

eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



# EIP-AGRI SEMINAR DIGITAL INNOVATION HUBS FOR AGRICULTURE

FINAL REPORT  
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## Table of contents

2.	Summary.....	3
3.	European policy context: the digital transformation of agriculture and rural areas.....	4
4.	The Seminar.....	5
5.	What does a DIH for agriculture mean?.....	6
6.	Barriers & needs for developing DIHs in agriculture.....	11
7.	Next steps & priority actions.....	13



## 1. Summary

On 1-2 June 2017 the European Commission's DG Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) organised the EIP-AGRI Seminar on '**Digital Innovation Hubs: mainstreaming digital agriculture**'. 150 delegates from 24 EU member states and Serbia met in Kilkenny (Ireland) to share experiences, discuss needs and identify priority actions for developing Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) for agriculture.

The pace of technological innovation is proceeding faster than ever before and there is a need to ensure that the farming sector can take full advantage of the "digital revolution". Agricultural businesses and ICT developers alike strive to understand which technologies to invest in, when to invest and to what extent. DIHs can help both, agriculture businesses and ICT companies to become more competitive by means of digital technology. DIHs allow any business to access the latest knowledge, expertise and technology for testing and experimenting with digital innovations. They provide connections with investors, facilitate access to funding, and help connect suppliers and users of digital technologies in agriculture across the value chain.

The development of DIHs across Europe is one of the pillars of the European Commission's Communication on Digitising European Industry<sup>1</sup> which sets out to ensure that "*any industry in Europe, big or small, wherever situated and in any sector can fully benefit from digital innovations to upgrade its products, improve its processes and adapt its business models to the digital change*".

Thus, a large part of the EIP-AGRI Seminar focused on understanding what a DIH is and what it can do for the farming sector. The discussions were built around the presentation of the 6 'building blocks' that at least a DIH in agriculture should have (see [section 4](#)). All the delegates were then invited to reflect how to support the development of DIHs for agriculture, building on the already existing initiatives and considering the available support at regional, national and EU scale. In an 'open space' format they decided on the most pressing issues to work on and listed priority actions (see [section 0](#)) to start building a DIH for agriculture at home.

You can also download the [short report](#).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0180&from=EN>

## 2. European policy context: the digital transformation of agriculture and rural areas

The agriculture sector and rural areas are capable of delivering sustainable solutions to current and future challenges such as assuring a safe and sustainable provision of quality food, fostering resource efficiency, developing the circular economy and combating climate change.

In this context, 'digital transformation' will play a crucial role for rural business and the farming sector. For instance, the adoption of modern farming technologies, including those based on robots, the Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data, has great potential in leading to a more productive, sustainable, and environmentally responsible food production. Smart farming systems can help farmers improve decision-making and develop more efficient operations and management.

This has been recognised by the [Cork 2.0 declaration](#) 'A better life in rural areas' that develops policy orientations for an innovative, integrated and inclusive rural and agriculture policy.

The Cork 2.0 declaration set out the basis to facilitate the digital transformation in agriculture and rural areas. It stresses the need for investments to overcome the digital divide and to develop the potential offered by connectivity and digitisation of rural areas. It also highlights the importance of boosting research and innovation to ensure that rural businesses, including farmers, have access to appropriate technologies, state-of-the-art connectivity as well as new management tools to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

In addition, on 6 May 2015, the European Commission (EC) adopted an ambitious strategy to complete the Digital Single Market (DSM)<sup>2</sup>. The DSM Strategy is about the competitiveness of Europe across all sectors including the agro-food sector.

As part of this strategy, on 19 April 2016 the EC launched the **Communication on "Digitising European Industry"** (COM(2016)180).

The overall objective of the Communication is to ensure that "*any industry in Europe, big or small, wherever situated and in any sector can fully benefit from digital innovations to upgrade its products, improve its processes and adapt its business models to the digital change*". This requires the full integration of digital innovations across all sectors of the economy, including the agriculture and food sectors.

One of the main elements of the Communication will play a key role in supporting the digital transformation in the agriculture sector: the development of **Digital Innovation Hubs** across Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/digital-single-market\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/digital-single-market_en)



### 3. The Seminar

The farming sector has never stopped innovating and every generation brings new technological and organisational improvements and competencies. However, the pace of technological innovation is proceeding faster than ever before and it is important to ensure that EU farmers take full advantage of this "digital revolution".

ICT developers and agricultural businesses are keen to assess which technologies, including the most disruptive ones like the Internet of Things, Big Data, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence etc., could help the sector meet the current challenge of 'producing more with less'. However, the farming sector can find it difficult to see the real added value of these technologies, to decide which ones to invest in, when to invest and to what extent.

In this context, the EIP-AGRI Seminar on "Digital Innovation Hubs: mainstreaming digital agriculture" was organised by DG AGRI on 1-2 June 2017, and 150 delegates from 24 EU member states and Serbia met in Kilkenny (Ireland) to share experiences, discuss needs and identify priority actions for developing Digital Innovation Hubs for agriculture.

The seminar aimed to enable policy makers, research and technology organisations, the agriculture sector, and investors to share knowledge, expertise and needs to develop Digital Innovation Hubs for agriculture. In particular, the specific objectives of the seminar were:

1. To clarify the concept of Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) and how they can contribute to mainstream digital innovation in agriculture.
2. To identify and connect existing initiatives and entities in Europe with the capacity to share technical, financial, training and/or other services to contribute to the development of DIHs in agriculture.
3. To identify and discuss the specific needs and potential barriers to develop DIHs in Europe focused on agriculture.
4. To define main priority steps to further develop DIHs in agriculture and to foster collaboration among them at European level

Delegates at the Seminar were selected following a public call for participants with almost 300 applications. The selected participants were relevant to the topic, well balanced geographically and very diverse in terms of profile. Advisors, farmers and farmer organisations' representatives, public administration, research & technology organisations (RTO) and ICT companies were the groups with more delegates involved. Representatives from Horizon 2020 Thematic Networks and EIP-AGRI Operational Groups were also present, as well as investors and other agri-food industries and farm providers.

The **programme** of the Seminar was designed according to its four main objectives. It started with different presentations aiming at clarifying the concept of DIH as well as trigger further reflection by participants. The sessions and presentations were designed to put the participants and their contributions at the core of the event, so that most of the time was devoted to different types of group work and interactive discussions.

## 4. What does a DIH for agriculture mean?

Digital Innovation Hubs are meant to foster "many-to-many" connections between competence centres, the farming sector and IT suppliers, technology experts and investors and to facilitate access to EU-wide markets (see Figure 1).

A Digital Innovation Hub<sup>3</sup> refers to an ecosystem through which any business can get access to the latest knowledge, expertise and technology for testing and experimenting digital innovations which are relevant to its products, processes or business models. The hub should also provide connections with investors, facilitate access to financing of digital transformations of businesses and help connect users and suppliers of digital innovations across the value chain (see presentation from [Ronan Burgess](#) – DG CNCT, European Commission).

With the presentation "[Building effective innovative ecosystems: an example of Digital Innovation Hub](#)", Cato Bechtold, from the Duth Ministry of Economic Affairs, showed an inspirational hint of the health and life science hub in Boston, one of the biggest in the world.

As a basis for discussion, the **six main "building blocks"** of an ideal DIH in the agricultural sector were introduced through concrete examples. They were illustrated by the following presentations:

1. Competence centres by [Peter Liggesmeyer, Fraunhofer - DE](#)
2. Advisers/innovation brokers by [Tom Kelly, EUFRAS/TEAGASC - IE](#)
3. Start-ups, entrepreneurs, SMEs by [Mihai & Stefan Stanescu, AGRISO - RO](#)
4. Public/private investors by Hubert Cottogni, EIF ([presentation, hand-out](#))
5. Regional/national authorities by [Alfonso R.Álvarez \(INGACAL\) & Luis P.Freire, \(Gradiant\) - ES](#)
6. Farming community by – ([Daniel Azevedo, COPA-COGECA](#))



### A Digital Innovation Hub

Organised to provide services to ICT and agricultural businesses

- Access to competence centres
- Development of innovation ecosystem
- Brokerage
- Access to finance
- Market intelligence
- Training and education
- Incubator/mentoring services

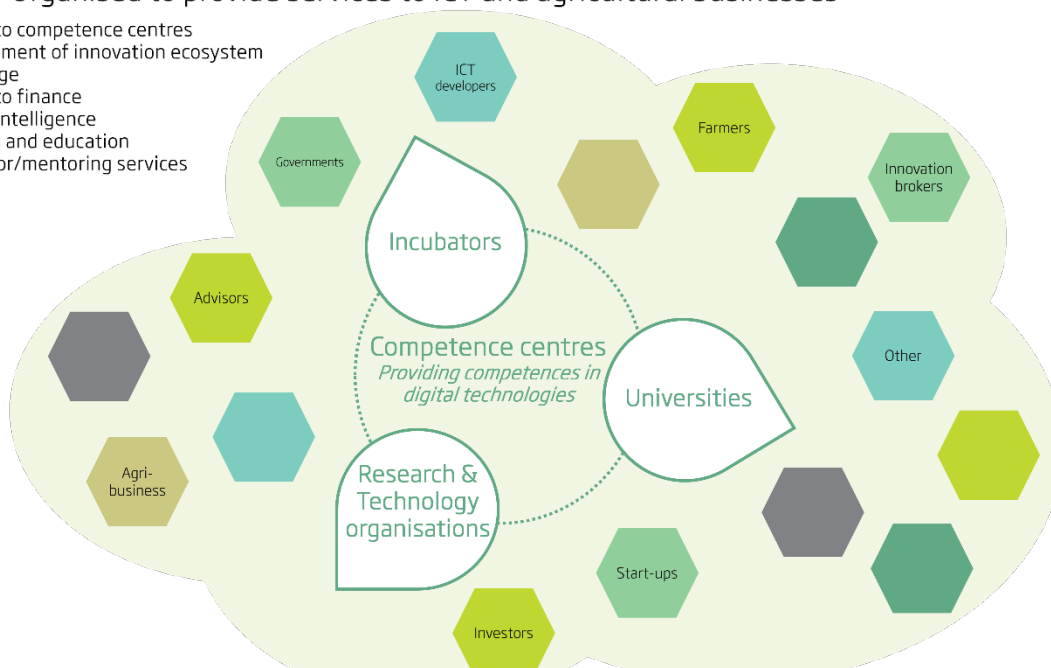


Figure 1. Digital Innovation Hub in agriculture

3

[https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/dei\\_working\\_group1\\_report\\_june2017\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/dei_working_group1_report_june2017_0.pdf)

**Competence Centres** play a key role in a DIH. They are considered the core element of the hub's operations. They provide technical expertise and facilities (labs, infrastructures, etc.) linking up with the other partners in the innovation chain to support businesses in their digital transformation (see example of Fraunhofer IESE in [box 1](#)).

#### **Fraunhofer-Institute for Experimental Software Engineering (IESE): Competence Centre for smart agriculture**

Fraunhofer provides comprehensive applied research and innovative solutions together with companies that produce equipment, fertilisers, digital services, etc. It acts as a 'Living lab' on smart farming while providing a platform to bring stakeholders and expertise together. Smart agriculture is a large ecosystem that requires expertise in different domains and a competence centre can act as a clearinghouse service. Some key issues for the role of a competence centre were identified, such as understanding trade-offs between various aspects and/or predicting the consequences of decisions. The discussion also highlighted that the high number and small dimension of end-users in agriculture, compared to other sectors, poses both a challenge and an opportunity. It is difficult to offer tailored solutions to single farmers so the standardisation of problems and solutions could be an option as well as working with farmer providers while ensuring good field testing and experimentation.

More info:

<https://www.fraunhofer.de/en.html>

#### **The role of farm advisors according to Teagasc**

The contribution of farm advisors and their organisations to a DIH should be proactive. Possible roles for farm advisors include knowledge and technology transfer, consultancy, marketing and demand articulation, networking facilitation and brokerage, capacity building (e.g. training), access to resources and institutional support. These roles should be combined in a DIH:

- To create the space for real interaction between digital technologies and users (awareness, idea generation, inspiration).
- To stimulate the development of new digital tools for improved decision making (idea generation)
- To facilitate and broker an open and interactive exchange of ideas and challenges (awareness, inspiration, problem solving)
- To help identify the scale and the potential impact of new and proposed products (scoping)
- To assist in the format, language and level of technical detail of digital products (development)
- To promote the use of successful digital tools in routine decision support at farm level (marketing and demand articulation)  
To facilitate feedback loops to developers (embedding and improvement)

#### **Box 1. Examples of competence centre (Fraunhofer IESE) and advisory services (Teagasc) in agricultural DIHs**

To ensure the uptake of technologies in the agriculture sector it is important to bring end-users (farming community) in the innovation process, linking them, their knowledge and needs up with the other partners along the innovation chain, and ensuring that technologies and innovations are adapted to their specific needs. As pointed out by the EC, and also highlighted by participants, the activity of DIH is driven by the demand for digital innovations. The approach should be bottom-up.

This considered, when building a DIH for the agricultural sector, it is key to involve the **advisory services** that operate between end-users and researchers/developers in order to help matching technology developments with the farming community's needs. On the other hand, these "brokers" can play a major role in facilitating the uptake of digital technologies by farmers and thus contribute to promote a two-way flow of knowledge. As example of this building block, the experience of Teagasc and the innovation spiral model were presented (see [box 1](#).)

### Regional approach: Galician Digital Innovation Hub

In 2016, Gradiant (Galician R&D Center in Advanced Telecommunications) and the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), with the support of Xunta de Galicia (regional government), boosted the creation of the DIH for Galician agri-food sector, a key initiative to encourage the future sustainability of the sector in the region. This joint initiative focuses on establishing a dynamic, profitable, open and responsive collaboration to: achieve greater competitiveness for the agri-food sector; expand business opportunities and; export potential for technological providers.

The Galician DIH facilitates the confluence of a productive and transforming sector opened to add technologies and innovative services adapted to their reality (the demand side) with technological suppliers and services (the supply side) and innovation centres, in order to generate solutions and improvements demanded by the sector.

Close collaboration is necessary between different departments of the Public Administration (such as the Galician Innovation Agency, the Galician Institute for Agrifood Quality or the Galician Agency for Technological Modernisation) to mobilise their own funding instruments, as well as to foster the integration of the regional innovative ecosystem. The Galician example combines a sound 'bottom-up' approach, a close collaboration between private and public sectors, a light work structure and the alignment to the regional specialisation strategy. Besides, the Galician DIH intends to connect to the wider EU environment through initiatives like the Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food (**S3P Agri-Food**).

More info:

<http://polodeinnovaciondixital.org/>

### The Agricultural Multi-Regional Guarantee Platform (AMGP) in Italy

Based on its experience with financing to enterprises, the European Investment Fund (EIF) is designing and implementing Financial Instruments (FIs) for the agriculture sector (i.e. under EAFRD). FIs leverage EU resources available under EU programmes for financial products such as loans, guarantees, equity and other risk-bearing mechanisms. These are then used to support economically viable investments which promote EU policy objectives. FIs aim to put EU funds to good and efficient use, ensuring that grants are complemented by other financial products so that EU funding can be used time and time again in a revolving fashion.

The AMGP in Italy is one of these pilot projects, and is a good example on how different policy actors and instruments can be combined in platforms and hubs to foster synergies and innovation. The guarantee platform introduces a new instrument for managing European structural funds in Italy through which EIF together with Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) will support new loans in the agricultural and agri-food business by providing a 50% guarantee to financial intermediaries on loans to SMEs and mid-caps in the sector.

In this way farmers and other agri-SMEs have better access to financing prior to investment (compared to grants mechanism), especially for innovative and new technology-driven investments or companies. At the same time, financial intermediaries get better risk protection and more visibility in the agricultural sector. To facilitate their involvement, bank staff get tailored training.

More info:

[http://www.eif.org/news\\_centre/publications/eif\\_agri\\_quarantee\\_facility\\_en.pdf](http://www.eif.org/news_centre/publications/eif_agri_quarantee_facility_en.pdf)

Box 2 Examples of a funding instrument (AMGP) and a regional approach (Galician DIH)



**National and regional authorities** not only need to provide investment for DIHs, but they also need to **stimulate and facilitate their own local 'innovation ecosystems'**. Regions could find mechanisms for combining and scaling up different funding sources, and foster the creation of the 'investment triangle': region-technology-funding. Smart specialisation platforms could help regions to develop or share infrastructures such as testing facilities, pilot plants, data centres, fab-labs and develop joint investment projects. The example of the DIH in Galicia was presented during the seminar (see [box 2](#)).

Besides the investments that the EC<sup>4</sup> is going to allocate for the European level networking of DIH under Horizon 2020, it is important to mobilise investments by Member States and regions. The EC Communication on "Digitising the European Industry" states that a "*significant national and regional effort is needed, in the order of 5 billion EUR investment over 5 years*" to implement DIHs across the whole EU and stimulate their use by the different sectors. **Different strategies and instruments could be used to leverage available funds** in a targeted way by using EU and national/regional funding (see the example of the AMGP in Italy, see [box 2](#)).

#### AgriSo: the start-up perspective

AgriSo is a farm management solution created by farmers trying to improve their production process in the crops sector. The system has been [and still is] further developed based on farmer needs. In Romania, AgriSo has more than 50 clients including small, medium and big farms.

According to AgriSo promoters, a DIH could help them to provide their solution abroad by connecting them faster with potential partners or clients in other countries. From their point of view, individual farmers may have many benefits. The DIH could promote pilot farms where new technologies can be tested and demonstrated so that other farmers can take them up. Other important aspects that could be addressed by a DIH according to AgriSo developers are technology development and integration (both software and hardware), data interoperability, fund raising, internationalisation and business model development.

More info:

<https://agriso.ro/en/promo/>

#### Role of the farming community: the experience of Copa-Cogeca

DIHs could help farmers to address specific challenges or opportunities by taking advantage of digital transformation. For example by developing infrastructures (e.g. connectivity, satellite), interoperability, standardisation and the use of data (transparency, portability, trust), digital upskilling and awareness and access to finance.

DIHs can benefit from setting innovation priorities based on actual farmers' needs as the main driver. Farmers can test and assess the effectiveness of a variety of tools & business models as well as providing structures & networks (e.g. cooperatives) which can facilitate the development and increase the performance of the hub.

### Box 3. Examples of farmers involvement in DIH and start-up in digitising agricultural sector

<sup>4</sup> The Commission plans to focus 500M€ investment from Horizon 2020 on digital innovation hubs (see COM(2016)180)

To ensure the uptake of technologies in the agricultural sector, it is paramount to put the **farming community at the core of the innovation process**. Their knowledge and needs should be linked with the wider innovation ecosystem, ensuring that technologies/innovations are adapted to their specific needs. (see the experience of COPA-COGECA in [box 3](#)). Besides this, DIHs act as a **'one-stop-shop', serving companies, start-ups**, entrepreneurs in their region and beyond to upgrade and develop their business by the mean of digital technologies. This support can take different forms and be available at different stages of the service or product conception, development and production (see the example of AgriSo in [box 3](#)).

The introduction of the six main building blocks supported further reflection about the concept of DIHs. In groups, the Seminar delegates shared their views on the cases and disentangled the key elements of an 'agricultural DIH', as summarised below:

- DIHs in agriculture are still at an early stage both in terms of conception and development.
- The most frequently mentioned principle for a DIH in agriculture is collaboration (and networking) among a diversity of actors, both at horizontal (innovative ecosystem) and vertical (agri-food chain) levels.
- There are different instruments and actors to be connected, but an ideal DIH should be problem-oriented, with farmer needs as main driver.
- Connectors, such as advisors and innovation brokers, play a key role bringing people together.
- Digitisation should be seen as a means and not as a goal itself, meaning that DIHs need to be farmer-centered (in terms of easiness of solutions, awareness of rural IT infrastructure, addressing challenge of sector fragmentation, enhancing trust, etc.) and not just technology-centered.
- Delegates agreed about the need of defining a sound business model for the hub as well as the importance of transnational cooperation between regions/countries.



## 5. Barriers & needs for developing DIHs in agriculture

After reflecting on the concept and scope of DIHs in agriculture, the delegates identified and discussed the main challenges ahead for making DIHs a reality. The main question asked to the four break-out sessions was: '*What are the specific needs and barriers to consider for developing DIHs for agriculture?*', and this led to a comprehensive **outcome** that can be summarised through seven main points.

1. First, the **overall structure and governance of DIHs** received significant attention by participants. Several remarks pointed out that a balance of power among the different stakeholders, with special attention to the farmers, should be guaranteed. This includes ensuring a balanced share of value propositions and risks both among the different players and along the agri-food chain. The DIH needs a critical mass of actors with real interest, from farmers to 'outsiders', as well as the support of public sector. However, such diversity should not provoke a too complex functioning of the DIH at operational level.

Delegates highlighted the importance of defining a proper strategic approach of the DIH -goals, mission and vision-, as well as a long-term commitment of its activities. This strategy should take into account the frequently different timeframes of political, agricultural, start-up and research horizons. Besides, each geographical context may need [or allow for] an adapted level of decentralisation and interoperability.

Networking and brokering are fundamental to strengthen the relationship between the actors involved. Not only within a single DIH but also between DIHs to connect them at the regional, national and EU level. DIHs should be open and accessible for all agents and overcome the potential lack of engagement of key stakeholders. As it was mentioned during the event: "*the DIH ecosystem can be seen as a coral reef where there are big and small fish, hunters and prey, but everyone performs better off, compared to in isolation*".

2. The need of promoting an environment of **trust among DIH members and between the DIH and society** at large was mentioned several times as key ingredient and it would indeed be the basis for sound DIH governance. Therefore the human factor becomes as central as the technological dimension. Respect and competence were identified as important ingredients for trust building.

3. **A good mapping of existing infrastructures/networks/hub-like initiatives is needed** at the very starting phase of the DIH. Whether it is bottom-up or top-down (or a mix), a minimal critical mass is needed to start-up the DIH.

Especially at this initial stage, delegates stressed the need for designing a sustainable business model for DIHs in agriculture. But considering the special particularities of farm income patterns and available funding sources in the agricultural sector, they asked: who pays? how to monetise DIH activities?-

A good start also demands the right mix of skills and competences, technical capacity from the supply side, and the need for farmers to be acquainted with IT technologies and their potential added value. Time, financial and management constraints at farm level are perceived as potential barriers for this. Adapted facilitation for their involvement is of great importance here. Innovative farmers who have already adopted IT technologies could support this facilitation. . This assistance should consider the existing gap between the agri-food and ICT sectors and in terms of type and size of regional stakeholders.

4. **Suitable IT infrastructure** is fundamental too: rural broadband reaching all regions, including marginal areas, access to supercomputing centres, development of competence centres for technologies and other physical infrastructure, etc. are requirements identified to develop a DIH in agriculture.



5. Participants considered that **“the way DIHs operate, matters”**. They highlighted the need for DIHs to have a clear, practical orientation, to be “hands-on”. Delegates pointed out the need to develop pilot cases/user cases that are properly validated in market conditions, living labs, demonstration farms, etc. DIHs should develop a clear and simple language, avoiding technical jargon that could hamper communication and pay special attention to mutual understanding. This also relates to the need for transparency at the strategic and operational levels and the accountability of the DIH when assessing its results.

6. The activities to be developed by DIHs will be very much influenced by **data governance** conditions and availability and quality of IT infrastructure. DIHs could play an important role in defining a clearer data governance and improving framework conditions for data sharing and re-use.





## 6. Next steps & priority actions

Based on previous reflections the delegates identified, as main outcome of the seminar, **seven priority issues** to work on further:

1. **Identify the local/regional needs and specialisations** in rural areas to develop a DIH model that can deliver integrated services adapted to the context.

The rationale behind points out that different services together make rural business stronger. Without basic services in rural areas, there would not be a good business environment for agriculture. Therefore there is a need for a multi-service DIH (education, health, logistics, etc., and agriculture).

2. **Map existing initiatives** and identify which 'building blocks' are already available in the local/regional context as the basis to develop DIHs.
3. **Ensure that the farming sector is at the core of the DIH** following the 'interactive innovation' model that underpins the EIP-AGRI. This will bring the knowledge of the sector into the innovation process and will ensure that technological solutions are adapted to the farmers' needs.

Visualisation of benefits using the proper language is key to attract farmers to DIH in agriculture. Targeted messages to farmers could be: *'Digital innovation hubs can get you higher profits, it can save your time and lessen your risks'*. Same need exists to describe in a clear way the functions of DIHs, i.e. mediation/translation between Agri and IT sectors or upgrading the image of farming with IT. Involvement of frontrunner farmers (as opinion leaders) as pilot farmer tests seem to be an effective way of engaging the farming community. Financing of these pilots should be a priority for the DIH.

A DIH could also follow a sector-chain approach. In this case, it brings sector specific knowledge and technology together as well as chain stakeholders –i.e. dairy sector-. It could identify different value propositions along the whole value chain.

The concept of *proximity* is another way to facilitate the engagement of farmers, and it could be addressed at physical but also virtual level.



4. **Develop a strategic business model** for DIHs which sets out how its services are to be financed and how the initiative will become and remain sustainable in the long term.

The business model should start by identifying stakeholders and their real needs, the different value propositions, as well as the resources needed and the core activities – i.e. following the classic Business Model Canvas.

The DIH should then define a low cost and simple, yet effective, start-up plan indicating those containing actions which could be rolled out from the very beginning.

In the longer term financial sustainability is seen as critical. Capital financing in a DIH should reflect the balance of stakeholders taking part and it should not be controlled by just one category of partners. Pooling of activities and resources needs to be balanced and different sources of income identified: services to technology providers, services to technology developers (project funding, incubators, accelerators), inter-sectoral technology transfer (project funding), services to farmers, regional impact (public authorities), academic-services to clients-partners, private industry services to clients-partners.

Still several open questions remain: legal structure (legal entity or not), private vs. public dimension, profit vs. non-profit, etc., which may have a different answer according to the specific context.

5. Build **social and environmental concerns** into the DIH's business model. Consider the impact on, for example, employment, services, privacy, security. Anticipate risks and mitigation actions.

Developing DIHs may have also some risks, which should be identified. Once identified, mitigation measures can be planned accordingly. Use cases are a practical way to do this, both for picking up the good practices and identifying the gaps. A set of social and environmental indicators should also be defined. The DIH business plan should integrate all of these elements.

6. **Nurture the entrepreneurial ecosystem and foster participation.** Bring together start-ups, incubators, accelerators through targeted activities. Encourage agri-businesses to seriously think about the implications of digitisation for them. Communicate!

Entrepreneurship goes through different stages in its life cycle, with different needs at each stage. Therefore the DIH can develop different activities matching these evolving needs (awareness, ideation, experimentation, validation, scale-up, etc.). Every entrepreneur, independently of stage, could find some support connecting to the DIH.

Good communication and awareness raising are key since not everyone may know and understand the concept of a DIH.

7. **Foster the collaboration between hubs across Europe.** Linking regional/national DIHs in a wide European Network in order to access additional facilities, complete missing competences, foster knowledge transfer, and develop new services and tools together.

The aim is not to create a new pan-European hub but to foster communication among the existing (and future) ones at regional and national levels. The challenge ahead is to develop connecting mechanisms and to identify those already available – i.e. EIP-AGRI facilitation, S3 Agri-food platform, other existing networks, etc.-. "The essence of what we do is to develop connecting mechanisms, not developing structures and institutions, and then give those mechanisms a chance to connect in Europe" (*Peter Pree, ZLTO-The Netherlands*)







For more information on this event, you can take a look at the dedicated [webpage for this seminar](#) on the EIP-AGRI website.

You can download the presentations, participants list and other documents on this event page.

You can also download the interactive [sessions' results](#).

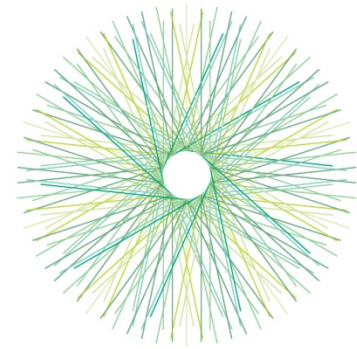
Read the short report of the event [here](#).

**The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI)** is one of five EIPs launched by the European Commission in a bid to promote rapid modernisation by stepping up innovation efforts.

The **EIP-AGRI** aims to catalyse the innovation process in the **agricultural and forestry sectors** by bringing **research and practice closer together** – in research and innovation projects as well as *through* the EIP-AGRI network.

**EIPs aim** to streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives and complement them with actions where necessary. Two specific funding sources are particularly important for the EIP-AGRI:

- ✓ the EU Research and Innovation framework, Horizon 2020,
- ✓ the EU Rural Development Policy.



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