



Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability

7th Meeting

16 February 2017

REPORT



Introduction

The Subgroup on Innovation met for the sixth time in Brussels on 16 February 2017. The **programme of the meeting** was focused on four main topics:

- I. EIP-AGRI networking activities for 2017
- II. EIP-AGRI Focus Groups
- III. Capacity building for better EIP-AGRI implementation
- IV. EIP-AGRI evaluation

The meeting aimed at presenting the work program of the EIP-AGRI network for 2017, particularly while discussing how the EIP-AGRI network can best carry out thematic networking activities for Operational Groups, to start a discussion on the functioning of focus groups, to collect suggestions for the forthcoming seminar about current experiences and challenges in implementing the EIP-AGRI and to inform the Subgroup about the evaluation of the EIP-AGRI recently finalised by an independent evaluator commissioned by DG AGRI.

Session I "Ready, steady, go: launching new EIP-AGRI networking activities for 2017"

This session started with the general presentation of the 2017 EIP-AGRI network work plan for 2017 by Pacôme Eyenga (EIP-AGRI Service Point). Afterwards, the agenda of the meeting targeted two particular types of activities: EIP Focus Groups and support to Operational Groups.

Before entering the discussion about the on-going and future Focus Groups, Antonella Zona (DG AGRI) explained the approach envisaged for organising the input of the Subgroup for the 2018 work plan of the EIP-AGRI network: DG AGRI will ask all Subgroup members to reflect and collect ideas on new topics and initiatives as soon as possible. Their ideas would be collected by volunteers from each category (MAs/NRNs, NGOs, Advisors and Research Institutes) and presented at the June meeting when a discussion will take place in order to cluster and prioritize future networking activities.

Following a general presentation about the state of play of FGs 16-23, Antonella Zona and Koen Desimpelaere (EIP-AGRI Service Point) presented to the plenary the first two new focus groups to be launched in 2017: FG 24 "New forest practices and tools for adaptation and mitigation of climate change" and FG 25 "New grazing methods".

A discussion was then organised, focusing on concrete ideas for networking initiatives gathering Operational Groups (OGs) working on similar topics.

The objective of this part of the session was to discuss how the EIP-AGRI network can best carry out thematic networking activities for OGs. Following a short introduction by Alberto D'Avino (DG AGRI), Subgroup's members split in four break-out groups to discuss the following questions:

Question 1 - Do you see for any of these issues an activity where you and your network / organization could contribute, and how?

Question 2 – Do you have any concrete suggestions with regard to the organisation of the two workshops planned for 2017 concerning OGs active in organic farming and OGs active in supply chain issues?

After the break-out session, the facilitator of each group briefly reported about the main issues discussed. Most relevant points are provided below and a detailed collection of the issues raised during the breakout sessions is available on the EIP-AGRI website (on the collaborative area for members of the Subgroup on Innovation).

➤ **Question 1 - Do you see for any of these issues an activity where you and your network / organization could contribute, and how?**

Among others, the following activities were indicated:

- Provide better information about OGs all over the EU
- Promote effective use of EIP-AGRI database: create good and visible access, projects and information about experts needs to be easy to find; provide short description of OGs s and publish interim progress reports
- Link OGs per theme and also by geographical area
- Organise EU events and/or macro-regional meetings for OGs working on similar themes
- Involve NRNs to help identifying OGs working on the same topic
- Make use of IT platforms (videoconferences, webinars, webfora, etc.), notably as a follow-up to events
- Produce multimedia dissemination materials (e.g. videos)
- Collect video material generated by OGs and use it to further stimulate stakeholders
- Use YouTube for dissemination of results and use specific EIP-tags (tags that the people from practice are familiar with)
- Promote translation/interpretation possibilities
- Connect OGs with H2020 projects and other relevant projects that are not funded by RDPs
- Promote the creation of a budget for exchange activities in OG projects (e.g. budget for travelling)
- Involve advisors as a means to promote knowledge transfer to farmers
- Create trust by investing in human relationships – have team building sessions: via face-to-face or getting-to-know-each-other activities

Concrete activities that members are already putting in practice were also mentioned:

- Translating EU relevant information: Estonia (MA), Poland, Croatia (MA), Romania (NRN), Greece (MA), Netherlands (NRN)
- Moderating *fora* and online groups: Romanian NRN
- Organising webinars and online meetings where OGs can share their results and experiences: Austria, Chambers of Agriculture
- Organising video conferences and developing videos: Lithuania (University)
- Disseminating information on OGs: Estonia, Poland
- Organising workshops for OGs:
 - Germany: (1) annual workshop for all OGs plus similar projects funded through other measures and (2) macro-regional workshop for OGs with Austria (no language barrier)
 - Greece: workshops at national level for potential OGs
 - Croatia: workshops and seminars at national and regional level
 - Netherlands: meetings for leaders from the farming community, and then have them organise meetings on opportunities for OGs
- Inviting farmers involved in OGs to participate in their own events: Ireland, Teagasc
- Organising study visits: Germany (excursions to OG projects) and Lithuania (University - thematic study visits in different regions)
- Disseminating the outcomes of OGs via workshops and via their own website: Spain, Agricultural Cooperatives

Question 2 - do you have any concrete suggestions with regard to the two workshops planned for 2017 concerning OGs active in organic farming and OGs active in supply chain issues?

Some of the general suggestions for both workshops were:

- Invite OGs and potential OGs, H2020 projects working on the same topics, advisors, experts, Civil dialogue groups, consumer side, policy makers and Managing Authorities
- Look for synergies and complementary between OGs and show the added value of networking
- Include a point in the agenda about the dissemination of OGs results
- Include field trips

Suggestions for the workshop on Organic farming:

- Include in the agenda: ways to find partners, problems faced while implementing the project, product-specific issues
- Invite to participate:

- All organic OGs, H2020 Thematic Networks and Multi-actor projects – they should present themselves through a poster or video
- Farmers - to speak about their problems and needs
- Researchers - to speak about ongoing projects
- Advisers - to find ways to spread information on project results
- A health expert
- BEUC – Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs
- Experts from universities
- Enterprises dealing with Organic food

Suggestions for the workshop on Supply Chains:

- Focus on short supply chains
- Promote a stronger role for farmers in the supply chain
- Include digitization in the agenda
- Link with cities and consider the whole supply chain, also the consumers
- Ask OGs what they would like to discuss
- Invite to participate:
 - the agriculture markets task force
 - a successful web shop company from a different field, (e.g. Amazon or Bol.com)
 - a storytelling expert or an expert in community building
 - experts from other fields of expertise (e.g. health or community building)

Session II "Working more effectively with Focus Groups"

To launch a discussion on the functioning of focus groups, Subgroup's members had a presentation of the recent assessment on the results of EIP-AGRI Focus Groups by Tanguy Chever (AND International).

Then four breakout groups were organised to discuss on concrete ways for working more efficiently with Focus Groups, namely as regards the FG connection with and support to Operational Groups. The groups were asked to answer the following questions:

Question 1 – Focus Group format

- Is there anything you would recommend to change to the current format?
- Do you think that the FG format could be used in your region? Why?

Question 2 - Focus Group themes

- Do you think that the themes chosen up until now for FGs are relevant for catalysing innovation in EU agriculture and forestry and make them more productive and more sustainable?

- How can the theme-identification process be improved in order to make FG work closer to/more useful for the activity of innovation players on the ground?

Question 3 - Use of Focus Group outcomes

- Are FG results useful and for whom?
- Is it possible to create more value out of FG outcomes and how?

Main conclusions from discussions in breakout groups were then presented by each facilitator. Main points are provided below and the collection of issues raised is available on the EIP-AGRI website (on the collaborative area for members of the Subgroup on Innovation).

Question 1 – Focus Group format:

- In general the format is fine
- Consider flexibility in the number of meetings or FG duration, depending on the topic; it could be that a FG would need to work for a longer period. Possibilities: Skype can be used to continue discussions; NSUs may volunteer as ‘ambassadors’ for a specific FG dealing with a topic that is relevant for their country or region
- In some regions is difficult to mobilise experts to apply; this can be tackled by inviting directly some experts from that region
- Need to have good balance between types of stakeholders - in selection process, give bonus points for OG members, farmers and practitioners
- Think about a way to retribute work /time spent in the FG, some sort of compensation (e.g. in Sweden farmers get paid for participating in FG) – this could attract more practitioners
- Within the experts involved in FG, the coordinating expert is key: the selection should be more transparent – maybe via an open call?
- Consider including the dissemination potential in experts’ selection criteria (experts need to feel committed to the dissemination plan)
- The format could be used at national level, though it could be adapted (e.g. in Romania, the number of meetings may differ per topic)

Question 2 - Focus Group themes:

- In general, themes chosen are good
- Ideas to find new themes:
 - Themes should be decided on a bottom-up approach and could be based on the clustering of OGs
 - Continuously consider new areas / challenges
 - There’s a need for a balance between topics that are relevant for all EU but also ‘niches’ should be considered; besides, inspiration can be found outside the EU
 - Screen all NRDP SWOTs for needs and weaknesses to find new common themes
 - Consider more consumer/health related or cross-over themes (current themes focus more on supply rather than on demand side)

- SGI members could look at the national agendas for agricultural, agrifood and forestry research and bring ideas to the Subgroup
- Improve the structure of the process: every year DG AGRI could circulate an email requesting inputs for the next programme - SGI members collect needs from national / regional level + inputs from OG clustering – collect ideas in SGI by June – mature during Summer – decided on themes for new programme by October
- Proposal for a topic: ‘tools for advisors’

Question 3 - Use of Focus Group outcomes

FG results:

- FG results are useful
- Useful for applied research, for MAs (when preparing new national/regional calls for OGs), for NRNs (when defining networking plans)
- Useful as a source of technical background on specific topics for policy makers, students and agricultural schools
- Applicants for calls can use the FG results to argue why their topic is important

Creating more value out of FG outcomes:

- Reports should have a more targeted audience; good practice in FG ‘New entrants’ where factsheets were made for practitioners, advisors, etc. – factsheets are good communication products
- Reports should focus more on solutions and practical information which are useful for Operational Groups
- Overall, bigger impact needs to be pursued at different levels
- FG reports /outcomes need to be more accessible to people:
 - Reports should be shorter, easier to understand and clearer
 - Easy-to-understand outcomes like animations and infographics should be frequently prepared, also videos could be made
 - Translations need to be provided / promoted: reports must be translated by Member States
 - FG results should be easier to find on the EIP-AGRI website
- FG outputs need improved dissemination:
 - FG experts need to be motivated to act as ambassadors and communicators of FG results – need to have a clear mandate to disseminate the results; create sense of ownership within FG members; they should be more visible
 - Multipliers need to be further involved – networks, national authorities, etc.
 - Summaries of FG results can be published in magazines read by farmers
 - Make better use of social media channels
- MAs and NRNs can further support, having a more active role:
 - MAs can use FG results to focus national/regional calls for OGs
 - Include more information on NRN websites
 - NRNs and MAs could interact with FG experts
 - Create some budget at national level for dissemination activities

Session III "Capacity building for better EIP-AGRI implementation"

The third session on the agenda focused on the forthcoming seminar 'Moving EIP-AGRI implementation forward' which will take place on 10-11 May 2017, in Athens, Greece.

After a brief introduction by Inge Van Oost (DG AGRI), the Subgroup was again divided in four breakout groups and invited to discuss the following questions:

Question 1 – From your perspective, which are the 3 main issues to be addressed in the seminar "Moving the EIP-AGRI forward" (Athens 10-11/05/2017)?

Question 2 – Are there any documents you would like to share in this event as good examples?

When discussion time was finished, the facilitator of each breakout group reported back to the plenary on the main issues discussed. Main points are provided below and the collection of the issues raised is available on the EIP-AGRI website (on the collaborative area for members of the Subgroup on Innovation).

Question 1 - main issues to be addressed in the seminar:

- How to communicate about M 16.1? How to reach relevant actors? How to involve farmers? How to create awareness and attractiveness? How to increase EIP profile at supply chain?
- Selection criteria, selection procedure and composition of the jury/committee
- Concept / definition of innovation and level of innovativeness when selecting projects
- Simplified and fast processes: how to make this happen? Simplification in administrative procedures - needed to create more innovation; obstacles and good practices; administrative bottlenecks
- Payment procedure, including the administrative checks (both for applications and for payments); specific issues regarding consortiums/ partnerships
- Eligibility rates of expenditures (both for setting up and for project implementation)
- Take the opportunity that Paying Agencies will be participating
- Select good practices but also include bad practices as well: include things that went wrong and how they were tackled

Question 2- documents to share:

Documents /issues that Subgroup members wish would be shared:

- Application forms (need to translate them into English)
- Documents that are easy to understand by farmers
- Cooperation agreements between partners in operational groups
- Selection criteria (and their scoring)

- Definition of innovation: meaning, characteristics (system-, product-, marketing-, social innovation?)

Documents that Subgroup members would like to share (themselves):

- Application form (paying agency) and procedure to select projects (MA) - Poland
- Report on 'Assuring skills of Innovation brokers' - shared during SCAR AKIS meeting
- Experience on how to share mini-abstracts on the projects at the start so that OGs know who else is working on the same issue - Netherlands (can share an example used in another measure)
- Germany can share:
 - A document created to help OGs, on how to create the contract for their group
 - A document for the OGs to evaluate their work (for themselves, to see if they are achieving what they want to achieve, non-compulsory)
 - A document for OGs on how to write their final report
- Templates and models of partnership agreements - Italy, Germany, France

Session IV: EIP-AGRI evaluation

With the objective of informing the Subgroup about the evaluation of the EIP-AGRI recently finalised by an independent evaluator commissioned by DG AGRI, Brad Rohmer (COFFEY) presented the main highlights and conclusions of this study on the implementation of the EIP-AGRI.

Wrap up and next steps

The chair closed the meeting thanking all Subgroup members for their active contribution for the 2017 workplan. The discussion about the functioning of Focus Groups showed that these are an ineffective tool that can be overhauled according to the finding of the assessment and the indications of the Subgroup. Finally DG AGRI reminded that the ideas of Subgroup members for networking activities to be carried out in 2018 will start very soon according to the approach explained at the beginning of the meeting.

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

The next meeting of the Subgroup on Innovation will take place on Thursday 8 June 2017 in Brussels.

