

# CONNECTIONS

THE EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

## NEWS AND UPDATES

- **NEW EU MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK**
- **EU RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**
- **NEW ENRD THEMATIC GROUPS**

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

- **CAN USING DIFFERENT WORDING BENEFIT RURAL AREAS?**
- **WOMEN AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS**
- **RURITAGE – HERITAGE FOR RURAL REGENERATION**

## FOCUS ON...

**RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2020**

## EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). The ENRD contributes to the effective implementation of Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe.

Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) that brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development. At EU level, the ENRD supports the networking of these NRNs, national administrations and European organisations.

Find out more on the ENRD website (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>)

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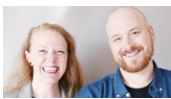
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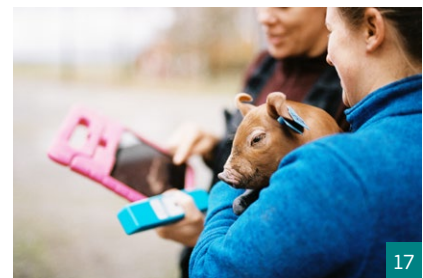
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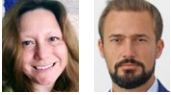


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## EDITORIAL



Happy New Year from the ENRD Contact Point.

The COVID-19 pandemic that dominated 2020 has been a stark wake-up call for the whole world, sweeping away a shocking number of lives as well as many of our daily routines and certainties. Today, Europe is still dealing with the crisis, but the recently found vaccines are bringing new hope.

In rural areas, the pandemic has exacerbated issues like limited access to services and the digital divide. Initially, primary producers and food chains were under pressure to maintain food security despite the emergency, but they have risen successfully to the challenge. Rural areas have equally felt safer than overcrowded cities, and their people have shown their strengths, their capacity to react and adapt. Our webpage **Rural responses to the COVID-19 crisis** (see page 4) presents good examples that can inspire other rural stakeholders. It also provides information about various EC initiatives European Commission initiatives aimed at alleviating the current challenges faced by rural Europe. We aim to continue doing the same in the next months, so please keep sharing your stories via our new tool 'Share your rural story' (see page 4).

A crisis can also be a turning point, a moment when we are forced, by unforeseen circumstances, to take important or radical decisions. In our **News** section (page 4) you can read how the EU institutions are fully mobilised to support agriculture and rural areas through these difficult times and promote their economic recovery, as well as preparing the ground for a more sustainable future – also through an unprecedented economic support package.

While not its focus, the coronavirus pandemic creates a new backdrop for the **Rural issues, rural perspectives section** (page 17). Articles range from reflections on the language we use to describe rural areas – and its influence on our perception of rurality – to projects that facilitate the transition to renewable energy, from rural heritage as a tool for regeneration to women-led social innovation. You will also read about small farms and food security, gender equality in agriculture and broadband.

In our **Focus on...** the Rural Inspiration Awards 2020 (page 31) we see how last year's competition recognised successful projects that are using rural development funding to promote the bioeconomy and climate action in rural areas. Hopefully these initiatives can inspire many others to act, especially at a time when the EU is working for the 'green' recovery of its Member States.

Working together will be key to overcome challenges and explore post-COVID perspectives for rural areas. We hope this edition of Rural Connections offers useful contacts and inspiration to understand the present and design a better future.

Enjoy reading, keep sharing!

**Elena Di Federico**

Publications Manager, ENRD Contact Point

[editor@enrd.eu](mailto:editor@enrd.eu)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD NEWS



## Share your rural story



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The ENRD is always on the lookout for interesting rural stories. What is your experience with using Rural Development Programmes in your area? How is your community reacting to recent challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic? How do you imagine the future? Let us know!

Visit our new website section 'Share your rural story' and fill in the form to share your stories, ideas, hopes and challenges. The content you share may be used in our thematic work, publications and social media. We will give priority to stories providing useful lessons learned and analysis related

to the use of Rural Development Programmes and to our thematic work.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Share your rural story:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-sfri/add/enrd-ruralstory\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-sfri/add/enrd-ruralstory_en)

## Rural responses to the COVID-19 crisis

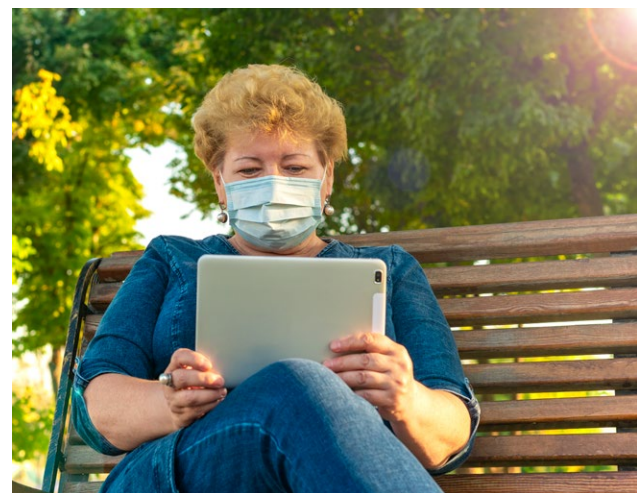


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The outbreak of COVID-19 has significantly affected all aspects of life across Europe. In rural areas, farmers, businesses and local communities are proving their capacity to react to the challenges this has caused. Food producers could count on the help of local people who had temporarily (or permanently) lost their jobs. Communities mobilised to support the most vulnerable groups. Flower producers set up joint digital shops with their competitors. Farms offered childcare when parents had to work and could neither count on schools nor grandparents.

The ENRD Contact Point has collected many examples of rural responses to the COVID-19 crisis on a dedicated web page. This presents examples of projects and initiatives primarily launched by rural communities in coping with the COVID-19 emergency, supporting rural businesses and fostering solidarity with those more vulnerable in this exceptional situation. It also provides information about the wide range of European Commission initiatives and actions aimed at alleviating the difficulties faced by rural Europe and stimulating recovery.

You are all welcome to share your own initiatives via the new ENRD tool 'Share your rural story' – your examples may inspire others!



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## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## New 'CAP post-2020' information portal

A new 'CAP post-2020' online information portal on the ENRD website collects key CAP-related legislative documents and showcases presentations from Member States concerning their preparations for CAP post-2020 programming.

The new portal includes materials from a range of EAFRD stakeholders, as well as recent news on the CAP post-2020 process. Examples include updates from the European Commission on the state of play of Commission initiatives, including the CAP Reform and other relevant EU policy initiatives, as well as the transitional arrangements between the two programming periods.

The portal is part of the ENRD Contact Point (CP) activities supporting more effective and simpler implementation of the

current Rural Development Programmes and preparations for the new CAP and the 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plans. Other regular activities include providing topic-specific content responding to emerging needs of Member States and stakeholders.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CAP post-2020 information portal: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/common-agricultural-policy-post-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/common-agricultural-policy-post-2020_en)

## New ENRD Thematic Groups

Last autumn, the ENRD set up two new Thematic Groups (TG), respectively on the European Green Deal and on the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas.

The TG on the European Green Deal (EGD) in rural areas will focus on EGD elements (e.g. Farm to Fork, the Biodiversity Strategy) linked to the delivery of the three climate and environment specific objectives of the CAP post-2020: climate action, environmental care and preserving landscapes and biodiversity. The TG forms part of the ENRD work on the topic of greening the rural economy.

The TG on the Long Term Rural Vision, #Rural2040, aims to actively involve stakeholders in contributing to the foresight work (led by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission) and design of the Long Term Rural Vision which the European Commission is



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scheduled to adopt by summer 2021. The TG will act as a platform or exchange hub among different stakeholders in Europe, enhancing dialogue, communication and

involvement in the Vision process. Visit the ENRD website for regular updates.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD TG on the European Green Deal in Rural Areas:

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/european-green-deal-rural-areas\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/european-green-deal-rural-areas_en)

ENRD TG on the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision_en)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Bioeconomy and climate action

Since September 2019, the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Bioeconomy and climate action in rural areas has gathered rural development stakeholders to discuss the climate benefits of the rural bioeconomy and ways to incentivise and upscale related activities. The TG contributes to the EU Circular Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan by enabling exchanges on sustainable ways of deploying bioeconomy initiatives in rural areas and by exploring how the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) can be best used to support CAP climate-related objectives.

Four TG meetings were organised between September 2019 and March 2020 to explore the types of activity within rural bioeconomy value chains that provide the most significant climate benefits. The TG identified how such activities can be supported now and in the future, through relevant interventions under the post-2020 CAP Strategic Plans.

As part of the TG work, on 19 March 2020 the ENRD organised a webinar on 'Experiences of rural biogas production around Europe', a specific topic in which the TG members had showed interest. The discussion focused on the evolution of the overall policy context, of the national policy contexts and of the national and EU incentives for biogas production, in addition to the economic sustainability of rural biogas plants.

Drawing on the work of the TG, the ENRD organised an online seminar on 'Climate action and resilient rural economies' on 25 June 2020. The webinar highlighted the EAFRD's potential to promote climate change mitigation in agricultural and rural bioeconomy activities while ensuring economic profitability. Stakeholders from EU Member States demonstrated how they used RDP support to implement



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Agri-Environment-Climate measures, advice, LEADER projects, cooperation and investments to advance their transition towards circular, low-carbon and sustainable practices. The possibilities of integrating related interventions into the CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) were also discussed.

The TG produced three factsheets: 'Monitoring data and raising awareness of rural actors' contribution to climate action', 'Decision support for climate action across the bioeconomy' and 'Economic value of climate action within the rural bioeconomy'.

The TG identified orientations for the preparation of Member States' CAP Strategic Plans that have been collected in three briefings: 'Sequestering carbon in soil and retaining soil carbon stores', 'Optimising the climate benefits of rural bioeconomy value chains' and 'Delivering rural climate change mitigation and rural development – Lessons from EAFRD support 2014-2020' (to be published soon).

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD TG on Bioeconomy and climate action in rural areas (including TG meetings and publications): [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy_en)

ENRD Rural Bioeconomy portal: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal_en)

ENRD's bioeconomy and climate action playlist on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLocST8\\_B8egYcd3mzUxi43tYwleOTPkJT](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLocST8_B8egYcd3mzUxi43tYwleOTPkJT)



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Smart Villages

The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Smart Villages took place on 1 April 2020 in the form of a virtual 'lab'. This webinar focused on how to design support for Smart Villages in the future CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) drawing from the ideas being discussed in Poland. Among others, participants listened to a first-hand account from the village of Piaseczna Górka, winner of the Polish Smart Villages competition.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> TG meeting on 2 June 2020, also organised as a webinar, the Managing Authorities of Austria, Ireland and Slovenia presented their ideas for supporting their villages through a dedicated framework for Smart Villages in the CSP. At the core of their shared view is the idea of using a blend of interventions from LEADER, cooperation, support for investments and village renewal alongside the use of Simplified Cost Options to help reduce administrative burdens in delivering support.

The 12<sup>th</sup> TG meeting concluded the work of the ENRD TG on Smart Villages. The TG encourages all its members and rural stakeholders to make use of the rich information developed in the last three years and to engage with Managing Authorities to help design the right support framework for Smart Villages in their respective Member States. 'Smart Rural 21', a project supported by the European Commission, will continue the work, including

by helping selected villages to develop and implement Smart Village approaches, building on the knowledge developed by this ENRD TG.

The ENRD Smart Villages Portal remains available to browse for resources and documents. To engage with peers working on Smart Villages, join the ENRD Smart Villages community on Facebook.

**i FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

ENRD Thematic Group on Smart Villages:

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages_en)

Smart Villages portal and toolkit on the ENRD website:

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal_en)

ENRD Smart Villages community on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EUSmartVillages/>

ENRD publications on 'Smart Villages':

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal/smart-villages-toolkit\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal/smart-villages-toolkit_en)

Preparatory Action Smart Rural 21: <https://www.smartrural21.eu/>



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Social inclusion



© Local community of Ballstätt

The ENRD has been working on the theme of Social inclusion in rural areas since July 2016, looking in turn at different aspects – from integration of migrants to demographic changes.

Since May 2019, the ENRD's work in the area of social inclusion has been focusing on rural depopulation and opportunities for developing 'vibrant rural areas'. It has been exploring in particular how to revitalise rural areas through the creation of job opportunities and improving access to rural services.

A first workshop on '**Rural jobs**' was organised in Brussels on 27 November 2019. The second workshop of the series took

place online on 30 June 2020 and focused on '**Access to services**'. It explored the accessibility of services across rural Europe, the role of public support (including through EAFRD) and practical experiences of improving rural services in different Member States.

A new ENRD factsheet on 'Accessible rural services' summarises, in an eye-catching style, the key factors necessary to help rural areas thrive and be more attractive and viable: relevant infrastructure, fruitful partnerships between public and private partners and synergies between the different EU, regional and local policies.

Last but not least, the ENRD website now hosts a Social inclusion portal, collecting and signposting to project examples, policy documents and many other resources. Do not hesitate to take a (virtual) tour!

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD Workshop 'Vibrant Rural Areas: Access to Services': [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-vibrant-rural-areas-access-services\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-vibrant-rural-areas-access-services_en)

ENRD Social inclusion portal: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/social-inclusion\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/social-inclusion_en)

ENRD's Social inclusion playlist on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0zcmLs25qw&list=PLocST8\\_B8egb00J7mwcgsAbk5g6s8yLcy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0zcmLs25qw&list=PLocST8_B8egb00J7mwcgsAbk5g6s8yLcy)

EAFRD Projects Brochure 'Vibrant rural areas': [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eafrd-projects-brochure-vibrant-rural-areas\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eafrd-projects-brochure-vibrant-rural-areas_en)

## Rural Inspiration Awards 2020

Last year's ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards competition (#RIAwards2020) received 71 entries. The ENRD Contact Point thanks everyone involved in the process, from the project beneficiaries to the National Support Units who collected and submitted the projects for evaluation, the jury who helped select the winners and everyone who took part in the Public Vote.

The competition celebrated EAFRD-funded initiatives in the field of climate change mitigation, bioeconomy, and climate change adaptation. And the winners are... presented at page 34 of this magazine!


 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-2020_en)

## NEWS & UPDATES

### LEADER

The 4<sup>th</sup> LEADER Thematic Lab organised by the ENRD Contact Point took place on 4 June 2020 and looked at 'Maintaining and widening stakeholder engagement.' Participants discussed alternative and innovative ways of working with local stakeholders, ensuring their engagement in local development. They also shared experiences of how LAGs are responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

The 5<sup>th</sup> LEADER Thematic Lab took place on 26 November 2020 and focused on 'Developing local strategic approaches to address green issues'. Based on practical experiences, participants had the opportunity to exchange about various approaches such as re-localisation, strengthening local markets, rural-urban cooperation, as well as relevant practical and programming considerations.

These online events continued the series of LEADER Thematic Labs, following previous ones looking at LEADER and Smart Villages, Climate change mitigation and adaptation, and Youth and depopulation.

In spring 2020, LEADER stakeholders from different EU Member States actively shared examples of LEADER approaches and projects which show how the method can help rural communities to thrive. Stories range from youth engagement to community support for the elderly and from environmental action to administrative simplification. The case studies are now available

in the LEADER resources section of the ENRD website (tab 'ENRD publications') and in the Projects & Practice database.

Finally, the LEADER Resources section on the ENRD website has recently changed its style. Do you like its new look?

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

5<sup>th</sup> LEADER Thematic Lab on Developing local strategic approaches to address green issues: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-developing-local-strategic-approaches-address-green\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-developing-local-strategic-approaches-address-green_en)

4<sup>th</sup> LEADER Thematic Lab on Maintaining and widening stakeholder engagement: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-maintaining-and-widening-stakeholder-engagement\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-maintaining-and-widening-stakeholder-engagement_en)

ENRD events on LEADER, including previous Thematic Labs: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/past/leader-clld\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/past/leader-clld_en)

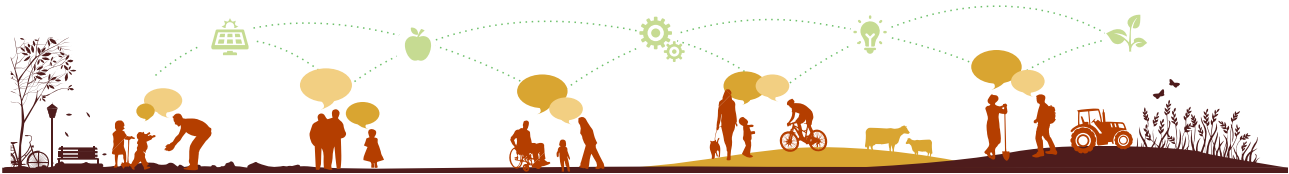
LEADER resources on ENRD website: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-resources\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-resources_en)

LEADER case studies in the ENRD Projects & Practice database: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en) (search by keyword 'LEADER/CLLD')

ENRD's LEADER playlist on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL20DD755E804D9CDD>



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> National Rural Networks meetings

The 17<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting took place on 7 May 2020 and was the first dedicated online NRN meeting. Over 80 people from 23 Member States took part. It was organised together with the Swedish Rural Network as virtual hosts and the participants embraced the webinar format.

The meeting confirmed that ownership, neutrality and equality in the governance arrangements are key success factors for rural networks. Participants also discussed useful actions for improving the perception of rural Europe.

The 18<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting also took place online, on 22 October 2020 and was co-hosted by the Flemish and the Walloon Rural Networks (Belgium). The event gathered over 70 participants from 25 Member States.

The meeting focussed on lessons learned for networking from the COVID-19 period, including new practices, particularly digital

alternatives, and means for engaging stakeholders. The event also provided the opportunity to discuss the role of the rural networks in stakeholder engagement activities including those related to the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

17<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/17th-nrn-meeting-webinar\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/17th-nrn-meeting-webinar_en)

18<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/18th-nrn-meeting\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/18th-nrn-meeting_en)

ENRD's rural networking playlist on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLocST8\\_B8egbib\\_C7rikHcCCGt8WcFp\\_a](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLocST8_B8egbib_C7rikHcCCGt8WcFp_a)

## NRN Workshops on communications

With rural development networking increasingly reliant on effective digital communications – especially in these COVID-19 times – the ENRD Contact Point organised a dedicated capacity building workshop on the topic on 16 June 2020. The event brought together over 40 representatives from NRN Support Units and Managing Authorities to exchange on and improve digital communication activities. Participants were able to exchange on their best practices and learn from their colleagues about digital methods of exchange and dissemination, efficient online communication and ways of targeting specific stakeholders. The event

involved journalists and communication experts who shared hints and tips for online hosting.

On 24 November 2020, the ENRD organised another online workshop for NRNs, this time on 'Valorising and communicating successful projects'. This virtual workshop looked to identify the success factors and added value delivered by projects and consider how successful projects can be identified, communicated and used in networking. The workshop also allowed to exchange the lessons learned from successful projects and how these experiences can best be communicated and transferred.

By attending the event, participants had a better understanding of the benefits of involvement in the Rural Inspiration Awards (RIA) framework and approach.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

NRN workshop 'Digital communication': [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-digital-communication\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-digital-communication_en)

NRN workshop 'Valorising and communicating successful projects': [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-national-rural-networks-valorising-and-communicating-successful\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-national-rural-networks-valorising-and-communicating-successful_en)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Governance updates

Rural Network governance meetings are a vital element of rural development networking. They guide the work of the EU Rural Networks and provide network members with important updates on EU policy initiatives and on planned and recent rural networks' activities.

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Rural Networks' Steering Group (SG) was held on 26 May 2020 and focused on updates on the state of play of the CAP reform and other relevant EU policy initiatives, including COVID-19 support for the agri-food sector and rural areas. SG members also considered and put forward ideas for ENRD Contact Point activities in the upcoming year.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Steering Group meeting took place on 8 October 2020. SG members exchanged on the CAP Reform and other relevant EU policy initiatives, including the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks' LEADER/CLLD Sub-group Meeting took place on 18 September 2020, providing members with an update on European Commission initiatives relating to LEADER. Local

Action Groups, LEADER and rural networks presented an overview of recent LEADER activities, responses to the COVID-19 situation and how lessons from these can be used in planning for LEADER in the next period. The discussion continued with a mini-workshop on the same day, where Sub-group members had the opportunity to look at key success factors in 'Improving LEADER delivery for resilient rural territories'.

On 4 December 2020, the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU Rural Networks Assembly was opened by Mr Wolfgang Burtscher,

Director-General of DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The meeting provided an update and exchange with members on the CAP Reform and Transitional Regulation and other relevant EU policy initiatives.

All these governance meetings took place online, demonstrating the capacity of European networks to adapt and continue their work despite the current travel restrictions.

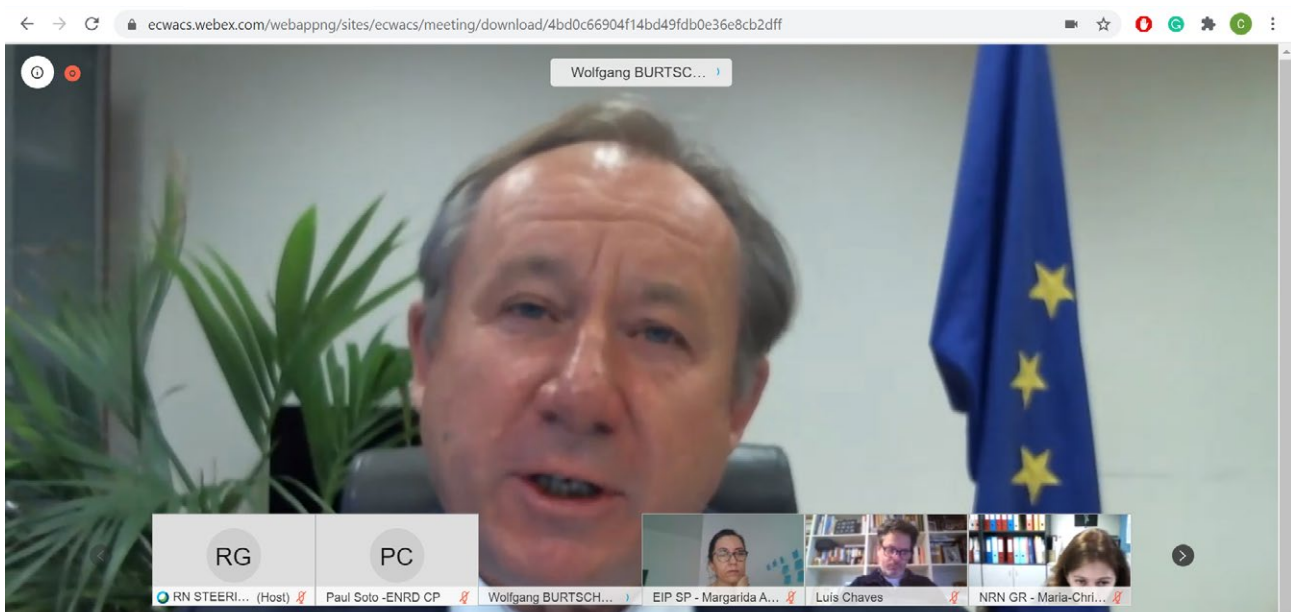
 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Rural Networks Steering Group:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/13th-rural-networks-steering-group-meeting\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/13th-rural-networks-steering-group-meeting_en)

14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Rural Networks Steering Group:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/14th-meeting-rural-networks-steering-group\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/14th-meeting-rural-networks-steering-group_en)

8<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks' LEADER/CLLD Sub-group Meeting and mini-workshop:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/8th-rural-networks-leaderclld-sub-group-meeting\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/8th-rural-networks-leaderclld-sub-group-meeting_en)

7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU Rural Networks Assembly:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/7th-meeting-eu-rural-networks-assembly\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/7th-meeting-eu-rural-networks-assembly_en)



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## UPDATE FROM THE EVALUATION HELPDESK

EUROPEAN  
EVALUATION  
HELPDESK  
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



### Supporting Member States in reporting on achievements and impacts for the Ex Post Evaluation

In 2019, for the first time in the 2014-2020 programming period, Member States had to report on their RDPs' contributions to the achievement of the EU's policy objectives by evaluating the policy's impacts. The findings of these evaluations were reported<sup>(1)</sup> to the European Commission in the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) 2019.

The Evaluation Helpdesk has analysed the AIRs 2019 to not only synthesis RDP achievements and impacts so far, but also, to identify major evaluation challenges and draw lessons for future learning.<sup>(2)</sup>

The main challenges identified concern:

- the conceptual understanding of definitions of indicators and methodologies for the calculation of result and impact indicators;
- the use of robust evaluation approaches and methods;
- the collection and management of data for evaluations;
- the assessment of net contributions;
- the quantification of secondary contributions, synergies and LEADER contributions.

To address these challenges and to better prepare for the ex post evaluation of the programming period 2014-2020, the Evaluation Helpdesk, in collaboration with thematic experts and DG AGRI, launched the Thematic Working Group, 'Ex post evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020: Learning from practice' at the end of February 2020.

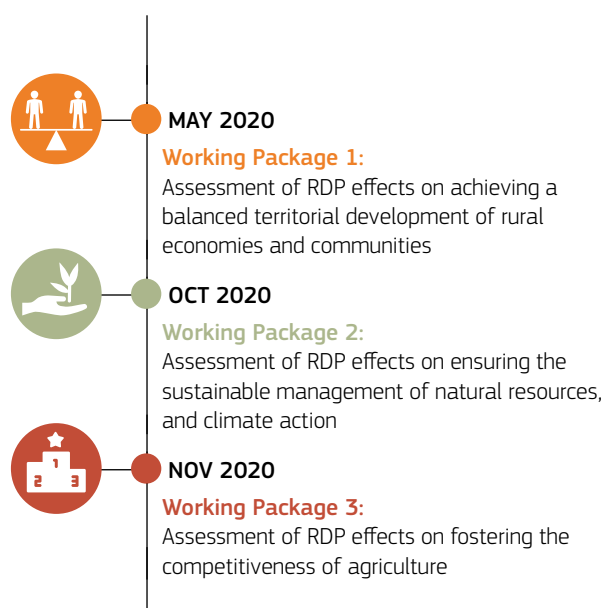
The objectives of the Thematic Working Group are to:

- address weaknesses in the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts;
- improve the calculation of result and impact indicators;
- tackle emerging issues in the assessment of priority areas (e.g. environment, climate, social indicators).

This Thematic Working Group will further serve as an important input into the future development of the monitoring and evaluation systems for the post-2020 period.

The Thematic Working Group will consist of three working packages each one related to the assessment of one of the three CAP general objectives.

#### TIME PLAN FOR THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUP 'EX POST EVALUATION OF RDPs 2014-2020: LEARNING FROM PRACTICE'



Each working package will encompass an overview of the emerging issues identified and the proposed recommendations for addressing these. These working packages will be enriched with practical examples to illustrate how the identified issues have been addressed in different Member States.

To ensure that the Thematic Working Group meets the practical needs of the evaluation community, ongoing consultations will take place with evaluation stakeholders through periodic Sounding Boards and other means of written feedback.

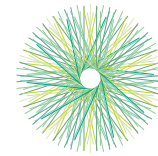
#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Working Package 1 'Assessment of RDP effects on achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities': [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/thematic-working-groups/thematic-working-group-8-ex-post-evaluation-rdps-2014-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/thematic-working-groups/thematic-working-group-8-ex-post-evaluation-rdps-2014-2020_en)

(1) Article 50 of the Regulation No 1303/2013, Article 75 of the Regulation 1305/2013, and Article 15 of the Commission Implementing Regulation No 808/2014

(2) Synthesis of the Evaluation Components of the Enhanced AIRs 2019' ([https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/summary-report-synthesis-evaluation-components-enhanced-air-2019-chapter-7\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/summary-report-synthesis-evaluation-components-enhanced-air-2019-chapter-7_en)) and 'Assessment of the Progress in Implementing the Evaluation Plans of RDPs 2014-2020' ([https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/summary-report-assessment-progress-implementing-evaluation-plans-rdps-2014\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/summary-report-assessment-progress-implementing-evaluation-plans-rdps-2014_en)), Good Practice Workshop no 12 ([https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/good-practice-workshops/how-demonstrate-rdp-achievements-and-impacts-lessons-learned\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/good-practice-workshops/how-demonstrate-rdp-achievements-and-impacts-lessons-learned_en)) and Yearly Capacity Building Events in the Member States

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

**UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI**

eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

## EIP-AGRI addresses practical soil management challenges to enhance soil health. EIP-AGRI seminar fosters innovation for healthy soils for Europe

Healthy soils are fundamental to the sustainable production of food, feed and fibre. They also provide many other functions that contribute to human well-being such as water filtering, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling and biodiversity conservation. Soil health is affected by unsustainable management practices like frequent tillage, which accelerates soil organic matter loss, incorrect use of agrochemicals leading to soil and water pollution, or irrigation practices causing salinisation problems. The EIP-AGRI contributes to addressing these challenges through its soil-related activities, and many other types of EIP-AGRI projects.

The Spanish Operational Group project (OG) 'Sembra en Sec' – Development and adaptation of rice dry seeding in the Ebro Delta – addressed the soil salinisation challenge the Spanish Delta is facing. This salinisation is caused by rising sea levels and erosion of the Delta, and threatens the future of the rice fields. In addition, the apple snail- an invasive aquatic snail from South America- is ravaging rice crops in the area.

"Dry seeding consists of seeding the rice in moist soil uncovered by water. This stops the snails entering the fields and damaging the young plants. However, when no layer of fresh water covers the fields, sea water is more likely to enter the soil", says farmer Miguel Tomàs Ferré who is involved in the OG. Once the rice seedlings have grown tall enough to withstand the snail attacks, the fields are inundated intermittently, until the rice plants have reached their full height. The rice fields are continuously monitored to check the salinity of the soil during the entire process. "We found that flooding the fields intermittently reduces the apple snail population and there is no negative effect on soil salinisation. We also discovered that on sandy soils the yield was slightly less, while on clay soil the yield increased by 3%. We will use these results in the future, since this system is the only one we can use in the fields suffering from the invasion of the apple snail. It is the only strategy possible to keep producing rice".

Many Operational Groups and other innovative projects will be invited to join the EIP-AGRI event 'Healthy soils for Europe: sustainable management through knowledge and practice', which will tentatively be held in spring 2021, in Portugal. This EIP-AGRI seminar will raise awareness, address practical soil management challenges, and explore solutions to enhance soil health. It will also consider the different soil functions

and ecosystem services. The debate will build on outcomes of previous EIP-AGRI events and their results. On 20-21 October 2020, an online EIP-AGRI workshop contributing to the Horizon Europe mission: 'Caring for Soil is Caring for Life' was held, which provided an opportunity to give feedback on the objectives of this EU mission, on ways to achieve them and on the mission's research priorities.



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### **i** FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EIP-AGRI Seminar 'Healthy soils for Europe':  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-healthy-soils-europe-sustainable>

EIP-AGRI Focus Group Soil salinisation: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/focus-groups/soil-salinisation>

EIP-AGRI activities on soil: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/news/safeguarding-our-soils>

Horizon Europe mission area: Soil health and food:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme/mission-area-soil-health-and-food\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme/mission-area-soil-health-and-food_en)

EIP-AGRI workshop 'Caring for Soil is Caring for Life':  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-workshop-shaping-eu-mission-soil>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## EU NEWS

EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027  
and Next Generation EU

The European Commission proposed on 26 May 2020 a major recovery plan<sup>(1)</sup> for Europe based on harnessing the full potential of the EU budget while aligning with the principles of the EU Green Deal and the European Digital Agenda.

The recovery plan aims at supporting Member States to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the Covid crisis, kick-starting the economy, helping private investment and addressing Europe's strategic challenges. The

recovery plan combines the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Next Generation EU, a temporary recovery instrument.

Adopted on 17 December 2020, the new MFF will make available € 1 074 trillion for beneficiaries of EU funding during the next seven years, as of 1 January 2021.<sup>(2)</sup>

For the Next Generation EU recovery instrument of € 750 billion to become operational, the European Commission needs to have the legal possibility to borrow on the markets and distribute the amounts where needed the most. To that end, EU Member States still need to ratify the Own Resources Decision in line with their constitutional requirements.

The EU's long-term budget, coupled with Next Generation EU, will be the largest stimulus package ever financed through the EU budget. A total of € 1.8 trillion will help rebuild a post-COVID-19 Europe. It will be a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.



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## CAP: transitional period and future legal framework

The Common Agricultural Policy post-2020 will earmark € 336.4 billion<sup>(3)</sup> through the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (€ 258.6 billion) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (€ 77.8 billion). The CAP will support rural areas in making the structural changes necessary in line with the European Green Deal and in achieving the ambitious targets in line with the new Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies.

To ensure a smooth transition from the current EU farm policy to the future one, transitional CAP rules have been proposed by the Commission. Following an agreement between the co-legislators, these rules – covering the period 2021 and 2022 – were adopted and entered into force at the end of December 2020. They involve a two year extension of the current generation of RDPs which will be supplemented with further financing from both the new MFF and, once confirmed, € 8 billion from Next Generation EU.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/recovery-plan-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/recovery-plan-europe_en)

(2) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2021-2027\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2021-2027_en)

(3) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/>

(4) <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200627IPR82204/transition-to-new-eu-farm-policy-partial-deal-on-key-provisions-for-after-2020>



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## EU response to the COVID-19 outbreak



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European institutions and the recently adopted EU budget are fully mobilised to support the recovery of European economies and societies following the COVID-19 outbreak. Up-to-date information is available on each institution's online channels.

Since the beginning of the pandemic the European Commission has been coordinating a common European response to the COVID-19 crisis,<sup>(1)</sup> not only to support the healthcare systems of the EU Member States, including the development and deployment of vaccines, but also to mobilise resources to support businesses hit by the crisis, including farm holdings, agri-food companies, and rural businesses.

The measures taken by the Commission to support the agriculture and food sectors during the pandemic<sup>(2)</sup> aim to:

- ensure an efficient supply chain;
- guarantee direct support to farmers through specific financial instruments, increased advances for CAP income support and special State aid for farms, food processing and marketing companies;<sup>(3)</sup>
- help ensure continuity of business activities via a temporary measure allowing EU countries and regions with remaining rural development funds to pay up to €7 000 per farmer and €50 000 per small and medium enterprise (SME);<sup>(4)</sup> and
- take advantage of CAP flexibility to help Member States and farmers who are facing practical difficulties in meeting certain requirements.

The Committee of the Regions, as the interface and reference point between the EU and its local and regional governments, endorsed a plan to assist, inform, engage and represent regions and cities across Europe. It opened an online platform for the exchange of experiences in dealing with the pandemic.<sup>(5)</sup>

## European Green Deal

Presented in December 2019, the European Green Deal<sup>(1)</sup> is the European Commission's roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all.

The Green Deal has a particular relevance for the agri-food sector. By embedding the concept of sustainability in the way food is produced and consumed, the European Green Deal aims to bring benefits for all the actors in the food chain and in particular for farmers. It will help farmers achieve higher returns on investment and lower costs, enjoy new business opportunities also on global markets, play a stronger role in the food supply chain and get a stronger connection with consumers.

The European Commission's proposal for the first European Climate Law,<sup>(2)</sup> presented in March 2020, aims to establish the framework for achieving climate neutrality, thus writing the goals set by the European Green Deal into law. The European Climate Pact launched in December 2020 is an EU-wide initiative inviting people, communities and organisations to participate in climate action and build a greener Europe.<sup>(3)</sup>

In May 2020, the European Commission presented two new key strategies in the framework of the European Green Deal: the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

(1) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en)

(2) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/coronavirus-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/coronavirus-response_en)

(3) For a list of approved State aid schemes, see [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/rural-responses-covid-19-crisis\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/rural-responses-covid-19-crisis_en)

(4) Following the adoption of the CAP transitional rules, applications for this support have to be approved by end June 2021, and paid out by 31 December 2021.

(5) <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/COVID19-exchangeplatform.aspx>

(1) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

(2) [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law_en)

(3) [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact_en)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## From Farm to Fork

A cornerstone of the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>(1)</sup> (presented on 20 May 2020) aims to support the EU's transition towards a more healthy and sustainable food system.

The Farm to Fork Strategy has five objectives:

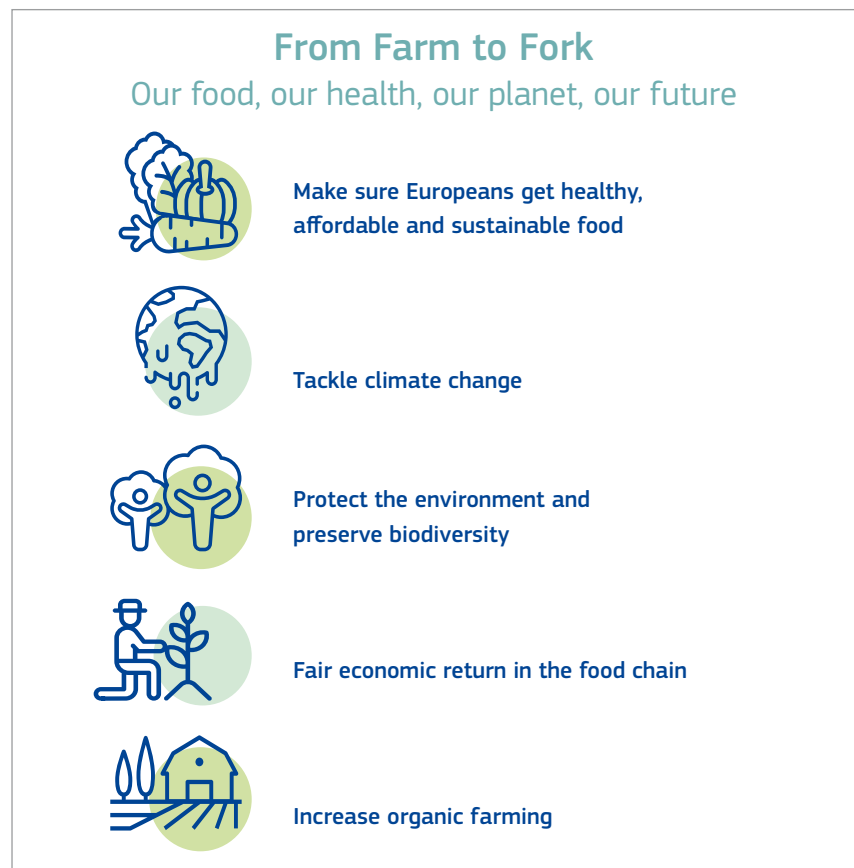
- making sure Europeans get healthy, affordable and sustainable food;
- tackling climate change;
- protecting the environment and preserve biodiversity;
- ensuring fair economic return in the food chain; and
- increasing organic farming.

The strategy will have direct impacts on the agriculture sector.

By 2030, the Commission aims to halve the use of pesticides in agriculture, which can be a source of pollution for soil, air and water. It also aims to reduce the use of fertilisers by at least 20% while reducing nutrient losses from soils by at least 50%. The excess of nutrients in the environment represents a major risk of air, soil and water pollution, with potentially negative impacts on biodiversity and climate.

The Commission proposes to reduce the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% and boost the

development of the EU organic farming area, with the aim of achieving 25% of total farmland under organic farming by 2030.



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(1) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590404602495&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0381>

## EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

Biodiversity loss and the climate crisis are interdependent and can exacerbate each other. Restoring forests, soils and wetlands and creating green spaces in cities will help achieve the climate change mitigation that is needed by 2030.

Presented on 20 May, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>(1)</sup> aims to “bring nature back into our life”.

The new EU-wide strategy seeks to establish protected areas for at least 30% of land and 30% of sea in Europe, restore degraded ecosystems in land and sea across the whole of Europe and unlock €20 billion per year for biodiversity through various sources, including EU funds and national and private funding. The strategy will put the EU in a leading position in the world in addressing the global biodiversity crisis.

(1) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030\\_en#the-new-eu-wide-biodiversity-strategy-will](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030_en#the-new-eu-wide-biodiversity-strategy-will)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Can using different wording benefit rural areas?

Dave Odegard and Maja Svensson, Svengard & Co.

It started as a list. Often-used phrases and wording for Sweden's rural areas that the creators considered inaccurate, condescending and harmful. The Swedish Rural Lexicon first appeared online in 2017 and included explanations, examples, and guidance on alternatives. Although written in Swedish, its insight is universal.



**Dave Odegard and Maja Svensson, Svengard & Co.**, a freelance writing and translation team based in Sweden collaborating with the Swedish Rural Network  
[info@svengard.se](mailto:info@svengard.se)

The Swedish Rural Lexicon was put together by Rural Sweden ('Hela Sverige ska leva' in Swedish), a national organisation with local and regional chapters that advocates for rural communities in Sweden. The lexicon has since become a cornerstone in the group's communications strategy.

"We have a mission to work for rural development, to enable favourable conditions in all of Sweden, a balance between city and rural areas," says Rural Sweden's Managing Director Terese Bengard.

One entry in the lexicon relates to the fact that rural areas are often defined in relation to populated areas, like 'City X and its surrounding countryside'. This creates the impression that the 'countryside' is owned by 'City X' so the lexicon suggests the alternative phrasing: 'the nearby countryside', 'the countryside near City X' or even inverting the terms to read 'rural area Y and its neighbouring City X'.

According to Bengard, the lexicon came about when the group was brainstorming ideas for a new communication strategy. The entire team, with their combined years of experience in rural development, worked on it together.

The initiative is a linguistic effort to counteract what is called the 'urban norm'. Like heteronormativity or white privilege, the term identifies and highlights unspoken



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values which are often accepted unchallenged. It is about an unequal distribution of power in society, but specifically regarding rural and urban areas.

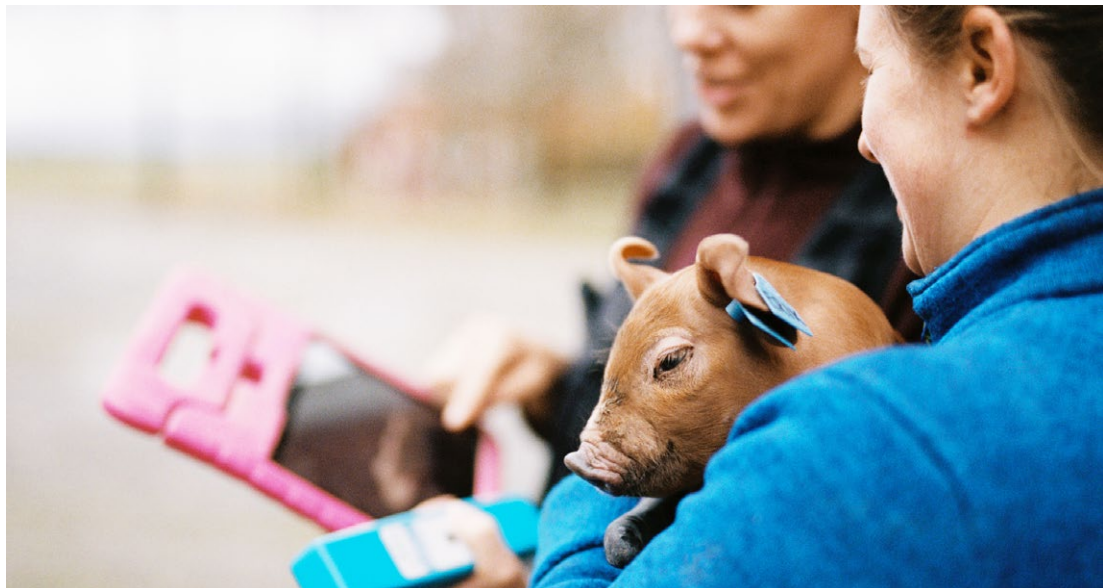
As Bengard explains, the 'urban norm' means that one primarily sees things from the perspective of the city. That the city is the 'normal' through which people build their world-view, and the other is 'different'.

The influence of applying the 'urban norm' also extends beyond language. It can affect public opinion, social dynamics within a country and even how governments respond to the needs of their own citizens.

According to Maria Gustafsson, Managing Director for the Swedish Rural Network – of which Rural Sweden is a member – the 'urban norm' can prevent policymakers from enacting laws or programmes that help rural areas, even when that is their aim.

"The image of the rural areas becomes very generalised," she explains, "which runs the risk of not seeing the real opportunities and challenges. When you don't see those, then the policies or their implementation aren't adapted to make them work."

Words and how we look at things can create consequences in how resources are allocated. As Bengard says, "That's maybe our long-term goal: the division of resources. Then you can create a small project, like the Swedish



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Rural Lexicon”, which, she notes can be an important contribution to eventually increasing the share of public funding going to rural communities.

A good example of how using the language of the ‘urban norm’ can sway public policy is the different use of ‘support’ and ‘invest’ in reference to tax expenditures. A discussion about government spending, on infrastructure for example, is usually described as ‘support’ when it is in rural areas, but is often portrayed as an ‘investment’ when it is for urban communities.

As highlighted by the Swedish Rural Lexicon, this difference creates a contrast in value between the two. An investment is ‘something good and necessary for the country’, but support is seen as ‘something you give out of goodwill to the needy’.

For Bengard, the other pieces of the puzzle include identifying problems in rural areas, figuring out solutions, finding related government policies and adapting them where needed to better fit rural needs. To do that requires a deeper sense of understanding that can be shared with others. This is easier to do when you have words that can describe things.

The struggle against the ‘urban norm’ language goes beyond the Swedish Rural Lexicon. Not long after publishing the lexicon, Rural Sweden had to deal with the fallout from officials in the Swedish government announcing they were going to ‘outsource’ jobs from Stockholm to rural areas. The term was picked up and repeated by journalists writing on the issue.

“We notified them that it isn’t good to use the word ‘outsource’ [when describing the initiative],” says Bengard, who explains the term implied rural communities were being granted the jobs that were being taken from urban residents. “They changed and thereafter were very good

at expressing it in a more neutral way”.

In 2019, the Swedish Rural Network took the Swedish Rural Lexicon and built on it. The Network added dozens of suggestions on terminology, intended to allow their member organisations to express themselves in more ‘neutral’ terms.

“It is about power relations,” Gustafsson says, “and the one that has the power needs to open up to other perspectives.”

Bengard points out that while Swedes pride themselves on their country’s notoriety for being open to other perspectives and questioning the power dynamics of social norms, there isn’t much examination of how effective such conversations are in reaching people, both in Sweden and beyond.

“We maybe think that we are good at these sorts of things but maybe we aren’t,” she says.

Shortly after the interview in which Bengard made this statement, in May 2020, the ENRD convened its 17<sup>th</sup> National Rural Networks’ meeting, co-organised online by the Swedish Rural Network Support Unit. One of the points on the agenda was an examination and exchange of information between NRNs across Europe on how rural development is impacted by the commonly used language and the image of rural areas.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The balance between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ and related terminology were discussed at the 17<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting on 7 May 2020, [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/17th-nrn-meeting-webinar\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/17th-nrn-meeting-webinar_en)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Increasing diversity in European agriculture: including women

Sally Shortall

Ensuring that the European agricultural industry includes women is critical to the success of the sector – but there is still some work to do.



**Professor Sally Shortall**, Duke of Northumberland Chair of Rural Economy, Centre for Rural Economy, School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Newcastle University  
sally.shortall@newcastle.ac.uk

Across Europe there is wide variation in the structure of agriculture and women's role in the sector. According to Eurostat,<sup>(1)</sup> 70% of European farmers are men and the cultural norm is to understand farming as a male profession. We know that women provide a considerable amount of farm labour and are frequently involved in farm management decisions.<sup>(2)</sup> (Eurostat, 2018; FAO, 2018). Research has shown that diversified industries are more successful.<sup>(3)</sup> Ensuring that the agricultural industry includes women is critical to the success of the sector.

In general, women rarely inherit land. In Member States such as Latvia and Lithuania where considerably more women own farms, these tend to be very small and subsistence-based rather than commercial farms.

Some countries have taken significant steps to try and alter cultural patterns of land transfer but they have had



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limited success. For example, Norway introduced the Allodial Law in 1974, which made the eldest child the legal heir to the farm, yet most Norwegian farm owners continue to be men.<sup>(4)</sup>

Ireland is a case in point: only 12% of farm owners are women. In 2017, the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) had only one woman on its National Council of 56 members which is the governing body. IFA established a Diversity Committee, intended to increase the representation of women in the organisation. In 2019, it launched a Diversity Strategy which establishes targets and quotas to increase the number of women active in the IFA. Thirteen per cent of the National Council are now women.

The IFA's reflections on its diversity and lack of women representatives is welcomed. IFA is not unusual in having few women representatives. For example, although Austria has a very strong women's agricultural

(1) Eurostat (2018) *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Statistics*, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-FK-18-001>

(2) Eurostat (2018), cit. and FAO (2018) *What gender mainstreaming means in practice: Cases from selected countries in the European Union*, <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1145225/>

(3) Pearson, R. and Elson, D., (2015) *Transcending the impact of the financial crisis in the United Kingdom: towards plan F—a feminist economic strategy*. *feminist review*, 109(1), pp.8-30, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1057/fr.2014.42>

(4) Shortall S, McKee A, Sutherland L-A. (2020) *The performance of occupational closure: The case of agriculture and gender*. *Sociologia Ruralis* 60(1), 40-57, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/soru.12279>



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organisation, all nine agricultural Chambers of Commerce have male presidents. Thus, women are under-represented in top-level decision-making.

There are other initiatives across Europe to increase women's visibility. For example, there are various awards for innovative women farmers. The Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations and the General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union (Copa-Cogeca) established in 2012 the European Innovation Award for Women Farmers to highlight the many innovative projects created by women in the sector across the EU. Spain offers a similar award to innovative women farmers.<sup>(5)</sup>

Following commissioned research, the Scottish Government has committed considerable funds per year up to 2024 to increase women's representation in the industry and to develop an equality charter<sup>(6)</sup>.

The fact that farming organisations are reflecting on the issue of diversity and that governments are carrying out activities to increase the visibility of women and establishing equality charters are all positive initiatives. Yet, on their own they are not enough. The issue is not one of women's ability, but rather cultural norms and unconscious structural exclusion.<sup>(7)</sup> The EU is committed to gender mainstreaming and as such must encourage Member States to take this responsibility seriously to ensure women active in agriculture are represented in decision-making processes, such as their partnership arrangements for the preparation of the new CAP Strategic Plans. Diversity and inclusion will enhance the financial viability of the sector.

(5) FAO (2018) *cit.*

(6) Scottish Government (2019) *Women in Agriculture Taskforce: final report*, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/final-report-women-agriculture-taskforce/>

(7) Shortall et al., *cit.*

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Women as agents of social innovation in rural areas

Cristina Dalla Torre and Elisa Ravazzoli

Based on research conducted by SIMRA – Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas (a Horizon 2020 project which ended in early 2020) and the REXSAC project (funded by Nordforsk), this article reflects on the experiences of women's empowerment and community resilience in rural areas worldwide.<sup>(1)</sup>



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Around the world, rural women contribute to innovating and transforming the social and economic fabric of their communities. However, they face traditional ideas of entrepreneurship as a 'male' activity and have troubles to gain respect as business initiators and community leaders. Therefore, they often work as paid or unpaid workers on family farms and businesses or dedicate their life to raising children.

Research conducted by the SIMRA project in rural areas of Europe (Italy, Serbia and the UK), in the Mediterranean Basin (Lebanon and Morocco) and by the REXSAC project in Northern Canada, revealed the many women-led initiatives aimed at empowering themselves and their communities. These organisations define initiatives where rural women are protagonists of social change as Women-led Social Innovation.

Women-led Social Innovation initiatives in marginalised rural areas vary from traditional activities to providing innovative services or goods, including social agriculture, organic farming, international marketing of local traditional products, intergenerational exchange on traditional craftsmanship and business acceleration services. Moreover, their organisational forms, linked to social engagement, whether social cooperatives, enterprises or associations, are innovative.

Examples of Women-led Social Innovation include a social cooperative of Moroccan women selling Argan



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oil; a social cooperative of Italian women farmers offering childcare services on farms; a British counselling and business accelerator service for women traders, microbusiness owners or founders of non-profit organisations. In Serbia, an association trains women in the production and processing of organic greenhouse vegetables. In Canada, an informal learning programme brings together women to sew parkas and prepare meals for the most vulnerable people in the local community. In Lebanon, a social cooperative promotes the regional food heritage while processing excess local produce.

Common features of these case studies are their location in areas with a demographic trend of outmigration and/or brain drain and infrastructural difficulties resulting in high transport and production costs. Geographical and cultural specificities include aridity, mountain and/or island territories and patriarchal values determining the socio-economic marginalisation of women.

## DRIVERS, BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

SIMRA examined the drivers of social innovations and their impact on the well-being and resilience of rural communities. The analysis revealed that the factors that drive women to start and become agents of social innovation initiatives are linked to a disadvantage in their starting conditions: lack of economic capital, political visibility and support for their activities. However, being

(1) The authors would like to acknowledge contributions by Sophie Alkhaled, Valentino Marini Govigli, Mohammed Bengoumi, Houda Chorti, Jasmiini (Pylkkänen) Fransala, Verena Gramm, Elena Gorriz-Mifsud, Sarah Jack, Arbia Labidi, Mariana Melnykovich, Patricia Sfeir and Ivana Zivojinovic.

creative and socially oriented, women have the capacity to recognise and exploit opportunities, such as local and international women networks, associations and institutions, the availability of primary resources and the growing market demand for innovative services and products.

In the initial phase of idea development, women-led initiatives face obstacles such as male mistrust in their capability to establish successful initiatives. Moreover, women themselves are often sceptical about the remunerative capability of their initiatives.

An interesting positive aspect of women-led innovation is its impact on the rural community's well-being and resilience. Thanks to these initiatives, women become a reference point for communities and help strengthen community bonds. Through the creation of professional opportunities in social entrepreneurship specifically targeting them, women acquire skills and a social role in the community, as well as more economic independence and decision-making power. In some cases, they become key actors in the provision of decentralised social services in rural areas (childcare, training and education, solidarity meals), as well as the acquisition of specialised production techniques and machinery for the community.

The positive impacts of the initiatives include the valorisation of local traditions, foods and handicrafts, the promotion of rural lifestyles and ecological values and the enhancement of a more equitable division of income among genders and community members.

### IMPACTS

From the SIMRA and REXSAC cases analysed, we conclude that by being agents of social innovation initiatives in rural areas, women empower themselves and improve the well-being and resilience of the whole community. To begin, women-led initiatives leverage bottom-up cooperation with external actors to acquire enough resources. In so doing, women invest time in the community. Sometimes however, they can get overburdened with volunteering activities.

Further research is needed to establish the potential effects of women-led initiatives on the women themselves. It is clear, however, that Women-led Social Innovation creates a virtuous cycle of socio-economic development.

Women as leaders encourage a cooperative, peaceful and humane development. Their initiatives promote a

holistic development of the community by diversifying traditional economic activities and developing activities requiring little start-up investment. The cooperative form of the initiatives enables the sharing of entrepreneurial risks among members and makes them more prone to be financially sustainable. Simultaneously, women can also play a role in integrating social services offered by governments (e.g. education and care for vulnerable people in the community). Therefore, they should be supported by public administrations through public-private partnerships according to a logic of shared responsibilities among private and public sectors for social services provision in rural areas. It is important for public administrations to create the enabling conditions for women-led social innovation and provide instruments for experimentation, innovation and learning.



### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The H2020 SIMRA project (2016-2020) sought to advance understanding of social innovation and innovative governance in agriculture, forestry and rural development, and how to boost them, particularly in Europe's marginalised rural areas, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. Visit the project's website: [www.simra-h2020.eu](http://www.simra-h2020.eu)

- Case studies of social innovation in marginalised rural areas: [www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simra-case-studies/](http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simra-case-studies/)  
<https://womeninthearticandantarctic.ca/2019/08/26/jasmiini-pylkkanen/>
- Related article: <http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/2018/03/09/social-innovations-focusing-on-women-in-marginalised-rural-areas-across-europe-and-the-mediterranean/>
- Practice guide: <http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/practice-guide/>
- REXSAC (Resource Extraction and Sustainable Arctic Communities): <https://www.rexsac.org/research/>



## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# RURITAGE – Heritage for rural regeneration

**Simona Tondelli**

Rural communities around the world tell us the story of thousands of years of interaction between nature, culture and humans. They embed unique traditions, gastronomy, landscapes and human capital. However, they are also facing demographic and socio-economic challenges.



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**R**URITAGE is a four-year project funded by the Horizon 2020 programme. It started in June 2018 and includes 38 partners from 19 countries in the EU and beyond. The project aims to turn rural areas into sustainable development laboratories to demonstrate the role of cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) as an engine for local regeneration and community empowerment.

RURITAGE identifies six drivers for regenerating rural communities, defined as Systemic Innovation Areas: pilgrimage, local food production, art and festivals, landscape management, migration, and resilience.

It has also identified 13 Role Models, i.e. territories that have achieved rural regeneration by building on their cultural and natural heritage along the six Systemic Innovation Areas. Ruritage then classified, described and analysed the Role Models' practices, business models, governance framework and regeneration mechanisms to better understand how they might inspire other rural areas. Seven additional Role Models were selected through an open call in the autumn of 2018.

## ROLE MODELS

Among the Role Models, the Camino de Santiago (Spain) and Via Mariae (Romania) identified pilgrimage and hiking routes as part of their cultural and natural



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heritage and developed them into opportunities for international recognition.

In the case of the Coffee Landscape of Colombia and the local agro-food production in Puglia, Italy, local food production was used as a diverse and dynamic channel for sharing stories, forming relationships and building communities.

The non-profit association PIAM in Asti (Italy) and the Lesvos UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece) took the opportunities offered by the arrival of migrants in rural areas to encourage rural regeneration by, for example, re-populating abandoned areas and fostering new economic and social growth. PIAM puts the emphasis on hospitality and inclusion for migrants, while Lesvos has developed integration and information programmes for newly-arrived migrants- as well as locals- on cultural and natural heritage.

Art and festivals are becoming increasingly popular in rural areas and, by enabling participants of all ages and abilities to participate, rural areas are able to generate new cultural capital and further increase creativity. Two successful practices are TakeArt (UK) in Somerset, which strives to make professional arts experiences accessible to all communities, and Visegrád (Hungary) that developed a place narrative strategy and organised an annual medieval themed festival to encourage tourism in the locality.

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The Wild Atlantic Way (IE), the Duero-Douro cultural landscape (ES and PT) and the Austrått and Ørland manorial landscape (series of large country houses with land – NO) are perfect examples of diverse integrated landscape management and governance models that have boosted regional development by using their natural and cultural heritage.

Finally, RURITAGE explored the concept of resilience as a driver for regeneration, turning challenges (such as natural hazard risks but also social and economic crises) into learning and development opportunities by boosting responsible ownership of cultural and natural heritage in rural areas. Good examples of this are the UNESCO Global Geoparks of Psiloritis (Greece) and Katla (Iceland).

### RURITAGE REPLICATORS

Six other rural areas are engaged in the project as Replicators: the Magma UNESCO Global Geopark (Norway); Negova (Slovenia); Appignano del Tronto (Italy); the Geo-Naturepark UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany); the Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geopark (Austria) and the Gediz-Bakircay Basins of Izmir (Turkey). All of them have worked intensively during the first 18 months of the project to learn from the Role Models' successful strategies by tailoring these to their own territories through knowledge exchange with the project partners and local stakeholders' engagement.

Each Role Model and Replicator has established a so-called Rural Heritage Hub which is both a community of local stakeholders and a physical space where the local community meets and exchanges. The objective is to share the acquired knowledge at local level and to collect insights from communities, feedback and ideas on local regeneration strategies. Currently over 2 500 people are involved in the hubs.

The Replicators have developed Action Plans for rural regeneration with actions to be implemented locally in cooperation with the community of stakeholders. They include training for improving local skills, art festivals and exchange opportunities for international artists, the promotion of pilgrimage, hiking and cycle routes and the integration of migrants in community activities.

While the Replicators are starting to implement their actions, in turn the Role Models have expressed interest in improving their own strategies. At the same time, RURITAGE partners are working on developing tools and methodologies to make the upscale and replication of the RURITAGE approach easy and open to all rural areas.

The project is currently looking to the future and working on establishing a brand for heritage-led regeneration projects. Future activities include a summer school and development of a professional Master's programme about cultural and natural heritage as a resource to regenerate rural areas.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Being resilient is one of the drivers of rural regeneration. Accordingly, and in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, RURITAGE launched a call for actions to share approaches that could help rural communities increase and strengthen their resilience.

RURITAGE started to investigate which are the main threats the pandemic is posing to rural areas, but also how these challenges can be turned into opportunities for rural development and regeneration. A participatory workshop on this topic took place during the RURITAGE General Assembly on 28 May 2020. A webinar on 8 July 2020, open to the general public, presented RURITAGE's preliminary considerations with relevant institutions and stakeholders (including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the ENRD). The results of this process are available in the vision paper 'Thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis: heritage-based opportunities for the regeneration of rural areas'.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

RURITAGE website: <https://www.ruritage.eu/project/>  
RURITAGE summer school and professional Master's programme:

<https://www.ruritage.eu/join-us/>

RURITAGE Vision paper 'Thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis: heritage-based opportunities for the regeneration of rural areas':

<https://www.ruritage.eu/resources/publications/>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Encouraging local energy communities in rural areas

Cynthia Echave and Danilo Čeh

The Med Renewable Energy Project aims to capitalise on the results of different Interreg projects on renewable energy, favouring holistic energy transition strategies.



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The Med Renewable Energy Project is a transnational cooperation project (co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Interreg MED Programme 2019-2022) gathering over 110 institutions from 10 EU Member States and three neighbouring countries, all located in the Mediterranean (Med) region.

The project has developed the Ecosystemic Transition Units (ETU) initiative, a capitalisation strategy for transferring the results of the different Interreg Med projects dedicated to renewable energies – collectively referred to as the Med Renewable Energy Community.

The aim of the ETU initiative is to promote an energy transition model based on a holistic approach. Its objective is to empower rural territories to define their energy transition roadmap through innovative governance based on five principles: ecological response to the climate crisis, territorial equity, social innovation, green economy and commitment and cooperation.

The initiative has developed a toolbox collecting technical tools developed by the Med Renewable Energy Community and aims to encourage local authorities and civil society to use such tools in their energy transition plans. The ETU model can help rural areas:

- apply an ecological approach to the climate emergency response;
- promote territorial equity between urban and rural contexts;



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- boost social innovation encouraging community empowerment and bringing clean energy solutions to the most vulnerable social groups;
- encourage the green economy by attracting green businesses into local energy communities; and
- advocate for cooperation and commitment between key actors and key policy frameworks.

The energy transition can be a catalyst for rural revitalisation through reorientation towards a greener and more resilient pathway. The Med Renewable Energy Project aims to highlight the gaps and opportunities in this sense and gathers partners' efforts to respond to the needs of rural areas.

The main contribution of the MED Renewable Energy Project is to promote increased production and consumption of renewable energy in rural areas, by supporting the application and use of the ETU toolbox



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and the ETU model in: energy planning (through sectoral plans), energy communities (through raising citizens' awareness of energy transition), energy governance (through the implementation of green fiscal policies) and energy facilities (through their design and implementation).

### **A CALL FOR RURAL AREAS**

The project calls on local authorities to join the ETU initiative and integrate its toolbox and proposed model into their energy transition plans. The ETU is reaching out to small villages and rural areas located either on the mainland or on islands in the Mediterranean. The project is organised in three strategic areas – the Western Med Area, Adriatic Med Area and Eastern Med Area – which are supported by five working groups in Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Greece.

#### **i FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

##### **Med Renewable Energy Community:**

<https://interreg-med.eu/news-events/news/detail/actualites/renewable-energy-med-community-is-pleased-to-announce-etu-initiative-manifesto/>  
Interreg MED programme: <https://interreg-med.eu/>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Recognising the essential contribution of small farms to food security

Nevena Alexandrova, Giulia Palestini and Sandra Šūmane

The COVID-19 pandemic has made clearer than ever the importance of regional food systems. The Horizon 2020 project SALSA has lessons and insights about the contribution of small farms and food businesses in regional food systems to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS).



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There are 500 million smallholder farms in the world, supporting almost two billion people and contributing to biodiversity, sustainable rural development and climate resilience. In the European Union alone, more than three-quarters of farms are small<sup>(1)</sup>. Yet their role in the agri-food sector and their contribution to food security is often neglected and there are not many policy schemes specifically targeted to support them and their needs.

The H2020 project SALSA – Small farms, small food businesses and sustainable food and nutrition security, (2016-2020) aimed to provide a better understanding of the current and potential contribution of small farms and food businesses to sustainable food and nutrition security. It gathered 16 partners from Europe and Africa and used transdisciplinary and participative approaches. In the European and African regions studied by the project, small farms are found to contribute to a large share of the overall regional production. The project, therefore, proposes policy recommendations to unleash the potential of smallholders.

According to the findings of the SALSA project, small farms and food businesses play a key role in filling the gaps that exist in ‘industrialised’ food supply chains in terms of land use, local varieties and market channels. They also clearly contribute to the alleviation of rural poverty, whilst delivering environmental and social benefits. In particular, small farms are found to contribute sustainably to regional food availability and access to fresh nutritious food for their communities.

The level of small farms’ contribution to regional food availability depends on both the regional food system’s integration into the global food trade system and on the nature of their connection with their regional food system. The small farms of the African and eastern European countries analysed by SALSA contribute more to regional food availability by using agricultural output to feed their own households and to sell locally. In the northern and southern European regions, SALSA found that small farms do not contribute significantly to the total regional produce, either due to their low numbers (northern Europe) or because they mainly export their produce outside of their region (southern Europe).<sup>(2)</sup>

The project estimates that in 44% of the food systems studied – notably in Africa, southern and eastern Europe – the production from small farms could cover 100% of the regional food demand and in some cases even generate a surplus.

Despite these positive estimates, the continued contribution of small farms to regional FNS is not assured. Southern and eastern Europe, for example, lost 1.4 million small farms between 2010 and 2016 alone<sup>(3)</sup> and this trend is likely to continue in parallel with the rural depopulation phenomenon occurring in many countries.

The COVID-19 upheaval is already leading to unforeseen scenarios. For instance, restrictions on movements are hindering farmers’ access to markets

(1) While it is not easy to identify a common meaning of ‘a small farm’ in the European context (let alone the African one), SALSA identifies small farms as those of less than 5 ha in size and 8 European Size Units – ESU (which is equivalent to €9800 of Standard Gross Margin (SGM): <http://www.salsa.uevora.pt/conceptual-framework/>)

(2) For more details on the macro-regions, please see the related Policy Briefs here: <http://www.salsa.uevora.pt/salsa-reports-publications/>

(3) According to EUROSTAT, there were 10.5 million farms in the EU in 2016, with the vast majority of these (95.2%) classified as family farms. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agriculture\\_statistics\\_-\\_family\\_farming\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agriculture_statistics_-_family_farming_in_the_EU)

## SALSA typology of small farms

**1.****Part-time farms**

Farming appears to be a secondary activity that supplements other sources of income, by generally young farmers, who started farming as their own option; a high proportion of production stays in the household

**2.****Conventional strugglers**

Second poorest cluster, and oldest; farming is rooted in tradition; agriculture accounts for a high proportion of income; high household self-consumption

**3.****Conventional entrepreneurs**

Relatively wealthy, relatively old and established in farming; rely on family labour; access markets through cooperatives

**4.****Business specialised**

Wealthiest group, relatively old and established in farming; extensive use of hired labour; access to markets through cooperatives, invest in certification

**5.****Business multifunctional**

Wealthy, relatively young and new to farming; extensive use of hired labour; diverse portfolio of buyers

and this is therefore leading to food loss and rising insecurity. On the other hand, it has triggered an increased interest in local food supplies.

Many small farms are coping with this increased demand for local food with new methods of selling, including the use of digital technology and direct delivery. They are often supported by extension and advisory services in this endeavour. As recently stated by the FAO, in this context smallholders need to be supported to enhance their productivity and market their produce, including through e-commerce.

Along these lines, SALSA specifies that policy interventions should be more territorially based and take into consideration the characteristics of regional food systems and the different types of small farms. With this in mind, SALSA developed a small farm typology in five types (see image above). The five types of farms are present in all the reference regions analysed, however their contribution to FNS differs depending on the type.

Two over-riding recommendations of relevance to all the contexts studied by SALSA are 1) the need for appropriate combinations of policy interventions to help small farms add value to their produce. Small farms are more profitable when they specialise in quality products and processing and 2) the potential to foster cooperation as the most empowering form of governance for them.

SALSA provides specific guidance on how policy can enable small farms in five policy briefs. The first one provides an overview of the situation, while the other four focus on the macro-regional areas analysed: eastern Europe, northern Europe, southern Europe,

and Africa. For each area, the most representative small farm types are illustrated and concrete policy measures are proposed.

For the European context, incentives for cooperation remain the most important form of direct support for small farms, through short supply chain measures and collaboration opportunities. The rural development Cooperation Measure 16 was very effective during the 2014-2020 CAP period. One way to enhance it would be, for example, to connect it with greater funding for product innovation, collective marketing and consumer awareness.

Today, more than ever, it is imperative to plan an efficient and timely policy mix of measures in support of small farms to ensure a sustainable food security.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

SALSA website: <http://www.salsa.uevora.pt/>

SALSA reports and publications: <http://www.salsa.uevora.pt/salsa-reports-publications/>

FAO, 'COVID-19 and the risk to food supply chains: How to respond?':

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca8388en/CA8388EN.pdf>

FAO, 'Extension and advisory services: at the frontline of the response to COVID-19 to ensure food security':

<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8710en>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Faster broadband for rural areas

Jan Dröge

How to ensure that rural areas are served with high quality Internet connectivity? Reflections and actions by the European Broadband Competence Offices (BCO) Network.<sup>(1)</sup>



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Although access to fast broadband (30 Mbps download speed) in Europe reached 86% in 2019 overall, in rural areas, this figure stands at 59%, having increased from 47% in 2017.<sup>(2)</sup> Rural areas are clearly at a disadvantage when it comes to access to the digital single market, with all the consequences this entails for rural quality of life such as access to health and education, business creation, connected farming and digital hubs.

The BCO Network has worked specifically on this issue in recent years, with three working groups looking into the investment models for broadband in rural areas. The work was driven by a mix of national and regional BCOs from several countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK). A key starting point was to focus the work on those rural areas facing difficulties. Indeed, many rural areas in Europe are dynamic and highly digitalised. However, those where broadband investments fall short might be facing demographic, economic or geographic challenges that create a disincentive for private operators to invest. It is a declared European objective to ensure these areas are also served with high quality connectivity.<sup>(3)</sup> So the question is: how can this be achieved?

Two of the working groups analysed the three main investment models foreseen in the "Guide to high-speed broadband investment".<sup>(4)</sup> The guide offers comprehensive advice for any public authority looking to allocate public funds for broadband. The working groups found that the guide takes a generic approach



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to broadband investment, not specifically taking into account the hurdles faced by some rural areas.

Since the guide is currently under revision, the working groups have drafted recommendations, both to the European Commission and the Member States. The main points are:

- the revised guide should take into account the specificities of declining rural areas;
- state aid approval for municipal investment projects should be eased;
- state aid requirements for areas that already have access to 30 Mbps download speeds should be eased;

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/about-bco-network>

(2) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>

(3) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/broadband-europe>

(4) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/broadband-investment-guide>



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- Member States should ensure a legal environment that allows for citizen initiatives to drive investments; and
- Member States should set up State aid frameworks that allow smaller municipalities to drive broadband investments.

State aid compliance was one of the key aspects discussed by another working group. Indeed, the high level of aid required in many of the rural areas with low connectivity makes State aid approval a key requirement. At the same time these rural areas are often not equipped with the administrative capacity to secure clearance of such aid. This double hurdle – the need for aid and the lack of administrative capacity – needs to be addressed. One solution would be for Member States to ensure legal frameworks that give smaller municipalities in rural areas freedom to support investment, so they can focus on the technology and the delivery. BCOs can

play a key role in providing the kind of legal, technical and administrative support that rural areas might need.

#### **i** FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The European BCO Network brings together EU Member States' national and regional public authorities in charge of broadband deployment to exchange knowledge and good practices with peers, experts and European Commission representatives, building their capacity to bring reliable, high-speed broadband connectivity to all EU citizens. [www.bconetwork.eu](http://www.bconetwork.eu)

Guide to high-speed broadband investment: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/broadband-investment-guide>

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI): <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>



A FOCUS ON... RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2020



## INTRODUCTION

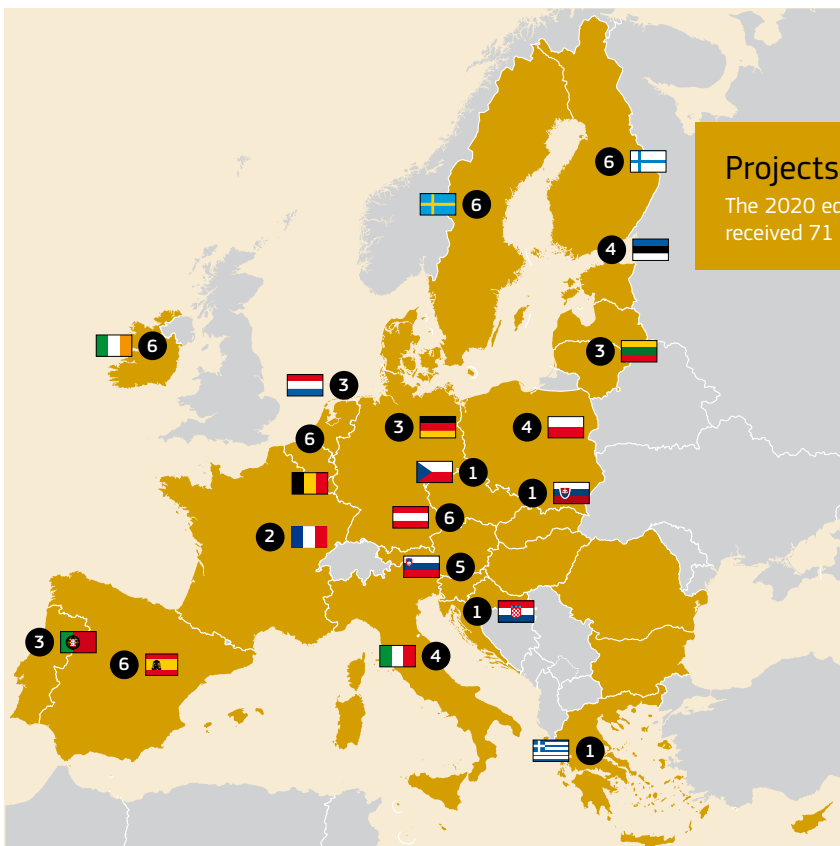
# Rural Inspiration Awards 2020

The 2020 edition of the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards highlighted projects funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) that demonstrate the contribution of Rural Development policy in promoting rural climate action and the bioeconomy. There were 71 applications submitted for awards under three thematic categories: Bioeconomy, Climate change adaptation and Climate change mitigation (see infographic below).

National Rural Networks identified and submitted inspiring projects from their Member States. The entries were evaluated by the ENRD Contact Point and its experts, who shortlisted 15 projects. While a technical jury selected the winners, there was also a Popular Vote category where the general public had the opportunity to vote online

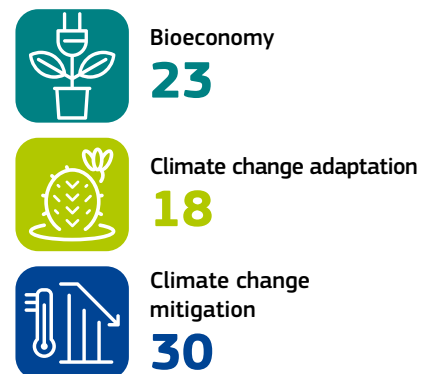
for their favourite project among the finalists between 17 and 25 June 2020. The winners in each category were announced by the EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, at the online Awards ceremony on 25 June 2020.

Pages 34-37 present the 15 finalists, which demonstrate the impressive range of climate action and bioeconomy initiatives that the EAFRD is supporting. A more detailed description of the projects is available on the ENRD website. Keep following the ENRD publications as the next EAFRD Projects Brochure will focus on the 2020 Rural Inspiration Awards (RIA2020)



**Projects submitted per Member State**  
The 2020 edition of the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards received 71 applications from 19 Member States.

### Projects submitted per category



Source: ENRD Contact Point

## A FOCUS ON... RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2020

## REPORT

# Environment, CAP reform and the European Green Deal: connecting the dots

Climate action, natural resources, biodiversity and landscapes are some of the keywords of the new CAP proposals. They also are central to the European Green Deal ambition of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. In this scenario, farming, forestry and rural areas have a key role to play.

The European Green Deal is a growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy with no net emissions of greenhouse gases and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use. It also aims to preserve, safeguard and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts.

Several EU policies will contribute to pursue the EU Green Deal's goals, including some instruments and programmes which have a particular relevance for agriculture and rural areas: the new CAP, Horizon Europe, the LIFE funds and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The new way of working<sup>(1)</sup> proposed for the future CAP and its 'green architecture' is expected to allow the agricultural, agri-food and forestry systems to turn the sustainability issues identified by the Green Deal into opportunities for new green business models.

The CAP's new way of working will introduce a shift from a compliance-based to a performance-based or results-based governance system. This intends to give Member States greater flexibility (and subsidiarity) in designing and implementing national CAP Strategic

Plans (CSPs) to better respond to the needs of their territory and achieve the nine key objectives defined at EU level.

The green architecture of the CAP post-2020 is central to delivering the policy's increased environmental ambition. It gives greater scope and responsibility to Member States in terms of tailoring the design and funding of environmental and climate schemes.<sup>(2)</sup>

The system provides a combination of instruments, developed from those already existing in the current CAP:

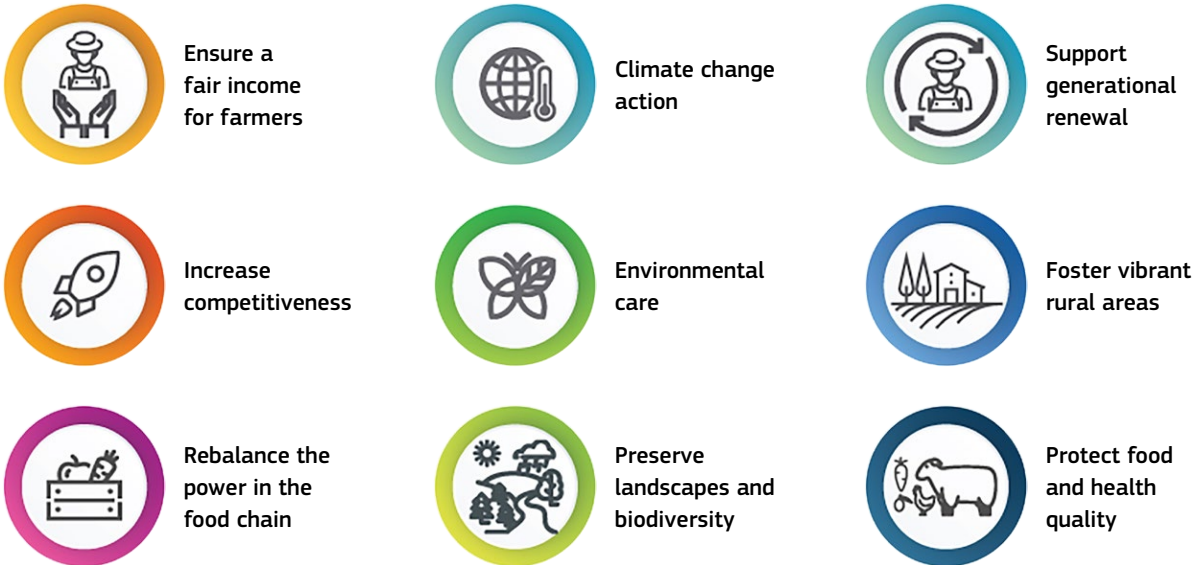
- an enhanced conditionality, which links EU-funded income support to environment- and climate-friendly farming practices and standards;
- eco-schemes to unlock new funding and additional incentives for climate- and environment-friendly farming practices;
- agri-environment-climate measures and investments; and
- farm Advisory Services delivering up-to-date technological and scientific information to farmers.

The European Commission presented the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies as part of the European Green Deal. In the words of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, "This is not a proposal for a new agricultural policy, but about reforming the entire

(1) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap\\_en#a-new-way-of-working](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en#a-new-way-of-working)

(2) [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs\\_20\\_910](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_910)

## CAP post-2020 – 9 specific objectives



© European Union 2020

food system in a sustainable way. It aims to design fairer, healthier and environmentally-friendly food systems in the EU by 2030.”<sup>(3)</sup>

In May 2020, the European Commission also published a Staff Working Document<sup>(4)</sup> analysing the links between the CAP Reform and the Green Deal which concluded that the CAP reform proposal is compatible with the Green Deal’s ambitions. It also noted that, to realise this potential, key elements of the proposals must be maintained in the negotiating process and certain improvements and practical initiatives should be developed to facilitate the achievement of the ambitions of the Green Deal.

The efficient and rational use of natural resources is necessary to guarantee environmentally sustainable

development. The new EU programming period will offer the agro-food and agro-forestry sectors and rural

communities new tools to improve their sustainability and also enhance their competitiveness.



© Unsplash

(3) [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/wojciechowski/announcements/speech-commissioner-wojciechowski-link-between-cap-reform-and-green-deal-european-parliament\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/wojciechowski/announcements/speech-commissioner-wojciechowski-link-between-cap-reform-and-green-deal-european-parliament_en)

(4) European Commission (2020) Analysis of links between CAP Reform and Green Deal, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/sustainability\\_and\\_natural\\_resources/documents/analysis-of-links-between-cap-and-green-deal\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/sustainability_and_natural_resources/documents/analysis-of-links-between-cap-and-green-deal_en.pdf)



## RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2020

# Nominees and winners

The three categories of last year's Rural Inspiration Awards (Bioeconomy, Climate change mitigation and Climate change adaptation) deal with topics that are a key part of EU rural development policy priorities and are at the forefront of the wider EU and global policy agenda. They show how EAFRD support under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes is already helping in these areas. They also complement the work of the ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy and Climate Action in Rural Areas.

The following pages present summaries of the 15 nominees for the Awards and show the winners in each category. More information is available on the ENRD website in the Projects and Practice section:

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en)

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the RIA2020 nominees and to watch the recording of the Awards ceremony: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/rural-inspiration-awards-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/rural-inspiration-awards-2020_en)

Read the EAFRD Projects Brochure 'Rural Inspiration Awards 2019' for more details about the first edition of the competition: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eafrd-projects-brochure-rural-inspiration-awards-2019\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eafrd-projects-brochure-rural-inspiration-awards-2019_en)

## CATEGORY BIOECONOMY

Projects/actions in this category encompass the production of renewable biological resources and the conversion of these resources and waste streams into value-added products, including food, feedstuffs, bio-based products and bio-energy.

### PROJECTS

#### 1. Vielfalter – Kalkalpen National Park Start-Up Challenge, Austria



© Vielfalter

Organising a competition to support and encourage businesses and their sustainable projects in tourism, health, agriculture and forestry in the Kalkalpen National Park, Austria.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/vielfalter-kalkalpen-national-park-start-challenge\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/vielfalter-kalkalpen-national-park-start-challenge_en)

#### 2. Aardbeitrayveld – Elevated trays for strawberries, Belgium



© Aardbeitrayveld

Elevated growing trays and the automation of some management tasks has enabled strawberry production to be less reliant on external inputs and to re-use irrigation water.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/aardbeitrayveld-elevated-trays-strawberries\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/aardbeitrayveld-elevated-trays-strawberries_en)

#### 3. Järviuoko – Developing the harvesting and use of the common reed, Finland

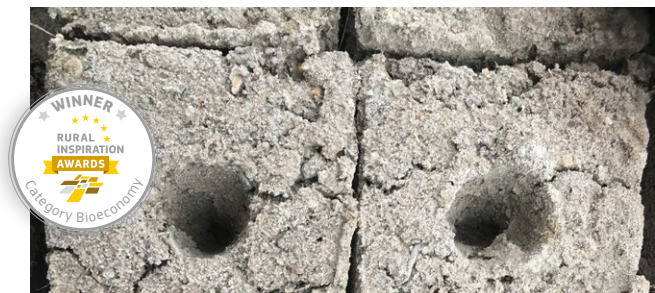


© Järviuoko

In Finland, trialling the winter harvesting of the common reed provides a greater availability of sustainable resources with collateral environmental benefits.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/jarviuoko-developing-harvesting-and-use-common-reed\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/jarviuoko-developing-harvesting-and-use-common-reed_en)

#### 4. Brickz Natural Soil Improver, the Netherlands



© Brickz

Using biomass residues to produce a fertiliser, which is then used to grow trees and will, over time, improve soil quality, has led to significant financial savings for nature conservation organisations and tree nurseries.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/brickz-natural-soil-improver\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/brickz-natural-soil-improver_en)

#### 5. Hiša vin Kokol – Rebirth of vine/grapes, Slovenia



© Hiša vin Kokol

This project took nature-friendly vine cultivation on a family farm a step further to develop zero-waste processing methods that valorise all by-products of grapes in a sustainable and fully circular way. The resulting seeds, oil and flour have proved very popular with customers.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/hisa-vin-kokol-rebirth-vine-grapes\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/hisa-vin-kokol-rebirth-vine-grapes_en)

## CATEGORY CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

This category comprises projects/actions which are reducing greenhouse gas emissions or removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

### PROJECTS

#### 1. FUMObil – Regional masterplan for the future of mobility, Austria



© FUMObil

Developing a regional sustainable transport and mobility scheme through coordinated data analysis, multi-actor engagement and innovative solutions to improve inclusiveness.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/fumobil-regional-masterplan-future-mobility\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/fumobil-regional-masterplan-future-mobility_en)

#### 2. Hiiltä sitovat kylät – Villages sequestering and storing carbon, Finland



© Hiiltä sitovat kylät

Communities coming together to collaboratively develop locally suited, innovative actions to mitigate climate change in rural Finland.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/finnish-villages-sequestering-and-storing-carbon-hiilta-sitovat-kylat\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/finnish-villages-sequestering-and-storing-carbon-hiilta-sitovat-kylat_en)

#### 3. Černelič Biodynamic Farm, Slovenia



© Černelič

Organic and biodynamic farms cooperate to jointly acquire no-till cultivation equipment to enhance soil quality, reduce pollution and maximise their soil's capacity to act as a carbon sink.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/cernelic-biodynamic-farm-0\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/cernelic-biodynamic-farm-0_en)

#### 4. ENFOCC – Energy, Forest and Climate Change, Spain



© ENFOCC

Local renewable energy opportunities generated through knowledge exchange, capacity building and training on sustainable forest management and energy transition.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enfocc-energy-forest-and-climate-change-0\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enfocc-energy-forest-and-climate-change-0_en)

#### 5. Klimatkollen i Greppa Näringen – Free tailored advice to farmers on climate change, Sweden



© Klimatkollen

Targeted advice on climate mitigation actions for individual farms provides farmers with consultant support to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/klimatkollen-i-greppa-naringen-sweden-offers-farmers-free-tailored-advice-climate\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/klimatkollen-i-greppa-naringen-sweden-offers-farmers-free-tailored-advice-climate_en)

## CATEGORY CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

This category recognises projects which are helping increase the resilience of Europe's agriculture and forestry sectors against the adverse effects of climate change.

### PROJECTS

#### 1. Ekofarma Petra Marada – Agri-environment business focused on adaptation to climate change, Czechia



© Ekofarma Petra Marada

An eco-farm implementing agri-environment-climate measures aims to foster ecosystem services and climate adaptation on-farm as well as promote wider uptake throughout the farming community.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agri-environment-business-focused-adaptation-climate-change-ekofarma-petra-marada\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agri-environment-business-focused-adaptation-climate-change-ekofarma-petra-marada_en)

#### 2. OSMO – Sharing know-how and tools for a resource-efficient agricultural soil management, Finland



© OSMO

Collaborative learning and tools for assessing soil health contribute to farmers' understanding of problems and alternative management strategies.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/osmo-sharing-know-how-and-tools-resource-efficient-agricultural-soil-management\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/osmo-sharing-know-how-and-tools-resource-efficient-agricultural-soil-management_en)

#### 3. BIOCONVITO – Introducing and testing biological pest control techniques in the wine-producing sector in Tuscany, Italy



© BIOCONVITO

Offering a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach in terms of training, technology transfer and decision-making to find alternative approaches to pest management and reducing pesticide use in the wine-producing sector of Tuscany.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/introducing-and-testing-biological-pest-control-techniques-wine-producing-sector\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/introducing-and-testing-biological-pest-control-techniques-wine-producing-sector_en)

#### 4. ECOPIONET – Innovation and Bioeconomy in the Rural Environment, Spain



© ECOPIONET

Knowledge exchange network established to foster multi-actor collaboration and sharing around organic agriculture.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/ecopionet-innovation-and-bioeconomy-rural-environment\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/ecopionet-innovation-and-bioeconomy-rural-environment_en)

#### 5. Go Setos – Multifunctional borders for a sustainable landscape and agriculture, Spain



© Go Setos

Farmers, researchers and other rural development stakeholders working together to increase the implementation of multifunctional hedgerows that offer environmental benefits as well as climate mitigation and adaptation.

Further info: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/go-setos-multifunctional-borders-sustainable-landscape-and-agriculture\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/go-setos-multifunctional-borders-sustainable-landscape-and-agriculture_en)

## A FOCUS ON... RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2020

## REPORT

# National Rural Networks, the bioeconomy and climate action: an overview

Rural development networking is doing its share for the development of the bioeconomy and climate action. We asked four National Rural Networks to describe their main activities on these topics and their opinions on how much the Rural Inspiration Awards support their efforts in practice.



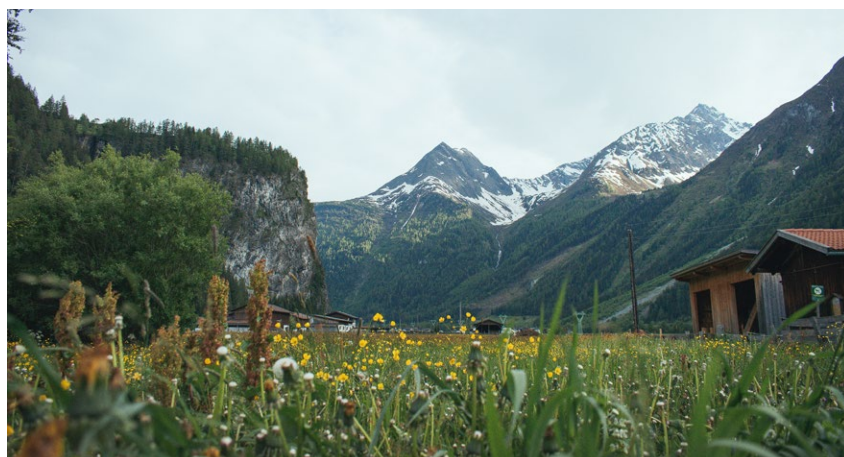
## AUSTRIA: FOCUSING ON RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR THE BIOECONOMY

Based on an interview with Michael Fischer (National Rural Network) and Bernhard Zenz (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Austria)

When it comes to climate action, the writing of a Bioeconomy Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) Strategy

in 2018 was a flagship activity of the Austrian NRN. This strategy identifies bioeconomy-relevant RTI thematic fields as well as specific measures to support the international visibility of Austrian research capacity in this field. This document contributed to the Integrated Austrian Bioeconomy Strategy,<sup>(1)</sup> published in 2019. Actions defined by the Bioeconomy Strategy will be implemented in the future CAP Strategic Plan (post-2020).

The bioeconomy is generally a well-received topic in Austria, where it is perceived as an important approach in dealing with the consequences of climate change. It has been the theme of various conferences, including a Bioeconomy Conference (November 2018) and a breakout session of the Austrian World Summit (May 2019), both in Vienna.



© Unsplash

(1) <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/Research/Research-in-Austria/Strategic-focus-and-advisory-bodies/Strategies/Bioeconomy-Strategy.html>



Due to its natural resources, its innovative companies and its renowned research institutes, Austria is an ideal location for bioeconomy-related businesses. Specific strengths include the pulp and paper industry, wood construction and biomass incineration for district heating. As it is essential to identify regional multipliers that can promote the bioeconomy and its related topics (renewable resources, climate protection, regionalism and local value creation, for example) communication is a key element.

For the NRN, participation in RIA2020 could help increase the visibility of existing projects and activities and create a common understanding of the bioeconomy and its related issues. For Michael Fischer, “RIA2020 can really make an important contribution to the dissemination of the bioeconomy. It offers the opportunity to present innovative ideas and solutions and to reach and motivate all relevant stakeholders to implement their own bio-based ideas.”

In 2019, the Austrian project ‘Zeitgeist Enns’ (Pop-up shops to revitalise a small town) enjoyed significant media coverage after winning the Popular Vote of the Rural Inspiration Awards – including receiving the congratulations from the country’s President. Hopefully the 2020 edition will bring even more visibility to the candidate projects from Austria.

Further information:

- About the Austrian Rural Network: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/austrian-rural-network\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/austrian-rural-network_en)
- ‘Zeitgeist Enns’, winner of the RIA2019 Popular Vote: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept_en)



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## SPAIN: COLLECTING AND SHARING PROJECTS

**Based on an interview with Jorge Cuevas Moreno (National Rural Network) and Cecilia Bretal (Managing Authority of Measure 16 of the Spanish National Rural Development Programme)**

Spain has a national Bioeconomy Strategy and various regional ones are either published or in preparation. The national Bioeconomy Strategy, published in 2015, covers the whole agri-food sector (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, food processing and marketing), as well as forestry, bio-based industries and the bioenergy sector.

The Strategy aims to boost the economic activity, competitiveness and sustainability of the bio-based sectors, promoting the development and application of technologies through the collaboration between the science and technology sector and Spanish companies. It also includes the competitive development of new industrial sectors and new professional training.

Spain has an enormous potential to increase the use of biomass, both for bioenergy and bio-based products. This

could reduce the country’s dependency on fossil fuels and facilitate the switch to a circular economy. The better identification of relevant projects could help overcome some of the challenges to the development of the bioeconomy in Spain. These include the lack of consensus on the very definition and scope of the bioeconomy, the need for more (public and private) investment in research and development, primary producers’ limited awareness of the advantages of the bioeconomy and the need for more collaboration between actors in the value chains.

Participation in EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) is one way for Spain to pursue the objectives of the national Bioeconomy Strategy. Through these OGs, the Spanish National Rural Network (NRN) has collected best practices and innovation projects on the bioeconomy and climate change as well as on biodiversity and the environment. It also created a ‘thematic search’ function to ease the search for EAFRD-funded projects in its online database.

The Managing Authority has supported innovative projects directly or indirectly connected to the bioeconomy through two open calls in 2018 and 2019 and a third call was launched in 2020.

The NRN also carries out dissemination and communication activities, including publications and events. A milestone was the Spanish conference on the ‘Application of the circular bioeconomy for rural

development through biomass' in June 2019. Another bioeconomy webinar took place in 2020.

Finally, the Managing Authority and the NRN participate actively in the activities of the ENRD, particularly in its Thematic Group on Bioeconomy and Climate Action.

Selecting projects for RIA2020 allowed the Spanish NRN to identify important projects of general interest. Hopefully these will receive high visibility and inspire others, as was the case of the Spanish Agroberry project, winner of the RIA2019 awards in the 'Improving competitiveness' category.

Further information:

- About the Spanish Rural Network: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/spanish-rural-network\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/spanish-rural-network_en)
- The Spanish Bioeconomy Strategy: [http://www.redruralnacional.es/documents/10182/635989/WEB-paginas\\_BBPP\\_INGLES\\_1576658042909.pdf/66d5ec78-4510-4265-b822-ac475c353126?t=1576658042911](http://www.redruralnacional.es/documents/10182/635989/WEB-paginas_BBPP_INGLES_1576658042909.pdf/66d5ec78-4510-4265-b822-ac475c353126?t=1576658042911)
- Andalusian Circular Bioeconomy Strategy: <http://www.bioeconomiaandalucia.es/en/la-eab2030>
- Best practices and innovation projects on the bioeconomy and climate change: [http://www.redruralnacional.es/documents/10182/635989/WEB-paginas\\_BBPP\\_INGLES\\_1576658042909.pdf/66d5ec78-4510-4265-b822-ac475c353126?t=1576658042911](http://www.redruralnacional.es/documents/10182/635989/WEB-paginas_BBPP_INGLES_1576658042909.pdf/66d5ec78-4510-4265-b822-ac475c353126?t=1576658042911)
- Project Agroberry – Original from Zamora: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora_en)



## WALLONIA (BELGIUM): SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

### Based on an interview with Xavier Delmon (Walloon Rural Network)

In Wallonia, the main action related to climate action has been the use of RDP measure 6.4b – Support to non-agricultural investments by companies and investments by farmers in biogas, and measures 4.1 and 4.2 – Investments in farms and in the processing and sale of agricultural products, to mitigate GHG emissions. Beyond the EAFRD, other funding programmes have been used to support the bioeconomy, in particular to foster green chemistry, innovative building materials, environmental technologies as well as research on the extraction of molecules from wood and on the development of biomass and certification labels.

Belgium is a small country (and Wallonia is only part of it) and thus offers a small market. Research and investment costs for the bioeconomy are generally high and this is a major challenge in the implementation of these types of actions. Yet there are various interesting initiatives currently going on.

The GreenWin cluster is an innovative and competitive cluster for environmentally friendly technologies set up by the Government of Wallonia and dedicated to the green economy and sustainable development. The GreenWin cluster joined other public and private partners in 2013 to launch the 'Coq vert' strategy<sup>(2)</sup> and create the eco-construction cluster, a network of companies and experts active in eco-construction. The network works to raise awareness, inform and organise training. It represents the sector in dialogues with public authorities, and encourages the economic development of eco-construction.

In the forestry sector, the Ecological File of Species and the Arboretum project are noteworthy examples. The first is an interactive tool for the optimum selection of forest species to plant in any given area. It helps forest and natural area managers make informed decisions. The Arboretum project is operated by the Royal Forest Society of Belgium (private owners) and aims to test new species throughout a network of experimental plots spread across the national territory. The continuous monitoring of plantations will allow future generations of foresters to plant the most promising species.

The Walloon Rural Network actively participates in the ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy and climate action and



© Biowatize

(2) The 'Coq vert' initiative was launched in 2013 by a public-private partnership. The project aims to contribute to the development of a strong, competitive bio-based economy in Wallonia by encouraging new projects in the chemistry industry, and plant chemistry in particular: <http://www.coqvert.be/en>

co-organised the fourth Thematic Group meeting (on 28 April 2020). This was an opportunity to present two other EAFRD-funded projects: Galactic (Production of lactic acid, lactates and a variety of other innovative products) and Biowanze (Production of bioethanol).

Even if no project from Wallonia has been shortlisted for RIA2020, the experience from the previous edition shows that the value of such a competition is important to increase the visibility, the promotion and the dissemination of European best practices.

Further information:

- About the Walloon Rural Network: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/belgium-walloon-rural-network\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/belgium-walloon-rural-network_en)
- 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy and climate action in rural areas: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/4th-enrd-thematic-group-meeting-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas-webinar\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/4th-enrd-thematic-group-meeting-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas-webinar_en)
- GreenWin cluster: <https://www.greenwin.be/en/>
- Cluster Eco-construction: <http://clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction-en/>
- Ecological file of species: <https://fichierecologique.be>
- Arboretum project: <https://www.srfb.be/arboretums/>
- Galactic project: <https://www.lactic.com/en-us/home.aspx>
- Biowanze project: <https://www.biowanze.be/fr/BioWanze/De-toevoegde-waarde-voor-Belgie/>



© Slovenian National Rural Network



## SLOVENIA: FOCUS ON AWARENESS RAISING

Based on an interview with  
**Matej Štepec, Slovenian National  
Rural Network**

In Slovenia, climate change and the bioeconomy are becoming increasingly important topics. Organic farming is the most important related sector. Due to its natural resources, diverse landscape structure and rich biodiversity, the country presents excellent opportunities for developing organic agriculture. Slovenian consumers appreciate it as a system that produces safe and high-quality food, while mitigating the effects of climate change.

The figures confirm the positive trend. In 2019, organic farms made up 5.4% of Slovenian farm numbers and 10.4% of the total agricultural area. However, further development of organic farming requires more crops, more organised market participation by organic farmers and increased awareness on the part of both producers and consumers.

For this reason, the Slovenian NRN is working closely with the Ministry for Agriculture, in particular with the civil servants responsible for organic farming,

and with the NRN's partners. The objective is to raise consumers' and producers' awareness of the importance of organic farming. To this end, several events for the general public have been organised, as well as discussions and consultations on organic farming.

Understanding that having a direct contact with farmers and the general public is essential, the NRN has also participated at agricultural fairs across the country focusing on raising awareness of organic farming. It also organised study visits to Germany, to the Biofach World Organic Farming Fair and the Herrmannsdorfer Organic Estate.

For the Slovenian NRN, participation in the RIA2020 was a useful opportunity to analyse state-of-the-art bioeconomy projects in Slovenia and learn about those in other Member States, to better understand the context and to network with different national institutions, especially those involved in Horizon2020 projects. This is an important first step to increase the visibility of this topic and raise awareness about its importance.

Further information:

- About the Slovenian Rural Network: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/slovenian-national-rural-network\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/slovenian-national-rural-network_en)



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## FINLAND: TOWARDS A SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Based on an interview with Sinikka Torssonen (National Rural Network) and Marja-Liisa Tapio-Biström (Managing Authority of the Finnish mainland RDP)

The Finnish Bioeconomy Strategy was designed to help Finland become a low-carbon and resource-efficient society through a sustainable economy. The NRN and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Managing Authority) highlighted some of the 26 key projects that are translating the strategy into concrete action.

The project 'Recycle nutrients for clear waters' supports the innovation of processing technologies to transform manure, biomass residues and fractions of industrial processes by small and medium enterprises into organic fertilisers.

Study curricula in agricultural schools and universities have changed to include

nutrient circulation, renewable energy and climate actions and sustainable practices. A network of universities and vocational schools providing education in agriculture has been set up and includes teaching and research farms that are adapting their operations to become more resource efficient.

Finally, the Finnish mainland RDP has invested a total of €6.5 million in projects on nutrient circulation and water protection in vulnerable areas, especially in the Archipelago Sea area (a part of the Baltic sea region), where livestock farming has long put environmental pressure on the waters.

Time, resources and technological innovations are needed to bring about a real systemic change. The weak economic situation of farms can slow down the adoption of innovative technologies. Yet Finland is pursuing its path. The Rural Inspiration Awards 2020 will surely help increase the visibility of strong bioeconomy-related actions and, with good communication, will raise rural stakeholders' awareness of the importance of such projects.

Further information:

- About the Finnish Rural Network: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/finnish-rural-network\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networking/nrn-profiles/finnish-rural-network_en)
- Finnish Bioeconomy Strategy: [https://www.biotalous.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The\\_Finnish\\_Bioeconomy\\_Strategy\\_110620141.pdf](https://www.biotalous.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The_Finnish_Bioeconomy_Strategy_110620141.pdf)
- Project 'Recycle nutrients for clean waters': <https://mmm.fi/en/recyclenutrients>
- A network of nutrient and energy-efficient teaching farms and educational institutions: <http://ravinnejaenergia.fi/fi/etusivu/>
- Special investment in nutrient recycling under the Finnish RDP: <https://www.maaseutu.fi/maaseutuverkosto/teemat/ympariston-tilan-parantaminen/erityispanostus-ravinteiden-kierratykseen>

# Books & publications

## *Global food policy report 2020*

Building inclusive food systems

**International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**

In this year's edition of the report, researchers at IFPRI – International Food Policy Research Institute

survey recent developments in food systems and food security by world region and provide analysis and recommendations on selected policy themes.

The broad theme explored in the 2020 edition, 'Building inclusive food systems', is about ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable

people enjoy the benefits and opportunities that food systems can bring. Building truly inclusive food systems requires better engagement of smallholder farming families in food value chains—something that biofortification and other integrated agriculture-nutrition strategies are well-positioned to support.

ISBN 978-0-89629-367-0

<http://gfpr.ifpri.info/>



## *Study on economic value of EU quality schemes, geographical indications (GIs) and traditional specialties guaranteed (TSGs)*

**European Commission**

The study aims to collect economic data on each of the 3 207 products registered under the Geographical Indication (GI)/Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) schemes in the EU over the 2011-2017 period. It covers four schemes: agricultural products and foodstuffs, wines, spirit drinks and aromatised wine products. The data for each GI/TSG have been entered into a database and aggregated at sectoral and geographical levels.

ISBN 978-92-76-09889-8

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a7281794-7ebe-11ea-aea8-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-133915048>



## *Facing the challenges of broadband deployment in rural and remote areas*

**European Commission**

This handbook prepared by the European Commission and published by the Support Facility of the European Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) targets rural policy makers and broadband project managers who wish to roll-out high-speed networks in rural or remote territories, effectively and efficiently. It aims to help these areas overcome the digital divide affecting their citizens, communities and economic activities, by taking a closer look at the success factors and good practices demonstrated by 12 rural broadband project case studies.

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/broadband-handbook-facing-challenges-broadband-deployment-rural-and-remote-areas>



## Grey literature on gender equality in agriculture and rural development

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)



The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has collected grey literature (literature produced by non-commercial publishers, such as public institutions, universities, research institutes and civil society) on gender equality from across the EU, making it easily accessible.

Agriculture is one of the oldest and most widespread activities in the world. However, differences between women and men, be it in employment, pay or decision-making positions still persist. Agriculture has a crucial role in food production, environmental protection, landscape preservation, rural employment and food security. Mainstreaming gender within this sector is therefore extremely important.

ISBN 978-92-9482-187-4

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/grey-literature-agriculture-and-rural-development/>

## Boosting ecological restoration for a wilder Europe

Making the Green Deal work for nature

This briefing provides policy priorities and solutions aimed at restoring Europe's nature and shaping the EU ecological restoration agenda. The document promotes rewilding principles and the creation of a coherent 'Ecological Network in Europe' as a guiding principle in the political debate.



The briefing was developed by the European Environmental Bureau alongside organisations such as Rewilding Europe, WWF (European Policy Office), BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv)

and Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg.

ISBN 978-3-9817938-5-7

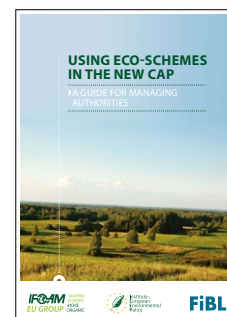
<https://eeb.org/library/wilder-europe-briefing/>

## Using eco-schemes in the new CAP

A guide for Managing Authorities

IFOAM EU

This guide has been developed by IFOAM (an organisation representing 214 members in 34 countries focused on organic agriculture) primarily for policy makers and Member State officials involved in the national and regional programming processes of the CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs).



In addition, the guide provides support to other stakeholders and practitioners from the public and private sectors and civil society (including agricultural, environmental, food, health and consumer NGOs), with a direct or indirect involvement in the programming and evaluation process of the CSPs.

<https://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ifoam-eco-schemes-web.pdf>

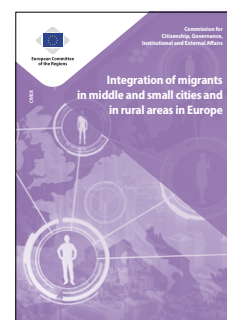
## Integration of migrants in middle and small cities and in rural areas in Europe

European Committee of the Regions

Medium and small-sized cities and rural areas in Europe have increasingly found themselves addressing the needs of migrants and refugees and developing and implementing integration programmes for their newly arrived residents. This report by the European Committee of the Regions explores the context in which, and the structures through which, these measures are implemented and the nature of the actions being undertaken. It also makes a number of overarching observations about these measures.

ISBN 978-92-895-1043-1

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/cities-and-regions-for-integration.aspx> (click on section 'Studies')



# ENRD PUBLICATIONS

Keep up to date with all the latest news, views and developments in European rural development by reading the various ENRD publications.

These are available on the Publications section of <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu> by filling in the online form at <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search>.

## EU RURAL REVIEW

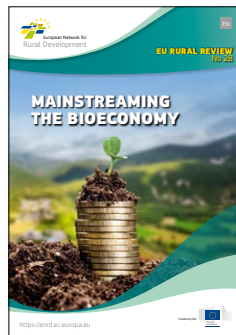
The EU Rural Review is the ENRD's principal thematic publication. It presents the latest knowledge and understanding of a particular topic relevant to rural development in Europe. Themes range from rural entrepreneurship and food quality to climate change and social inclusion. It is published twice a year in six EU languages (DE; EN; ES; FR; IT; PL).

### No.29 – LEADER Achievements



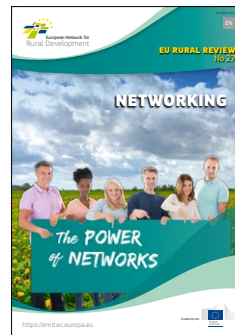
KF-AJ-19-002-EN-N

### No.28 – Mainstreaming the bioeconomy



KF-AJ-19-001-EN-N

### No.27 – Networking



KF-AJ-18-002-EN-N

## EAFRD PROJECTS BROCHURE

The ENRD publishes brochures presenting good and interesting examples of EAFRD-funded projects. Each edition highlights successful project examples around a particular rural development theme. The brochures aim to showcase the achievements of the EAFRD and inspire further projects. They are published in six EU languages (DE; EN; ES; FR; IT; PL).

### Vibrant Rural Areas



KF-AP-20-001-EN-N

### Rural Inspiration Awards 2019



KF-AP-19-002-EN-N

### Bioeconomy



KF-AP-19-001-EN-N

## FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

### Online

- Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en)

### EU publications

- You can download or order free and priced EU publications from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>
- Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)).

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