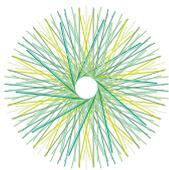


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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



# **EIP-AGRI Seminar:** **EIP-AGRI: From Operational Group project to impact** Building the innovation ecosystem for the future

FINAL REPORT  
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## 1. Introduction

The EIP-AGRI seminar “EIP-AGRI: From Operational Group project to impact – Building the innovation ecosystem for the future” was held in the city of Spoleto, in the Italian Umbria region, on 17 and 18 October 2018. The event lasted one and a half days, and was hosted by the Umbria Region in collaboration with the Italian National Rural Network and the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food, Forestry Policies and Tourism (MiPAAFT).

With many Operational Group (OG) projects already finished or ongoing, and more to come, the seminar focused especially on promoting the impact of OG projects. The event also looked at some of the challenges that some administrations are currently facing, and possible ways forward.

### The objectives of the seminar

The overall aim of the seminar was to further improve EIP-AGRI implementation, to share and learn from existing experiences and practical approaches in preparing and supporting OG projects, and to promote the uptake of project results by practitioners (farmers, foresters and advisers).

The specific objectives were to:

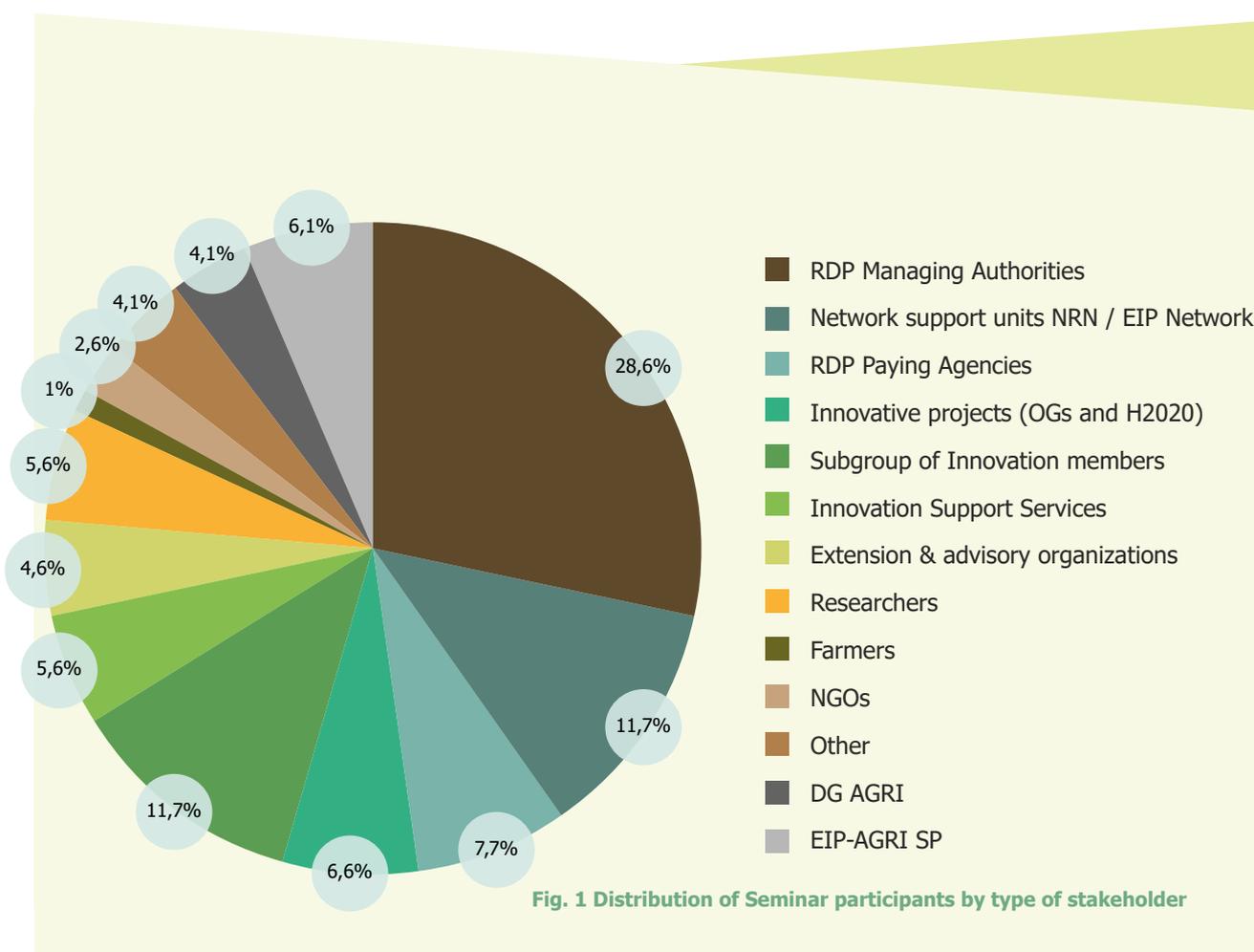
1. **Exchange experiences and practices** among Rural Development Programme (RDP) Managing Authorities (MA) and Paying Agencies (PA) in rolling out RDP support to OGs, focusing on approaches for further simplification to achieve more impact;
2. **Identify approaches and tools** that are useful for MAs, PAs and National Rural Networks (NRNs) for OG project reporting and for disseminating project outcomes;
3. **Understand and exchange experiences** about how OGs are creating awareness on their project, and how to make the best use of OG results;
4. **Increase the impact of OG projects** by promoting networking and collaboration among OGs and with other entities, and by stimulating the dissemination of OG results and their uptake by practitioners.



## Who participated in this workshop?

More than 150 participants from 26 Member States came together in Spoleto.

Figure 1 shows the representation of different types of actors who participated in the event, including Managing Authorities (MA), Paying Agencies (PA), and National Rural Networks (NRN). Some participants represented more than one type of stakeholder.





## 2. Introduction to the seminar

### Welcome by the host and introduction to the programme

The seminar started with a welcome by **Fernanda Cecchini**, who is the Councillor for Agriculture, Environment, City Planning and Culture for the Umbria Region, one of the host organisations. Later on in the programme, also **Alessandra Pesce**, Undersecretary of State at the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food, Forestry Policies and Tourism (MiPAAFT), expressed her words of welcome. Both hosts stressed the importance of cooperation between different agricultural stakeholders in the EU, to ensure a flourishing innovation ecosystem that can safeguard a sustainable increase in safe and healthy food for a growing population.

**Kerstin Rosenow** (Head of Unit B2 "Research and Innovation", DG AGRI, European Commission) reflected on the reasons for holding the seminar: "The EIP-AGRI started in 2013, and after 5 years comes the time to take stock and see how OGs are doing, how are they finalising their projects, how they are simplifying their measure, how are they disseminating their outcomes, connecting with each other, how they are preparing new plans and projects with those they encountered within the EIP-AGRI network". She stressed that in this time a lot has been learnt regarding the advantages and disadvantages of some approaches. She added that the European Commission is proud to see that a series of cooperation measures has now turned into actual OG projects. "Finally, after this period of 5 years, we are in the position to showcase the added value of the EIP-AGRI". One of the aims of the seminar was to contribute to the synergies between the EIP-AGRI and H2020 projects, and to explore how these synergies can be strengthened even further. Ms. Rosenow highlighted that this is especially important now that the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is on the way. The seminar, therefore, also partly focused on enhancing the understanding of the AKIS concept (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System) for future CAP Strategic plans, and further AKIS support for the EIP-AGRI. "We are moving from project-based work in OGs and Horizon 2020 Multi-Actor Projects to a real EIP-AGRI innovation ecosystem, which systematically supports knowledge flows within the so-called Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System." One of the objectives of the seminar was to reflect together on what the best ways are to do so.





## Setting the scene

In the opening session, **Inge Van Oost** (Unit B2 “Research and Innovation”, DG AGRI, European Commission) set the scene and introduced the scope of the seminar. She emphasised that the seminar included two main themes, which would be dealt with over the two seminar days. Smart solutions to achieve impact would be discussed on day 1. On day 2, the seminar would explore options for a (smart) dissemination of OG results and successes through networking and collaboration. Based on this division, day 1 provided room to think deeper about the simplification of implementation procedures, and about how smart reporting can help achieve impact.

To start off, Ms. Van Oost presented the provisions on modernisation in the new CAP Plan Regulation post-2020. She especially highlighted how these provisions can support ways to take innovative projects to a ‘higher level’: from innovative projects to a whole innovation ecosystem. Her presentation underlined the linkages between the articles related to the EIP and various relevant elements of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS). In this way, Ms. Van Oost presented an overview of how the various articles in the Commission’s proposal for the future CAP form an integrated approach for boosting modernisation, innovation and knowledge flows, which is at the same time a cross-cutting CAP objective. She highlighted that a well-functioning AKIS should intensively and regularly connect all innovation actors. It should also involve people who are newly interested in innovation and knowledge sharing. A well-functioning AKIS involves peer-to-peer learning among stakeholders. It provides an enabling environment for innovative projects and it also offers an effective dissemination channel. This should help to build and promote a good innovation ecosystem in each Member State and region. This will support knowledge exchange and the co-creation of innovation, to support the needs of farmers and foresters. In this framework, activities of Managing Authorities and NRNs that focus on innovation will be key to support dissemination in their country or region, and to promote networking for innovation purposes.

Inge Van Oost’s presentation is available [through this link](#). The supporting document for this presentation, [“Outlook on EIP-AGRI programming post-2020” is available here](#).

Following this presentation, the mobile application ‘Attendify’ was used to collect any questions that the participants might have about the Commission’s proposal for the CAP post-2020, with respect to AKIS and the EIP. Some examples of questions that were posed are shown below:

- “How to integrate regional AKIS plans and National Strategic Plans”
- “How can we integrate the already created thematic networks within the next CAP? Is that even possible, considering Article 113?”
- “How can CAP networks fulfil new AKIS-related tasks when the upcoming tasks related to ‘Pillar I’ will bring along a lot more non-innovative tasks?”

Some of these questions were addressed in the ‘open seminar’ session on day 2. For an overview of these and other topics that were proposed for this session on the CAP post-2020 and AKIS, [see section ‘the open seminar’ further in this report](#).

### 3. Learning about EIP-AGRI implementation: achieving impact

In this session, the plenary presentations and breakout discussions all focused on ways to achieve impact through simpler implementation and smarter reporting.

#### Inspiring examples on simplification

The presentations and breakout discussions that dealt with **achieving impact through simpler implementation** especially focused on the existing potential to ease the administration for applicants and beneficiaries, as well as for Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies.

In this context, three speakers presented inspiring examples:

**Marina Hadjiyanni** (Unit F1 “Conception & consistency of rural development”, DG AGRI, European Commission) presented new simplification options which came into force after the Omnibus regulation. She especially highlighted the novelties after the recent legal amendments, being 1) the type of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) and forms of support for grants; 2) new methodologies for establishing SCOs; 3) additional options for calculating staff costs; 4) an off-the-shelf flat rate for calculating remaining eligible costs (other than direct staff costs); and 5) removing the need to have a certificate proving – in line with Art 62(2) of R.1305 – that “an independent body with appropriate expertise verified that calculations followed a fair, equitable and verifiable method”. Marina Hadjiyanni’s presentation can be found [through this link](#).



**Michael Schrörs** (Head of Unit EU affairs, agricultural research and innovation, Lower Saxony Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, DE) gave a practical overview on the implementation of the standard cost model in Lower Saxony, Germany. He touched upon the legal requirements, the actual calculation of standard costs in Lower Saxony, the challenges and solutions with respect to implementation and, last but not least, the advantages for beneficiaries and administration. Michael Schrörs’ presentation can be found [through this link](#).



**Simona Cristiano** (Policy researcher, CREA – Centre for Politics and Bioeconomy, IT) presented the guidance on simplification (with SCO as main focus) that was made for the Italian regions. Simona Cristiano’s presentation can be found [through this link](#).

#### Breakout session on simplification

To further elaborate on the topic of simplification, participants were divided into smaller ‘breakout’ groups. They discussed the following two questions:

1. What simplifications were implemented in your country? (administrative / bureaucratic or financial procedures)
2. Which practices of simplification do you want to implement in your country in the future?





In some countries and regions, simplified costs are only partially applied, e.g. to calculate farmers' costs (Italy) or only to prepare Operational Group projects, for instance for those dealing with fruit production or vineyards (Romania).

In one of the breakout groups, the most applauded idea was the method for calculating staff costs according to one standardised formula for all project programmes (ERDF, Interreg, EFRO, etc.), implemented by the Flemish government.

Some of the breakout groups flagged certain challenges that need to be solved:

- Transparency about regulations, and openness about payments can sometimes create uneasiness between partners. It can cause a split between the "beneficiaries", who receive a grant, and "collaborators", members of the group who do not receive a grant.
- Financial liability documents have to be signed by beneficiaries of grants. However, farmers are not very keen on signing them.
- In the current system, standard cost models create the need for a certain form of certification of the cost evaluation system. Managing Authorities, however, do not want to take the risk of having the cost model rejected after a control by the EU. It could be useful to have reassurance about this beforehand.

One group wanted to highlight a question:

- How does the EU's new General Data Protection Regulation (GPRD regulation) affect the flow of financial / administrative information from partners and beneficiaries to Managing Authorities? For example: personal data about personnel from the beneficiaries are visible in documents about salary costs. How can leaking of personal information and data be prevented?

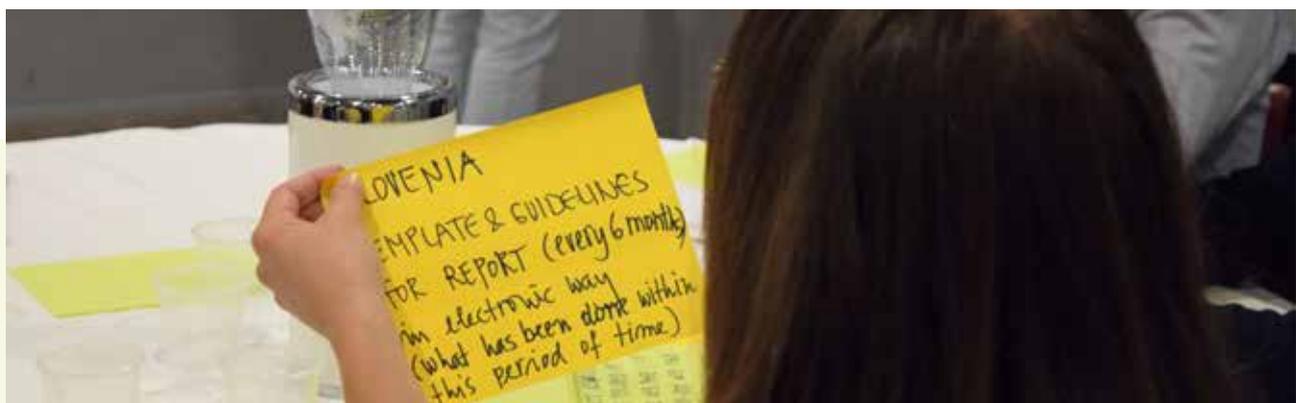
A few countries already apply online applications, but they indicate that there is still room for improvement for the templates that are used. Sometimes these templates were simply taken over from other measures and not well adapted to the specific elements that are important for OGs.

The two-step procedure in calls for Operational Groups is becoming increasingly popular as its usefulness is shared and becomes clearer. The same is true for support for preparing OG project applications. Such innovation support can be used both in preparing the application and in facilitating the project. In the evaluation of applications, one region even gives extra points for meetings with innovation brokers, because this can result in better prepared proposals that are more fit for the measure.

Innovation brokers have two main functions:

- 1) Informing and guiding future OGs through the administrative process
- 2) Helping them to find knowledge and information, as well as complementary partners. These can help the project reach its objectives and help make the project proposal more likely to be successful.

Potentially, if the group works well with the innovation broker, he or she may also become a facilitator in the OG project once it has been selected.





Although advance payments from the EU budget are not possible yet in the current programming period, several Member States were asking to make this possible. Some even already give support for advances from the national budget.

Furthermore, several Member States saw advantages in not only having big budgets for OGs, but also in having calls for smaller OG projects, with a limited number of partners and focusing on a very specific subject. This may be easier to set up, and it may attract farmers more easily.

In short, the groups discussed different ways for simplification, for easier access to funding and easier ways to set up OG projects. What could be drawn from the discussions is that many participants mentioned the importance of preparing guidelines or a toolkit for MAs and OGs. An example was reported by Italy, where the NRN developed a toolkit to inform the regions. Most countries aim for more standardised documents for project application, for monitoring and for follow-up. For instance, the Belgian example of using the same application forms for OGs as well as for Interreg and EFRD projects.

## Inspiring examples on reporting

### A short introduction

Reporting refers both to reporting from an administrative point of view, and on the other hand to the dissemination of results through the EIP network. Reports that are compiled for administrative purposes are those that, once accepted, are proof that the 'operation has been completed' (Art. 2 of Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013). This simply means that the project implementation is finished and that – if there are no other obstacles – all related payments to beneficiaries can be made. Article 35 leaves Member States free to implement a reporting format which they think is informative enough and complete. As the EIP is a very flexible instrument, it does not provide any specific guidance for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, besides the EIP guidelines and the EIP common format.

This kind of 'administrative reporting' should not be confused with the reporting obligation which EIP-AGRI Operational Groups have according to Article 57(3). This involves short 'mini'-reports that help disseminate project results to practitioners. These also serve as a networking tool among Operational Groups, and connecting OGs with other projects and actors, for instance to consortia that are preparing H2020 Multi-Actor Projects. These European Multi-Actor Projects receive a "strong recommendation" to link up with OGs. As indicated in the Annex of the EIP Guidelines, the EIP format is much more concise (practice abstracts take up about 20 lines) and it is meant to contain practical information and recommendations for end users of the project results.

An inspiring example of a report that is made for dissemination purposes, was given by **Lisa van Dijk** (Knowledge Exchange Programme manager, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, UK). Her presentation ('How to draft good practice abstracts?') can be found [through this link](#). It is based on the Horizon 2020 Multi-Actor Project 'Hennovation'.



**Natascha Orthen** (NRN, Germany), **Jaume Sió Torres** (MA, Spain) and **Els Lapage** (MA, Belgium) provided brief but very important tips for reporting:

*"Do not wait too long before you start disseminating! The road towards final results offers many lessons learnt for other OGs or innovative projects"*

*"Disseminate information that is tailored to the audience"*

*"Creating impact starts at the selection of OG projects"*



Obviously, the word "report" was frequently used in most discussions. "NRN" was mentioned very often. This is due to the expectation of having support from the NRNS, or due to the role that the NRNs already play in providing support, for instance by providing "Templates". The word "Database" was clearly also a hot topic. Not only the national database was referred to, but also the importance of the EIP-AGRI database. This is important to have an overview of topics, but especially also as a tool for dissemination and networking. Many participants see monitoring "Progress" through reporting as important, also as a way to record learning. This importance was especially earmarked in one breakout group, and this eventually resulted in a topic for the 'open space' session. Learning is about trial and error, and this is important to report on. However, there still seems to be a barrier in recording on paper what did not go well.

Interestingly, although the need for simple formats and templates was emphasised, the words 'simplification' or 'simple' are not that visible. This was confirmed in the feedback session. Most likely this may have been caused by the fact that simplification formed a separate discussion topic.

Concerning reporting and procedures, a few participants shared information about templates and forms for different purposes: to apply for funding, for establishing a partnership agreement, periodic reporting, or financial advances of the project. Even though online advice is available for OGs, reporting and the established procedures are indicated as a bottleneck. Simple formats and a few templates are needed. It turns out that many countries count on the NRNs for support and guidance, or hope that templates or standards will be published by the NRNs soon.

In general, mostly for longer projects, OGs periodically report to the MA, NRN or PA. This means different reporting actions for different purposes. Although some countries flag the need for templates, protocols or compulsory formats for reporting, others 'cherish' the freedom they have.

The whole group agrees that the report for administrative or payment purposes is not suitable for dissemination. Therefore, other formats are in place in some countries, such as posters. However, according to many countries, effective dissemination mainly depends on face-to-face meetings via workshops or demonstrations.

In any case, the support and commitment of NRNs, MAs and PAs is very much appreciated and is found to be of key importance, especially for dissemination purposes. "Often they provide great support to the OGs, not only regarding the provision of materials but also through platforms or channels for dissemination".

General suggestions that were made:

- Report summaries or extracts – in a language that is adapted to the larger public – could be made on the basis of the reports sent to the MA, NRN or PA. In this way the reports can also be useful for dissemination purposes to the larger European public, but also to farmers.
- Training advisers, based on results of OGs, could be the topic of a project in itself and a useful addition to the 'ecosystem of innovation'!
- Establishing a central system to gather all formats and templates that are available in Member States and regions could be interesting. Especially the most common ones should be available centrally.

## 4. Digital project market

During the lunch break, a digital project market was organised as an opportunity to network, to discuss opportunities and issues that occur during project implementation, and to exchange (preliminary) project outcomes. The digital project market featured 13 OGs, 2 Horizon 2020 Thematic Networks and 2 Horizon 2020 Multi-Actor Projects. Moreover, it was aimed at serving as inspiration for all seminar participants on how to further promote the impact of Operational Group and Horizon 2020 projects.

The project posters from the digital project market were accessible through the Attendify app. Participants were stimulated to interact with project representatives. In addition, all posters were compiled in a booklet, which is [available on the EIP-AGRI website](#).

In addition to the project posters that were featured, two videos from OGs in Sweden were also shared. [The first of these videos](#) shows how EIP-AGRI innovation support has contributed to making reindeer husbandry more profitable by developing 5 premium products. [The second video](#) shows an innovative solution for manure scraping systems in stables.

### An overview of posters and videos can be found by [clicking here](#)

Poster 1 – OG Belgium – Wim Ceulemans - Title: Company Nitrogen Balance

Poster 2 – OG Belgium – Anke De Dobbelaere - Title: Pocketfarmer – small-scale anaerobic digestion

Poster 3 – OG Estonia – Hardi Tamm - Title: Biosensor development for the detection of mastitis

Poster 4 – OG Ireland – Donal Sheehan - Title: The BRIDE Project – farming with nature

Poster 5 – OG Latvia – Linda Sarke-Fedjajeva - Title: Decision support system – leaf and ear diseases in winter wheat

Poster 6 – OG Netherlands – Dirk Keuper - Title: Working together on the Kromme Rijn nutrient cycle

Poster 7 – OG Poland – Aleksander Bomberski - Title: Innovation in the cultivation, processing and marketing of Dwarf and Persian Wheat with increased nutritional value

Poster 8 – OG Poland – Aleksander Bomberski - Title: “Mojasoja” – Innovative solutions in the cultivation of soya and feeding for farms

Poster 9 – OG Portugal – Olga Moreira - Title: Goefuentes – agronomic and energetic valorisation of livestock effluents in farming activity

Poster 10 – OG Spain – Joan Bonany - Title: Alternative to traditional post-harvest fungicide treatments applied in apple and pear production

Poster 11 – OG Spain – Iker Bilbao - Title: FOPE 2015 – transition to organic farming

Poster 12 - H2020 Thematic Network – Rosa Mosquera-Losada - Title: AFINET – agroforestry innovation networks

Poster 13 – H2020 Multi-Actor Project – Heidi Hundrup Rasmussen - Title: AGRISPIN

Poster 14 – H2020 Thematic Network – Lisa van Dijk - Title: Hinnovation – practice-led innovation in the laying hen and other livestock sectors

Poster 15 – H2020 Multi-Actor Project - Susanne von Münchhausen - Title: Liaison – better rural innovation: linking actors, instruments and policies through networks

Video 1 – OG Sweden - Title: Profitability of Reindeer Herding

Video 2 – OG Sweden - Title: BREAKBOX – alarm for a de-manuring system



## 5. Field visits

The seminar included five field visits to Operational Groups and other innovative projects. These field visits had been organised by the hosts and were carried out in parallel.

The aim of these field visits was to have first-hand feedback from ongoing OGs on relevant aspects of project implementation. They also provided participants with concrete knowledge on how the EIP-AGRI architecture and the implementation of rules can address different innovation challenges and strategies. The five field visits were all focused on OGs, clusters or network projects illustrating how the EIP-AGRI is currently implemented in Umbria Region.

During these field visits, activities that were foreseen to disseminate results were shared and discussed. In addition, experiences about networking and collaboration among OGs, and between OGs and other entities were addressed in most field visits. All field visits showed that innovative solutions were focusing on farmers' needs while also taking into account the interactions across the supply chain. However, few projects addressed that this is still a challenge and that it requires specific attention. It is especially connected to linking partners with complementary knowledge (e.g. farmers, advisers, researchers, enterprises and non-governmental organisations). This is very important but not always an easy task. "Maintaining the network requires hard work and is sometimes difficult". Co-deciding and co-creating all along the project is an important objective which was illustrated in all projects and cases that were visited.



**Field visit 1 - OG SMART METEO - Development of an innovative agro-meteorological and phyto-pathological monitoring system to support farms - [www.cratia.it/smartmeteo](http://www.cratia.it/smartmeteo)**

The increased awareness of environmental protection has led to the introduction of new methods that can reduce the use of chemicals: only when strictly necessary. Land monitoring systems limit the use of treatments considerably: only in presence of pathogens and / or parasites.

In particular, monitoring systems that are implementing probabilistic forecast models are an important tool for reducing the use of plant protection products.

Objectives of the project include the use of plant protection information systems for cereals, viticulture, olive and tobacco; the integration of a regional agro-meteorological data network; the implementation of specific monitoring protocols; drafting of phytosanitary bulletins and their dissemination through innovative communication tools.

**Field visit 2 - OG Fi.L.O. - Sustainability through organisational efficiency in agri-food supply chains - [www.retefilo.eu](http://www.retefilo.eu)**

The project intends to improve the competitiveness of primary producers and of the entire agrifood sector by improving the performance of logistics through innovative organisational models. To do this, the project focuses on contracts with farmers and on cooperative company management. The results of the project are practical tools for organisational innovation in the supply chain.



*"It was interesting to see that this cooperative culture could be empowered, e.g. by developing a common distribution platform and by sharing the needs of the companies involved. This saves money and helps to reduce kilometres!"*

**Field visit 3 OG FORTE - Oil crops supply chain with total recovery**

The project focuses on the creation of an Umbrian supply chain for bio-based products. The project aims to increase the regional circular economy and is closely linked to the activities of three Umbrian companies.

Objectives of the project include the development of a new farmers' product (the oilseed), by introducing sustainable cultivation methods; exploitation of lignocellulosic biomasses to produce biomolecules (e.g. monomers for the production of biodegradable bioplastics); use of by-products (protein residuals) from the extraction processes of the oils (pressing panels and / or seeds extraction flours) for livestock feed.





#### Field visit 4 Innovative network / cluster: the “Smart Agri Platform”

This field visit was related to a cluster / network financed by RDP Measure 16.2. Exactly as in an OG project, the “Smart Agri Platform” cluster / network is implementing an innovative project that focuses on precision farming. Partners cooperating in the network / cluster are providing specific support to farmers in precision farming activities, e.g. high-resolution mapping of crop surfaces and monitoring of spatial-temporal trends; developing maps for prescription of nitrogen, phosphate and potassic fertilisation; or providing alerts on biotic and abiotic risks.

*“Co-deciding and co-creating all along the project!”*

#### Field visit 5 - 3A Parco Tecnologico Agroalimentare dell’Umbria - Regional Innovation Support Service - [www.parco3a.org](http://www.parco3a.org)

3A-Agrofood Technology Park (3A-PTA) is a company under the control of Umbria Region and an institutional innovation broker. Park 3A has played a decisive role in promoting innovation in the agricultural, food and regional forestry sectors in the last 7 years. They did this by developing and coordinating 40 innovative projects and by disseminating the results of over 120 innovation projects that were implemented with the support of Measure 124 of the 2007-2013 Umbria RDP. 3A-PTA has a network of more than 500 regional companies and 50 public and private research institutes, e.g. with Top Melon, a company that has adopted innovative crops, increasing the quality and the environmental sustainability of the product, and reducing the use of pesticides and water.



## 6. Learning about OGs: results, successes, networking and collaboration

Whereas day 1 focused on EIP-AGRI implementation to improve project impact, on day 2 participants were invited to focus on OG projects. They particularly reflected on their results and successes, and on how to support OG networking and collaboration, thus contributing to laying out the building blocks for the EIP innovation ecosystem.

### Inspiring examples on results, successes, networking and collaboration

In order to prepare us to reflect on these questions, **Fabio Cossu** (Unit B2 "Research and Innovation", DG AGRI, European Commission), kicked off this session by highlighting 'why networking is important' and addressing 'with whom to network'. His presentation also gave us more insight into the networking instruments that are available at EU level. In this respect, he specifically referred to the OG database and the online information on H2020 projects provided. He also introduced a few examples of how OGs are networking. This underlined the importance and the benefits of making OGs more visible, of connecting them with H2020 projects, and of disseminating their results, lessons learnt and successes. Fabio Cossu's presentation is available [through this link](#).

This broader perspective, offered by Fabio Cossu, was followed by an overview presented by **Pacôme Elouna Eyenga** (team leader of the EIP-AGRI Service Point). His presentation focused on making OGs visible to other OGs, H2020 projects, farmers, advisers, researchers and others. Mr. Elouna Eyenga highlighted that it is very important to have good quality information on OGs, and to keep this information updated. He further highlighted what we can do to help OGs network at the EU level, but also what the EIP-AGRI Service Point already does and what it further aims to do. He highlighted, for example, the background material produced by the Service Point (e.g. brochures or online information on AKIS and on OG collaboration) and referred to the many inspiring examples that are available. Last but not least, he pointed to the collaborative area for MA and NSU/NRN representatives, motivating them to share information and share their experiences in supporting OGs and other innovative projects. Pacôme Elouna Eyenga's [presentation 'Sharing knowledge and connecting all innovation actors' can be accessed through this link](#).



**Margarida Ambar** (EIP-AGRI Service Point), followed up with a stimulating presentation entitled '**Types of networking for OGs – inspiration for AKIS Strategic Plans**'. She stressed the importance of networking and of continuously sharing ideas and results to effectively disseminate and collaborate, and thereby ensure impact. She did so by especially focusing on experiences from supporting actors (e.g. MAs and NRNs). While her presentation provided an inspirational list for different types of networking support, the audience complemented this overview by contributing with their examples for inspiration.

Integrated in Ms. Ambar's presentation, three other speakers presented their own experience:

- **Els Lapage**, MA Flanders, emphasised the importance of dissemination to ensure EIP impact. She provided an overview of different types of dissemination. Her presentation underlined that disseminating results and enlarging the impact is better addressed if "an important part of the OG activities show costs and revenues of the innovative solution(s) to the farmers: highlight win-wins!" "OGs also initiate further research projects: specific research questions arisen in the OG have become the subject of new large research projects. This should be given attention!". Her presentation includes many more relevant lessons to be considered. The presentation is available [through this link](#).
- **Kees Anker**, NSU / NRN Netherlands, mentioned that more than 65% of all OGs in the Netherlands focus on 3 main issues: dairy farming, arable farming and new chains/new markets. In line with these 3 issues, the Dutch NSU / NRN organised 3 networking events for project leaders of these Dutch OGs and OGs from Flanders, Dutch and Flemish participants in Focus Groups and Thematic Networks, researchers, Horizon 2020 Multi-Actor Projects, and Paying Agencies. These events covered 3 specific objectives: knowledge exchange, connections between projects, inspiration and connecting to EU-initiatives. At one of these events, a dairy farmer reflected, after having discussed the challenges to be addressed (among others on soil fertility, climate change adaptation, shorter supply chains): "Transition in agriculture is necessary, and there are plenty of ideas in agriculture to be developed". Kees Anker's [presentation can be found here](#).
- **Carola Ketelhodt** from the Innovation Support Service (ISS) in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, informed the participants that the ISS supports (1) the EIP process in Schleswig-Holstein in general; (2) the actors on their path to a successful project, enabling them to achieve the best results; and (3) networking, knowledge transfer and public relations. Ms. Ketelhodt underlined these tasks by providing specific examples of relevant activities (e.g. publishing articles, organising field walks, excursions, thematic meetings) and tools to create awareness on OG projects and to support dissemination. She also presented examples of relevant activities (e.g. regional EIP-AGRI network meetings two times a year) to facilitate networking and collaboration between projects, and examples of activities such as meetings and seminars that help support the uptake of project results in practice. Carola Ketelhodt's presentation can be found [here](#).





## The 'open' seminar

At the end of the event, an 'open' seminar session included topics that were brought forward by participants. In this session, participants could discuss topics that for them were essential to address with the other participants. In most cases, the discussions on the various topics that had been suggested were hosted by those who actually proposed the topics. All participants joined one of the topic discussions. While participants were free to move around and join parts of different discussions, this did not happen. The participants decided that a few topics were very closely related and that it was better to merge the discussion groups.

The topics that were proposed formed the basis for the actual discussion groups. All of the topic titles are presented below, as well as one highlight per discussion group.

### **Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation Systems in post-2020 CAP and making AKIS plans**

"Making AKIS Plans needs time to mature: Start brainstorming now on your AKIS strategic plans!"

### **Collaboration: cross-border cooperation**

"Despite the challenges (e.g. differences in legal frameworks) ... More cross-border OGs, please!"

### **Dissemination: effective storytelling**

"Effective dissemination means dissemination from farmer to farmer, and more video reporting!"

### **Evaluation & learning**

"Recognise that OGs are contributing to social capital! Develop an EIP website on Innovation & Learning."

### **Working with farmers and organising farmers' events**

"Trust has to be built! This requires advisers in key positions."

### **How to avoid starting up OGs on issues where the knowledge already exists**

"What is the innovation? Is it new? Is it different? Is the innovation still innovative? Does it require a new business model? At what level does the innovation take place? What cooperation is possible?"

### **Succession: Attractive future for young farmers**

"Think out of the box to engage youth! Start up an OG for young farmers without a farming background."

### **Simplified costs / Standard Cost Options**

"Auditors seem satisfied with the simplified cost model ... what are you waiting for?"

### **How to support OGs? Especially those that are bottom-up and may have little previous project management experience**

"The inability to negotiate bureaucracy can cause good projects to fail ..."

### **How to start and support Communities of Practice**

"Pilot communities of practice, focusing on pilot projects"

### **Bringing up innovation from pre-commercial to European Market level: financing strategy to fund projects such as the Agro-Forestry project**

"Define a set of common indicators to assess the upscaling of success. This should be done by external evaluators."

## 6. Closing the seminar

During the very last session of the seminar, participants were asked to air their 'message laundry'. Using post-its, the participants gave their answers to the questions: "What will you do next?", "What will you take home from the event?" and "What message do you want to leave behind?".



Many of these messages voiced the participants' gratitude to host country Italy, to the region of Umbria and/or to the city of Spoleto. About a third of all messages highlighted the relevance of the new things that participants had learnt, e.g. "[This was an] excellent seminar for: (1) the discussed themes (2) networking opportunities and discussion (3) for all the things learnt."

Many participants also appreciated the mix between short presentations and sharing experiences: "Good mix of PowerPoints, sharing experiences and brainstorming and GOOD food :)". "It was very inspirational because a lot of time was spent on sharing experiences". "This charges my battery to keep on doing my job more inspired!" Others appreciated the active participation of the audience: "The involvement of the participants was at the highest level".

"What was good: 1. Great arrangements with good discussions. 2. The application is great. 3. Great preparation before and during the meeting. 4. Great social events".

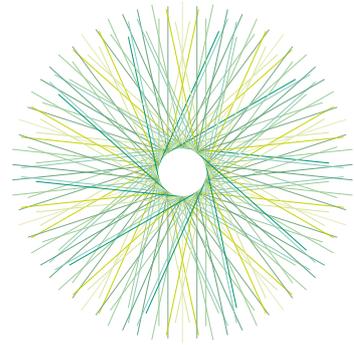
There were also ideas for improvement: "[...] Presentations in the Attendify app could be added beforehand (or at least a draft)"; "Could you add pictures in the participation list? This would be helpful after the meeting"; "Since every MS has invested a lot in EIP, the EIP-AGRI seminars become more and more interesting. Now you can really learn from each other."



Kerstin Rosenow (Head of Unit B2 "Research and Innovation", DG AGRI, European Commission) closed the seminar by thanking everybody for their active participation and contributions. "With many topics and ideas left to be discussed, we unfortunately have to say goodbye". However, the network of farmers, MAs, researchers, foresters, PAs, advisers, European Commission, NRNs, innovation brokers, and EIP-AGRI, which forms the basis for the 'Innovation Ecosystem', has been reinforced through this event.

**All presentations, background documents, project posters and other results of this seminar are available on the EIP-AGRI website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-operational-group-to-impact>**





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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



**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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