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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



# EIP-AGRI Focus Group

## Wildlife and agricultural production

MINI-PAPER: Collaboration and Partnerships Between Different Stakeholder Groups

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# 1. Introduction

The EIP-AGRI Focus Group - Wildlife and Agricultural Production is looking to identify means of promoting innovative and sustainable practices to prevent and control wild animal damage on farms while at the same time protecting wildlife. One of the specific tasks of the Focus Group is to identify opportunities to implement innovative solutions at farm or at landscape level through collaboration. In this mini-paper we explore in more detail the forms of collaboration and partnerships that currently exist, the grounds necessary for success, and the knowledge gaps and the research needs that exist, including possible innovations that could be applied to the processes to ultimately enable sustainable outcomes.

This section presents an overview of the paper, and some of the background that needs to be considered when building any form of collaboration or partnership.

## 1.1. Overview

Adapting farming to wildlife cohabitation is a challenging issue. It has many dimensions, including technical, biological, sociological, and economical. It is multi-scalar, both in time and space. The dynamics at play, both the wildlife and the underlying socio-economics, are complex. Thus, in most cases the issue is not about finding a single farming technique that would fix the problem(s) caused by wildlife, because: (i) this technique might not exist; and (ii) it might have adverse effects on other components of the socio-economic and ecological system. The aim instead is to design a proper development pattern encompassing wildlife, the farming community and the whole of society. Addressing cohabitation between farming and wildlife needs a holistic approach, differing from a straightforward “command-and-control” approach that might be used to fix a well-defined problem.

Invariably, the identification of suitable collaboration and partnership mechanisms will depend on the local context. Each interaction between wildlife and agriculture production is different. They depend on multiple factors, including but not limited to the wildlife species at stake, agricultural and wildlife management practices, types of crops and animals, landscape considerations, legislative frameworks, the balance of power between stakeholders, monitoring mechanisms and data availability, the level of emotions surrounding a given issue, the availability of resources to manage conflict, and any cooperation that may or may not already exist. A thorough baseline assessment is required early in the process.

Above all, the institutional and socio-cultural context must be considered before efforts are made to build any form of collaboration and partnership. Whatever form the collaboration might take, it will require some level of initial agreement, dialogue and understanding between stakeholders in order to succeed.

Success should not always be seen as the resolution of a problem but instead is often defined by conflict reduction. Defusing a conflict situation can, in itself, represent success on which partners can build.

In addition, one needs to assess the wider situation, and to understand the multiple root causes of conflict before attempting to collaborate and partner in resolving any issues. Ultimately, compromise is essential in finding sustainable solutions, which themselves should include room for adaptation, in order to evolve.

Where conflicts are tense, or where existing cooperation or dialogue is minimal or even absent, individuals who are far-removed from the conflict in question can be called upon as mediators in order to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and compromise, especially between direct stakeholders. Identifying the right individual(s) for this task is key.

In some instances, conflict reduction might not be possible with dialogue between the direct stakeholders, even with the assistance of a mediator or broker. Bringing indirect or third-party stakeholders to the table can help introduce novel ideas to the discussions.

The types of collaboration and partnership are numerous and range from more traditional forms such as stakeholder meetings/workshops, agri-tourism ventures, formal and informal agreements, or projects between

different stakeholders; to less traditional forms such as webinars, online conferences, and public-private partnerships. These can be local, regional, national or international in scale.

Whatever the platform, moving from conflict identification to reduction requires careful communication throughout. Communication between collaborating stakeholders requires a level of calmness, respect, civility, and inclusiveness in order to avoid tensions spilling over. In turn, monitoring and communicating successes can provide a positive stimulus and assist in furthering collaboration among stakeholders.

Each of these issues and more will be looked at in further detail in this paper.

## 1.2. Stakeholder Mapping

The issues, which exist surrounding wildlife and agricultural production, are ultimately defined by human interactions and are best addressed and resolved in the same way, through human interaction.

Stakeholders are defined as the individuals, government bodies, organizations, associations, companies, or other entities who are involved in or affected by a given issue, and the associated actions or policies that aim to resolve it. They can be directly or indirectly included in the decision-making process. Involving all relevant stakeholders from the start is important. To do so at a later stage in the process can create conflict, reduce trust, and ultimately lead to solutions that are not sustainable in the longer term.

When looking at agricultural production, the most obvious stakeholders are the farmers. However, agricultural production is part of a wider landscape management system and is influenced by several socio-economic factors. When wildlife is looked at as part of the system, species can be seen as both a resource and a nuisance, or both. Much depends on the views of the respective stakeholders. Wildlife itself is a stakeholder, but without a single unified voice. It is represented instead, in different ways by other stakeholders implicated in a given issue. While some ideologists and possible stakeholders may view this as an anthropocentric approach, it is unavoidable if sustainable solutions are to be found among human stakeholders.

Other stakeholders implicated directly in the agriculture production and wildlife management nexus include hunters, foresters, leisure users of nature (e.g. walkers, hikers, mountain bikers, skiers, mushroom and fruit pickers), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) including local community organisations, governmental bodies, research organisations and institutions, industry representatives (e.g. pharmaceutical companies or agricultural machinery manufacturers), tourism operators, rural landowners, and importantly everyday citizens representing the wider society. The latter are the ultimate beneficiaries of the farming activities. They too are joint "owners" of the territory through their citizenship in a given country, where wildlife is viewed as a public good.

There are also those who are not directly implicated in a given conflict but who could have a stake in its resolution. This could include for example entrepreneurs, industry associations, schools, or financial institutions. These represent "hidden" or less obvious stakeholders for which there can be benefits associated with their inclusion in conflict resolution.

Stakeholder analysis can help to identify relevant stakeholders and to assess their views and interests already at the planning stages of collaboration and partnership. This should form part of the baseline assessment that is described in further detail in section 2.

When mapping stakeholders, it is important to consider the levels of influence of each stakeholder, the relative balance of power among them, the levels of objectivity, the levels of interest, underlying competition that might exist, and the possible over- or under-representation of the respective stakeholders. It is important to seek a balance between and among stakeholders. In doing so, one should not assume that a stakeholder that is a victim might not also be in the wrong in some instances. One should also recognise that some individuals might represent multiple stakeholder views. For example, some farmers may be hunters, some hunters or farmers may represent political parties, and some may even be involved in government-level decision making. An open mind is therefore required when analysing the various stakeholders and individuals comprising each group.

One should not forget about the general public as a stakeholder in itself. Increasingly, in the age of social media, and with it the ability to reach large audiences with the push of a button, the general public can influence decision-making processes. This is particularly true with regards to the management of more emblematic species such as large carnivores.

### 1.3. Case Studies

Before examining in detail, the conditions necessary for successful collaborations and partnerships, and ultimately the knowledge gaps that exist and further research needs; this section looks at two existing examples of collaboration. One example looks at national and local level collaboration on a relatively emotive issue (coexistence of wolves and livestock), while the other looks at transnational collaboration on a slightly less emotive issue, at first glance: agri-environmental schemes and on-farm biodiversity. Each of the below case studies has a different stakeholder configuration.

#### Case Study 1. Spanish Campo Grande Group

The conflict between extensive pastoralism farming and wolves is probably the most paradigmatic in the Iberian Peninsula regarding natural resources and biodiversity. Coexistence, while lasting almost forever in Spain, has become a battlefield of two deeply antagonistic parties. The confrontation has led to a scaling-up of conflict, fuelled by the symbolism of the beast, that right now transcends the reality of the predation over livestock, and points to the whole social relationships in rural areas. Entretantos Foundation, an NGO advocating for social participation in sustainability policies, has designed a Social Mediation Initiative around this conflict. The backbone of this initiative is a participatory nation-wide think-tank, the Campo Grande Group, where people linked to several sectors related to the conflict are participating. The main characteristics of this multi-actor platform reflect the participatory methodology used, and focuses on the social conflict around coexistence, instead of actual damages caused by wolves. The objective of this mediation initiative is to reduce the conflict and not necessarily solve the problem. This initiative operates with invited participants acting on their own (not representing organisations) but being representative (based on their field of work or background) of all sectors involved: farmers, hunters, conservationists, academic and researchers, activists, etc. At present, any new participants are decided on and invited by the main group.

This **platform is facilitated by a professional 5-person team with experience in conflict management**. Team members act as both facilitators of the meetings and discussions, and mediators between conflicted parties. The methodology applied is based on negotiation and dialogue, searching for a common ground that could support some agreements. At this stage, government bodies have not yet participated in the initiative. The aim here is to avoid a bias towards agreeing on “what government should do” instead of “what should be done”. Government departments and institutions will be invited to participate in the next stage.

This is a longer-term process, currently up to 5 years. Following the first preparatory stages, participants have gained control of the development of the process. Its’ goals and actions are constantly being transformed, geared by the interests and decision-making inside the group. Its first accomplishment has been the release of the [“Declaration of the Campo Grande Group”](#), a set of agreements and recommendations, covering the main issues around the conflict.

The main topics discussed and agreements reached in the declaration include: (1) Damage assessment and compensation; (2) Economic tools; (3) Damage reduction and management; (4) Population control (use of lethal tools to eliminate wolves); (5) Census and science; (6) Legal status; and (7) Wildlife related tourism. It is useful to note that, as participants stated in the declaration, **the formulation of agreements and recommendations are not as important as the methodology used to reach those agreements, and the dialogue, negotiation and exchange of ideas that led to them**. All participants had to give up some of their beliefs and positions to reach an understanding, and that is one of the main lessons provided. More info can be found on the [Campo Grande Group website](#), and [this article in CPD news](#).

### Case Study 2. North Sea Interreg Partridge project

The North Sea Interreg PARTRIDGE project illustrates **the importance of conflict prevention, rather than damage control, in ensuring coexistence between agriculture and wildlife**. The project aims to show-case how new and improved management solutions can improve biodiversity and ecosystem services by up to 30% by 2023 at 10 demonstration sites across the North Sea Region (NSR), with project partners from Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom. This is achieved through transnational and transdisciplinary partnerships, capacity building, and information exchange between project partners.

The project began in 2016, with the first activities involving meetings with hunters in Belgium at two demonstration sites to discuss a monitoring protocol for hare counts and partridge counts

and to discuss and develop a winter feeding and predator control plan for the demonstration site. This showed an early emphasis on both dialogue and monitoring.

Additional activities under the project vary from site-to-site but include local stakeholder meetings, monthly virtual progress meetings, on-farm excursions, volunteer monitoring, and talks and presentations.

The **project is built on science-based management plans and a bottom-up approach**, involving farmers and hunters, as well as conservationists, the general public and Government agencies.

One common and uniting factor that can be seen among different project stakeholders is the sense of 'pride' for partridge-friendly farming. **Having a shared goal is an important factor in ensuring a successful outcome in collaboration.**

The on-the-ground project objectives are achieved through tailored local management plans supplemented by winter feeding and predation management where local circumstances allow. In addition, the project has developed and field-tested new transnational monitoring protocols to provide evidence that the new solutions are working. This **monitoring is essential to demonstrate success and to provide a positive feedback loop to the partners.**

More details can be found on the project [website](#).

## 2. Assessing the situation and building scenarios

This section presents proposal objectives for situational assessments and scenario building.

### 2.1. Managing wildlife-farmer relationships requires a proper baseline assessment.

As seen in the introduction, every situation is unique and requires a tailored approach. Engagement requires that the issue at stake is set out properly from the outset, and that there is a differentiation between problems or damages (caused by wildlife to farmers) and conflicts (between stakeholders). The former usually leads to the latter.

Because of the plurality of actors and the diversity of assessments of what is an acceptable solution for managing wildlife-farming cohabitation, there is a need for a proper assessment of the situation and of the possible scenarios for addressing the issues. This is even more necessary given that there is often a strong belief, from many stakeholders, in a "top down/command and control" solution. This implies that a set of techniques can be simply taken out of a catalogue of good practices, and that these would fix the problem or prevent conflict.

Assessing the relationships between wildlife, farming and rural communities implies that both objective issues (losses, damages, investments), and subjective ones (perception, feelings, values) are addressed. All should form part of the assessment and thus require sociological and governance skills, in addition to technical expertise on the subject-matter.

## 2.2. Assessment prerequisites: understanding of existing and potential conflict levels, and willingness to build a common solution based on mutual trust.

Wildlife management goes hand-in-hand with conflicts. In many cases, conflicts are part of the reason why wildlife is managed in the first place. Sometimes, conflicts are so strong that they can even hamper the possibility to address the issue and find a solution (other than leave the situation as it is). In this case, there is no room for even envisaging the possibility of a shared baseline assessment and collaborative way of building scenarios.

Nevertheless, the existence of conflicts alone does not mean that there is no way to face and/or solve them. There must be a balance between the recognition of conflicts and willingness to find a common solution (sometimes, conflicts are the reason for trying to find such a solution).

There is thus a need to assess the sociological and political configuration. Questions that need answering include: Who are the influential stakeholders? In what way do they play a role? Is there an influential arbitrator (or different arbitrators) able to orient discussions towards confirming the need to find a way out? This strategic stakeholder assessment (which corresponds to the mapping in section 1.2) should be made by the governing body willing to “institutionalise” a wildlife management process on the ground. Such assessments are mainly based on face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, carried out by experienced and independent persons, who are accepted by all parties, and are able to capture the lock-in and potential middle grounds between different stakeholders.

## 2.3. What should be considered in the baseline assessment?

The overall goal of the baseline assessment is to characterise and address all the dimensions that are present in the debate, bring knowledge to the questions that the variety of actors may ask. As a collaborative and transparent process, the baseline assessment should be shared and available to the public. This allows the reference document to properly play its role in setting out the issues before considering any solutions. The baseline assessment should also show the different options on the table for the management of wildlife/farmer relationships, without concluding on what is the right one. Framing the problems properly, and setting the issues, is the goal of such an assessment. This is a crucial platform and necessary step to be able to identify sustainable solutions. It should not be seen as “wasted time” in the search for solutions.

The assessment should ideally address the following issues:

- A proper **analysis of the spatial dimensions of the wildlife-farmer interactions** (*what are the ecological and socio-economic driving forces and at what level of influence do they have?*), defining a territory and related arena in which issues should be set and solutions found.
- An **analysis of converging activities influencing human-wildlife relationships** (*e.g., nature conservation, hunting, forestry, tourism, infrastructure development, water management and their combined effects.*)
- An **understanding of the economy, dynamics and business models of the farms** in the area, with particular focus on the history of the wildlife/farming relationships (*a long way together or recent disruption from [forgotten] wildlife species?*)
- A **subjective analysis of the problem based on perception, feelings and values of farmers**, with special attention to people suffering damages.
- An **analysis of the sociology of the territory** (*stakeholders and their visions for wildlife, farming and wider rural development*); what is the place of wildlife in the visions brought by the actors in development of the local area?

- An **analysis of the main institutions and institutional rules and legal framework dealing with agriculture, rural development, outdoors activities** (*in the wider sense, including hunting, hiking, and other sporting activities*), nature conservation and wildlife management (*protection level and status*)

A special focus should be given to proposed/possible solutions for managing wildlife/farmer relationships:

- What are the solutions on the table? Who is proposing them?
- What is the assessment on the ecological, economic and sociological aspects of such solutions? How feasible are they given the reality of the territory? What are the gaps identified by some stakeholders in such assessments?
- What are the conditions for success and how the benefits/risks are distributed among stakeholders?

## 2.4. The role of scenarios in exploring solutions.

A scenario consists of a set of assumptions exploring a plausible “storyline” for the co-evolution of wildlife and territory for what is of concern. In the case of collaboration, it comprises:

- One or more explicit images of a desirable future. In case of convergence, images can be shared by all stakeholders; if not, there should be as many images put on the table, as there are sound visions borne by stakeholders. Such images should be future-oriented and consider the driving forces shaping the overall context of the area. Building the “worst case scenario” can be a heuristic way to favour convergence among actors.
- Assumptions about governance and technical options (the operational component of the scenario.)
- Assumptions about outputs for key challenges identified during the baseline assessment.

The logic behind building scenarios (plural) is four-fold:

1. To set a proper **conceptual frame**, as the issue of managing wildlife/farmer cohabitation is a matter of dynamics taking place on the long term; this allows a wider frame of analysis than one that focuses only on wildlife, considering different driving forces;
2. To recognise that there is not only one solution and to **reflect the diversity of options and values**;
3. To facilitate local cooperation that is clearly based on a “**what if?**” **thinking**, allowing a step back from any existing “hot” debates; and
4. To offer a basis for **proper comparative assessment** of the solutions.

Ultimately, scenarios should be based on the baseline assessment. Reciprocally, the baseline assessment should be conducted in order to feed scenarios.

## 3. Solutions and recommendations

When it comes to moving from situational assessment and scenario development to solutions and recommendations, there is no one-size-fits-all. Below, we present some practical solutions and recommendations, including some innovative means for enabling collaboration and partnerships.

### 3.1. Third parties in wildlife-related conflict resolution.

Third parties can play an active role in the pursuit of multi-stakeholder agreements that seek to reduce conflicts related to coexistence and promote useful and sustainable solutions.

There are three main tasks where third parties are needed. Tasks can be combined and include: (1) **facilitation** (managing the platform dynamics, establishing the rules, and conducting meetings); (2) **mediation** (specifically promoting agreements between conflicted parts); and (3) **brokering** (bringing new tools and initiatives to enhancing dialogue and decision-making). The latter being a somewhat innovative role

in farmer-wildlife conflict resolution. External, objective facilitation can help participatory processes to deal with wildlife related problems and conflicts but requires relatively intensive involvement by all parties concerned. There needs to be tangible buy-in from them from the start.

First of all, **facilitation** needs to address all voices, and to work with dissensus, minorities and people usually silent during such processes. The following is a list of recommendations about how facilitation can be conducted:

- Facilitation teams should include multidisciplinary, suitably qualified individuals.
- Skilled facilitation is key for addressing conflicts, but it needs to achieve some particular characteristics, such as recognition, legitimacy, acceptance or accountability to the different sides of the conflict.
- Facilitated processes require sufficient preparation, resources, and time to produce results.
- Facilitation is intended to empower and make the group operational throughout the various stages of preparation, analysis, strategy, operation, assessment, and feedback. Such dynamics need to be respected, although they can induce delays in the implementation of solutions.
- When social conflict is deeply embedded in a community it could be necessary to prioritise e.g., to first address the conflict, then the damages and victims, then other problems.

**Case example:** Coexistence with badgers (*Meles meles*) or wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) generates complex interactions with livestock, namely as a result of both species potentially acting as reservoirs and vectors for disease transmission to livestock. Such problems can only be addressed by ambitious planning that involves the whole spectrum of diverse stakeholders. A good facilitation team is needed to gather such a diverse group of stakeholders together and to promote collective action.

**Mediation**, on the other hand, is focused on solving, or at least reducing, the conflict (or conflicts). Thus, what mediation needs is, fundamentally, the recognition and capacity to act, both of which need to be granted by all parties in the conflict. Accordingly, the recommendations for a mediation team mainly address its position towards the group:

- Mediation-based processes are not for solving technical problems, but rather for addressing conflict(s) underpinning those problems. Mediation is an initial step prior to deactivating any potentially dangerous situations that can polarise or freeze the conflict or interfere with tangible solutions.
- Mediation teams should not display any particular preference or interest in the conflict. Simply having no specific interest is not enough. Instead, mediators should also look neutral (or, at least, fair). As soon as a mediator is perceived as partial towards one side, this can lead to them being defeated and the trust invested by stakeholders lost. Sometimes mediators can even be viewed as partial towards “the other side” by both “sides” respectively.
- Ultimately, mediators should be accepted by both sides. Sometimes it is difficult to get enough support (time and money) for mediation work. Until sufficient support is explicit, mediators can only work in the background, preparing and setting the ground for real negotiations.
- Mediation demands a specific skill set that is often well-known to diplomats: patience, determination, endurance and strong communication abilities.

**Case example:** coexistence between pastoralists and large carnivores frequently generates polarized conflicts that often need to be defused, before even considering implementing prevention or compensation measures. Mediation in such conflictual situations can be a crucial first step prior to starting dialogue and getting agreements.

Last, but not least, **innovation brokers** help the group to get operational, enhancing its capacity to design, develop and implement useful measures. They offer assessment, technical advice, consulting and guidance, to



both improve the group dynamics and the practical results, thus operationalising the group's decision-making. The recommendations for good brokering are aligned with the following needs:

- Brokers should include qualified experts, with enough field experience and technical resources to deal with the specific problem on display.
- The ability to compile, draw on and manage information from both traditional sources stored by farmers and other stakeholders and research and technical expertise is a key for brokering innovation when it comes to wildlife problems. Sharing knowledge with the group generated in this way can provide the basis for the implementation of innovative and effective measures.

As mentioned, facilitation, mediation and brokering can be mixed and combined together in the same process, although it is important to correctly address the needs and adjust their respective roles for each problem and situation.

### 3.2. Achieving consensus/acceptance in difficult circumstances – The case of large carnivores

The solutions and sustainable co-existence between stakeholders with regards to wildlife-related conflicts often depends on the general knowledge and attitudes of different stakeholders, as well as of society in general. Confrontations and misunderstandings can arise because of the wide variety of interests, views, ideologies, or educational backgrounds. In order to prevent and mitigate any or further conflicts, it is reasonable to recognize the different laws and social norms related to nature. A legal consensus and social acceptance, both of which can be constantly evolving, are vital for achieving sustainable solutions for all parties concerned. Below, we look at one of the more difficult conflictual issues between agriculture and wildlife: coexistence with large carnivores. We look at some of the pre-requisites necessary in order to have any chance at achieving a consensus.

- Diet
  - Large carnivores depredate other species and eat meat, some of them e.g., wolf, are obligate carnivores. For any consensus to be possible, society (no matter which stakeholder) must accept this unavoidable natural habit/need of large carnivores.
- Native species
  - Large carnivores are natural and are often native to European landscapes and must be accepted by all stakeholders as a part thereof if any consensus is to be achieved.
- Neighbours
  - Most of the management activities involved in agriculture, forestry, wildlife management, nature tourism etc. take place in the immediate vicinity of, or in the middle of nature, using natural resources either directly or indirectly. This direct coexistence, as "neighbours" so-to-speak can lead to conflicts with large carnivores. There is a need for acceptance by all stakeholders that all of the components are part of this managed system, including large carnivores. This includes also big game animals which in turn are an integral, evolutionarily evolved part of the healthy ecosystem.
- Recognition and acceptance of the different perceptions among stakeholders
  - Large carnivores & sheep farmers: farmers tend to have a more negative attitude, as result of depredation on sheep and other impacts from large carnivores.
  - Large carnivores & crop farmers: farmers tend to have a more positive attitude, because large carnivores predate on herbivore and omnivore species such as wild boar and deer that might otherwise damage crops.
  - Large carnivores & hunters: the attitudes of hunters can be quite varied, particularly as on the one hand large carnivores could be treated as competitors (for game species), while on the other hand they too can be seen as a game species.
  - Conservationists & naturalists: usually have a positive attitude towards large carnivores but they too can be fearful of them and want to maintain their distance.
- Classification and perceptions of large carnivores
  - A species can be classified e.g., as a pest or a game species, a protected species, endangered species or other; this can affect perceptions.

- Large carnivore species can be seen by some as “symbolic” or “emblematic” species in the eyes of the wider public.
- Large carnivores tend to be a highly emotive set of species, which humans can relate to more easily than many others. Managing and dealing with the associated emotions is crucial to finding a consensus or agreement.

The above is not an exhaustive list but demonstrates many of the difficult realities one faces when trying to collaborate or form any types of partnership and stakeholder dialogue and interaction on controversial issues.

### 3.3. Platforms and means for collaboration.

The EIP-AGRI Focus Group - Wildlife and Agricultural Production is in itself a European platform for collaboration, bringing together different stakeholders implicated in the wildlife and agricultural production nexus, including farmers, hunters, foresters, governmental, non-governmental and public sector representatives to solve a complex problem: achieving a balance between the multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives concerning wildlife and agricultural production. The focus group is an area for discussion, negotiation, and joint planning between diverse actors. In this case, not only do we have different stakeholders but also multiple objectives, and actors are operating at different landscape levels and geographical scales. To face this challenge, there needs to be something that unifies matters and allows them to be discussed on a level playing field.

One possibility for organizing collaboration is in the form of a long-term, multi-stakeholder platform. The aim of this platform is to develop an effective and broadly accepted wildlife and agricultural production management strategy for a particular region. The platform could be set up by local government, as well as by the involved parties who identify the need for communication and exchange of information. Local governments can, in some instances, be considered the most appropriate bodies to address different stakeholders because they already have a big network of different actors and are seen as a relatively neutral party. However, one needs to be mindful of the fact that other stakeholders may have conflicting interests with the local government, and it may appear from the onset as though a top-down approach is being imposed.

In the case of larger regions, or many platform members, the platform could be set up online as a virtual room. The same is true where funding is limited, or travel is restricted. However, wherever possible it is important to organize physical meetings between actors at least in the initial phases. This approach is recommended to increase the communication effectiveness and minimise the risk of misunderstandings further down the line.

To our knowledge, specific one-size-fits-all guidance on how to structure platforms or how to run the process, or a manual with concrete methods does not exist. This is a problem for organizing new platforms, especially if the founder, establishing member(s) is/are not communication experts or do not have knowledge in managing regional management processes. A possible solution is to consult with an expert with experience in such matters and/or work with a mediator.

## 4. Knowledge gaps and research needs.

In identifying existing knowledge gaps and research needs, one needs to be mindful that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to conflicts between agriculture and wildlife. In addition, top-down/command-and-control solutions are rarely effective in the long-term.

### 4.1. Acceptance of bottom-up solutions

Greater research is needed into ways of building acceptance, by stakeholders, that together they need to find solutions and that these need to be supported and implemented together. Acceptance of communal solutions is not always straightforward, especially among cultures and societies, and individuals and groups, where

hierarchical structures and top-down leadership and governance are common and widely supported. Research should instead focus on the psychological reasons that push people to seek ready-made solutions.

In addition, many regions of Europe already employ bottom-up approaches to developing solutions. One such example is Finland, where collaborative bottom-up approaches are common, including when dealing with interactions between wildlife and agriculture production. This includes the management of moose (*Alces alces*), an ecologically, socially, and economically important game animal and considered a 'pest' species by some stakeholders. Regional multi-stakeholder meetings have played an informal consultative role in the planning of moose hunting, on a regional level, for more than two decades.

While bottom-up approaches might work well in some instances, further research is needed into what lessons could be learned in applying and building acceptance for bottom-up approaches in other countries and regions.

There needs to be increased recognition at all levels, from on-the-ground stakeholders to developers, donors, decision-makers etc. that one cannot manage situations by simply "providing" solutions. Research is needed into the best means of fostering bottom-up approaches to collaboration and partnerships so that "solutions" can be more widely accepted and sustainable in the longer-term. The social challenges, including communication and social science need to be further researched in the context of collaborative partnerships.

#### 4.2. Understanding and characterising human needs

Further research is also needed into understanding and assessing the needs of humans when developing collaborative partnerships. Such needs are of different kinds:

- **Quantitative**, in the sense that the tasks of facilitation, mediation and brokering identified in section 3.1 are time-consuming and require a certain physical presence, with frequent contact with stakeholders. Many projects are ambitious on paper, but do not mobilise enough means to make the ambitions a reality. We find that stakeholders might lack tools and references in order to properly quantify the actual resources needed (human-hours, energy and money).
- **Qualitative**, with regards to the technical and human skills needed for the accompanying tasks identified in this paper, particularly in section 2. Setting a relevant grid of skills and assessing the means against this grid is something that must be addressed and further researched in terms of its practicality and effectiveness.
- **Organisational and strategic**. Partnerships involve several actors, representing different interests. There is a need to have ex ante evaluation tools available in terms of strategic management and governance. Which actors are relevant for monitoring? For what purpose? How should the different competencies and responsibilities be distributed and accounted for in order to facilitate farming and wildlife cohabitation? Research on biology conservation does address such questions, but these need to be tailored to specific situations.

#### 4.3. Operational gaps

Achieving agreements on solutions and plans to resolve conflicts between stakeholders is possible. However, such agreements are only the first step in the process of resolving issues. Moving from planning to implementation is where a number of difficulties arise. This operational gap, and why it is so, is something that requires further research. Findings would likely feed back into the initial stages in the resolution of conflicts.

Ready-made solutions are not the answer: there needs to be increased recognition at all levels, from on-the-ground stakeholders to developers, donors, decision-makers etc. that one cannot manage situations by simply "providing" solutions – there needs to be increased acceptance of this.

#### 4.4. Setting up Operational Groups

There is a need to foster networks of stakeholders involved in wildlife - farming cohabitation in order to exchange thoughts and views on problems, approaches and solutions found in different contexts. Different criteria can be considered in order to set the relevant networks of exchange in operational groups:

- The type of wildlife considered (large carnivores, birds, protected species etc.)
- The type of farming (pastoral vs. crops for example)
- The type of institutional and cultural context (areas with strong centralised management vs. areas with community management)

When setting up Operational Groups, it is important to not only identify the key dimensions of each “case”, but to also analyse how the use of ‘brokers’ from other fields of activities can help in resolving conflictual situations among stakeholders in agriculture-wildlife conflicts. It should then be oriented towards conflict management and strategic project management.

### 5. Conclusions

This paper shows the intricacies associated with building collaborative partnerships that are effective, and that deliver successful outcomes for wildlife and agriculture interactions. The ultimate goal of any effort is to move from conflict to cohabitation between wildlife and agriculture. To do this, we must recognise that every situation is unique, and that each will require some level of innovation or adaptation tailored to the given situation. Before embarking on any form of collaboration or partnership, it must be understood that there is rarely a quick-fix, and that solutions take time. This often requires significant resources to be invested, especially early-on, whether it be money, time or voluntary in-kind contributions from stakeholders.

Observations in this paper suggest that conflict can be the result of either physical damages which should be objective if they are accurately measured (losses, damages, investments); or the result of personal disagreements which are subjective (perception, feelings, emotions, values).

In addition, it must be noted that there are multiple activities influencing human-wildlife relationships, beyond just agriculture. These include nature conservation, hunting, forestry, tourism, infrastructure development and maintenance, town planning, water management and others. The combined effects of each of these need to be considered, and relevant stakeholders involved as needed. One needs to consider the realities of each of them, including those who might otherwise remain silent or whose absolute numbers are overshadowed by other stakeholders.

In addition to direct stakeholders, there are those not directly implicated in the issue that can play an important role. This is especially important with regards to facilitation, mediation, and brokering.

While each stakeholder is important in the process, agriculture production is recognised as the focal point of conflict resolution between wildlife and agricultural production. This is not to say that farmers are always right, nor that they should be listened to the most; rather that solutions that are identified should be feasible and practical for farmers. This does not mean that farmers should not accept compromises.

This requires an understanding of the economics, dynamics, and business models of the farms in question, including how exposed they are to risks linked with wildlife; how much of an influence wildlife has on the farm; and the history of wildlife-farm relationships.

In any situational analysis, a balance must be sought between the use of scientific/expert knowledge and local knowledge.

To summarise, the process of moving from conflict identification to resolution/diffusion involves nine main steps:

- (1) identifying and mapping relevant stakeholders; (2) identifying the various influences and selecting suitable mediators (if needed); (3) mapping the institutional and socio-cultural context; (4) assessing the underlying conflicts and their source; (5) framing the problems and setting out the issues, including defining a geographical/temporal scope within which the issues should be set and solutions found; (6) discussing and identifying commonalities and building trust to overcome differences; (7) identifying the visions of the respective stakeholders for wildlife, with this being the common denominator; (8) developing a baseline assessment, which should ideally be jointly-agreed on by all stakeholders; and (9) collaboratively building multiple scenarios, recognising that a compromise will be needed in managing wildlife/farmer and inter-stakeholder relationships.

Having multiple scenarios at hand is important as it helps stakeholders to understand that there is rarely a single solution. The scenarios that are developed will include a set of assumptions surrounding a plausible “storyline” for the co-evolution of wildlife, stakeholders, and the territory. There should be a shared image of a desirable future.

The format that the collaboration or partnerships take depends on the local situation. However, a key element of any collaborative effort is face-to-face and open discussions, as opposed to virtual, structured interviews that do not allow stakeholders to express themselves. This is especially important at the start when building trust and collaboration.

In summary, there are rarely any short-cuts that can be applied to collaboration and partnerships, and that will ultimately lead to sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders. Any innovations are likely to be relatively minor in nature. They are unlikely to be revolutionary and are likely to be applicable only to incremental parts of the conflict resolution process. Innovation is needed into building acceptance of the necessary process, and the importance of a bottom-up, all-encompassing, multi-stakeholder approach. Brokering can play a significant role in building acceptance.