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Pooling funding streams to boost interactive innovation

Body:

Having an idea is one thing, turning it into an innovation action is another. There are different types of funding available that can help get a project started, such as under the Rural Development programmes (RDPs) or under the EU research and innovation programme "Horizon 2020".

The two policies complement each other: Rural Development Programmes are normally applied within a specific programme region, and research policy must go beyond this scale by co-funding innovative actions at cross-border or EU-level.

The EIP-AGRI and Rural Development

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups can be funded under the RDPs and are project based. They tackle a certain (practical) problem or opportunity which may lead to an innovation and contribute to achieving the programme's objectives. The EU member states or regions decide on the precise conditions to support innovation projects through their Rural Development Programmes, which operate in a given region or country. EIP Operational Groups can benefit from an increased EU co-financing rate.

Each Operational Group is project oriented and composed of those key actors (such as farmers, advisers, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc) that are in the best position to realise the project's goals, to share implementation experiences and to disseminate the outcomes broadly. The Operational Group approach makes the best use of different types of knowledge (practical, scientific, technical, organisational, etc) in an interactive way.

Operational Groups can use support to develop new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors. Further possible areas of action include joint work processes, short supply chains, joint climate change actions, collective environmental projects etc.

Support can cover the funding of the Operational Group project, but also to help set up operational group projects. Innovation brokers can help to develop a rough new idea into an innovation group ready to start a project. Bringing the right partners together and making clear agreements on the concrete work plan and cooperation arrangements is key for the future success of Operational group projects.

Innovation Support Services and brokering will play a crucial role in getting many worthwhile projects off the ground. Innovation Support Services can take the lead in facilitating initiatives that connect actors with an interest in, and ideas on, finding an innovative solution to a shared problem.

Read the [EIP-AGRI Brochure Operational Groups \(2016\)](#) [1] and [EIP-AGRI Brochure Innovation Support Services](#) [2].

Read the [guidelines on programming innovation in Rural Development Programmes](#) [3].

The EIP-AGRI and Research and Innovation Policy “Horizon 2020”

Apart from the more classical research projects under Horizon 2020, the call includes several opportunities to support multinational interactive innovation projects in agriculture and forestry through thematic networks and through multi-actor projects.

Multi-actor approach, research involving the agricultural community

The multi-actor approach requires that end-users and multipliers of research results such as farmers and farmers’ groups, advisers, enterprises and others, are closely involved throughout the whole research project period. This should lead to innovative solutions that are more likely to be applied in the field, because those who need the solutions will be involved right from the start: from defining the questions, to planning, to implementing research work, to experiments and right up until possible demonstrations and dissemination. Openness to involve relevant groups operating in the EIP context (such as rural development operational groups) has been strongly recommended in the work programme of Horizon 2020.

Thematic networks, unlocking and exchanging knowledge across the EU

The thematic networks should again involve a range of actors from science and practice, along the same lines as the multi-actor approach. These networks aim to:

- collect existing scientific knowledge and best practices on the chosen theme, and facilitate their use
- develop easily understandable material for practice, such as info sheets in a **common format** and audio-visual material. The material should be long-term available and easy accessible to end-users.

Read the [EIP-AGRI Brochure on Horizon 2020 - Calls 2019](#) [4]

Read the [EIP-AGRI Brochure Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects](#) [5]

Read the [EIP-AGRI Brochure on Thematic Networks under Horizon 2020](#) [6]

Other funding opportunities

Other EU policies, such as the EU Regional Policy through the European Regional Development Fund (**ERDF**) and the **European Social Fund** as well as the SME support programme COSME or the **Education Policy** may offer additional opportunities. A large share of the ERDF budget concentrates on measures for research and shift towards a low carbon economy, while one of the strategic objectives of EU education innovation, competitiveness of SMEs and training policies is to enhance innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

National and regional policies offer in addition a variety of other funding schemes opportunities that may also support and focus on interactive innovation projects. All such project groups are welcome to join the EIP network.

Search through other [Funding opportunities](#) [7] and read [EIP-AGRI brochure on Funding opportunities](#). [8]

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Public - accessible to all site users

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[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-brochure-operational-groups-update-2016>

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[3] http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/pb_guidelines_eip_implementation_2014_en.pdf

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