

# Call for expression of interest for experts participating in Focus Groups of the European Innovation Partnership on 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'

The European Commission is launching a call for experts such as farmers, foresters, advisers, scientists and other relevant actors for three new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. The Focus Groups will start working in June 2018 and are expected to present their results and recommendations within 12 months. Candidates for each of the Focus Groups below are invited to apply in accordance to the rules set out in this notice for the purpose specified.

*Please note that the dates for the first meetings of the Focus Groups are indicated below per Focus Group, and that experts are expected to be available to travel to the Focus Group meeting on these dates. Focus Group participants will also be requested to do some preparatory work before and in between the first and second meetings.*

You will find the link to the application form underneath the calls below. Please read the entire call text carefully before applying.

## **Focus Group themes:**

For the current call, experts, farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers and others<sup>1</sup> are invited to apply for participation in Focus Groups on the following topics, noting that these Focus Groups will complement the work of previous Focus Groups:

### **29: New feed for pigs and poultry**

[More info](#)

### **30: Protecting fruit production from frost damage**

[More info](#)

### **31: Reducing food loss on the farm**

[More info](#)

## **What is a Focus Group?**

The purpose of a Focus Group is to explore practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities and to draw on and share experience gained from relevant innovative projects. The group discusses and documents research results and implications for further research activities that will help to solve practical issues in the sector. Such issues may be related to production, processing, consumption, transport or other areas. The group is asked to focus on practical knowledge, dissemination to the sector as well as developing project ideas for [Operational Groups](#).

Focus Groups are expected to work for around 12 months and will meet face-to-face twice. For more information on the Focus Groups, please see the [Focus Group brochure](#) and the [Focus Group charter](#).

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 2 section 'Who can apply'

## **What is the outcome of a Focus Group?**

The specific questions and tasks per Focus Group for the current call are listed below. Candidates should carefully study these questions and refer to them in their applications, indicating how their experience is relevant to answering these questions.

All Focus Groups will be required to:

- ✓ **make a summary description of the issue**
- ✓ **take stock of the state of play of practice in the field of its activity, listing problems and opportunities**
- ✓ **take stock of the state of play of research in its field, summarising possible solutions to the problems listed**
- ✓ **identify needs from practice and possible directions for further research**
- ✓ **propose priorities for innovative actions by suggesting ideas for Operational Groups or other project formats to test solutions and opportunities and ways to exchange the practical knowledge gathered beyond the Focus Group**

The outcome of the Focus Group will be presented in a report (see example of outline in [annex 1](#)) and feed into the EIP-AGRI Network, which will share the knowledge and practical experience with the wider public as well as with relevant programming authorities.

## **Who can apply?**

The composition of the Focus Groups will be based on the following profiles, while taking into account the different characteristics of the specific challenge/objective at stake and a good balance in the composition of the group (area of expertise, professional capacity and experience, geographical balance, etc.):

- Experts such as farmers, foresters, advisers, with relevant practical experience and technical knowledge on the topic, who can contribute with practical solutions for problems or opportunities in the field.
- Experts with a good understanding and experience of the relevant economic situation related to the topic concerned, including market prospects, production costs, supply, manufacturing, and socio-economic impact for farmers and the forest sector.
- Experts with experience in practical research and innovation actions related to the topic.

## Detailed Description of the Focus Groups

### **Focus Group 29: New feed for pigs and poultry**

**First meeting: 7-8 June 2018**

*The pig and poultry sectors use substantial amounts of compound feed and this is what largely defines their environmental footprint. Importing feed from elsewhere leads to nutrient imbalances. Producing feed alongside food and biofuels can also lead to competition for land, sometimes at the expense of natural habitats. Applying the principles of the circular economy to feed production chains could potentially mitigate some of these impacts.*

*There are many opportunities to produce alternative, high quality feed products. This includes, but is not limited to: use of waste food products for feed, appropriate by-products from non-food industries, or unusual sources such as algae production, microbial biomass and insect based alternatives. The Focus Group will look at on-farm and off-farm production, as well as large-scale centralised and smaller-scale decentralised processing systems. Several of these alternatives could offer promising solutions to increase the circularity of livestock production systems and reduce their environmental impact. The actual benefit from those potential solutions would need to be evaluated thanks to advanced life-cycle analysis methodologies.*

**QUESTION: Which are the promising new sources and strategies to reduce pressure on natural resources while feeding or producing feed for pigs and poultry?**

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- Make an inventory of alternative strategies and sources for pig and poultry feed, including both new and underused sources;
- Analyse the most important pros and cons of these alternative feed sources, strategies and supply chains;
- Analyse their general economic and environmental sustainability, analyse their technical viability and safety, and identify potential tools/barriers affecting a broad uptake;
- Propose potential innovative actions and ideas for Operational Groups (funded under the Rural Development Programmes) to stimulate the use and improvement of alternative resources;
- Identify needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge which may be solved by further research;
- Identify how new and emerging alternatives may be transferred to other conditions (location, type of production) and how they may be checked and standardised in a cost-effective way to obtain safe and steady products at farm level;
- Identify innovative business models for farms and/or third parties.

## **Focus Group 30: Protecting fruit production from frost damage**

**First meeting: 27-28 June 2018**

*Despite rapid technological advances, open field agriculture remains highly dependent on weather and climate. Climate change is already affecting fruit productivity, and this is expected to become worse. As a result, frost damage has become more and more frequent in recent decades and this is increasingly causing economic losses in agricultural production. The main reason is the occurrence of very low temperature episodes out of the normal season, decreasing the effectiveness of traditional methods to cope with frost. When air temperatures fall below 0°C, frost damage can occur in all plants, but the mechanisms and types of damage vary considerably. Frost damage may affect the entire plant or only a small part of the plant tissue, impairing the yield or product quality.*

*There are a number of existing active and passive frost protection methods (data, tools, knowledge and technologies) available to farmers, researchers and planners to cope with a variety of weather and climate-related problems in fruit production. However, choosing the protection method which is the most cost-effective depends on local risk of frost as well as other factors. The Focus Group will look at examples of good practices and technologies and how these can be transferred to other situations to benefit the wider sector, paying special attention to approaches related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. It will also look at opportunities and barriers, identify knowledge gaps, and propose areas for future research.*

### **QUESTION: How to protect fruit from frost damage?**

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- Assess existing methods and tools and how they can be used to better anticipate and take action to protect fruit against frost; identify good practices and success stories from various European areas, specifically taking into account farmers' and advisers' experiences.
- Compare different management practices and tools considering the feasibility and cost-effectiveness at individual farm level or through collective approaches; identifying the opportunities (such as knowledge requirements, crucial partnerships) and technical/economic barriers that can hinder their uptake or development.
- Identify how these practices may be transferred to other conditions (e.g. location, model or type of production). Consider the role played by advisory systems.
- Identify innovative approaches combining scientific and practical knowledge with new business models.
- Identify further research needs from practice and possible gaps in technical knowledge.
- Suggest innovative solutions and provide ideas for Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

## **Focus Group 31: Reducing food loss on the farm**

**First meeting: 12 – 13 September 2018**

*Around 88 million tonnes of food are wasted annually in the EU, with associated costs estimated at 143 billion euros. For the primary production sector, the total amount of food waste was estimated to be 9 million tonnes ( $\pm 2$  million tonnes) in 2012. This corresponds to 18 kilograms per person per year ( $\pm 3$  kg / person / year) and to an average of 10 kg for every tonne of food produced, meaning a rate of 1 percent. These figures are based on findings of the EU-funded project FUSIONS (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising Waste Prevention Strategies) which was funded by the EU 7th Framework programme.*

*The EU and Member States are committed to halving per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030 and reducing food losses along the food production and supply chains (Sustainable Development Goals, September 2015). Food waste prevention is an integral part of the Commission's new Circular Economy Package to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy which will boost global competitiveness, foster sustainable growth and generate new jobs.*

*All actors in the food chain have a role to play in preventing and reducing food waste, from those who produce and process foods (farmers, food manufacturers and processors) to those who make foods available for consumption (hospitality sector, retailers) and ultimately consumers themselves. Food loss at the early production stage on the farm is a key step in this chain, with production techniques and transformation on the farm generating losses and by-products that can be re-introduced in the food chain or given value through non-food value chains.*

*This EIP-AGRI Focus Group will concentrate on the on-farm practices and technologies that have a potential to limit the loss of plant food products, such as cereals, olives and fruit and vegetables, in the European Union and that can provide inspiration for Operational Groups supported under the Rural Development Programmes and for other innovative projects.*

### **QUESTION: Which new on-farm practices and technologies can limit food loss?**

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- Identify the main factors causing loss of plant food products on the farm;
- Identify existing on-farm practices that limit the loss of plant food products, such as cereals, olives and fruit and vegetables;
- Identify technologies that can help create value within the food chain or in non-food value chains for by-products and for products that might otherwise not be sold (N.B. energy production on the farm is already dealt with under another Focus Group and will not be the main target of this Focus Group);
- Define strategies to reduce loss of plant food products at farm level, from the selection of crops and varieties and planting to harvesting and the delivery of the product (handling, storing...);
- Identify examples of new strategies for marketing plant food products which are not of a quality which is accepted by traditional market channels;
- Explore the possibilities offered by digital technologies in helping to reduce food loss on the farm;

- Provide examples of practices and tools to limit the loss of plant food products on the farm;
- Propose potential innovative actions to stimulate the knowledge and use of practices and strategies for limiting food waste on the farm and providing inspiration and ideas for Operational Groups and other innovative projects;
- Identify remaining research and innovation needs coming from practice associated to the reduction of food loss in the production of plant food products.

# Selection Process and Terms of Agreement

Each Focus Group consists of up to 20 experts: farmers, advisers, scientists and where appropriate representatives from industry, civil society or other relevant actors.

Experts will be chosen according to their qualifications, based on proven expertise to support the progress of the Focus Group (relevant information to be submitted via the application form). The European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, will nominate the group experts.

## **Please note:**

There will be no translation, it is essential that group members are able to express themselves in English.

Selected experts will need to be available to participate in both meetings; the date for the first meeting is mentioned for each new Focus Group.

Selected experts will be requested to prepare for the first meeting and do some work in between meetings, and they should be able to reserve some time for this.

Results produced within the Focus Group are always attributed to the group as a whole, not to individuals, and conflicting views should be included in the final report.

## **Selection criteria (individual)**

Technical and professional capacity – evidence of the technical and professional capacity of experts based on:

- Proven professional experience that is relevant for the Focus Group at stake: examples linking experience to the specific questions for the Focus Group – detailed above – should be given;
- Motivation, reasoning why the expert should be a member of the Focus Group;
- Potential contribution to the Focus Group by the expert – the candidate should clearly state how, and what he or she can contribute to the Focus Group;
- **Relevant** educational and professional qualifications – this includes practical experience – clearly linked to the specific questions for the Focus Groups listed above.

## **Balancing criteria:**

The Focus Group will be composed taking into account a balance in the areas of expertise, professional capacity and experience, and geographical balance.

## **Application procedure:**

Candidates need to complete the on-line application form and **submit it by 3 April 2018 23:59 hrs CET** (Brussels time).

The system will notify candidates upon successful submission of the application. Please, be aware that if this notification is not displayed, the submission of your application was not successful and you will have to start again.

Applicants will be informed whether or not they have been selected **before 22 May 2018**.

### Terms of agreement

By submitting an application, the applicant agrees on the following and confirms that:

- The applicant easily expresses him/herself in English (as this will be the working language in meetings, documents and in all means of communication) in both oral and written form;
- In case of a nomination, the applicant is willing and able to share information, knowledge and experience and to contribute actively to work documents, to achieve the Focus Group objectives;
- Attendance at the meetings: in case of a nomination, the applicant is willing and available to travel (within Europe) to attend meetings of the Focus Group (the dates for the first meeting of each Focus Group are indicated under the respective call). Nominated experts can be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs according to established guidelines ([annex 2](#));
- Availability: in case of a nomination, the expert will be available to attend the first meeting on the dates specified in the call; should this, for whatever reason, not be the case, the nominated expert will inform the EIP-AGRI Service Point as soon as possible, to allow for the selection of another expert to replace him or her.
- Transparency: in case of a nomination, the applicant agrees to publish his/her name along with their professional capacity (e.g. adviser, scientist, etc.), country of residence and e-mail address on the EIP-AGRI website. The applicants also agree to register to the EIP-AGRI website to facilitate the Focus Group work. NB Once registered to the website, it will not be necessary to publish the email address, as participants can be contacted through the website.

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You can start your application by [clicking here](#).

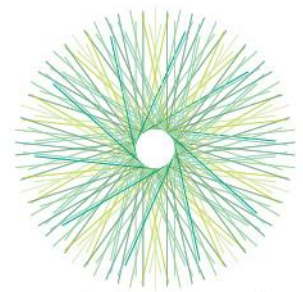
### Background:

The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI) connects innovation actors, including farmers, advisers, agri-business, civil society, and researchers, working at EU, national and regional level. The partnership aims to catalyse innovation-related actions to foster enhanced productivity and sustainable resource management across the whole value chain. In line with this, the European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, requested the EIP-AGRI Service Point to set up Focus Groups on specific agricultural topics to facilitate innovative actions in the field and better connect science and practice.

For previous EIP-AGRI Focus Groups, please see the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group pages](#). Please note that the calls for the previous Focus Groups are now closed, and it is not possible to join them.



# Annex 1: Draft outline for EIP-AGRI Focus Group Final reports



eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

## Table of contents (indicative number of pages between brackets)

1. Executive summary (1p.)
2. Introduction (0,5 p)
3. Brief description of the process (0,5 p)
4. State of play (7 p.)
  - a. Framing key issues
  - b. Good practices
  - c. Success and fail factors
5. What can we do? Recommendations: [*most elaborated part and heart of the report*]  
(7 p.)
  - a. Ideas for Operational Groups
  - b. Research needs from practice
  - c. Other recommendations, including improving take up
6. Annexes
  - a. Good practices and case studies
  - b. Members of the Focus Group
  - c. List of mini-papers
  - d. Relevant research projects

# Annex 2: Practical arrangements for EIP-AGRI Focus Groups



## What will the EIP-AGRI Service Point provide during an EIP-AGRI Focus Group meeting?

1. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides Travel and Accommodation for Focus Group participants. We can only provide travel by public transportation. For local travel to the train station or the airport we do our best to make proposals within our limits.
2. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides the needed travel and accommodation with the help of its travel agency. The travel agent will send the selected participants travel proposals based on their requirements.
3. Priority is given to travel on regular flights, but low cost flights can also be proposed. Participants will not be requested to start travelling before 07:00 (trains) or 8:00 (planes) respectively or to arrive at their destination later than 22:00. If this is not possible, the travel agent can propose to travel on the days before and/or after the meeting.
4. For participants who have to travel on the day before or after the meeting because of flight or train schedules, the EIP-AGRI Service Point will arrange for accommodation and breakfast for an extra night. *No other meals will be provided.*
5. Once a ticket has been issued, it is final and cannot be changed.
6. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides meals and catering during the event. However, participants have to pay their meals outside the event themselves. Participants will also have to pay themselves for any extra services they request from the hotel.
7. All other costs: taxi, tolls, use of private car, parking fees, local bus or metro are not covered and cannot be reimbursed.
8. Costs related to personal travel arrangements are not reimbursable (change of travel dates, different town of departure and return,...). Some local travel costs can be refunded based on a substantiated request before the event.