Building a partnership on agroecology living labs and research infrastructures

Webinar 5
Starting co-creation in practice

25 June 2020, Brussels

Report, 24 July 2020
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More information

You can find more information on the European Commission’s website on:
European partnerships in Horizon Europe
European research and innovation on ecological approaches and organic farming
European research infrastructures

Disclaimer

This report assembles the contributions made by participants in the context of webinar held on 25 June 2020. These contributions do not represent the views of the European Commission.
Introduction

The European Commission started on 6 May 2020 a series of webinars to discuss with stakeholders and potential partners how to build the candidate European partnership on agroecology living labs and research infrastructures under Horizon Europe. After two first webinars on 6-7 May that aimed to build a shared understanding of agroecology, living labs and research infrastructures, a second series was organised on 4 and 5 June to look at practical examples.

The webinar on 25 June was organised to start co-creating the partnership in practice. For that, the webinar provided a space for the community to:

- go through the final outputs of the partnership development, departing from the “EC inputs on the partnership proposal” that the Commission had shared at the end of May;
- capitalise on the previous four webinars to start developing a joint vision in groups addressing the “content and ambition” and the “instruments and approaches”;
- listen to the coordinators of the two Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) recently selected for funding under the call FNR-01-2020 to support the preparation of the partnership;
- discuss how to plan the work ahead (what, who, by when).

Where are we in the process?

Around 90 participants joined the webinar. Participation was restricted on this occasion to only one lead contact per organisation in order to ensure good interactions and the quality of the discussion, with the exception of organisations taking part in the coordination and support actions.

The audience included representatives from 27 countries (23 Member States and 4 non-EU countries including Canada). Public authorities’ representatives (research, agriculture and environment, education ministries and agencies) who are key participants as potential main partners, made up more than one third of the audience. The rest was distributed between research and academia, industry and farming sector representatives (including input industry and downstream food sector and retail as well as farm advisors), and civil society representatives.
Co-creating the agroecology living labs partnership proposal in practice

Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Unit for Research & Innovation at DG Agriculture and Rural development of the European Commission, opened the webinar by recalling that integrated ecological approaches from farm to landscape are one of the five priorities in the Commission’s long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation, an area in which the Commission has invested around EUR 240 million under Horizon 2020 to support 40 R&I projects. She went on explaining that agroecology has also emerged as a key area in the context of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI), referring to the Agricultural Innovation Summit organised in France in 2019. The summit clearly showed that there are many initiatives going on in different parts of Europe and that research needs in agroecology are significant. She confirmed that agroecology will continue to be a key priority for the Commission under Horizon Europe, as an approach that can provide answers to several of the challenges that our farm and food systems face.

Moving to the wider EU policy context, she highlighted the links between the partnership and key EU policy files, especially the farm to fork and the biodiversity strategies that had been launched after the first webinar, on 20 May. The farm-to-fork strategy has identified agroecology as one of the sustainable farming practices that need to be boosted and explicitly mentions this partnership and the contribution it will make to reduce the use of pesticides, fertilisers and antimicrobials. The strategy also recognises that European farmers are key to manage the transition to sustainability and one of the objectives of the strategy is to strengthen farmers’ efforts to tackle climate change, protect the environment and preserve biodiversity, fully in line with the objectives of this partnership. For the individual farmers, this could mean another burden that could be challenging to achieve, and therefore, the role of R&I and further linking R&I to practice become absolutely essential. The strategy also identifies the ‘eco-schemes’ under the new CAP as a major stream of funding to boost sustainable practices, such as precision agriculture, agroecology (including organic farming), carbon farming and agro-forestry. Agroecology is also identified as one of the areas for future research and innovation that will be at the core of the EU’s international cooperation. As for the biodiversity strategy for 2030, Kerstin Rosenow underlined the impetus it provides for the development of agroecology in Europe as it recognises the role it can play in providing healthy food while maintaining productivity, increase soil fertility and biodiversity, and reduce the footprint of food production.

She underlined the important targets that both strategies have set out and to which the partnership can provide a key contribution, including:

- **reducing the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides** by 50% and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50% by 2030,
- **increasing the share of organic farming** to at least 25% of the EU’s agricultural land by 2030;
- **bring back at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features** in order to provide space for wild animals, plants, pollinators and natural pest regulators;
- **protect soil fertility, reduce soil erosion and increase soil organic matter.**

She emphasised the importance of ensuring more sustainable, resilient and inclusive farming and food systems notably in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the need to ensure support for the farming sector in the recovery plan recently announced by the Commission. She underlined that the plan should be in line with the objectives of the green deal, the farm-to-fork and the
biodiversity strategies. Both strategies are telling us that we need a **deep and systemic transformation of the EU agriculture**, and she stressed that this can only be powered with **political support, with funding, and with knowledge**. For that, she emphasised the need to target our R&I investments, and the **instrumental role of Horizon Europe** in achieving the objectives of both strategies and of the green deal.

She explained that increasing funding for research and innovation activities on agroecology will contribute to achieving the targeted impacts we have proposed for Cluster 6 “Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment” and in particular those regarding climate neutrality, biodiversity decline, sustainable and circular management and use of natural resources, and ensuring food and nutrition security for all. The European Commission believes that a **partnership will be the right instrument** to ensure effective **collaboration in research activities**, exchange of knowledge, good practices and experience across Member States, and impact on the ground through end-user involvement. It is also the right instrument to ensure the **long-term sustainability of the activities**, and a **stronger focus on territorial, site-specific challenges** of the farming sector.

She then briefly went through the **achievements of the past four webinars**. She recognised that the concepts involved in the partnership are complex and lend themselves to several opinions and interpretations. The webinars have offered space to exchange on different views on agroecology, living labs and research infrastructures, and she underlined the need to move on to **discuss and agree on the definitions or principles** we will use in the context of the partnership. Referring to the many inspiring examples shown at the webinars of initiatives across Europe that have some of the elements to take into consideration for the living labs on which to build the partnership, she reminded that the Commission’s purpose in showing those examples was not to say “this is what we call an agroecology living lab” but to show possible forms that initiatives can take that can be useful to collectively identify the key elements to carry on to the future partnership. She took the opportunity to thank all the speakers of the different webinars for their great collaboration, and all participants for their support and valuable comments and insights that are extremely valuable for the Commission in moving the discussion forward. She also noted that the high participation in the four webinars was a clear sign of their interest in the initiative and of their commitment with the principles and values that the Commission aims to foster with this partnership.

Moving to the main **next steps of the process**, she explained that the time frame to develop the partnership spans roughly between now and summer 2022, when the topic that would be included in the Work Programme 2023-2024 of Horizon Europe should be ready. To prepare for that, a more extensive document or “partnership proposal” needs to be developed, including all the elements needed in terms of vision, ambition, objectives, activities, partners, etc. In this regard, she referred to the two proposals for coordination and support actions (CSA) that have been recently selected for funding under Horizon 2020’s call FNR-01-2020 to prepare the ground for this partnership and to help increase synergies for the partnership preparation.

She then went more concretely through the **key elements that are needed to build the partnership**, the **preparatory activities** that need to be undertaken before the inclusion of the topic in the work programme 2023-2024, **how the next stages will be organised**, and **who will be involved** in the process. For that, as a first step, she underlined that defining the vision and ambition of the partnership, in particular how the community understands agroecology and farming systems transition under this partnership, what are the key principles in terms of methods, how living labs are understood in the context of the partnership, how would research infrastructures support the network of living labs, and what would be the partnership’s **objectives, activities and key achievements** are important first steps and the focus of this webinar. Regarding the definition of the **activities**, she referred notably to the need to discuss and define during the preparatory phase aspects such as the role of research, what form the research activities will take, how knowledge exchange will be organised to turn place-based R&I outcomes
into transferable ideas and methods, and how the synergies with other R&I or policy initiatives will be organised.

She then went through the key preparatory actions until summer 2022:

- undertake a mapping exercise to identify existing sites or initiatives on which potentially start building the network of living labs, on which participants have provided valuable contributions;

- develop a robust Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) as a key element of the partnership that will provide the framework to define the thematic priorities and the kind of research and innovation actions needed. This is where we will define the respective roles of research activities, innovation & experimentation activities, and the role of research infrastructures. The SRIA needs to be ready for the adoption of the Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024, which means tentatively between spring and autumn 2022;

- prepare the funders, getting their commitment and agreeing on a funding model, to develop a framework for the activities of the partnership, piloting the living labs, and preparing an approach to data management and data sharing.

Recalling that “this is a joint partnership”, she concluded that with the five webinars the Commission has launched the discussion, prompted the creation of a solid community of potential partners and stakeholders and facilitated lively exchanges on key aspects for the future of EU’s farming. To complement the basis for further discussion, the Commission has also prepared and shared with the community what is a first input into the co-creation of the partnership proposal as a basis for the collective discussion. She insisted that the purpose was not having a discussion on this input between the European Commission and the participants, but to have it as a starting point of a discussion between all participants. She also referred to the two coordination and support actions that will be working hand in hand to prepare the ground for this partnership.

In recalling that the Commission is proposing a co-funded partnership, financed between the European Commission and the Member States and associated countries national or regional authorities or funders that wish to embark in this initiative, she concluded by calling on the potential partners to take over the lead in preparing the partnership proposal, using as a basis the material collectively developed until now, but making it their own project, with the help and support of the Commission. She said the purpose of this webinar was to exchange on practical
concrete ways to move this process forward, and hopefully to identify people interested to take part in a “drafters group” to move the preparation of the partnership proposal forward for example, as we have in other partnerships.

The presentation was followed by a brief exchange with the participants, who voiced their questions concerning:

- The **definition of the term “agroecology”**, and whether it means changes in agricultural practices and creating new knowledge on those practices where the living labs and research infrastructures can be the instruments to monitor these practices in the long run;

- The creation of a network of living labs, and what role and how does the planned **survey** fit in the overall process, who will receive the questionnaire, when will it be launched and the role of public administration.

- The need to move a bit closer to the **market**.

- Clarification on the **next steps** and how the process will be developed (workshops, questionnaires, etc.).

In her replies, Kerstin Rosenow recognised the importance of changing agricultural practices and the role of agroecology as a means to achieve those changes. However she recalled that the concept of agroecology, how we would want to see its definition and the one we want to use in this partnership, is among the aspects that need to be defined collectively. The discussion will also include aspects such as the integration of the market aspects and defining the concrete next steps. These aspects will be part of the co-creation, based also on the elements showed in previous webinars. The planned mapping survey is definitely part of the co-creation process, as it is conceived as an exercise that will be open for everybody to provide their inputs in terms of relevant initiatives they know in their respective countries and regions.

Other questions coming from the chat insisted on the clarification of the next steps, how will all stakeholders be involved and the role of the CSAs in this regard. Participants also asked questions on the EU survey and the mapping exercises foreseen by the CSAs, whether the mapped sites are supposed to be only regions where initiatives are already in place, or including high potential regions where transition would have big effects (e.g. intensive regions with major public good problems) could be considered. Participants also raised questions about the social aspects of the partnership and inquired, taking into account the "little appeal" of farming careers, what role AKIS and education will have in the partnership. Participants also congratulated the Commission on the way it organised the dialogue on the partnership.
Break-out sessions

Four one-hour parallel sessions were organised in groups of around 20 people each representing a balanced mix of stakeholders.

Parallel sessions 1&2 – Content and ambition – Farming systems transitions and agroecology

Sessions 1&2 focused on discussing the “content & ambition” of the partnership”, in particular, how does the community understand transition of farming systems and agroecology in the context of the partnership. The discussion was organised around three questions:

- What are the key principles on which we can agree in terms of vision and ambition? How do we want to understand agroecology and farming systems transition under this partnership?
- What would be for you the key achievements?
- What are the key questions to address in the preparatory phase?

Some snapshots from the first webinars were provided as inspiration.

1. Key principles

The participants in the break-out sessions 1&2 agreed on the following points.

The need to define agroecology:

- There is wide recognition of the FAO ten elements as well as the 13 elements defined by the High-Level Panel of Experts of Food and Nutrition Security as reference for the definition. The linkages between the elements and addressing all of them is key to this approach;
- It is important to ensure a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach that involves the social and economic dimensions, along the ecological, the food systems and the institutional innovation dimensions. This implies the involvement of all relevant actors (farmers, researchers, advisors, processors, consumers, etc).
- The definition should not to be too narrow in order to offer room for diversity and context-specificities and to allow each farmer find his/her own pathway to achieve the
agreed goals. Setting minimum requirements should therefore not be in contradiction with providing spaces for all farmers.

- The 'scientific' definition of agroecology (i.e., the implementation of ecological principles in farming, increased diversity, closing nutrient cycles etc.) could be the most strategically sensible to use. This option would however “leave out” the social and economic aspects that are also key in agroecology, as well as the bottom-up and co-creation processes, combining science and traditional knowledge and practices, and helping to deliver solutions to local problems. An integrated sustainable approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and includes all types of farming systems is therefore needed.

**The vision:**

- The overall principle underpinning the vision of the partnership should be replacing external inputs by knowledge on managing ecological processes, in line with the EU farm to fork strategy and the need to produce more with less. The objective of input reduction could be supported by precision farming as a tool that holds potential for spatially specific resource efficiency. Some indicators should measure these impacts. Looking at inputs on a case-by-case basis in function of their overall impact on aspects such as the environment and health may be needed (i.e., biocontrol methods that can enhance biodiversity).

- The vision should be ambitious and foster fundamental and comprehensive transition of the current input-based EU agricultural system towards a comprehensive and embedded (market, consumers) agroecological system using biodiversity based ecosystem services as sole input.

- The focus should be mainly on transforming conventional farms but also on ensuring the sustainability of improved systems, like organic farming. Addressing the farmers that are more reluctant to change is important, hence the key role of advisors and of pioneer farmers who are already implementing agroecological practices. Instruments such as "lighthouse farms" being developed in some parts of Europe to address this pioneer-distinction as exemplary farms could serve as basis for the living labs.

- We should adopt a systems thinking that also takes productivity and market aspects into account (certified products, added value reflected in price), beyond the purely agronomic ones.

- The transformation entailed in moving towards agroecology is key, but the dynamics of the process are equally important. Measuring success with appropriate indicators is key.

- The transition must be a true societal effort, since farmers alone cannot bear all the burden. Institutional innovation is therefore needed to achieve the objectives. Farmers need to be supported by getting back the added value through the agri-food chain with transparent commercial procedures. The role of consumers is key in driving the transition, and communication to consumers on the benefits and added value of agroecology is necessary (tools like block chain could help).

**The role of research:**

- Research, both basic and high-tech, should be a key component of the partnership to address fundamental questions, beyond the activities in the living labs.

- Research needs to keep pace with the demands from the society, and farmers need to be part of the research and development process. The involvement of the farmers in the living labs is necessary in order to ensure research that is driven by end-users needs that will facilitate transition and adoption of research results. Building on
existing successful principles and approaches of multidisciplinary and the multi-actor approach was underlined. AKIS should be embedded in the partnership.

- End-users will in most cases be farmers, however, who the end users are will depend on the innovation being developed.

The geographic and governance levels:

- Governance aspects need to be considered, since transitions do not take place outside of political systems, be it at national, regional or local levels.

- It is important to look at the farm, landscape and value chain levels. The territorial scale should go much beyond the farm level and the whole agri-food-system has to be considered. Regional aspects should be taken into account.

2. Key achievements

The participants in the break-out sessions 1&2 agreed that the key achievements should be (depending on the target date – 2030? 2050?):

The partnership contributes to sustainability goals:

- the partnership should ultimately contribute to achieve the global commitments embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by positioning and adopting agroecology as an approach to agriculture that respects planetary boundaries, that supports the interconnected nature of the SDGs, and that provides guidance for the European Green Deal implementation.

Agroecology is taken out of its “niche”:

- agroecology becomes a mainstreamed system and model for systemic change in farming that is supported and widespread across Europe in a systemic manner, making farming an appealing career that is more resilient and have good and stable profitability;

- agroecology is an attractive option for farmers, they would receive a fair price for the environmental benefits they provide to society, among others by reducing the use of external inputs. Recognition and certification of practices would be an important element.

Agroecology living labs are widespread in Europe:

- they would become a well-known concept that is easy to access for anyone who wants to be involved;

- they would be scaled-up to a generalized system reaching many farms. They would be a recognised approach to sustainability that is supported and recognized by the community, government and funders and by all agents across the agri-food chain;

- they would offer the possibility to connect science and practice, and would offer a toolbox for farmers on best agroecological practices with a territorial/regional specificity (soils, climatic conditions, crop, etc.).

A network of living labs and research infrastructures on agroecology is established at European level:

- it would include different actors at different spatial levels (plot, farm, landscape), temporal (short, medium and long term) and horizontal (supply change from production to consumption) and would constitute an EU-wide network of advisors in agroecology that would accompany and support farmers in the transition;

- it would develop a system for harmonized measurement, monitoring and sharing knowledge, for which the FAO TAPE could be the reference tool. Indicators would be
developed to measure performance, impact and externalities, setting benchmarks, inputs required, impact on soil regeneration and water quality preservation, self-sufficiency and ecosystem services, as well as social aspects.

3. Key questions

The participants in the break-out sessions 1&2 proposed several questions to be addressed in the preparatory phase:

- **Identify the elements that can make agroecology widespread.** These can include:
  - engaging in an in-depth discussion of what farming is: only a business or something more?
  - living labs can be a tool, but it might not be the only solution. Consider policy aspects as well;
  - improve AKIS and strengthen advisory services;
  - identify best practices and the methodologies to test their evolution;
  - address regulatory aspects and take the political economy into consideration;
  - engage farmers’ associations, the private sector (up and downstream), related sectors such as water, education, public health, etc, and the regions;
  - measure the efficiency/impacts of agroecology on sustainability and how to benchmark in a way that is standardized;
  - inform consumers of the value added of agroecology (labelling can play a role in this regard).

- **Ensure links with ongoing initiatives, such as the soil mission and the EJP soils**

- **Find the right balance in the partnership between research and innovation:**
  - ensure that the R&I activities are addressed to support farmers, but some cannot be addressed in living labs, room should be left for **basic and high tech research** that cannot always be addressed in a living lab;
  - analyse how to **address the education and training needs of farmers** in order to enable them to undertake the transition. Build on existing successful approaches such as the multi-actor approach;
  - identify the R&I questions that need to be addressed to support farmers;

- **Define to role of social sciences;**
- **Define how to scale-up living labs;**
- **Address language barriers and communication;**
- **Determine what is achievable by 2030.**
Parallel sessions 3 & 4 – Instruments and approaches – Living labs and research infrastructures

Sessions 3&4 focused on discussing ‘Instruments & approaches’ in particular, how does the community understand living labs in the context of this partnership and the role they see for research infrastructures?

The discussion was organised around three questions:

- What are the key principles on which we can agree in terms of methods we want to apply?
- How do we want to understand living labs under this partnership? What could be the role of research infrastructures?
- What would be for you the key achievements?
- What are the key questions to address in the preparatory phase?

Some snapshots from the first webinars were provided as inspiration.

**Snapshots**

1. Key principles

The participants in the break-out sessions 3&4 agreed on the following points.

- **Co-creation, co-leading and co-funding** should be the principles of the partnership.
- The partnership should **depart from the existing living labs at national, regional and local** level. For that, there is a need to map the existing, in the EU but also beyond: international cooperation would be important (with already a nice relation with Canada). While doing this mapping, one needs to consider that the concept of living-labs can be already present under a different name in national contexts, hence the need to map the various elements of living labs to see how they appear in the existing initiatives.
- **Living labs principles as understood by the European network of living labs (EnoLL)** should be adopted. They commented on the challenge of communicating and explaining these principles at a local level and also at the challenge of implementing these principles.
- **Comments on living labs principles:**
  - **working in real-life settings**: this did not raise particular comments.
  - **Active stakeholder engagement:**
    - The **multi-actor approach** should be applied.
Participants commented about this principle that you need to involve a **variety of stakeholders**, including on the science side, as you need many different research and technical organisations to provide access to the knowledge needed. There should not be a closed group of RTOs;

- You also need to **keep a link between research and offering services** to the farmers to keep them interested.

**Openness including open mind set in exchanging:**

- Participants commented that there is a challenge in getting all actors to open to others to exchange knowledge, especially in **competitive environments**: you have to make it possible to develop a solution that works for everybody.

- **There may be a trade-off between openness and getting a real transformation that meets societal and policy objectives.** Participants wondered if openness meant accepting the absence of results and if there should there be a bit of a top-down push. The discussion highlighted that living labs, while being open also have key performance indicators and ways in which they measure success. In agroecosystem living labs, a lot is about early adoption. It is important for the funders also. How to balance societal goals and market forces will be an important issue.

- **Link to the regional innovation ecosystem:** working in a quadruple helix is part of the principles. The living lab or living lab projects will be stronger if they are embedded in a regional strategy and possibly associated with a regional « label », as opposed to being stand-alone projects. They have to be aligned with the overall policy framework to provide an overall coherence.

- **Need for a systems approaches that helps balance the forces and objectives.**
  - There is a need for an integration of mechanism and principles to enable achievements.
  - **The living labs require facilitation** (e.g. a community manager). Co-creation takes-time and needs trust building.
  - Participants wondered if we were going to give a ‘**legal**’ definition of living labs. They commented that it might be understood differently in every country. They suggested building on the experience of EIP-AGRI operational groups of the EIP-AGRI regarding the multi-actor approach.
  - **There is a need for a research pillar in the partnership** that funds the research that is necessary on an excellence basis, produces replicable outputs and feeds into the needs of the living labs, e.g. through a platform. This is necessary in particular to trigger interest from the research funders. A challenging point may be that programme implementation is ‘time-bound’ and ‘theme-specific’ due to annual budgeting of the research funds contrary to the international funding schemes that have multiannual budgets. This could impact the architecture of the partnership.

- **Research infrastructures:**
  - The role of RIs should be to accompany, understand and support data providers by applying modelling, big data, and digital "state-of-art" innovations.
  - Some research infrastructures already work on the various dimensions that are needed for the partnership (including social dimension) and should be brought on-board the network.

- Some commented that a possible obstacle to openness from the funders point of view is that.
2. Key achievements

The participants in the break-out sessions 3&4 agreed that key achievements of the partnership would be:

**Agroecology is more widespread and rewarded in the market through new value chains:**
- The partnership would build a solid support base for agroecology by raising awareness on agroecology, which is quite a niche in some regions at the moment.
- Cohesion would be improved and there would be less conflicts between nature protection NGOs and industry. The reputation of farmers would be enhanced.
- The partnership would show how to get out of the lock-ins that prevent the transition to happen. It would show how to build a strategic vision of how to make markets change their scope and approaches.
- The socio-economic importance of ecosystem services would be better recognised across the broad environment of multiple and heterogeneous involved actors.
- As a result there would be more innovative supply chains built around the concept of agroecology – the partnership would create new markets.

**The knowledge and innovation ecosystem would be stronger, more longer-term and more efficient**
- The partnership would leverage some resources from local and national levels to support agroecology or a broader concept that would be encompassing enough to motivate their efforts.
- The partnership would speed up innovation through a better use of existing infrastructures and living labs. It would help to better use and exploit knowledge, infrastructure and human capacities toward working more sustainability. It would build synergies with other initiatives such as the mission on soil health and food.
- There would be a long-term strategic approach to research infrastructures that can contribute to agroecology (including in the ESFRI context), taking into account the living labs.
- There would be a good exchange of knowledge between the living labs: living labs would be connected through a knowledge exchange facility and share their challenges and learnings.
- The living labs would be better recognised and valorised, including financially.
- There would be a greater knowledge and understanding of the actors involved in the living labs and in R&I ecosystem at the local and regional levels.
- The partnership would have helped to develop a longer-term organisation and ways of funding of the R&I ecosystem to achieve long-term benefits of knowledge generation.
- There would be an improved understanding of how to monitor and evaluate the generation of new knowledge and new practices, alongside the uptake and implementation of this new knowledge on the ground (it will clarify what are the steps to take for that).

3. Key questions

The participants in the break-out sessions 3&4 proposed several questions to be addressed in the preparatory phase:

**Regarding policy-making and policy makers**
- How to create the necessary sense of urgency at the local level? How to convince the programme managers? Preparatory actions should devote specific actions to help those in charge of programming to make room for such type of activities.
- How to include the policy-makers in the family and make the link between R&I and policy/regulation?
• What role can and will regulation play in helping the blocking the partnership from achieving its objectives?

**Regarding the vision and ambition**

• What is our shared vision for agroecology? How can living labs and research infrastructures support this vision becoming reality? How can we motivate all the different stakeholders to take part?

• What are the synergies between the agroecology partnership and the mission soil health and food?

• Business models: How could these initiatives lead to new business models and new business creations and new market creation? How can we make sure that the extra-value of agroecology is seen in the supply chain? How can we get the ecosystem service value financed and incorporated in the value of the products and how to make sure that value reaches the producers?

**Regarding the actors to be involved on the ground**

• How to connect existing infrastructures and create a network of living laboratories to conduct and monitor research and innovation for agroecology?

• How to map and identify the key actors participating already in living labs initiatives at all levels?

• **How to address the lack of skills, gate keepers, people who enjoy the trust of people on the ground?** Locally grounded intermediaries. How to identify and train them? Advisory services are key. How could the cooperatives (50% of production covered) be brought on-board? How to bring the advisors on board, who have a key role to play in linking research and practice?

• **Producers are open to agroecology but need to understand what it means for them. How could the partnership help on that?** What are the technical requirements of agroecology? What are the economic consequences of adopting agroecological practices in the current economic framework?

• **How do you compensate for risk-taking by the real economic players?** How do you reward farmers for the knowledge that they create in the living labs? What would be a fair framework for Intellectual Property Rights?

**Regarding the funding of the partnership and its development with Member States**

• If this partnership is co-funded, what will happen with the Member states that are not able to participate economically?

• Will the partnership have internal calls or also external calls?

• What about synergies about the future infrastructures and the current networks and EIP Agri, and national but EU level as well

**Regarding the coordination and support actions**

• What will be the role of the CSAs and which synergies will they bring in the development of the partnership, in particular for the Member States that are not represented in the consortia?

• What is the time line of the activities of the CSAs in support of the partnership needs?

• How is DG AGRI considering the nominees from Member States for this partnership, in particular in relation to the CSA actions in support for the future partnership?
**Resources to prepare: How can the CSAs support the partnership development?**

The coordinators of the two proposals that have been selected for funding under the H2020 call “FNR-01-2020: Strengthening the European agro-ecological research and innovation ecosystem” presented their proposals and how these will contribute to prepare the ground for the partnership, if and when their grant agreement preparation phases are concluded.

**AgroEcoLLNet-Prep – The European agroecology living lab and research infrastructure network: preparation phase**

Heather McKhann, coordinator of the proposal “AgroEcoLLnet-Prep” and coordinator of the FACCE-JPI secretariat, underlined the role of agroecology in promoting a profound change of reasoning in farming, highlighting three main characteristics of the approach:

- Locally adapted to the local environmental, social and economic context;
- Evolutive: the trajectory has to be regularly evaluated with an adaptive management;
- “In the making”: collective experience, development of practice is needed through exchange and active networking.

This paradigm shift implies that researchers, trainers, advisors and producers will be equally concerned by the knowledge gaps, and co-creation of solutions becomes a useful tool to address those gaps. Experimental processes are needed that build on strong networks and common open databases and methodologies. Living labs are suited to this approach as place-based and open innovation initiatives.

The proposal AgroEcoLLnet-Prep is a preparatory phase for a European network. It involves 13 partners from 9 EU countries and one non-EU country (Canada). In addition, links are established with other initiatives such as ERA-NETS. The main aim of the proposal is to **prepare for the partnership and pilot a European network of Living Labs (LL) and Research Infrastructures (RI) to be called “AgroEcoLLNet” that will enable the transition towards agroecology throughout Europe**. For that purpose, AgroEcoLLNet-Prep will build this network to answer the following questions:

- Which agroecological criteria can be used to characterise agroecological systems, and monitor their transition? Which methodologies have been used to co-design and co-create new systems?
- Who are the actors involved (farmers, cooperatives, water and landscape managers, NGOs, consumers...), in which (types of) activities and with which governance?
- How diverse are the transitions and how can learning from one another across Europe be promoted to contribute to up- and out-scaling of agroecology?

The **objectives** of the proposal are to:

1. **Collectively define the mission and vision** for AgroEcoLLNet with all relevant stakeholders, including the definition of its characteristics, and collectively come to an agreement on the features of agroecological systems and agroecological LLs and RIs (components, operations, metrics or indicators to describe and monitor them, their trajectories, their key success criteria via WP1).

2. **Identify, map and evaluate** existing components of AgroEcoLLNet including their level of maturity, looking at both success stories, drivers and barriers for agroecological transition.

3. **Beginning with a few LLs and RIs** in the consortium countries, put in place a small-scale pilot Network to test different aspects of the Network in real-life situations.
4. **Draw up an implementation plan (2023-2030)** for AgroEcoLLNet, including trans-Network support activities and services. This will include assessing the current capacity on agroecology and on open innovation (including funding mechanisms & sources) to implement and run the Network and its activities at EU scale and draw up recommendations to ensure a long-term implementation of the Network in the medium and long-term.

5. Prepare and initiate a **capacity building programme** for the AgroEcoLLNet implementation phase. Prepare a data and knowledge management strategy and principles for the future network. This work should support living lab creation and maintenance, promote agroecology in RIs, toolbox approaches on agroecological transition. Prepare a data and knowledge management strategy and principles for the future network (WP6).

6. Roll out a **communication programme** that will, among other things, promote engagement among the agricultural community and funders and ensure a common understanding of agroecology amongst key stakeholders, including the general public, to provide a knowledge base for policy makers and to promote engagement among the agricultural community and funders.

The main **outcomes** will be:

1. A **Mission and Vision document** for the European AgroEcoLLNet (validated by the wider community) and how it can contribute to EU objectives and policy goals. This will be done through workshops.

2. A wide-scale **mapping, analysis and overview of existing mechanisms** (in EU and beyond) for carrying out participatory agroecological research and innovation including Key Performance Indicators for the network implementation. This will be carried out in coordination with the other CSA.

3. A small scale **pilot Network of LLs and RIs** to test the functioning and activities of the Network.

4. An **implementation plan** for the European Agroecological LL and RI Network (AgroEcoLLNet), contributing to the SRIA of the partnership.

5. **Recommendations** for ensuring the long term **implementation and sustainability** of the Network.

6. A **capacity building programme** including training actions and packages.

7. **Evidence-based knowledge** to support the transition to agroecology.

**AE4EU – Agroecology for Europe**

Alexander Wezel, coordinator of “AE4EU” presented the proposal. The proposal brings together 12 partners from 9 EU countries and one non-EU country (UK). A number of other stakeholders/associated partners (17) have expressed their intention to participate in different activities (e.g. workshops, discussion fora) and provide inputs (e.g. information for mapping and other), while an additional 10 have shown interest to participate in different actions of the project. Other non-partner country stakeholder and actor groups are also involved. Together with the other CSA, almost the entire Europe will be covered.

One of the main activities of the CSA will be the **mapping of agroecological initiatives, LL, RI, programmes, networks and NGOs** at different levels in different European countries. This will include interviews with different stakeholders, including groups of farmers, farmers’ trade unions cooperatives, agricultural advisors, NGOs and civil society organizations active in agroecology, universities, research institutes, agroecological LLs, agri-food businesses, private enterprises. This mapping will be based on the EU survey that the Commission is designing in the context of the
agroecology living labs partnership, and will be coordinated with the mapping exercise foreseen by the other CSA (AgroecoLLNetPrep). They will also build on another mapping already initiated by one of the partners (Agroecology Europe) that will be available in September.

Another important stream of activities will be driven towards developing **skills and methods** for the development of Living Labs and Research Infrastructures. This will include:

- analysing the functioning, potentials and constraints of LL, similar RI and initiatives looking at human, social, agronomic and ecological perspective and development of success-indicators;

- outlining schemes (best practice scenarios) for complementary open innovation activities, RI and LL to foster research, knowledge creation and further deployment of sustainable farming practices;

- identifying current and potential future Agroecology Territories for grasping long-term agroecological transition at the relevant landscape level. These are territories for the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources that imply adaptation of agricultural practices, develop embedded food systems and engaging the core stakeholders.

The **funding schemes and sources for agroecology** will also be analysed. The CSA will assess the implemented elements of agroecology in **public funding** schemes (regional, national and EU) and their functioning, as well as in **private funding** schemes across Europe, such as foundations, and will conduct participatory assessments and co-design of private and public funding schemes with funders.

Another key component will be **learning and exchange** in agroecology for the development of living labs and research infrastructure. This will entail building a European Agroecology Exchange Network Hub that includes a diversity of stakeholders in order to facilitate exchanges of knowledge in the Europe-wide network of agroecology. Pathways of co-development and co-learning for strengthened agroecological research and innovation based on 3 national living labs will be identified, and training packages in those three LLs will be developed, implemented and evaluated.

Under **policy development**, the CSA will identify the main challenges and innovations to develop targeted agroecology policies across Europe and at the national level, and will provide policy recommendations to maximize synergies between European, national and regional policies related to agroecology.

The CSA will provide a **framework for a European network of agroecological living labs and research infrastructures** for out- and up-scaling agroecology development across Europe and internationally through network development, reinforced interactions and cooperation among research infrastructures, farmer networks, extension services, and civil society stakeholders.

In relation with **communication and dissemination**, the CSA will create an AE4EU website and a Knowledge exchange hub (platform), that will be coordinated with the other CSA. Other communication tools will include brochures and thematic and policy briefs, newsletters, academic and non-academic publications, workshops and multiplier events with LL and RI stakeholders, funders and other stakeholders. Two Agroecology Europe Fora are foreseen for 2021 (June, Barcelona) and 2023.

**Exchange with the audience**

Both presentations triggered several questions from the audience. The participants inquired about how the co-creation process will be realized and how trust at the local level will be ensured. Questions also concerned **how the countries that are not part of the consortium will be engaged**, for instance in training activities to increase understanding of the concepts of agroecology and living labs; **how the coordination among the two CSA is planned**; what the expected outcomes from each of the CSAs will be beyond the foreseen mappings; and **how their**
results will be disseminated timely so they can be taken into consideration to build the partnership. Participants were also interested to know whether the CSAs will focus on different farming systems and supply chains in different countries, as well as the kind of funding bodies that will be involved and what kind of funding could be used for agroecology. Questions also concerned the scale of the network, how will regional coverage be ensured and with which advisory services will the CSA cooperate.

In their replies, the coordinators confirmed that they plan to expand coverage of their projects to all countries across Europe. AgroecoLLNetPrep is planning to set up a network of national contact points to undertake the mapping and to understand the needs for the networks. The idea is also that the small pilot they are planning expand to cover all LL and RI that wish to be involved. The coordinator added that each of the two consortia has a slightly different outreach and network and are complementary, so they expect to have a very good coverage of what is across Europe. The Commission explained that this complementarity is the main reason why the Commission has decided to fund both proposals to support the preparation of the partnership. AE4EU has been in contact with many other stakeholders, also in Eastern Europe, and that the aim is to enlarge and contact other partners and potential participants to contribute, exchange and co-create. They have foreseen budget to invite other stakeholders outside the partners to participate in workshops, for instance. Regarding co-creation, the coordinator explained that the training package will not be created by the partners alone, but it will be discussed in advance with the actors with training needs (such farmers groups), to identify the important elements to be included in the package, and test and evaluate with them to provide a guideline. On the expected outcomes of the CSAs that will contribute the preparation of the partnership and how will the CSA will work together, the coordinator explained that the mapping will be one of the first things that should contribute to build the partnership, and also other actions for which the proposals will be slightly revisited. Both CSAs are already discussing how to work together, and one of the aspects being discussed is how to coordinate the mapping.
Discussion on concrete steps to take to structure the work ahead

The last part of the meeting was dedicated to a strategic discussion with the participants on what would the immediate next actions be to prepare the partnership, how do participants see their roles and how they could contribute to this preparatory phase.

Concerning the immediate actions, some participants invited the Commission to engage with the national contact points nominated by the Member States for this partnership to further develop it, while others asked to closely involve the SCAR, as the strategic advisory body that involves all the Member States and can support drafting the proposal. Some participants further suggested to establish a SCAR working group on agroecology. Setting up a “drafters group” to develop the partnership proposal, as it is done for other partnerships, would be another approach. Participants insisted on the need to identify a single national entry point for the partnership. The Commission explained that all the Member States have been invited to the webinars, including the national contact points identified for the partnership, as well as contacts proposed by the SCAR members and the members of the Shadow Programme Committee, coming to a list of almost 200 names if we consider also academia, private sector and civil society organisations. The question now is to identify the ones that will be involved in preparing the partnership proposal. The preferred approach for establishing a working group to draft the partnership proposal will have to be rediscussed with Member States, taking into account the discussion at the webinar.

Participants also considered important involving the key people in charge of policies/strategies (i.e. CAP, innovation policies) at the national level. Some participants suggested the SCAR Strategic Working Group on agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) could play a connecting role and raise awareness of the partnership within their stakeholder community.

Some participants also suggested to circulate a list of funders to offer the possibility to propose additional funders who may not be involved in the process yet.

Participants considered also important as a next step to build a common understanding of the concept of agroecology and of the objectives pursued in setting up a network of living labs across Europe. This should be part of the initial discussions of the future working group.
Participants considered the **survey/mapping** as an essential exercise and as a first step in order to get a clear picture of existing living labs and agroecology initiatives at national, regional and local levels. Participants questioned the scale of the living labs that were to be mapped. Participants urged the identification of single entry points at the national and regional level that would know of ongoing initiatives and coordinate with them the contribution to the survey. In connection with this, some participants recommended not to rely only on single national entry points since this risked not working in decentralised / federal Member States. Participants also questioned the coordination of the initial survey proposed by the European Commission and the mapping exercises foreseen in both of the CSAs. Participants who expressed their preferences would rather have a single survey implemented in their country, although some reminded that different surveys may have value as they may target different groups and information gathered might be different in terms of policies, sectors, etc., as well as information on grassroots or other initiatives that are not necessarily known by the managers of funding programmes. In case it is decided to undertake more than one survey, participants insisted that coherence among the three that are already planned by the Commission and the CSAs respectively, should be ensured and that Member State contacts should be well informed. The Commission explained that the objective with launching a first EU survey was to use the momentum of the webinars to start gathering information on relevant initiatives while we wait for the CSAs to start (in autumn-winter). The Commission’s idea, also supported by some of the participants in their comments to the first draft of the survey, was to launch a first stage survey as pre-screening, and hand over afterwards to the CSAs to go deeper into the mapping, on which they will both work as one of their first activities as soon as the projects start. Identifying both the entry points and the right dissemination channels for the surveys will be important. In terms of next steps on the survey, the Commission concluded that it would re-consider the mapping exercise internally and discuss it with the CSAs, and keep the community informed about the decision that is made in the end.

In terms of immediate actions, participants also asked for **regular updates** and brainstorming opportunities to keep the broader community informed of the partnership development, including webinars even when physical meetings will be possible again, although some participants felt that organising physical participatory workshops seems unavoidable to consolidate a common understanding and co-creation.

Participants invited the CSAs to engage with existing initiatives and projects, such as the project I2Connect that is working on training for advisors, to test their tools in the pilot living labs. Other participants suggested to coordinate efforts with the Thematic smart specialisation platform on agri-food on high-tech farming that is addressing similar challenges, and ensuring engagement with regional actors.

Concerning **roles and contributions**, participants insisted on the need to ensure that producer organisations, cooperatives and associations of producer organisations, who understand well the policy connections and their impacts on farmers, are included in the process. Advisors and EIP AGRI innovation brokers should also be involved from the beginning. Several participants made more specific suggestions:

- COPA-COGECA suggested linking with ongoing initiatives they are coordinating focusing on farmers’ future skills and training needs.
- Via Campesina expressed interest in being involved in the development of the partnership, but insisted on the importance to ensure sufficient time for internal consultation and language facilities.
- The European Economic and social Committee informed they will also consider how to contribute to scale up agroecology in Europe, linked to research and innovation, and to the realisation of the SDGs and the Paris agreement.
The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) offered to involve its large network in disseminating information and in facilitating the involvement of its members as local actors participating in the co-creation and contributing their expertise.

The European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry Network (ERIAFF) offered to help facilitate a collaborative approach with European Regions.

**Conclusions and next steps**

**Kerstin Rosenow** closed the webinar by thanking all participants for their active participation and valuable inputs in putting the partnership preparation on a good track. The Commission will now carefully analyse the actions proposed at this webinar and see how to best approach each action point, in coordination with the grant agreement preparation for the two CSAs. Concerning the mapping survey, she concluded that the Commission will review it based on the comments received from the participants on the first draft questionnaire and at the webinar, and will coordinate action in this regard with the mapping exercises foreseen in the CSAs. She invited the participants to promote the survey and encourage stakeholders in their respective countries to provide the Commission with first-level information on their potentially relevant initiatives. She also informed that the reports on webinars 3 to 5 are in preparation and will be shared soon with all participants, and announced the preparation of a webpage that will summarise this work and make it publicly visible. To conclude, she asked the participants to share what they have learned during the webinars within their organisations and continue exploring how they can contribute to the process.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:45</td>
<td>Virtual room opening – Welcome and connecting to the meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Webinar starts (Start time in Webex invitation)</td>
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<td>14:00</td>
<td>Co-creating the Agroecology living labs partnership proposal in practice:</td>
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<td>- What do we have to prepare? Concrete steps to be taken.</td>
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<td>- European Commission inputs into co-creation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kerstin Rosenow – Head of Unit Research and innovation at DG Agriculture and rural development,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>European Commission (20’ + 10’ Q&amp;A)</td>
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<td>14:30</td>
<td>Introduction to group work- Susana Gaona Saez &amp; Alexia Rouby, European Commission DG AGRI</td>
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<td>14:40</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>14:50</td>
<td>Group work, in 4 parallels of maximum 20 people. Start co-creating a joint vision.</td>
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<td>Parallels 1 &amp;2</td>
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<td>Content &amp; ambition: how do we understand transition of farming systems and agroecology in the context</td>
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<td>Instruments &amp; approaches: How do we understand living labs in the context of this partnership?</td>
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<td>How do we see research infrastructures supporting the labs?</td>
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<td>15:50</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>16:00</td>
<td>Flash reporting from the 4 groups (report by someone non EC)</td>
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<td>16:30</td>
<td>Resources to prepare: How can the CSAs support the partnership development?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Presentation of AgroEcoLLnetPrep – Heather McKhann, INRAE &amp; FACCE</td>
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<td>- Presentation of AE4EU – Alexander Wezel, ISARA &amp; Agroecology Europe</td>
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<td>17:00</td>
<td>Discussion on concrete steps to take to structure the work ahead</td>
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<td>17:20</td>
<td>Conclusions and next steps</td>
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<td>17:30</td>
<td>End of webinar</td>
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Attendance list

This attendance list has been composed based on screenshots of the participants in the webinar and on the registration list. Only people for whom there was a name and surname have been included. Affiliations and countries may not be fully correct. Participants who joined by phone are not included. Participants who joined in the middle and left before the end may also be missing.

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Name/Firstname</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Austrian Chamber of Agriculture</td>
<td>Miron Elena-Teodora</td>
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<td>AT</td>
<td>BOKU - University of Natural Resources</td>
<td>Schaller Lena Luise</td>
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<td>AT</td>
<td>Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism</td>
<td>Ohrloff Chiara</td>
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<td>AT</td>
<td>FFG - Europäische und Internationale Programme - Nationale Kontaktstelle für Lebensmittel, Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Biotechnologie</td>
<td>Kurz Simone</td>
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<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flanders, Belgium</td>
<td>Delanoy Marleen</td>
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<td>BE</td>
<td>Flemish Dept. of Economy, Science &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>De Vos Liselotte</td>
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<td>Bijttebier Jo</td>
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<td>BE</td>
<td>Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO)</td>
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<td>SPW Recherche</td>
<td>Petit Carine</td>
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<td>BE</td>
<td>Uni Ghent - EURAKNOS, EUREKA</td>
<td>Burssens Sylvia</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada</td>
<td>McPhee Chris</td>
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<td>Association of Chambers of Agriculture / Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern - Brussels Office</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>ERANET SusAn + SCAR Sustainable animal production</td>
<td>Saggau Elke</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Projektträger Jülich</td>
<td>Butler Manning David</td>
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<td>Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)</td>
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<td>Von Thuenen Institute - Thuenen Institute of Farm Economics</td>
<td>Schwarz Gerald</td>
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<td>CDTI/ State Research Agency/National Institute for Agricultural Research (INIA) - General Deputy for Foresight and Coordination Programs. Coordination of agricultural research;</td>
<td>González Jose Manuel</td>
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<td>ES</td>
<td>LIFEWATCH - E-SCIENCE EUROPEAN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH</td>
<td>González-Aranda Juan Miguel</td>
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<td>Pera Mihai</td>
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