

# 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, advisers, scientists and other relevant actors for three new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. The Focus Groups will start working in October 2015 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 make themselves 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 meetings.*

## Focus Group themes:

For the current call, experts, especially farmers, and also advisers, researchers and others<sup>1</sup> are invited to apply for participation in Focus Groups on the following topics:

### **16: Mixed Farming Systems: Livestock/Cash crops**

[More info](#)

### **17: Benchmarking of Farm Productivity and Sustainability Performance**

[More info](#)

### **18: Reducing emissions from cattle farming**

[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 will discuss and document 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 the art of practice in the field of its activity, listing problems and opportunities**
- ✓ **take stock of the state of the art 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 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 and 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.
- Experts with experience in practical research and innovation actions related to the topic.

## Detailed Description of the Focus Groups

### **Focus Group 16: Mixed Farming Systems: Livestock/Cash crops**

First meeting: 24-25 November 2015

*Specialisation of farming systems led to the separation of livestock rearing and crop cultivation. It has mostly been driven by economies of scale and of agglomeration, however, with certain consequences: pollution due to an excess of manure and slurries, dependence on external inputs and fodder/feed, loss of biodiversity, lower resilience to climate and market changes.*

*Mixed farming systems can contribute to tackling these issues. In mixed farming systems, different agricultural practices are associated to optimise resource efficiency, reduce and re-use waste, reduce dependency on external inputs and increase farm productivity and resilience by diversifying the sources of income.*

*Different mixed farming systems exist and are being (or have been) used. Among other mixed systems, the Focus Group will work on the combination of livestock and cash crops that can enable European agriculture to become more resilient and environment-friendly without neglecting farm competitiveness.*

*The Focus Group will tackle mixed systems at farm and at landscape/territorial level, as a combination of specialised farms exchanging resources among them, and will consider challenges and opportunities to maintain or develop the synergies between livestock and cropping systems.*

### **QUESTION: How to develop livestock / cash crop interactions and promote their benefits as a sustainable alternative to farm or territorial specialisation?**

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

- Identify, describe with adequate examples and compare different combinations of livestock/cash crop systems both at farm and/or territorial level. Provide examples of different mixed agricultural systems other than livestock/cash crops.
- Where relevant and possible, describe environmental, economic and social impacts produced by the (re)-introduction of mixed systems into specialised farms/territories.
- Analyse cases of re-introduction of mixed farming at farm and/or at landscape/territorial level: what made it possible? What stopped the process? Lessons learnt.
- Identify remaining research and innovation needs and provide ideas for Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

## **Focus Group 17: Benchmarking of Farm Productivity and Sustainability Performance**

First meeting: 8-9 December 2015

*Different farm assessment tools have been used in Europe for many years for benchmarking productivity and sustainability performance. In the last decades, a number of schemes have been developed for a wider assessment and benchmarking of the resource use and environmental performance either at farm level or throughout the whole supply chain (i.e. per kg of product). Some of these also include aspects such as animal welfare and social, ethical or health criteria and some tools integrate information across all dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social, economic). The schemes also differ in terms of levels of assessment (per farm, region and land area or per kg of product), indicator types (process-oriented vs. results- / outcome-based), data requirements and degree of indicator integration (e.g. composite indicators).*

### **Question: How can farmers and advisers use benchmarking data and processes to improve farm productivity and sustainability performance?**

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

- Make an inventory of existing farm assessment tools and benchmarking systems, including private ones and covering different types of farming, to describe and evaluate their characteristics and objectives and to map their use by farmers and others in different member states/organisations.
- Review how farmers and businesses in the food value chain make use of benchmark indicators and assessment tools for decision making, for improving farm productivity and sustainability performance. In particular the usability and accessibility of individual data to the farmer and his advisers (for example on-line via computer or via smartphone). Looking into innovative ways that allow farmers to actually use relevant data for “day-to-day” management and more strategic decisions.
- Analyse the use of farm performance benchmarking by advisory systems (including use of ICT, coaching, strategic management) and the evolving best practices in the use of farmers’ own data to improve the effectiveness of advisory services, for example:
  - Use in one-to-one consultations
  - Use in group meetings
  - Training and education
  - Use of branding and marketing
- Identify the main problems and issues in farm benchmarking related to collection, processing, access and usability of data on the different levels (farm level, advisory and policy information support) and the operational solutions and innovative actions to tackle these issues, including how the different systems can be integrated with each other at higher levels.

## **Focus Group 18: Reducing emissions from cattle farming**

First meeting: 2-3 February 2016

*Livestock emissions have an impact on the environment. They contribute to greenhouse gases and acidification and affect human health. Therefore, legislation has been introduced with the aim to reduce such emissions.*

*For many years strategies and measures have been developed to reduce emissions from livestock. Best available practices have been developed for pig and poultry farming. For cattle, on the other hand, such best available practices have not been developed to the same extent. This Focus Group will discuss Nitrogen (NH<sub>3</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O, NO and NO<sub>2</sub>) and Methane emissions from cattle and ways to reduce these emissions that are cost-effective or may even result in benefits for farming. Both dairy and beef production will be taken into account. Both outdoor grass based systems and indoor systems and their specific perspectives will be looked into. The main focus will be on in-stable manure management practices and on feeding management practices that reduce these emissions.*

### **Question: How to reduce cattle livestock emissions in a cost effective way for farmers?**

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

- Make an inventory of competitive farm management practices and strategies related to housing and feeding which are currently available, to tackle emissions from cattle at farm level in the EU. Which working examples can be found in the EU?
- Compare these different management practices and strategies, which reduce emissions from cattle, taking into account the cost-effectiveness, production efficiency and emission reduction efficiency. How can emission measuring methods contribute to this?
- Explore cross-fertilisation from livestock other than cattle, which could be beneficial for the reduction of emissions in cattle production systems.
- Identify success factors and fail factors that stimulate or limit the use of the identified management practices and strategies by farmers, and summarise how to address these factors and explore the role of innovation and knowledge transfer in addressing these fail factors.
- Identify needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge on particular issues concerning emissions from cattle which may be solved by further research.
- Propose potential innovative actions to stimulate the knowledge and use of management practices and strategies in reducing emissions from cattle and to multiply positive effects within the agricultural sector.

# 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 below - 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 7 September 2015 23:59 hrs CET** (Brussels time).

The system will notify candidates upon successful submission of the application. Please, be aware that in the case that 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 accepted **by 8 October 2015**.

### 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 of 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.

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

## Background:

The European Innovation Partnership “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability” (EIP-AGRI) aims to provide a working interface for innovation actors, including farmers, advisers, agri-business, civil society, and researchers, working at EU, national and regional level. The partnership aims to act as a catalyst for 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 these 15 groups are now closed, and it is not possible to join them.

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



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1. Summary
2. Introduction
3. Brief description of the process
4. Theme / issue 1 (actual problem, how does it relate to the Focus Group topic)
  - a. State of play
  - b. Innovation process and fail factors
  - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
  - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
5. Theme / issue 2 (actual problem, how does it relate to the Focus Group topic)
  - a. State of play
  - b. Innovation process and fail factors
  - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
  - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
6. Theme / issue 3 etc. (depending on the number of themes identified by the Focus Group)
  - a. State of play
  - b. Innovation process and fail factors
  - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
  - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
7. Epilogue from the group: broader ideas, things that the group would like to say but don't fit into the Focus Group framework – general recommendations etc.
8. Annexes
9. List of members of the Focus Group
10. List of relevant research projects
11. List of relevant Operational Groups
12. List of documented best practices

# 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.