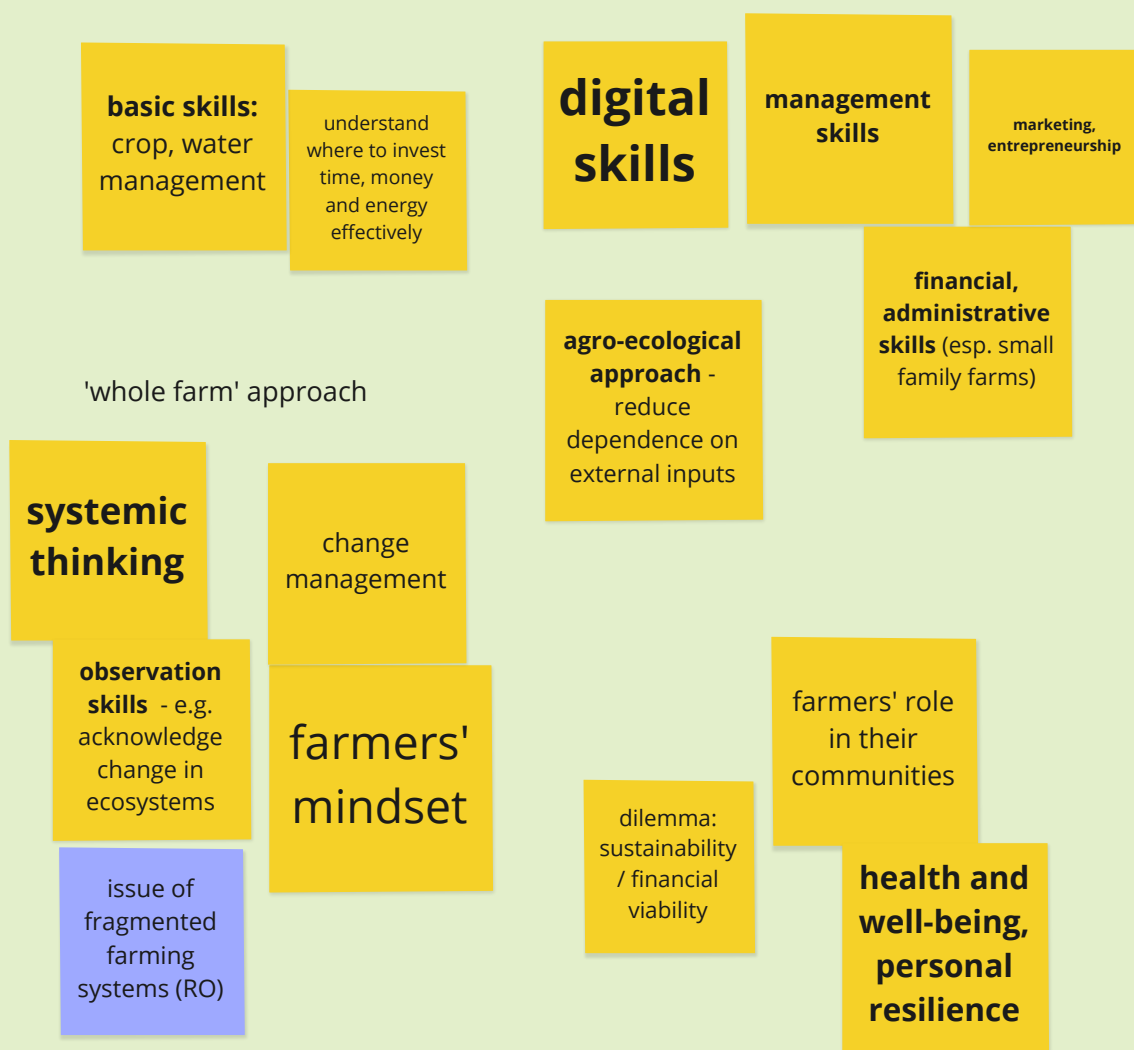


Sustainable farming practices



1. What skills are essential to implement sustainable farming practices?



Thematic Group on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector

1st TG meeting
09/10/2023

In the discussion regarding sustainable farming practices, the first-round participants engaged in a thorough discussion about the essential skills required for the successful implementation of sustainability in farming.

While some participants emphasised fundamental competencies like crop and water management, others stressed the significance of digital skills, management proficiency, marketing acumen, and financial skills.

The participants also discussed the 'whole farm' approach, emphasising the importance of systemic thinking, a comprehensive view of the farm, change management, and a thorough evaluation of existing practices, including the consideration of whether traditional methods should be retained or adapted.

Importantly, the participants also addressed the well-being of farmers and agri-food workers, including concepts like personal resilience, while recognising the essential roles farmers play within their communities. These multifaceted skill areas formed the core of the participants' discussion.

The information and views set out in this document are those expressed by the members of the EU CAP Network's Thematic Group on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.





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In the second round, participants delved into effective methods and training approaches for equipping farmers with skills to embrace sustainable farming. Once again, systemic thinking emerged as a significant aspect, particularly in the latter part of the discussion. The dialogue revolved around four main macro areas.

Firstly, there was a focus on the importance of networking and the exchange of information and knowledge. This exchange was seen as crucial, transcending generational and international boundaries, while fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including farmers, service providers, and input producers. Operational Groups were highlighted as examples of organic and effective knowledge transfer mechanisms. The discussion then shifted towards the value of informal and non-formal events as opportunities for networking and learning, spanning a range of activities, from casual meetings to farmers gatherings.

The second and third area of interest – strongly related - concerned sharing examples and transferring knowledge. Lighthouse farms and demo farms were deemed interesting for exchanging information and experiences. The conversation also delved into the realm of information and advice, stressing the importance of verifiable advice from clear and valid sources, based on trust and flexibility. The participants underscored the need for online provision of advice, mentoring and capacity-building activities. Furthermore, there was a discussion on the potential need to compensate farmers for their participation in such activities, or to facilitate access to training and advice, either through financial compensation or replacement services.

The fourth area covered in the discussion concerned training, with an emphasis on accessibility and broad participation - also through compensation or replacement services. Importantly, the discussion extended the focus to include not just farmers but also employees working on farms and family members involved in farm operations. The participants underscored the importance of education in providing incentives for farmers to adopt more sustainable practices. This entailed bridging the gap between the desire to be more sustainable and the necessity of remaining profitable and competitive in the market while maintaining the viability of the farm.

Topic 2

Sustainable farming practices



2. What are effective **methods / training approaches** allowing farmers to gain skills for (more) sustainable farming?

