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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

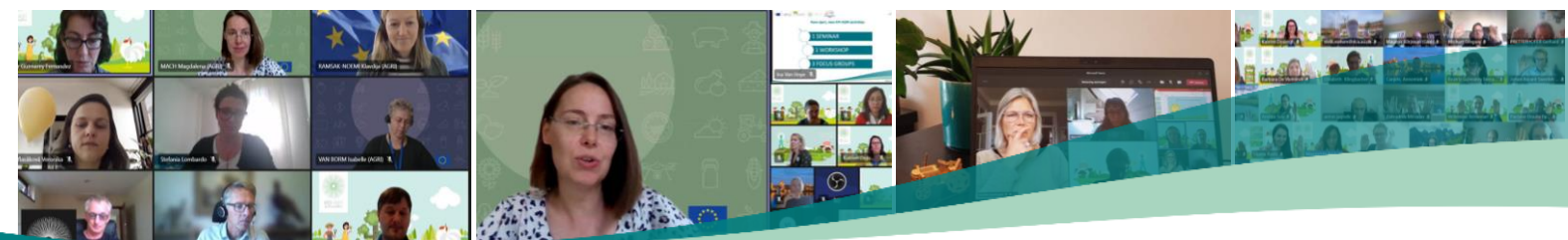


# Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability

19<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Online meeting

*23 September 2021*

**REPORT**



The Subgroup on Innovation (Sol) met for the nineteenth time – online – on 23 September 2021.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- a) to present past and upcoming EIP-AGRI networking activities;
- b) to present and further develop the topics for networking activities, based on the priorities identified in the meeting of the Subgroup on Innovation of December 2020.

## Welcome and introduction

### *Introduction by DG AGRI*

Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Unit DG AGRI B.2, warmly welcomed the Subgroup members and presented the latest updates on relevant developments. You can [find her presentation here](#).

Kerstin Rosenow informed the Subgroup members that there is a provisional political agreement on the CAP post 2020. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, the negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission, agreed on the reform of the CAP, which aims to be greener, more climate-friendly and which aims to engage more with young farmers. This provisional political agreement paves the way for the formal approval of the necessary legislation by the European Parliament and the Council in the autumn of 2021.

The new CAP will begin on 1 January 2023. The CAP Strategic Plans are to be formally submitted to the Commission by Member States (MS) by 1 January 2022. The Commission aims to approve the Plans quickly, by mid-2022. The CAP Strategic Plan regulation will provide many new or improved tools for AKIS under the cross-cutting objective, such as:

- farm advice: MS must have impartial advisers (public and private), who are able to cover all 3 sustainability fields with up-to-date knowledge and innovation, integrated within the AKIS. Well-qualified advisers will be needed and there will be obligatory training for advisers;
- support for knowledge exchange and information events, including support for advice, demonstrations and training, thematic and cross-sectorial events and for networks;
- obligation to provide innovation support (“hub”) for Operational Groups (OGs), to help capture bottom-up individual grassroots innovative ideas to be developed into an OG project proposal;
- CAP networks that will connect existing OGs and interact with Horizon Europe National Contact Points (NCPs). The role of innovation networking in the MS was also discussed in the EIP-AGRI webinar series, organised in June 2021 (outcomes can be found [on the EIP-AGRI website](#));
- EIP-AGRI OGs: there will be 80% EU co-financing instead of 43%. Interactive innovation principles are mandatory. There will be advance payments up to 50%. State Aid derogation till 350.000 euro / project (published July 2021).

Kerstin Rosenow explained that as part of the cross-cutting objective, there will be an important focus on digitalisation. MS are asked to elaborate on their digital strategy in their CAP Strategic Plans. In the

new CAP, it is important to have a strategic underpinning for digitalisation in agriculture in the EU. There are already a number of frameworks set out by the Commission: the Code of Conduct on agricultural data sharing (2018), the Digital Declaration (2019) where all MS are engaged in, a European Strategy for Data (2020), the Common Agricultural Policy post 2020, the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Agricultural dataspace and a new legislation on AI are in the pipeline.

Kerstin Rosenow also congratulated the Support Facility members on winning Lot 2 of the tender contract for Networking Activities in Support of the new CAP. She reminded that in the new programming period Rural Networks will become CAP Networks. The work on innovation and knowledge exchange, including EIP-AGRI, will be continued under the innovation strand of the future CAP network. The role of this strand will be key in delivering on the next CAP cross-cutting objective of fostering knowledge and innovation and in linking the CAP with the EU research and innovation policy.

As for Horizon Europe, Kerstin Rosenow informed that the [Cluster 6 Work Programme 2021-2022](#) was published on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. The deadline for application for 2021 topics is the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. The opening of the application process for 2022 topics is planned for the 28<sup>th</sup> of October. She also let the participants know that the expected launch of the mission in the area of soil health and food is planned at the end of September 2021.

The first call for proposals under the mission has already been published. Under the topic “Preparing the ground for healthy soils - building capacities for engagement, outreach and knowledge” of the Horizon Europe Mission Work Programme 2021/2022, actions are taken to identify regional “soil needs” and monitoring requirements, to map existing living labs and lighthouses and to help create a one-stop shop for soil information. The deadline for the call is the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. The Work Programme 2021/2022 will be updated with more topics and published by the end of December 2021 with the deadline for submission of proposals at the end of March 2022.

Kerstin Rosenow concluded by emphasising the importance of forests as a topic for the research and innovation agenda. The framework of the Green Deal gives a good incentive to improve the knowledge on forests. Forests also play a crucial role in the achievement of the EU climate and biodiversity objectives. Building on the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Commission adopted a new EU Forest Strategy on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2021. Forestry will also be the topic of a new EIP-AGRI seminar that will take place at the end of this year.

The session was concluded with a Q&A session:

- Q: Is the technical staff of farmers’ cooperatives considered to be an impartial adviser in the CAP agreement? COGECA believes that they are, considering that the farmers are the owners of cooperatives.  
A: In the new CAP there will be no distinction between public or private advisers. All the trusted advisers of the farmer will be supported. They will be an integral part of the new AKIS.
  
- Q: How will the EU and MS work together on the mission and living labs in detail? Activities and financing e.g.  
A: The communication on the mission implementation will not yet give a lot of details. The details will be displayed in the first work programme that will be published in December. During the last 2 years, the definition of a living lab has been refined and developed in cooperation with the European Network of Living Labs and with countries advanced in place-

based innovation, like Canada and France. The mission in the area of soil health and food uses a holistic approach and focuses on agricultural, forestry and urban soils, working with MS and regional and local authorities to ensure the bottom-up approach. First it will map out what living labs already exist, then it will build on this and try to establish a network all over Europe.

### **Presentation of the new Support Facility team**

Pacôme Eyenga (EIP-AGRI SF) presented the new team and gave a general idea of the new scope of the EIP-AGRI and of the new networking tools. You can [find his presentation here](#).

Pacôme Eyenga clarified that the support unit will be using the new name “Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI” (SF) instead of the former “EIP-AGRI Service Point”. The work of the EIP-AGRI SF will support all 9 objectives of the new CAP and specifically the cross-cutting objective. In addition, it will contribute to the objectives of the European CAP network, and particularly to:

- facilitating peer-to-peer learning and interaction among all agricultural and rural stakeholders;
- fostering innovation and supporting the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange and knowledge building process.

The work of the EIP-AGRI SF team will be focused on:

- developing an EU-level Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) by providing a platform for knowledge exchange, supporting the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge-exchange and knowledge-building process in order to capture the results and added value of European policies, particularly the results generated under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe Research Framework Programmes;
- promoting bottom-up innovation through networking activities taking into account farmers’, foresters’ and rural actors’ needs for research, innovation, technologies and innovative practices;
- collecting projects’ results and supporting networks of OGs, including transnational OGs.

The main networking activities will be included in an Annual Work Programme that is prepared with the support of the Subgroup on Innovation. Besides well-known Focus Groups, workshops and seminars, there will also be some new networking activities: ad-hoc national expert meetings and conferences. The ad-hoc national expert meetings will be organised within the MS and will focus on specific topics. The conferences will aim at promoting knowledge exchange and will allow for more participants (250-450 participants). The number of participants will depend on the scope, target group and topic of the conference.

Other new networking opportunities to enhance knowledge exchange are:

- cross-visits between projects to enable peer-to-peer learning and exchange on the innovations that the involved projects address; discuss common challenges and potential solutions; exchange and further disseminate project findings across the EU; establish future collaborations and/or partnerships;
- brokerage activities linked to workshops, seminars and conferences to provide an exchange forum for innovative projects and actors to meet each other, discuss potential project ideas or other forms of cooperation;
- competition and award ceremonies for innovative projects aiming at showcasing innovative practice(s), projects etc.

Pacôme Eyenga then briefly presented the Consortium members and the SF team structure. The SF Consortium consists of 18 partner organisations from 15 MS. These organisations are a good mix of public agencies, research institutes, universities, private non-profit organisations, a non-governmental organisation and small and medium enterprises. A broad team of 41 team members is organised in 4 divisions, corresponding with the CAP objectives, and a communication team. Division A will focus on the cross-cutting objective of building up a well-functioning EU AKIS, stakeholder management and facilitation. Division B will focus on fostering a smart and resilient agricultural sector and food security. Division C will focus on bolstering environmental care and climate action and contributing to the achievement of EU environmental and climate objectives. Division D will focus on strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas. All the divisions and the communication team are supported by the management team that works directly with DG AGRI and the Steering Committee of the EIP-AGRI Support Facility consortium.

The session was concluded with a Q&A session:

- Q: How does the SF propose to engage with the ongoing work on development of an EU-level knowledge reservoir started by EURAKNOS and EUREKA under H2020 and continuing under the HE GOV-01-24 call?  
A: EUREKA was a feasibility study which will end with a working demo and guidance for knowledge reservoirs within the CAP networks, to support MS' AKIS. However, there is still a lot to do in the next GOV 1-24 project. Therefore, future work will depend on the outcomes of the GOV 24 project and the foreseen interaction with MS' AKIS.
  
- Q: How about the former subgroup LEADER activities in the new network?  
A: The LEADER subgroup will continue.
  
- Q: How will coordination with the ENRD support facility be enhanced?  
A: It was explained that there is a need for stronger coordination on all levels. There are now 4 different SFs. DG AGRI is working hard on aligning the SFs and their activities under the new and broader CAP network, to make sure that there is a common approach. The branding still needs to be streamlined.
  
- Q: Pacome mentioned cross-border activities, so workshops with farmers and advisers in regions would be possible in future?  
A: It will be possible as far as these farmers and advisers will be members of the Operational Groups involved in the cross-border activities aiming to provide cross-border exchange possibilities between Operational Groups.
  
- Q: in cooperation with MS networks support units there could be more and more cross-border exchange and peer-to-peer learning between OGs?  
A: Yes.

## Session I: recent EIP-AGRI networking activities

### 1.1. Recent EIP-AGRI networking activities

Willemine Brinkman (EIP-AGRI SF) presented the past networking activities of the previous work programme, which took place after the last Subgroup meeting of March 2021. You can [find the presentation here](#).

The online workshop 'Towards carbon neutral agriculture' was held in March 2021 with 117 participants from 25 different countries. The workshop highlighted the need for further knowledge sharing, for methodologies to measure and monitor emissions at farm level and the need for incentives for farmers and consumers to produce and buy carbon neutral products. [Here](#) you can find the final report, programme, presentations and videos from the workshop.

The seminar 'Healthy Soils for Europe: sustainable management through knowledge and practice' was held online in April 2021. Over 140 farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers and other participants exchanged practical solutions to soil health problems and discussed what to do to take them up. The previous Focus Group results, relevant to the topic of the seminar, were taken into consideration and fuelled the discussions. You can find the final report, background documents, presentations and videos of the seminar [on the dedicated webpage](#).

Willemine Brinkman gave an [update on the Focus Group results of March-May 2021](#). The [final report](#) for the FG Sustainable beef production systems and the [final report](#) for the FG Climate-smart (sub)tropical food crops in the EU have been published. The experts of the FG Sustainable beef production systems were invited to participate in a seminar on the sustainability of grass-based beef production systems organised by the BovINE thematic network. The experts of the FG Climate-smart (sub)tropical food crops in the EU have continued to keep in touch and one of them organised a hands-on workshop to exchange information on specific technical aspects.

To end, Willemine Brinkman provided an overview of [publications](#) between December 2020 and May 2021: 6 monthly Newsletters; the brochure "Climate-smart agriculture: solutions for resilient farming and forestry"; the report "EIP-AGRI: 7 years of innovation in agriculture and forestry" (also available in French and German), the AKIS animated video, 3 translated factsheets on the results of the FGs Soil contamination, Reducing food loss, and Reducing antimicrobial use in poultry farming; and the Research needs from practice report.

Willemine encouraged the Subgroup members to share the above products as much as possible within their networks.

### 1.2. Main outcomes of the online webinars "Preparing the CAP Strategic Plans – the role of innovation networking in the Member States"

Inge Van Oost (DG AGRI) presented the main outcomes of the series of 3 webinars "Preparing the CAP Strategic Plans – the role of innovation networking in the Member States" that were organised on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. The purpose of the webinars was to provide guidance to the future CAP networks, and their innovation strand in particular, on supporting the new cross-cutting innovation objective of the CAP Strategic Plans currently being prepared by the MS. Four representatives from each country with responsibilities and/or involvement related to the AKIS Plan, the CAP network, farm

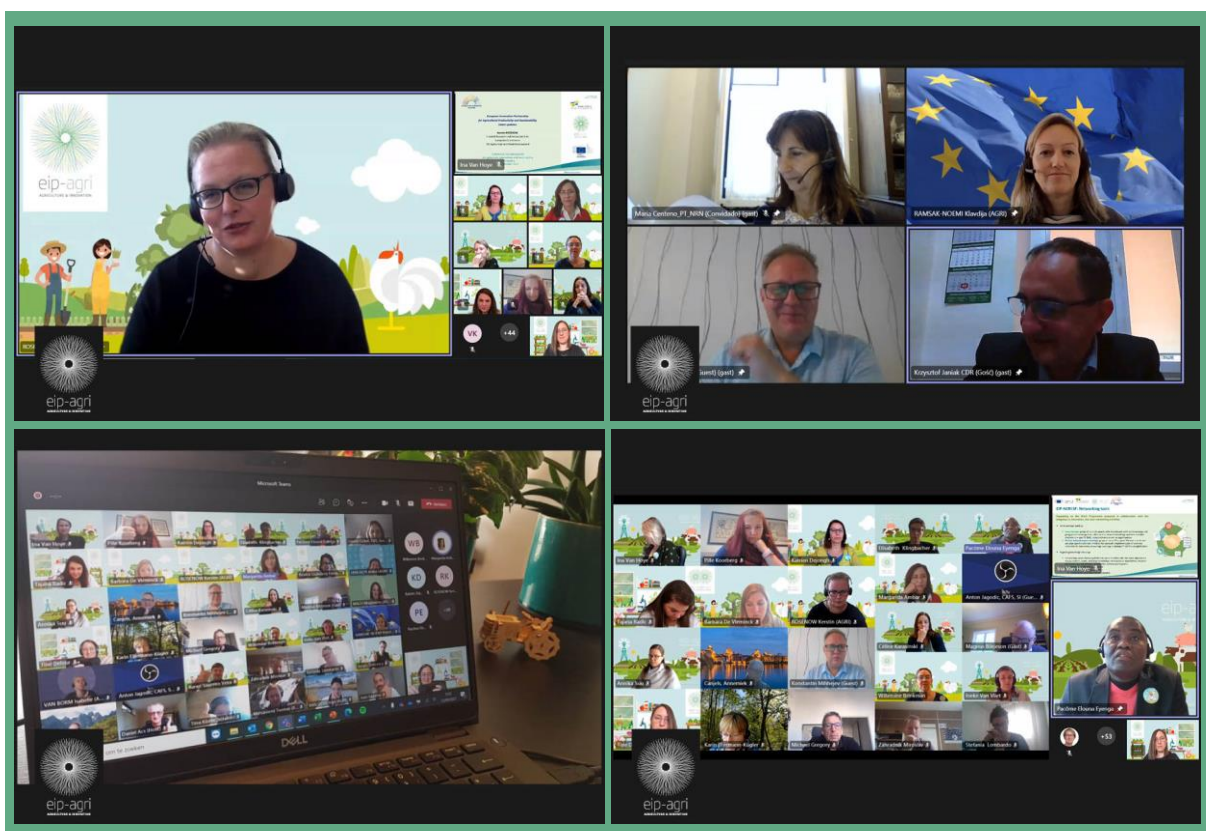
advisory organisations and the Horizon research and innovation programme were invited to take part in the webinars. Finally, 113 participants from 25 MS were divided into 3 broad clusters (Northern, Southern and Central & Atlantic Europe) to ensure sufficient diversity and enable all of them to participate in the discussions.

The webinars consisted of an introductory explanation on the innovation dimension of the new CAP Network, followed by three thematic sessions:

1. Role of the CAP Networks in the AKIS Strategic Approach
2. How can CAP Networks help facilitate integration of advisers in the AKIS
3. How can CAP Networks create and strengthen linkages with research (especially between H2020/Horizon Europe and OGs).

Inge Van Oost shared the main highlights from the interactive discussions. It is important to find ways to engage as many farmers and researchers as possible and to efficiently integrate advisers in AKIS. A good collaboration and knowledge flow between all these AKIS actors, both public and private, is key. It is important to look for synergies with existing AKIS (-alike) platforms and to build on materials and outcomes produced by OGs and other innovative projects. You can find the other highlights [in Inge Van Oost's presentation here](#).

The final report, videos and presentations of the webinars are available [on the EIP-AGRI website](#).



## Session II: Shaping the upcoming networking activities focused on innovation

### 2.1. Topics for the upcoming EIP-AGRI networking activities

Magdalena Mach (DG AGRI) presented the topics for the upcoming EIP-AGRI networking activities. You can [find her presentation here](#).

Magdalena Mach started by explaining that the proposals are based on the ideas collected through the online questionnaire for Subgroup members in July 2020, and through the EIP-AGRI website. Other ideas arose from discussions within DG AGRI and with the EIP-AGRI SF. Unused topics from past years were also taken into account. All these ideas were organised in 4 clusters and gathered in a booklet that the Subgroup members received at the end of last year. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Subgroup meeting in December 2020, the members were asked to vote for the topics they considered as priorities.

Based on the outcomes of this voting exercise, 5 topics were chosen for 1 seminar (SEM), 1 workshop (WS) and 3 Focus Groups (FGs). The SEM and WS will be held still in 2021. The FGs will take place in 2022, but a call for experts will be launched in 2021. The background information on these 5 topics was provided to the Subgroup members as a basis for today's discussions.

In the proposed seminar we will reflect on how to turn forest innovation into practice. Magdalena Mach clarified that an event on forestry was planned in 2020, but postponed due to Covid. It is a good time to come back to this topic as the EU Forestry Strategy has just been adopted and forests are currently very high on the political and research agenda. It is proposed to discuss during the seminar how to improve the uptake of innovative solutions that are already available, focusing primarily on the social aspects that play a role in forest innovation.

For the workshop, DG AGRI proposed the topic "Farm data for better agri-environmental performance". Digital technologies and data-based solutions can help farmers to work more precisely and sustainably improving their decision making and farming practices. However, it is important that farmers are empowered to decide on their data and benefit fully from its value. The European Commission's Strategy for Data and the future cross-sectoral initiatives for enhancing the use, reuse and sharing of data, will impact the handling of data in agriculture. Thus it is important to develop a common understanding and a view on the possible implications it may have for agriculture and the farmers. This event will take stock of ongoing projects that collect and make use of farm-generated data to improve economic and environmental performances of farmers. It will also explore the role of different stakeholders on data collection and use at farm level and provide an environment to exchange best practices of farm data collection.

Regarding the Focus Groups, Magdalena Mach informed that DG AGRI proposes the following 3 Focus Group topics:

- Farm Sustainability Tools (FaST): identifying good practices and promoting innovative approaches to expand the use of digital solutions by farmers
- New ways to deal with fruit tree pests and diseases, while reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides
- Water Management in the context of climate change

For the last FG, SOI members were asked to help choose its focus from the options below:



1. Nature-Based Solutions for water management under climate change conditions
2. Prevention and remediation of water pollution caused by climate change including effects on natural and artificial water storages and distribution infrastructure
3. Practices in small and large scale farms to deal with the effects of water abundance (rapid water showers, floods)

Magdalena Mach invited the Subgroup members to provide further input and to help define the scope and objectives of the proposed topics during the interactive breakout sessions.

## **2.2. Interactive discussions on EIP-AGRI networking activities**

Katrien Dejongh Audenaert (EIP-AGRI SF) presented the process for the interactive discussions explaining that their aim is to sharpen and target the scope and objectives of the upcoming networking activities.

The Subgroup members were divided into 5 breakout rooms. The proposals for networking activities were discussed in two rounds. More details on the ideas, examples and proposals discussed in the breakout groups can be found in Annex 1.

The following highlights from each breakout group were shared in the meeting:

- ✓ **SEM Forestry:** everyone agreed that social innovation is the right approach for the forestry seminar. The advisory system for forestry is critical. The most important objective of the seminar would be to promote innovation in rural areas by encouraging cooperation amongst different actors in the forest value chain and by enhancing the positive spill-over effects. Another important point that was highlighted was on how to deal with conservation of forests, together with the needs for economic development in the area. Tourism can play a role in conservation and can create business opportunities in rural areas.

There was consensus that the dialogue between farmers and foresters should be strengthened. The seminar would be a good opportunity to contribute to this. New groups of stakeholders should be invited to the seminar, like municipalities or the broader community/society organisations, as well as young foresters/practitioners who could be reached by promoting the seminar through social media.

- ✓ **WS Farm data:** farmers need to be able to interpret the data that is generated by various new technologies they are using on the farm. Farmers need to benefit from the data they are generating through their agricultural operations. It is important to ensure that farmers, or advisers, have the skills to interpret the data, so it is beneficial for the farm. The WS should also consider challenges that are specific to areas where (digital) infrastructure is not available (e.g. mountains). The differences in areas and environmental challenges need to be taken into account when monitoring data and vulnerabilities of farms (cf. climate change). The farm-generated data should be used to the benefit of the agricultural sector as a whole, with benchmarking activities. In parts of Europe, public generated data that is useful for agriculture (e.g. meteorological services) is difficult to access. Public data should be made available to the wider public and public institutions should enable access to this data.

Actors that could be invited to the WS are OGs, NRNs, innovative farmers etc. The WS will be held online. To make the workshop more attractive and practical, it was suggested to a) use

participatory facilitation tools, and b) to also include videos showing the farm context, to help understand the needs on the ground.

- ✓ **FG Water:** Nature-Based Solutions for water management under climate change conditions was chosen as the best angle to look at the topic of water management. A greener and more holistic perspective for water management is highly important, digging deeper into the topics of ecosystems and multi-functionality. Water availability is not only important for agriculture, but for the whole ecosystem. The keywords for the FG could be cooperation and co-creation. The aim of the FG could be to co-create nature-based solutions for water management between stakeholders, because today nature-based solutions hardly exist. Young farmers can be addressed, as they are usually interested in environmental topics. Other actors can be water management bodies, researchers, regional authorities etc. There needs to be a broad view on this topic. It was also proposed to pay attention to a more attractive communication in the call for the FGs in order to engage young farmers and to the involvement of young farmers with the assistance of young farmer associations.
- ✓ **FG FaST:** The main question to address in the FG would be 'who should be providing sustainability tools for farmers?'. Public administrations are a possible candidate, but there needs to be the capacity to establish this kind of work. For smaller MS it might be practically difficult to make the tools accessible and they might need to think about outsourcing the work. The FG should provide success stories from different regions. It could identify hot spots and market drivers, and providers of necessary resources within regions. Data interpretability is seen as very important. Evaluators can use the data to reduce administrative burdens. The (political) framework in which tools are used, will be very important. Will tools be obligatory and will there be fines when they are not used? Will data be shielded or freely shared with other regions and MS? Young farmers should be incentivised to participate.
- ✓ **FG Pests & diseases in fruit trees:** The FG would focus on agro-ecological practices. A metastudy is needed to map existing knowledge per fruit type. Old and new solutions from different areas should be taken into account. New solutions should be developed, although the use of existing practices can also be stimulated in new areas. The FG could also try to revive 'forgotten solutions'. The FG can try to figure out the most efficient practices that can be used on different types of fruit trees and berry bushes. Links should be made with other fields to try and enhance knowledge building, like agroforestry or animal husbandry (experiments could be set up). Young farmers can be engaged through young farmers' organisations and national and regional governments. The use of types of social media differs between countries and age groups. It would be beneficial to map out these different social media usages to try and reach young farmers.

## Next steps and closing

Magdalena Mach (DG AGRI) closed the meeting by thanking all the Subgroup members for their cooperation and for sharing their ideas. DG AGRI and the SF will analyse all contributions from the meeting and use them to organise the upcoming events.

The 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subgroup on Innovation will be held in the first half of December and it will be devoted to discussing topics for additional events in 2022.

**The detailed agenda of the meeting and all presentations can be found [on the EIP-AGRI website](#).**

## ANNEX 1: IDEAS, EXAMPLES OR PROPOSALS TO TARGET THE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE UPCOMING NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

### Results of the breakout group discussions

#### 1. Results of the interactive discussion on the SEM Forestry

##### Question 1: What would be the most useful to do now?

The participants agreed with the proposed scope and approach, focusing on social aspects. It was highlighted that the advisory system on forestry is critical from the social innovation point of view.

There were some comments stressing the importance of explicitly considering topics like climate change, agroforestry (not broadly implemented across Europe) and digitalisation and big data. Also, the topic of ecosystem services would be very interesting.

Finally, they mentioned the fact that generally, when we talk about sustainable forest management (as a common scope), it often seems to be more focused on ecological aspects and biodiversity and not on economic and social aspects.

##### Question 2: What would be the objectives?

The objectives of the current proposal seem quite ambitious. However, all of them are relevant. It might be good to prioritise, investing more in the ones that are more important or hard to achieve. For the participants the most important objective is the third one, namely to promote innovation in rural areas by encouraging cooperation amongst the different actors in the forest value chain and to enhance the positive spill-over effects. This third objective is considered most relevant and interesting for three reasons:

- It focuses on economics. Profitability is the only way of making the management -of forests- successful.
- It opens the event to new actors and thus helps to go beyond the usual suspects. Besides that it can also be interesting to strengthen the link with platforms related with bioeconomy or technology.
- It contributes to increasing dialogue amongst stakeholders with different interests and requirements:
  - o Agriculture vs forestry. The members emphasised that farmers and foresters are not in separated boxes. Synergies are key to link farmers and forest owners and to innovate in rural areas.
  - o Wood harvest vs conservation, owners' organisations vs environmental organisations. This seems, for example, a very important issue in Sweden, where environmental organisations want to reduce or stop wood harvesting.

- Tourism vs conservation (e.g. national parks) because recreation, tourism and multi-functionality in forests is growing fast. There is a big discussion on national parks and on how to make economic activities compatible with conservation, e.g. tourism activities, adrenaline sports.

### **Question 3: Who should be involved?**

The need for more interaction with all stakeholders related to forestry was highlighted. The need for a dialogue with farmers and the agricultural community was stressed.

In line with this, some suggestions for new groups of stakeholders were added to the current list of target groups: Municipalities (e.g. mayors), hunting associations (very important in Eastern countries), communities and citizens, tourism organisations and new business models (tree paths - examples from Austria- and accommodations, adrenaline sports, etc.)

It was highlighted that it is important that not only those MS with a lot of experience in forestry innovation and OGs are invited to the seminar. Some Subgroup members, representing MA, mentioned that for them it would be important to participate in this seminar because they are just starting with EIP-AGRI and they do not have OGs on the forestry topic yet. MS in a similar situation, and specifically the MA and NRNs of those member states could thus be invited too.

### **Question 4: How to involve more (young) foresters/practitioners?**

The group members said that the new generations are generally very committed with some topics closely related to forests (e.g. climate change). New study programmes are being set up in this area, etc.

For the seminar, some NGOs that work with young people could be addressed. Another way of attracting young foresters/practitioners is to disseminate the seminar through the means they use the most, so social media, with specific strategies to attract them.

## 2. Results of the interactive discussion on the WS Farm data

**Question 1: based on past work and future challenges: what would be the most useful to do now?  
What would be the objectives?**

- Farmers have a lot of data but data interpretation is complicated.
- Technical skills of advisers are fundamental to provide data interpretation that is sound, independent, and useful for the farmer. Explore more on learning and knowledge exchange on data interpretation.
- Interpretation and friendly interfaces
- Interoperability and reuse of data - sharing of good practices
- Coherence of policies and safeguarding the data
- Sometimes the service providers are the data owners, not the farmers
- The benefits of using the data should be made more obvious for the farmers.
- Interpretation of data should be impartial
- Focus on needed skills for interpretation of data, which skills are needed?
- The background note is a good starting point.
- Good to see what is going on at European level, taking stock of the various projects and initiatives.
- We would like to hear about small initiatives so we would suggest organising a session on small digital initiatives in agriculture.
- Also, we believe the advisers need to acquire the technical skills for providing data interpretation.
- We need to have nuanced discussions; this is because some areas have particular challenges. For example, digital infrastructure is a key challenge in marginalised areas such as the mountain areas.
- Also, we need to discuss what the place is of digitalisation in various sub-sectors for example in livestock production data interpretation also depends a lot on context.
- Important to explore to what extent we can use data to assess the various vulnerabilities of an area
- Focus on training to acquire the needed digital skills
- Build trust in digital tools – for that purpose the tools need to function as useful decision support tools in the farm. This will highlight the importance of data to the farmer.
- We should look also outside OGs, for example at start-ups who are developing artificial intelligence.
- Public data should be made available to the wider public to be used by farmers and app developers. Public institutions should enable access to this data.
- Access to data and documents for pesticide use. Citizens have the right to know according to a recent court decision in Germany (German court case Lars Neumeister citizens right to know about farmers' pesticide use ). Proposal to involve citizens in the Focus Group too.
- Support the idea of making public data available to the wider public
- We should involve the farmers in the development of these tools.

- Share best practices on data ownership, both from the angle of farm management and marketing of farm products
- Look at Farmer Business Network in the US for inspiration
- Leave the door open for individual farmers too, not only representatives from farmer organisations. Because in some countries we can't fully rely on such organisations – in some cases they don't exist or are not sufficiently active.
- US good example (<https://dairybrain.wisc.edu/>), farmers business network, New Zealand national level public data provision for farmers.

**Questions 2+3: Who should be involved and how (be specific i.e. specific people, organisations, initiatives, good speakers)?**

- ongoing or finished OGs
- Involve the NRNs too, they are important to spread the word
- Horizon projects, for example Desira project
- Innovative farmers. IT start-ups as advisers for farming.
- Projects to involve: Join-Data, Dutch initiative, S3 Platform Agrifood, subgroup Traceability & Big Data
- Young scientists doing startups in digital topics

**Question 4: The WS will be held online: what are your suggestions to make this online format more attractive? Is there something we can improve, things we have to think about?**

- Use of online participatory facilitation tools
- Putting more context to the meeting (videos showing the farm context)
- Provide supporting material

### 3. Results of the interactive discussion on the FG Water

#### Discussion on the specific angle (3 options):

The topic could be approached from several angles. For this FG it is proposed to choose from the three options below:

- 1) Nature-Based Solutions for water management under climate change conditions
- 2) Prevention and remediation of water pollution caused by climate change including effects on natural and artificial water storages and distribution infrastructure
- 3) Practices in small and large scale farms to deal with the effects of water abundance (rapid water showers, floods)

#### Discussion

- ✓ Option 3 is very interesting because we had a very dramatic flood just like ten kilometers from where I'm sitting now and it has affected a lot of farmers here.
- ✓ Option 3, how to store water in the dry period which is a huge influencing factor.
- ✓ Natural non-artificial tools are important. Option number 1.
- ✓ Focus should be very targeted (remark). We need to take into account that FG members meet each other just a few times.
- ✓ Option 1. I think we need to take into account rather greener options for water management.
- ✓ Option nr 1, because it is more broad.
- ✓ I would go for the 1 option I think there's a lot of traction on nature-based solutions.

#### Answer to the questions

##### What would be the main question to address in the FG?

- ✓ Focus on the natural-based solutions, more than on the other options.
- ✓ Best practices need to be combined together (across Europe). Across Europe, we have a lot of water boards/institutes, which are working with water quality and quantity.
- ✓ Water management is difficult because we have many regions with enough water but it's not available all the time.
- ✓ In some places there is too much water so I think we should be focusing on one of these problems in this Focus Group.
- ✓ We need to have in all EU regions enough clean water.
- ✓ To understand what are those natural based solutions for this kind of problem as flooding and extremely dry periods.
- ✓ We recognise the potential of natural-based solutions, but these kinds of solutions need high-level cooperation for their implementation. It is very important to exchange the already existing and working solutions from other projects/groups/institutes.

### What would be the specific tasks of the FG?

- ✓ Lack of water could be connected directly to climate change.
- ✓ How should we manage water in the future? For all kinds of problems and needs.
- ✓ We must be in this FG very specific and focused.
- ✓ EIP Water has 26 Action Groups - so yes let's first check what is already there.
- ✓ Have we asked Copa Cogeca what the farmers would like to explore?
- ✓ In some areas there is enough water, but it's not available all the time. This is a big problem. Water availability is not only important for agriculture, but for the whole ecosystem.
- ✓ Using underground and surface water. What is better to choose and use?
- ✓ Step back from the farm level, we need to think in a more holistic way. Water is life for the whole ecosystem. It should be relevant to work at basin level.
- ✓ Water management is broader than only agriculture. In Poland, we try to deal with that issue and we see that there is very difficult cooperation between institutions in that area/topic. How to cooperate with all of them?

### How to involve more (young) farmers/practitioners (what can they do to disseminate the call (+ expert call) more broadly; what can they do themselves to encourage practitioners to participate)?

- ✓ Topics that have an environmental angle will attract more young farmers.
- ✓ FG focused more on research. We need to add a bit more practical views which are adapted in an appropriate language for younger farmers.
- ✓ Make room at least for 3 young farmers in the FG.
- ✓ You need to involve them with the assistance of young farmer associations.

### Question of the format

- ✓ It is recommended that the FG meets regularly online. Regular communication is very important to keep the topic and discussion going.
- ✓ You can ask about the format in advance when contacting potential FG participants.



## 4. Results of the interactive discussion on the FG FaST

The overall aim of this FG is to identify good practices and promote innovative approaches to:

- Support farmers in their decision-making processes for farm profitability and environmental sustainability.
- Expand the use of digital solutions by farmers.
- Enhance the involvement of young farmers and experts.

### What would be the main question to address in the Focus Group?

- Is it the role of public administration to provide these tools or should private companies be involved in the process?
- What is the risk of public data? The framework in which this tool is used is important as well as data protection
- The challenge of harvesting the knowledge to produce those tools for farmers and providing the necessary training.
- Should farmers be obliged to adopt the technology? What would be the minimum requirements for this tool before it would be considered by a member state? Would you face reduced CAP payments by not adopting sustainability tools?
- Are there good examples to show capacity buildings to establish this kind of work? A Focus Group could provide success stories from different regions. As the regions vary a lot, different solutions are needed. First step is to pick a champion technology within a EU region. It would be more interesting for participants to have concrete examples of the types of Farm Sustainability Tools which could potentially be rolled out. Demonstrations of good practical examples developed within MS which already have developed such tools and where farmers are engaging with such tools.
- Mapping of farms that are on different “digital competence levels” over EU/region. --> Showing best practices.
- How to better communicate between private and public?
- Could market drivers ensure the widespread use and adoption of FaST technologies? The market could provide the resources to get this done.
- Would it make more sense for the FG to focus on one topic such as Animal Production or Fruit? There are so many subthemes that it could be useful for specific focus groups around Farm Sustainability Technologies relevant to particular sectors. For example, the technologies relevant to horticulture, poultry or pigs may not be very relevant to beef or dairy farmers. The market place needs to drive this. At the moment it can be quite broad and not allowing us to get to the nub of the problem.
- Do the benefits outweigh the costs in developing this?
- Should farmers be expected to pay for this technology?
- How can evaluators use this data to reduce administrative burden? Data interpretability is important. What are the limitations?
- Important that the tools which are developed are used. How can we ensure they are being used? Will these tools be obligatory? If you don't comply, will you have reduced farm payments?

- Would a Co-op model be a good basis to disseminate FaST? The Co-op model may offer a possibility to aggregate the demand. There are examples of cooperative models in Greece where farmers receive increased accessibility towards services through Coop models.
- Tools are too expensive for small farms – how to use cooperatives and other aggregators in implementing?
- Can a developed App or technology be shared with other regions or MS? Can it be used to benchmark performance between MS? In some MS there are a lot of these tools available while in others there are very little.
- We cannot focus specifically on the challenges at farm level. We have to integrate the tools with other sustainability challenges. Are there examples of farm challenges which could be integrated with other sustainability challenges? For example - the tool for nutrient balance at field scale, soil data, based on available info weather data etc and analysis. This could be linked to other challenges such as Soil Organic Carbon levels.
- Should MS be obliged to prepare this tool on the shoulder cost and manpower time of the advisory services? Who will pay for this? This could be seen as an advisory service.
- Are there examples from European Networks such as the Horizon FAIRshare network of best practice sustainable technologies which could be rolled out by advisory services?
- Is there a body of rules which define what technologies are acceptable?
- Should there be a dedicated funding mechanism from Rural Development to support or incentivise the transition? Incentives will help to provide more broad thinking opportunities and solutions. Incentives will also allow MS to monitor more parameters but this will require financial support.

There was concern about the practicalities in using and developing the tool in smaller MS.

- Who is going to disseminate it? Will it be done by private companies who are doing this for profit?
- The culture of farmers in using a FaST tool and lack of IT knowledge in some of the smaller MS was questioned. The simple practicalities of use could be an issue for farmers. Who is going to help farmers to use the tools?

**Question: How do we involve more farmers including young farmers and how to encourage people to participate in FG work?**

Recommendations included:

- Using the representatives of farmers such as Copa-Cogeca and CEJA. Approaching specific farmers is too narrow. If the farmers are willing to participate that would be great. English can be a major barrier.
- Compensating for the time spent on the FG work.
- Private service companies should possibly be engaged to encourage farmers to use these kinds of tools.
- Look for a group of farmers or a group of young farmers. Connecting with people in the same age group can be beneficial. If you invite people through a regional innovation service provider or a chamber of agriculture you will have more success in involving the right people. There are

some countries lagging with a fragmented advisory system that need a better system for information transfer.

- In some countries approaching the ministry is the best way to reach people to apply.
- Using regional service providers, chamber of agriculture etc.

**Question: Format of the Focus Group.**

It used to be physical meetings. It's up to each FG to determine this and that may depend on their physical location.

For the moment, there are only 20 members in a Focus Group. There should be an opportunity to include a wider group of satellite experts which could link in virtually and provide important and key expertise. One way proposed for this was organising the FG meeting back-to-back with another event. Sometimes it's very expensive to travel to Brussels. We could get more expertise by digital involvement.

## 5. Results of the interactive discussion on the FG Pests & diseases in fruit trees

**What would be the main question/aspect to address in the Focus Group? What would be the specific tasks of the Focus Group?**

- agro-ecology aspects
- functional biodiversity
- more diverse solutions
- to map and gather existing knowledge, knowledge that is ready for practice (e.g. biofruitnet “harvests” and “disseminates” solutions: <https://biofruitnet.eu>). It is important to share this information to accelerate the transition to and the adoption of non-chemical practices.
- specific solutions for specific fruit trees (the state of knowledge differs between different types of fruits)
- no focus on olives or wine (FGs have already been dedicated to these crops), but on citrus trees, stone fruits (the knowledge how to reduce or eliminate pesticides in stone fruit cultures seems to be quite limited), (nuts) berries and top fruit. First the main pest and look at quarantine for pests from abroad.
- A lot of research has already been done – a kind of metastudy would be interesting, to analyse which research results exist already and for which fruit type knowledge gaps are biggest.
- In some areas the knowledge base may not be big enough to start innovation. It’s important to know what the gaps are when you start experimenting.
- agroforestry (combination fruit trees with arable crops or animals)
- not only searching for new solutions, but also “old” or forgotten solutions should be kept in mind and be rediscovered. These could also provide innovative aspects; and techniques that have been used in one region for a long time may be new for another region.
- (comment of one participant: there is still a lot to do in arable cultures to reduce or eliminate pesticides – not to forget). Also, lessons could be learned from existing agro-ecological non-tree research and experiments.

### **Conclusion:**

Main focus on agro-ecology. A metastudy is needed to map existing knowledge per fruit type. Take into account traditional, old (forgotten) and new solutions from different areas.

### **How to involve more (young) farmers/practitioners?**

- There is a new type of very qualified young farmers with extensive knowledge, they are well-informed, but they are not often members of a young farmers’ association or not addressed by young farmers’ representatives. It is important to address and involve them.
- produce podcasts and videos on both economical as technical aspects
- use social media – keep in mind that the importance/popularity of different social media platforms depends on countries and on the age of users (e.g. Facebook is very popular in

country A, but not in Country B and while young people use Instagram, it's irrelevant for older ones.)

- research on a national level - which young farmers' associations exist in the MS (maybe input from national ministries), not only focus on CEJA (<https://www.ceja.eu/>)

### Conclusions:

Diversify communication tools depending on countries and target group of young farmers. Also involve non-traditional representatives of young farmers.

The participants also provided some interesting contacts or projects:

- IOBC, has been working on alternatives to pesticides since 1951 ([https://www.iobc-wprs.org/expert\\_groups/wg.html](https://www.iobc-wprs.org/expert_groups/wg.html); [http://www.iobc-wprs.org/ip\\_ipm](http://www.iobc-wprs.org/ip_ipm))
- a scientist who has done a lot of research on this topic: Lene Sigsgaard, Ecological studies of predation in scales from individual to community aiming at developing sustainable production systems which promote natural regulation and apply use of biological control (<https://plen.ku.dk/english/employees/?pure=en/persons/46040>)
- activities of young farmers who are growing fruit and vegetables, so-called "maîtres maraîchers" (<https://maitremaraicher-moestuimmeester.brussels/> - a group strongly growing)
- <https://www.fermetroptard.be>: a highly qualified and motivated young farmer, cultivates vegetables, but planted apple trees recently and sells fruit from other local growers directly.
- Community supported agriculture: <http://www.csa-netwerk.be>  
Only one example – CSA is a growing sector in different European countries (but farmers mainly grow vegetables) and NGO EEB. (<https://meta.eeb.org/2020/04/07/future-farming-bringing-farm-closer-to-fork-in-belgium/>)
- Farmers' cooperatives selling fruit and vegetables directly in Wallonia and Brussels: Agri-covert (<https://www.agricouvert.be/>); examples for peri-urban farms: La ferme du Chant des Cailles (<http://www.chantdescailles.be/>) and Groupe d'Achats Solidaires de l'Agriculture Paysanne (GASAP; <https://gasap.be>).