop interactions and promote their benefits as a sustainable alternative to farm or territorial specialisation.

Experts in the Focus Group on '[Agroforestry](#)' looked at how to develop agroforestry as a sustainable farming system that can boost agricultural productivity and profitability. The experts, including David Grandgirard (France), Maria Eugenia Ramos Font (Spain), Bert Reubens (Belgium) and Ulrich Schmutz (UK) noted that the Focus Group work had led to both national and EU-wide projects, such as [AFINET](#), [Organic-PLUS](#) on agroforestry supply chain products to replace peat, [UNDERTREES](#) for

"We used the Focus Group results during agroforestry workshops for farmers and advisers but especially - as a teacher and researcher - in developing educational programmes for new courses on agroforestry for students at the University of Sopron. They are very interested and they are the farmers and experts of the future."

Andrea Vityi (Hungary), expert in the '[Agroforestry](#)' Focus Group



"The Mixed farming Focus Group provided a platform to not only share experience of mixed farming systems across a broad range of experts and geographical regions, but also to identify future research needs and develop collaborative relationships. The H2020 MIXED Project evolved from a collaboration



of Focus Group members and other colleagues across Europe. It is an exciting opportunity to address research gaps identified in the Focus Group and to continue developing more innovative and resilient mixed farming systems for Europe."

Pip Nicholas-Davies (UK), researcher

ecosystem services, and radically transforming Europe's agriculture to mixed farming and agro-ecological land use with [AGROMIX](#).

"Our company is the largest assembler of faba bean seed in Ireland and I am responsible for obtaining new genetics and producing quality seed for sale in Ireland. The Focus Group helped broaden my horizons, and I source new genetics from all over Europe. I am also currently working on developing pig feed demand for faba beans in Ireland, as well as working with a nutrition company to develop carbon credentials for faba beans. The Focus Group probably started all of the above points."

Tim O'Donovan (Ireland), expert in the Focus Group on 'Protein crops'



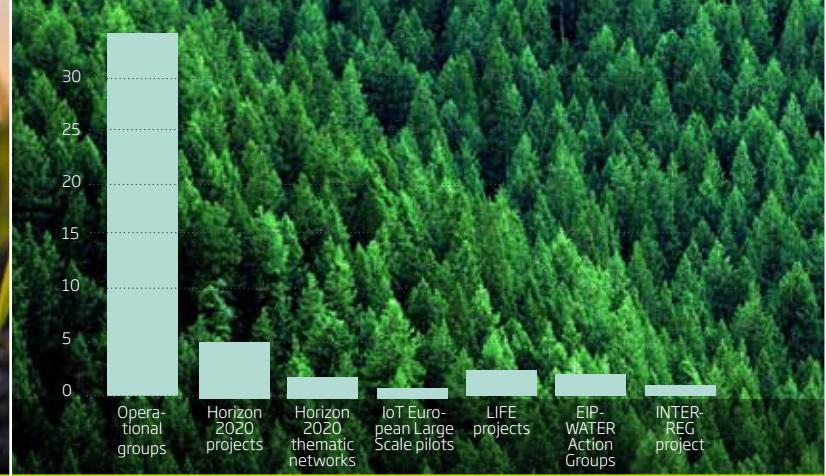
Experts in the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on this topic pointed out that to increase the competitiveness of protein crops in the EU, it is important to include these crops in rotations and optimise the whole arable farm production. Several of the experts continued working on the issues identified by the Focus Group, in Operational Group projects such as [GO_INPULSE](#) (Spain) and Horizon projects such as [LegValue](#) and [Legumes Translated](#), as well as projects funded by the [SUSCROP ERANET](#). These experts included Paloma Gatón Garnica, Donal Murphy-Bokern, Frederick Stoddard, Johann Vollmann, Chris de Visser, and Etienne Pilorge.

PROTEIN CROPS

Protein crops can contribute to crop diversity in Europe, and bring associated benefits such as more attractive landscapes, less disease and pest pressure, improved nitrogen management, fewer nitrogen emissions, and increased opportunities for local value chains.



The Portuguese National Rural Network published a testimonial video by Focus Group expert Gottlieb Basch on water and agriculture.



Types of projects in the EIP-AGRI workshop 'Water & Agriculture'

WATER

Climate change threatens to increase water shortages especially in the Southern parts of Europe. The EIP-AGRI Focus Group on 'Water and agriculture' identified good practices and new ideas for farms to deal with water scarcity, and an EIP-AGRI workshop 'Connected innovative projects dealing with water and agriculture'.

These projects shared a range of innovative approaches to prevent agricultural contamination of surface and ground water, how to use water wisely, and other questions. Dominic Meinardi and Beate Zimmermann were each working on an Operational Group project dealing with water issues, SEBEK and Precision Irrigation respectively, when they met at this workshop. This motivated them to team up to organise a thematic workshop in Germany and publish in the agricultural press together.



INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Reducing the use of inputs such as chemical pesticides can have both environmental and economic benefits. Several Focus Groups looked at good practices and new ways to reduce the use of pesticides through integrated pest management (IPM) for 'Soil-borne diseases suppression in vegetables and arable crops', and in crops such as 'Brassica species', 'Olives' and 'Vineyards'. ◀

Professional background of participants in the workshop 'Connecting innovative projects: Water and agriculture'



"During this workshop I explored agro-pesticide modelling for lake and river water quality and forest fire prevention with Spanish and Portuguese colleagues; I hope we can cooperate in the future." Bence Fulop (Hungary), farmer, adviser and scientist and participant in the workshop 'Connecting innovative projects: Water and agriculture' and expert in the Focus Group 'Water and agriculture'

Number of participants

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"Thank you again for the days in Almería. We are working in various projects with partners we met during that event. One of them is the LiveAdapt project (www.liveadapt.eu), where we are tackling water problems faced by farming in Southern Europe, and where we collaborate with Pía Sánchez, who was also at the event. In these years it has become even more urgent to have a deep understanding of water problems, and I think any initiative driven to networking or supporting the creation of a critical mass of experts addressing these issues is crucial."

Patricia Mora McGinity (Spain), Operational Group Water and Resilient Livestock and participant in the EIP-AGRI workshop '[Water and agriculture](#)'

"I had immediate benefits as a farmer, thanks to my participation in the Focus Group, including useful knowledge on how to better manage my olive trees and the entire agro-ecosystem. With some experts I am still in contact today, having established an ongoing exchange of ideas and materials about applying agro-ecological measures, for instance in fighting pests and diseases."

Vincenza Ferrara (Italy), farmer and expert in the EIP-AGRI Focus Group '[Pests and diseases of the olive tree](#)'

"My participation in the Focus Group on olive pests and diseases was very useful to learn about the situation of olive growing in areas other than Andalusia/Spain, as well as to contact people to collaborate with in the future."

Ricardo Alarcon Roldan (Spain), civil servant



AGRI challenge: pests and diseases in olive trees



AGRI challenge: non-chemical weed management



ACHIEVEMENTS

Biobased and circular economy



"The workshop helped us to promote cork as a natural material which, managed in a sustainable way, can provide incredible products, fitting within the bioeconomy. We have recently received various inquiries from people who had read about our work, both in the EIP-AGRI newsletter and on the workshop page."

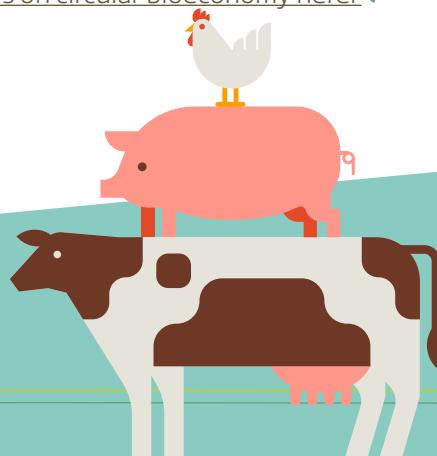
María Verdum (Spain), participant in the workshop '[New value chains from multifunctional forests](#)'



PROMOTING CIRCULARITY

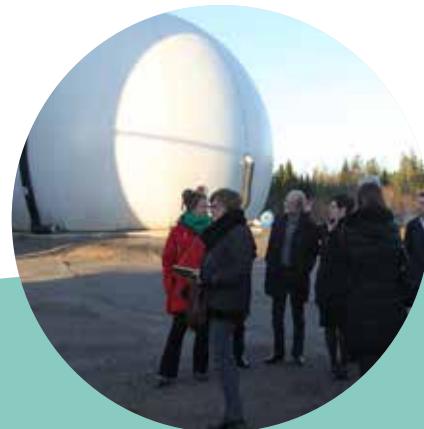
Promoting circularity, and reducing and reusing so-called waste products can help to produce more while using less inputs. The good practices and innovative ideas found by the Focus Groups dealing with '[Circular horticulture](#)', '[New feed for pigs and poultry](#)' and '[Reducing the plastic footprint of agriculture](#)' are some of the examples of EIP-AGRI work on this topic.

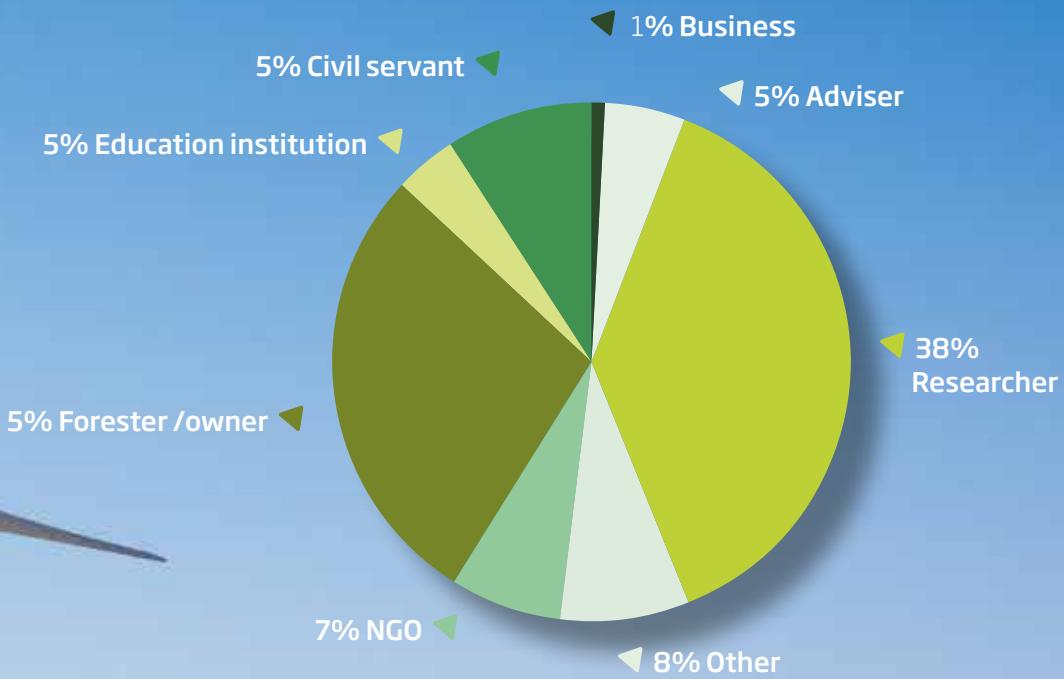
Several workshops, including the ones on '[New value chains from multifunctional forests](#)' and '[Opportunities for farm diversification in the circular bioeconomy](#)' brought together farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers, NGOs and others who work in innovative projects, to stimulate cooperation and to further work on this theme. [Find the full list of all EIP-AGRI events and publications on circular bioeconomy here.](#) ▶



"This workshop literally changed our life and our farm – so interesting and informative. I met some really amazing people whom I'm still working with. We try to keep a circular bioeconomy mindset in everything we do on the farm, every decision we make is aimed at limiting inputs and outputs. This brings immediate financial and environmental benefits."

Kylie Magner (Ireland), farmer and participant in the workshop '[Opportunities for farm diversification in the circular bioeconomy](#)'





Professional background of participants in the workshop 'New value chains from multi-functional forests'

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Reducing and ultimately eliminating the use of fossil fuel is very important to mitigate climate change. The work of the Focus Group on '[Enhancing production and use of renewable energy on farms](#)' contributes to this.

"In these tough times for farmers, renewable energy production may provide alternative income streams, while keeping the farm operations viable."

Anna Trettenero (Italy), farmer and expert from the Focus Group on '[Renewable energy](#)'

ACHIEVEMENTS

Biodiversity, ecosystem services, and soil



BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Farming and forestry can provide ecosystem services such as farmland biodiversity, or clean water filtered by forest soils. They can also capture carbon, as discussed on [page 24](#). Forests and diverse agricultural systems harbour biodiversity, both above and below the ground. In turn, they also depend upon biodiversity, such as pollinators for crops and natural enemies attacking crop pests. Agrobiodiversity, the genetic diversity of crops and livestock, is essential to cope with future changes, in climate, markets, pests and diseases. [At least 13 EIP-AGRI Focus Groups](#) and [a number of EIP-AGRI projects](#) have looked at how to combine wildlife management with agriculture

"I am very thankful that I could join this Focus Group. I found a bio-technical way to fight Varroa in bee colonies and tested it since 2006. I had no more losses of colonies due to this parasite since. First, no-one seemed interested, but following my participation as an expert in the Focus Group, my articles were published in bee journals in three different countries. The Finnish Beekeepers' Association (FBA) started a beekeepers' group with me as expert, testing my findings. The FBA and different local and regional associations invited me to present ideas for sustainable beekeeping and protection of wild bees. I also gave interviews for radio and for a business magazine.

Thanks to the Focus Group, I also started to read scientific reports and studies on beekeeping, so I understand more and more why my findings are working. It boosted my self-confidence to see that well-known scientists are interested in my ideas. During the testing by the FBA, I was blessed to be able to ask advice from, and share results with other members of our Focus Group."

Marc Bock (Finland), farmer, beekeeper and Focus Group expert



so both may thrive, how to protect pollinators, how to promote soil health, and other questions related to these themes.

The EIP-AGRI Focus Groups on '[Bee health and sustainable beekeeping](#)' discussed ways to ensure the sustainability of beekeeping in the face of challenges linked to pests and diseases, intensification of agriculture and climate change.



"I am happy that our Focus Group work will also contribute to my personal actions in working on new research themes, developing novel solutions for local beekeeping practices and finally more productive beekeeping."
Aleš Gregorc (Slovenia), researcher and Focus Group expert

HEALTHY SOIL

Healthy soils are ecosystems that host and nurture biodiversity, and provide water purification and nutrient cycling. They are also, literally, the basis for our landscape, forests and for growing our food. The EIP-AGRI Focus Groups on '[IPM for soil-borne diseases](#)', '[Grazing for carbon](#)', '[Protecting agricultural soils from contamination](#)', and the online workshop '[Shaping the EU Soil Mission: "Caring for soil is caring for life"](#)' are only a few examples of all the relevant EIP-AGRI work on this theme.

All these activities fostered exchanges of knowledge and experience among farmers,



AGRI challenge: Monitoring bee health



AGRI challenge: protecting soils from contamination



AGRI challenge: soil fertility through carbon storage



AGRI challenge: crop diversification in grassland

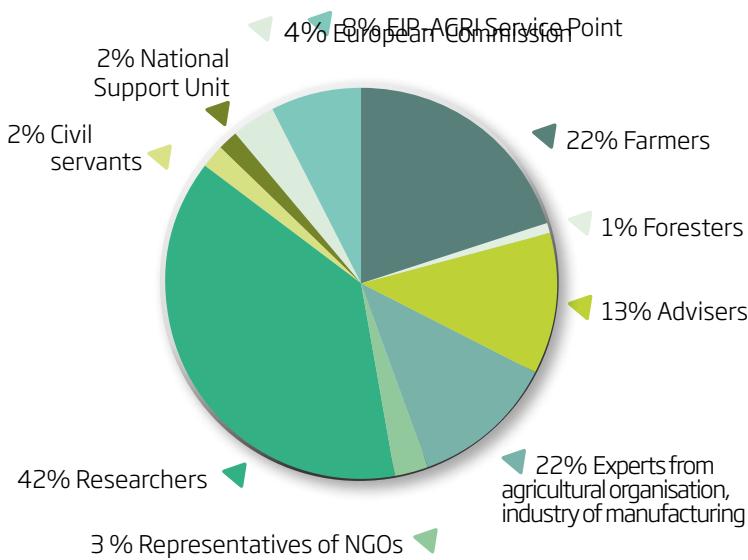


AGRI challenge: increasing biodiversity

foresters, researchers and others across the EU to promote and develop good practices and promising new approaches to nurture soil health. Partners from the Portuguese and Italian Operational Groups MoreSoil and Agroecological cover first met at the EIP-AGRI workshop 'Cropping for the future'. They continued to exchange and visited each other after the workshop. Read their story in the 2020 AgrInnovation magazine which focuses on soil.

Find EIP-AGRI soil health activities on the thematic webpage 'Safeguarding our soils'. Find the list of all EIP-AGRI activities and publications on biodiversity, ecosystem services and soil [here](#).

Participants in the workshop 'Cropping for the future: networking for crop rotation and crop diversification' included farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers and experts from agricultural organisations or industry. They were involved in 38 Operational Groups, and in other projects funded by Horizon, LIFE, INTERREG, ERANETs and other national or regional funds.



"Thank you very much for the impressive workshop: Shaping the EU mission 'Caring for soil is caring for life'. It gave me a lot of food for thought. I really wish that the Mission Soil becomes a success! I will try my best to promote it."

Tania Runge (Germany), researcher

"This Focus Group was the start of the European Best4Soil project which promotes putting the most effective soil health measures into practice by providing information in 22 languages, organising workshops, through Operational Groups etc.

The project launched databases for soil pathogens and nematodes, which are tools to develop clever crop rotations. Without the cooperation in the Focus Group, this project would never have come about."

Leendert Molendijk (Netherlands), coordinating expert of the Focus Group on 'Soil-borne diseases'

"It was a pleasure to meet farmers, scientists, and funders all seeing the urgent need to properly address soil-borne pests and diseases, simultaneously thinking of soil health and its ecological and economic importance."

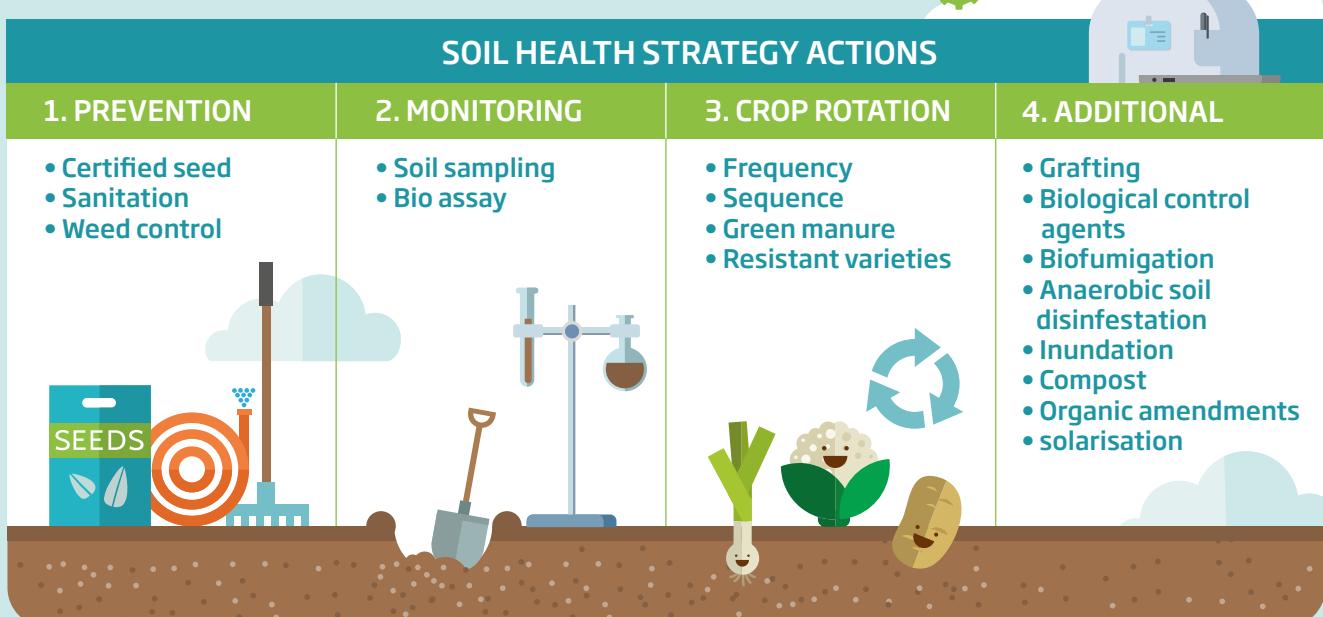
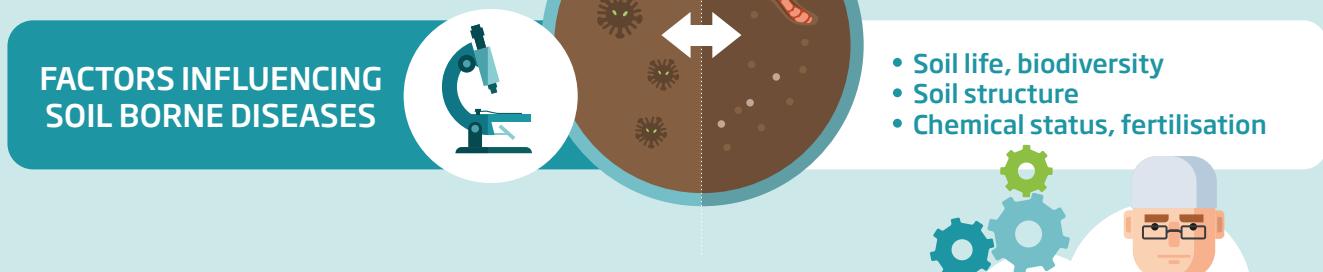
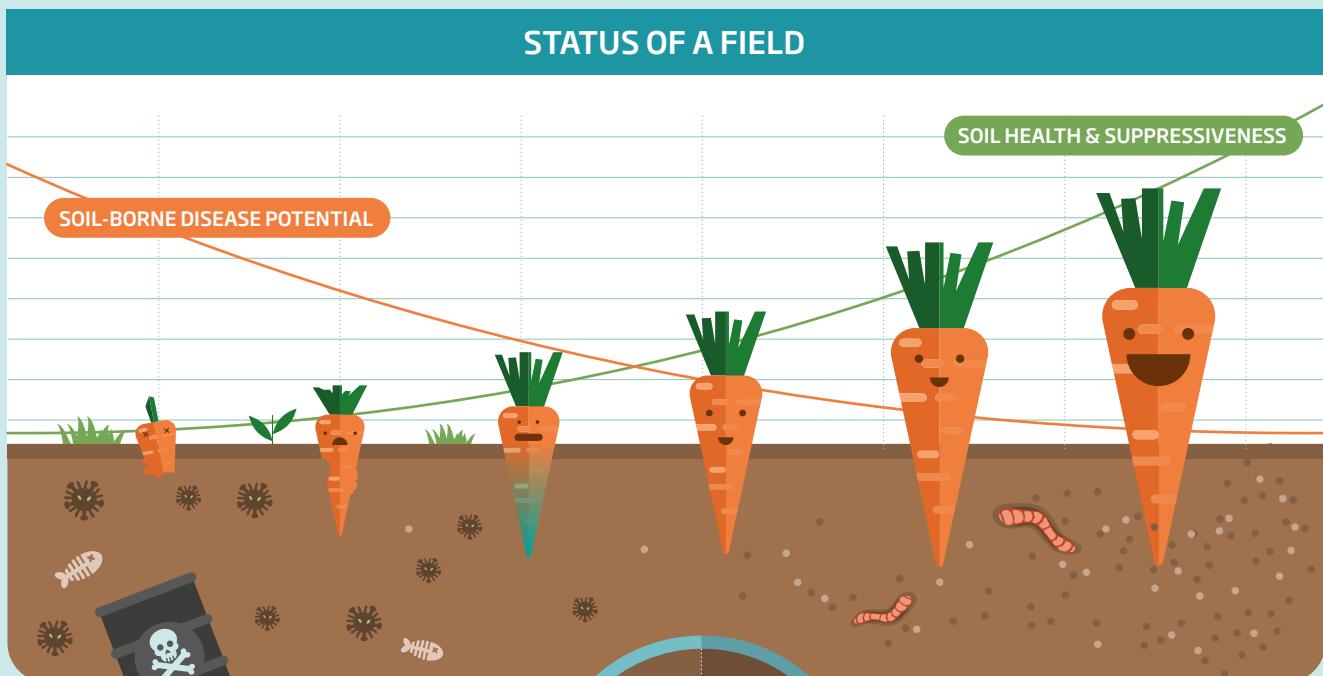
Vivian Vilich (Germany), farmer, adviser, researcher and Focus Group expert

A SOIL HEALTH STRATEGY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH THE SOIL



eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

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ACHIEVEMENTS

Climate change



FINDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER: MORE RESILIENCE FOR EU AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

"The results of the Focus Group on Protecting fruit production from frost damage' can greatly benefit fruit growers by learning about all possible and economically affordable tools to protect crops from serious frost damage, as well as the limits in the use of these tools."

Roman Chaloupka (Czech Republic), NGO representative and expert in the Focus Group on 'Protecting fruit production from frost damage'

Climate change affects agriculture and forestry in many parts of Europe. Hotter and drier summers, extreme weather events, and unseasonal frosts all challenge society as a whole and farmers and foresters in particular. Many of the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups - at least 17 - as well as Operational Groups and multi-actor projects funded by the Horizon programme have found ways to address these issues. Other Focus Groups and projects also looked at how agriculture and forestry can help mitigate climate change, by reducing emissions and capturing carbon.

The Focus Groups collected promising new approaches and formulated ideas for Operational Groups and research needs on topics such as genetic resources for more robust and resilient farm livestock and crops, water and agriculture,

and dealing with frost damage. They also looked at ways to create more diverse and resilient farming systems, which can contribute to capturing carbon, such as agroforestry and other mixed systems (p 14-15).

Others focused on Reducing livestock emissions, capturing carbon in arable farming and grazing systems and 'Generating renewable energy on the farm'.

At least three EIP-AGRI workshops brought innovative projects together around themes relevant to dealing with climate change: 'Connecting innovative projects: Water & Agriculture', 'Cropping for the future: networking for crop diversification and rotation', 'Shaping the EU soil mission: `Caring for soil is caring for life`'. All the events and Focus Groups on circular bioeconomy, presented on page 18-19, worked towards creating a thriving economy which is not dependent on fossil fuel. Find the EIP-AGRI events and publications on dealing with climate change here. ▶

"Frost protection is a very important question for fruit growers in the context of climate change. Sustainable and comprehensive methods have to be developed to minimise the risk at grower's level. Exchanging knowledge and experience with other experts in the Focus Group is very inspiring and useful."

Anna Brugner (Austria), adviser and expert in the Focus Group on 'Protecting fruit production from frost damage'





THE FOCUS GROUP ON LIVESTOCK EMISSIONS:

"The Focus Group was a great basis for discussions with farmers, scientists, NGOs, and the Ministry of Agriculture about the best activities to implement in Latvia. I made advisory material, "GHG emission reduction in dairy farms", and participated in creating a [handbook for good agricultural practices for reducing ammonia emissions](#). We are still interested in projects and partners to create an emission calculator for farmers in Latvia."

Silvija Dreijere, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre and expert in the [Focus Group on 'Reducing livestock emissions'](#)

"We integrated the knowledge and materials from the Focus Group into Interreg Baltic sea region projects, in which the Farmers Parliament participated as partners. We also integrated the Focus Group work into our Latvian national legislation. The handbook that Silvija Dreijere and I helped create is a useful guide with recommendations for improving cowshed construction, animal and feed management, and manure storage and use."

Iveta Grudovska (Latvia), Farmers Parliament, agricultural expert and Focus Group expert

THE FOCUS GROUP ON FORESTRY AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

"My experiences in the EIP-AGRI Focus Group showed that our knowledge can help in the fight against climate change, even in countries that are thousands of kilometres away. Thanks to these international communities, we also gain new experiences that we can apply at home. The larger and differentiated our networks, the more efficiently we can come up with new ideas for a better and more secure future."

Jan Kašpar (Czech Republic), researcher and expert in the Focus Group on '[Forestry and climate change](#)'

"The Focus Group and field trips were a great opportunity to learn how climate change is affecting different European forests and to see how forest owners and managers are approaching impacts and management for both gradual change and extreme events. Drawing on insights generated through EIP experience in Slovenia and Spain, I have answered questions from experts in a field setting. This really helps to put UK adaptation work in a European context."

Gail Atkinson (UK), researcher and Focus Group expert



Soil salinisation animated video

ACHIEVEMENTS

Digitalisation

TOOLS FOR PROFITABILITY, FARM WORK, AND REDUCED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Farmers use digital tools to increase profitability, improve their working conditions, and reduce the environmental impacts of agriculture. Still, decisions on which tools to invest in are difficult, and farmers need clear cost-benefit analyses that compare options, as the Focus Group on 'Precision farming' pointed out. The research questions that were identified by the Focus Group experts were taken up in one of the first calls of the ICT-AGRI ERANET, which pooled national research funding for researchers and farmers in EU countries to work on practical solutions. The Focus Group also led to further work, including Horizon projects such as SMART-AKIS which developed a quick assessment tool for smart farming technologies. Find more information on all the relevant EIP-AGRI work and projects on the [dedicated webpage](#).

"Very good to know other practical examples on how to offer support in digital skills. These examples should definitely be embedded in my organisation's value offering."

Theocharis Moysiadis (Greece), participant in the EIP-AGRI seminar 'New skills for digital farming'

"It was one of the most productive, engaging and professionally organised meetings I ever participated in. Great use of digital tools like instant polling, and extraordinary moderation."

Krzysztof Paleczny (Poland), participant in the EIP-AGRI seminar 'New skills for digital farming'

DATA SHARING AND DIGITAL SKILLS

Bearing in mind the potentially disruptive impact of digitalisation, issues like data ownership, data use and re-use have been addressed in dedicated workshops and seminars, including the workshop on 'Data sharing: ensuring a fair sharing of digitisation benefits in agriculture'. Rapid developments require regular skills updates for farmers and advisers. Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) can play an important role in promoting mutual learning, to generate, share, and use knowledge and information related to digitalisation in agriculture, as participants in the workshop 'Enabling farmers for the digital age: the role of AKIS' discussed. The seminar 'New skills for digital farming' further contributed to the design and implementation of approaches and tools that can help farmers and farm advisers develop the skills they need in the face of the digital transition in agriculture. Find the [list of all EIP-AGRI events and publications on digitalisation here](#). ▶

"We will use the outcomes in order to advance services in our Digital Innovation Hub Agrifood"

Tomaz Zadravec (Slovenia), participant in EIP-AGRI seminar 'New skills for digital farming'



ACHIEVEMENTS

Food quality and safety, and healthy lifestyles

REDUCING INPUTS THAT CAN HARM HEALTH

Organic food production does not allow the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, which benefits both the environment and the health of farmers and consumers. However, this means that organic farming has to find new solutions to common problems such as weeds. The workshop 'Organic is Operational' brought together EIP-AGRI projects that deal with organic farming and closely related subjects, to exchange knowledge and share experience.

The participants also visited farms that are involved in Operational Group projects. The EIP-AGRI Focus Group on 'Non-chemical weed management' shared good practices, ideas for innovative projects and research needs on viable ways to reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides in arable farming.

"The EIP-AGRI workshop was very good for networking. I am still in contact with some of the participants. We are continuing with projects in the EIP frame: AMF Agri, Precision AMF and Bioseed. These projects are developing new plant nutrition methods based on bio-stimulants such as mycorrhiza fungi and plant growth promoting bacteria. We aim to stimulate soil life for yield stability while reducing mineral fertiliser, protecting groundwater, preventing drought stress and soil erosion. Our Operational Groups are a mix of local farmers (organic and non-organic), breeders/suppliers and scientists."

Hans-Joachim Heermann (Germany), farmer and participant in the 'Organic is Operational' workshop



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AGRI challenge: non-chemical weed management in arable cropping systems



AGRI challenge: reducing antimicrobial use in poultry farming



"The Focus Group was an eye-opener. We just won a grant for a project which includes a partnership with soil and agricultural institutions in Romania. It involves speaking with farmers about responsible agriculture, and the use of chemicals and technology in agriculture." Manuela Teodora Rosian (Romania), farmer and expert in the Focus Group 'Non-chemical weed management'

HEALTHY LIVESTOCK AND HEALTHY FARMERS

Keeping livestock healthy not only makes economic sense, it also protects human health. Several Focus Groups and one workshop dealt with ways to keep livestock healthy and productive, while protecting animal welfare, including the Focus Group on 'Reducing antimicrobial use in poultry farming' and the workshop on 'Biosecurity in the EU'. Find the EIP-AGRI publications relevant to this topic [here](#). ▶

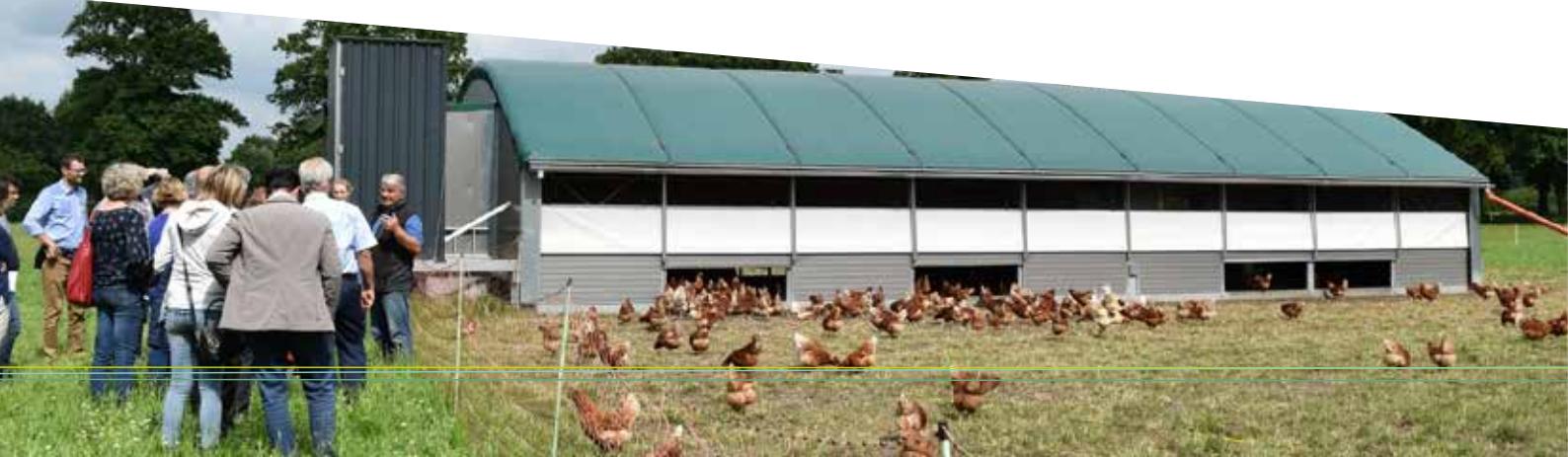
"Being a dairy farmer, I feel that sound and happy cows are the foundation for our economic and emotional success. This is essential for the acceptance of our work as dairy farmers and our product 'milk' in society."

Kirsten Wosnitza (Germany), farmer, expert in the Focus Group 'Robust and resilient dairy farming', and member of Operational Group 'Nutrient management in grasslands'

"Improving pig health is the key to reducing the need for antibiotics in the pig sector." Christelle Fablet (France), coordinating expert of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group 'Animal husbandry - reduction of antibiotic use in the pig sector'



EIP-AGRI events relevant to food quality and safety, and healthy lifestyles	Date	Place	Type
Animal husbandry - reducing antibiotic use in pig farming	2013-2014	Netherlands, Spain	Focus Group
Organic farming	2013-2014	United Kingdom, Spain	Focus Group
Biosecurity in the EU	2015	Belgium	Workshop
Dairy production systems	2016-2017	Croatia, United Kingdom	Focus Group
Organic is operational: linking EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in organic farming	2017	Germany	Workshop
Protecting fruit production from frost damage	2018-2019	Poland, Belgium	Focus Group
Non-chemical weed management	2018-2019	Romania, Portugal	Focus Group
Protecting agricultural soils from contamination	2019	Italy, Portugal	Focus Group
Reducing antimicrobial use in poultry farming	2019-2020	Ireland, Belgium	Focus Group



ACHIEVEMENTS

Innovative integrated supply chains

FRESH FOOD FROM FARMS, CONNECTING WITH CONSUMERS

New ways to market food directly from farms to consumers are being explored all over Europe. Consumers looking for fresh and healthy local food want to know how it is produced, and farmers may benefit economically, with well-designed short supply chains. An EIP-AGRI Focus Group looked at ways to stimulate growth of '[Innovative short food supply chains to increase farm income](#)'. This was followed up by two workshops that connected innovative projects working on these issues: '[Cities and food](#)' and '[Innovation in the supply chain](#)'. Several Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects, including DIVERSIFOOD, Strength2Food, SMARTCHAIN and the SKIN thematic network explored and shared solutions for sustainable food supply chains.



"We want to keep improving the supply of seasonal, fresh, high-quality ingredients into the public food systems. Tenders are often split up into smaller, specialised lots to make them more accessible to small-scale producers and small and medium-sized enterprises."

Betina Bergmann Madsen (Denmark) presented the Copenhagen approach at the EIP-AGRI workshop on '[Cities and food](#)'. Read her story in the [fourth issue of Agrinovation magazine](#).



NEW SUPPLY CHAINS FOR FARM INCOME

Diversifying farm income, and finding crops which will grow in dry areas can help farms to deal with climate change impacts. The Focus Group on '[Plant-based medicinal and cosmetic products](#)' identified ideas on how to create diversification opportunities for farmers through innovative value chains of plant-based medicinal and cosmetic products. The Focus Group on '[Industrial crops](#)' looked at how industrial crops can contribute to new market opportunities, business models and sustainable farming systems which create value for farmers in the EU, while not replacing food production. Find the [list with EIP-AGRI events and publications on innovative farm and food supply chains here](#). ▶



AGRI challenge: innovative value chains for medicinal plants



INNOVATION IN SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

Creating value together



BENEFITS		
Developing new products & processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Added value for producers & processors ▶ Access to new markets ▶ Broader product range for consumers 	Exploring innovative business & marketing models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Efficient logistics and distribution ▶ Sharing costs and resources ▶ Close relationship with consumers 	Linking cities & rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Access to fresh food for city consumers ▶ Stable supply chains ▶ Procurement contracts for public institutions

ACHIEVEMENTS

Social innovation: supporting vibrant rural areas

NEW FARMERS

In many EU countries, the average age of farmers is high, with young people leaving farming or rural areas. Finding farm successors and maintaining economic activity in rural areas is a concern. At the same time people across Europe have started farming from scratch, sometimes quitting city jobs. While they face challenges such as access to land or lack of farming experience, they can also bring in new ideas and business models, breathing economic life into rural areas. The experts of the Focus Group 'New entrants into farming' gathered lessons to foster such entrepreneurship, often based on their own new farming experience. The NEWBIE thematic network further developed key ideas from the Focus Group, facilitating the development and dissemination of new business models, including new entry models, to the full range of new entrants – from successors to complete newcomers to the agricultural sector.

"More and more sectors of society are seeing that the role that new entrants into farming play is becoming truly strategic for rural areas"

Neus Monllor (Spain), expert in the Focus Group 'New entrants'



SMALL HOLDINGS: LIVELY RURAL AREAS

Small agricultural and forestry holdings help to preserve the diversity of the landscape, provide a livelihood for millions of people, and nurture centuries-old traditions and customs in the countryside. Small holdings exist throughout the EU. Encouraging innovation to keep them economically viable supports vibrant rural areas. The workshop 'Small is smart - Innovative solutions for small agricultural and forestry holdings' promoted networking among people and projects dealing with innovation and adoption of new technologies in small farm and forestry holdings. Find the [list with EIP-AGRI events and publications on social innovation here](#). ▶

"Organic agriculture allows us to care for people and nature in an economically feasible way. We changed both the way we produce and the way we sell, now selling directly to consumers or other farmers. These changes are labour-intensive, and we involved more people on the farm. Currently several self-employed farmers are active on De Kijfelaar, all in part-time jobs. We also work with people from green care and with trainees, who all contribute to our farm from their own point of view. In this way, De Kijfelaar is gradually evolving from a family business to a cooperative partnership."

Bavo Verwimp (Belgium), small-scale farmer and participant in the 'Small is smart' workshop





Subgroup on Innovation / EIP-AGRI ambassadors

THE SUBGROUP ON INNOVATION

The Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability has inspired, supported and promoted the work of the EIP-AGRI network since 2015. Representatives from EU Member States and organisations include Rural Development Managing Authorities and Network Support Units, as well as farmers, advisers, researchers and NGOs. They help to shape the work of the network, identifying common themes to be dealt with at EU level, and promoting implementation, networking and knowledge exchange at national level. The [video on the Subgroup](#) provides some good examples.

THE PEOPLE IN THE NETWORK

Connecting people can spark innovation. This is certainly the experience within the EIP-AGRI, where projects and events bring people from different parts of Europe and different backgrounds together, to develop viable new solutions for agriculture and forestry. EIP-AGRI ambassadors promote the interactive innovation approach throughout the EU. This report cannot do full justice to all these voices, so here are just a few examples. ▶



Animated video: EIP-AGRI Focus Groups, sharing knowledge to inspire innovation

"EIP-AGRI provides many valuable tools for local innovators that are helpful for networking - which is what we try to foster."

Edgars Linde, NRN Latvia, member of the Subgroup on Innovation

"The Focus Group was extremely instructive and inspiring. I learned that this kind of work can be really effective and fruitful, potentially leading to large-scale changes that will benefit us farmers and our fields in the long term. Since this experience, I participated in workshops such as the Soil Mission workshop, bringing in the farmers' view."

Judit Csikvari (Hungary), farmer and expert in the Focus Group '[Agroforestry](#)'

"We have now completed the second stage of our selection process for Operational Groups in Northern Ireland - it is great to see some very interesting projects. Because of the high level of interest and the high quality of the projects we are planning to increase the number of projects from three to seven."

Nigel Murphy (Northern Ireland - UK), Rural Development Programme Managing Authority



We, as farmers or scientists or advisers, we have to get out of our bubble and discuss with other bubbles.

EIP-AGRI: making EU agriculture and forestry future-proof since 2013

Addressing future challenges

THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL AND THE FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

The EIP-AGRI has addressed key aspects of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy with its innovation and knowledge exchange work, as illustrated in the previous pages. EIP-AGRI projects and Focus Groups have found ways to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides, reduce nutrient losses and fertiliser use, reduce the need for antimicrobials in livestock and poultry farming, and improve organic farming. Making sure that farmers, foresters and other users of research results are involved in research projects from the start ensures that the results will be directly useful and economically viable for farmers and foresters. EIP-AGRI activities on supply chains have shown how connecting producers and consumers through new smart supply chains can benefit both groups, by making food sustainable and affordable, with a fair return for farmers. These lists present examples of relevant EIP-AGRI activities for Farm to Fork objectives.

"I am partner of the organic farming company Cà Colonna srl (www.cacolonna.it). The Focus Group brought us new ideas to apply on the farm, both for more sustainable agronomic techniques and for improving the added value of the current value chain. We value the EIP-AGRI as it has helped us form partnerships, and it links people from different professional backgrounds through different types of activities."

Gian Luca Bagnara (Italy), farmer and expert in the Focus Group 'Industrial crops'



"Addressing the challenges ahead is not an easy task, but everyone – farmers, consumers, citizens – understands the urgency to act. The Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity strategies do not simply set objectives, they also provide concrete tools for farmers and foresters to achieve them. Both strategies rely on the Common Agricultural Policy to support farmers in doing so. Research, innovation and new (digital) technologies are at the heart of the future CAP and Horizon Europe. The EIP-AGRI will be there to ensure that they make a difference in the field."

María Angeles Benítez Salas, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

All the EIP-AGRI work supports the development of effective agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, by connecting people, their farms, their forests and their projects. Work on new entrants and digital skills is relevant to generational renewal and thriving rural areas. A wide range of EIP-AGRI projects, events and Focus Groups allowed people to work together to find solutions to make EU farming and forestry more resilient to climate change and other challenges, while protecting the environment and securing sustainable livelihoods for farmers and foresters. These include the work on soil carbon, soil organic matter and soil health, which are also very relevant to the proposed EU mission 'Caring for soil is caring for life'. Addressing the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, while ensuring a fair income for land managers and contributing to quality of life in rural areas is urgent for the future of EU agriculture and forestry, and for the future of our children. It's important to continue working together to innovate, to promote innovation and knowledge exchange and to inspire others to make EU agriculture and forestry part of the solution. ▶



EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL, CLIMATE-NEUTRAL BY 2050

FARM TO FORK OBJECTIVES 2021 - 2027



COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY NETWORK

INNOVATION OBJECTIVES 2021 - 2027

The innovation strand of the EU CAP network will facilitate networking - regarding innovation and knowledge exchange in the field of agriculture and rural development.

Activities focus on design and implementation of CAP support in agriculture and rural areas to

- foster innovation
- promote knowledge exchange
- support digitalisation
- generate input and encourage the uptake of the Horizon Europe (HE) research and innovation actions.



"I found the EIP-AGRI Focus Group was an opportunity to concentrate on new ideas as to how non-chemical weed control could possibly become a competitor to herbicide use, in this age of high crop production with limited labour. It also contributed contacts for future work. As a farmer it provided an insight into the academic world and helped me see a bigger picture where the whole of Europe is attempting to find a solution to our problems that exist in modern agriculture and even organic agriculture."

Ben Colchester (Ireland), farmer and expert in the Focus Group on 'Non-chemical weed management'

"Participating in the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups on 'Agroforestry' and 'Renewable energy' has been of significant help for my farm development."

Mati Sepp (Estonia), farmer and Focus Group expert

"Working with people from different backgrounds is inspiring and it is always good to know more people with different knowledge and different experience and to learn from them."

Svetlana Boyanova (Bulgaria), adviser, on her participation in different EIP-AGRI events



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Lay-out and Design: EIP-AGRI Service Point

Photographs: Anikó Juhasz, Ben Colchester, EIP-AGRI Service Point, European Commission; European Union 2019, Els Lapage, Shutterstock.com

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Manuscript finalised December 2020
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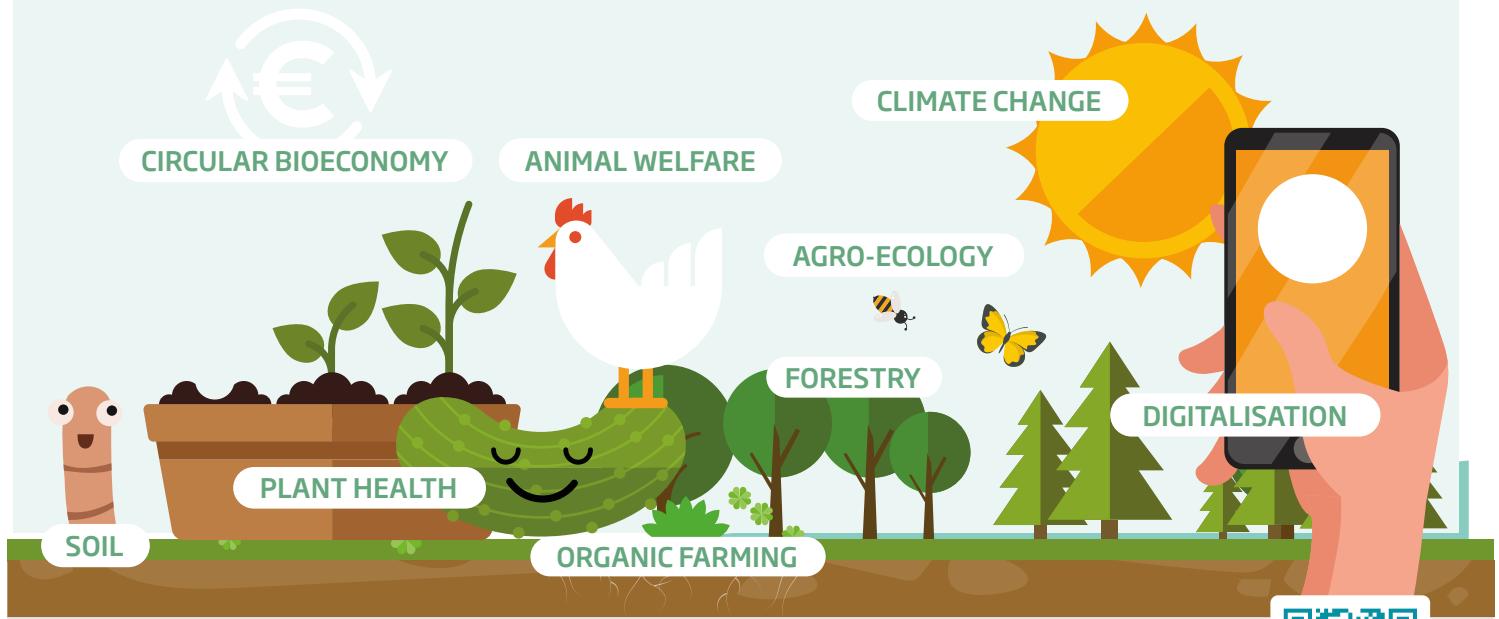


Farming and forestry topics in the spotlight

The EIP-AGRI regularly highlights important themes for European farming and forestry on the EIP-AGRI website and through social media.

- ▶ Innovation on key topics from European agriculture and forestry
- ▶ EIP-AGRI activities, publications, videos, inspirational ideas,....
- ▶ Dedicated thematic newsletters
- ▶ More inspiration for the EIP-AGRI network through social media

**Discover these themes by clicking on the labels below:
or visit <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/news/spotlight>**



www.eip-agri.eu

Your one-stop-shop for agricultural innovation in Europe

[Register to the website](#) to get full access to all information tailored to your needs.

- ▶ Search and find funding opportunities, partners and interesting projects, including Operational Groups, on the EIP-AGRI website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect>
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