



# 1st European CAP Network workshop 'National networking for innovation'

Tallinn, Estonia  
30 November – 1 December 2023





# Cultivating Knowledge: A Journey Through Ireland's National Rural Network and AKIS Initiatives

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UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

EU CAP NETWORK, ESTONIA 2023



# Overview

- ▶ Evaluation
- ▶ Mapping - Printed Material - One-stop-Shop
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Video Blogs
- ▶ Using What's Going On...
- ▶ Guest Blogs
- ▶ Teaming – up
- ▶ Learning what we don't know....

# Ireland's National Rural Network: 2016-2023



*Irish Rural Link*  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*



Department of  
**Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine**  
An Roinn  
**Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara**



**Supported by:**



*Philip Farrelly & Co*



**An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail**  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



# Initial Engagement: Evaluation

- ▶ **EIP-AGRI/Multi-Actor Evaluation....**
  - ▶ NRN (Maura Farrell) engaged in evaluating EIP-AGRI Projects
- ▶ **Importance:**
  - ▶ Getting involved from the 'Get-Go'....
  - ▶ Project awareness and knowledge
  - ▶ Commitment to projects
  - ▶ Buy-in for dissemination and support
  - ▶ Determination for successful outcomes



# EIP-AGRI Dissemination Methods: Mapping

- ▶ All EIP-AGRI projects mapped: visually appealing – transferrable – printable and online Story Mapping....creates impact via place identity...



## Operational Group Storyboard

View in Fullscreen

### BIOMASS TO BIOCHAR FOR FARM BIOECONOMY (BBFB)

This EIP-AGRI project aims to pilot the conversion of unutilised agricultural biomass, such as rushes, gorse, bracken and hazel and other problem species into stable forms of recalcitrant biocarbon through a cutting-edge Mobile Pyrolysis Unit on-site with farmers which can, when redeployed to the soil, confer multiple ecosystem benefits, driving an innovative bioeconomy on and off the farm. In doing so, this innovative project demonstrates a methodology for Irish agriculture to develop a carbon-neutral approach to the management of undesirable biomass, while at the same time increasing farm productivity.

You can find a full description of this project's rationale, aims, objectives and activities on page 10 of the NRN's 'EIP-AGRI Operational Group Storyboard'.




# Printed Material....

- ▶ Newsletters and online Bulletins, Booklets, Posters
- ▶ Importance of language – printed both English and Irish
- ▶ Disseminate widely to all OGs to use

### Hen Harrier Project

Locally Led Scheme for the Conservation of the Hen Harrier

<b>Geographical Location</b>	IC 043 Border, IC 044 West, IC 043 Midlands, IC 043 South-West, IC 051 Mid-West Region
<b>Keywords</b>	Hen Harrier, Special Protection Area, High Nature Value Farming
<b>Project Leader</b>	Fergal Macgabhain, The Hen Harrier Project Ltd. (email: fergal_macgabhain@henharrierproject.ie)
<b>Project Type</b>	Operational Group
<b>Starting Date</b>	2017
<b>End Date</b>	2022
<b>Project Status</b>	Ongoing
<b>Main Funding Source</b>	Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020
<b>Total Budget</b>	€25,000,000



**Project Rationale**  
The Hen Harrier is a rare, ground nesting bird of prey, adapted to open moorland and marginal grassland habitats. The semi-natural habitats that the bird depends on however have decreased in area over the last 40 years, as demographic, economic and regulatory factors have driven changes in land use. In fact, within the SPA network the breeding population of Hen Harrier has declined by 27% since 2005. The national Hen Harrier now only stands at an estimated 108 – 157 pairs.

**Project Aims and Objectives**  
The project aims to deliver sustainable benefits for biodiversity, upland ecosystems and a vibrant local rural economy by building strong partnerships with farmers who have land designated as Special Protection Areas for breeding Hen Harrier through a practical, results-based approach to farming for conservation.

To achieve these goals, the project will pursue the following specific objectives over a 5 year, locally targeted conservation programme:

- Ensure the sustainable management of High Nature Value farmland in the most important areas for Hen Harrier in Ireland, with special emphasis on providing quality habitat for the Hen Harrier and the various other species of wildlife that share the same landscape;
- Promote a stronger socio-economic outlook for what are generally difficult to manage marginally agriculturally productive upland areas;
- Develop an effective model for future sustainable management of Hen Harrier areas;
- Foster continued positive relations through locally-led solutions between the people who have managed this landscape for generations, the relevant Government Departments and the special biodiversity that exists on the land.

**Project Activities**

- Design and implement a conservation programme in six Special Protection Areas designated for breeding Hen Harriers.
- Incentivise farmers to enhance the habitat value of their designated lands.
- Support enabling measures that facilitate habitat enhancement.
- Recognise the farmer's role in delivering defined conservation objectives.
- Carry out annual surveys of breeding Hen Harriers to inform the advisory and training services provided to farmers.
- Work with Government Departments to minimise negative impacts arising from disturbance and habitat loss.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of landscape level interventions to reduce the risk to the Hen Harrier and other ground nesting birds from predation and wildfire.

**Project Aims and Objectives**  
The Pearl Mussel Project aims to design and implement a voluntary results-based agri-environmental scheme with farmers that will help protect the endangered freshwater pearl mussel, as well as benefiting the wider environment.

To achieve these goals, the project will pursue the following specific objectives within eight priority fresh-water pearl mussel catchments in Ireland:

- Protect and enhance the conditions of the freshwater pearl mussel rivers and local environment by maintaining and improving natural habitats (such as wetlands, grasslands, and bogs);
- Deliver an opportunity for farmers in eight priority catchments to earn an additional income from their land. Farmers will receive a score for the delivery of a defined environmental result, with higher scores being rewarded with higher payments;
- Provide sustainable benefits for biodiversity and river ecosystems, while supporting a vibrant rural economy.

**Project Rationale**  
The freshwater pearl mussel is a mussel species of clean rivers that is on the verge of extinction in Ireland and western Europe, where populations have declined by 90% over the past century. The primary cause of this decline is related to altered and intensifying land use. The species is on the IUCN Red List, and is one of the 365 most endangered species in the world. It is listed for protection under the EU Habitats Directive. In Ireland, eight river catchments contain 80% of the total Irish freshwater pearl mussel population, and are known as the 'Top eight catchments'. While these rivers support the highest remaining numbers of freshwater pearl mussels in Ireland, these populations are also undergoing a slow decline, and face extinction unless action is taken.

**Project Activities**


- Develop and then implement a results-based agri-environmental scheme which will financially reward farmers for delivering environmental benefits.
- Community outreach to promote environmental awareness amongst local communities in each of the project areas.
- Promote innovative agriculture by supporting novel approaches to land management that are relevant to the aims of the project.
- Develop market opportunities for agricultural producers that complement the project's overall environmental targets.
- Support research and development relevant to the aims of the project.

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**Hen Harrier Project**  
Ireland's EIP-AGRI Operational Groups



### Pearl Mussel Project

Farming for Nature in a Vibrant Rural Economy

<b>Geographical Location</b>	IC 051 South-West, IC 042 West, IC 041 Border Region
<b>Keywords</b>	Farming Practice, Landscape Management, Fertilisation and Nutrient Management, Water Management, Biodiversity and Insect Management
<b>Project Leader</b>	Dr Patrick Cravenell, The Pearl Mussel Project Ltd. (email: p.mccr@pearlmusselproject.ie)
<b>Project Type</b>	Operational Group
<b>Starting Date</b>	2018
<b>End Date</b>	2023
<b>Project Status</b>	Ongoing
<b>Main Funding Source</b>	Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020
<b>Total Budget</b>	€10,000,000



**Project Rationale**  
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**Pearl Mussel Project**  
Ireland's EIP-AGRI Operational Groups




### WOMEN IN IRISH AGRICULTURE

National Rural Network



**PEARL MUSSEL PROJECT**  
Ireland's EIP-AGRI Operational Groups



### EIP-AGRI: Ireland's Operational Groups 2019

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



An Initiative of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



# One-Stop Shop: Irish and International

Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Group  
'One-Stop-Shop' NRN Storyboard Project Database



NRN Operational Group Project Booklet

EIP-AGRI Service Point Project Database

EIP-AGRI Project Website

Project Social Media

- All material available
- Easy accessible
- National and International examples
- Visual
- Personable



# Events: Conferences, Workshops: National and International – Face-to-face and Online



**Networking:**  
(Online, Face-to-Face, Inside or Outdoors)

- Dissemination,
- Communication
- Courage
- Hard to Reach



# Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Group EIP-AGRI Participating Farmer Video Blog (Vlog)



Episode 1 - Martin and Colm Gavin from the Pearl Mussel Project



Episode 2 - Cyril Ó Flaithearta from the Caomhnú Áránn Project



Episode 3 - Kieran Doona from the MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project

## Locally-led, Farmer centered



Episode 4 - Louise Rankin from the Maximising Organic Production Systems (MOPS) Project



Episode 5 - The Mulkear EIP Project (Forthcoming)



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



## Video Blog (Vlog)

- Real Stories
- Real People
- Promotes ideas
- Promotes replication
- Creates project identify



National Rural Network Supporting the EIP-AGRI Initiative through innovative multi-method communication strategies

- Use What's Going on...
- Biodiversity Week
  - Women in Ag Week
  - Conservation Week



# Mult-Actor Perspectives: EIP-AGRI Guest Blogs – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



National Rural Network

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG**  
Digital Skills Models  
Enabling Farmers for the Digital Age: the role of AKIS, the focus was very much on how all actors in the agricultural knowledge innovation system can support the understanding and use of digital technologies at farm level. Farmers were identified as being central to the agricultural innovation system and are key actors in many communication, awareness raising and educational activities such as mentoring, on farm demonstration, peer to peer exchanges, on farm testing, community expert groups and networks, etc. In these cases advisers are equally seen as facilitators/trustees and as knowledge providers. Farmers, especially the ones who are already engaged, who have 'success stories' and who are front runners are also called upon to be ambassadors and trainers.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG**  
Mobilising Forestry Biomass via Sustainable Means  
Kieran Sullivan, IT Researcher at Waterford Institute of Technology and Part-Time Farmer and Forester



Groups main findings centred on three...  
The OviData EIP-AGRI project aims to bring Irish commercial sheep breeding into the next generation. It sets out to collect performance data on Irish sheep enterprises (across 1,500 ewes) and assign parentage to all lambs born through DNA (genomics). Assigning parentage is a critical step as it unlocks the maximum value from the performance records collected on individual sheep. Without parentage information these performance records would be of far less value. Yes, they would tell us how an individual is performing, but big gains can only be made by assessing performance at a bloodline/family level. DNA also allows us to identify the sire of lambs born, an impossible task for most sheep farmers who use a 'team' of rams to protect against possible fertility issues. Knowing lamb sires is incredibly valuable. When combined with performance data we can identify the top and bottom performers very easily.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG**  
OviData EIP-AGRI Project for Sheep Genetic Improvement – 'An Ounce of Breeding is worth a Tonne of Feeding'  
Eamon Wall, OviData EIP-AGRI Project Leader



Farmland habitats are used as result indicators and the higher the quality of these habitats (scored out of 50), the higher the payments farmers receive. This approach has the effect of creating a market for biodiversity and provides an opportunity and incentive for farmers to manage their habitats to a higher quality. Although payments are for results achieved, supporting actions, such as the provision of drinking troughs, drain-blocking, and stock management, are financed through the programme to assist farmer achieve higher scores.

**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG**  
Pearl Mussel Project - 'More than it says on the tin'  
Dr Derek McLoughlin, Project Manager at Wild Atlantic Nature LIFE IP

The focus of the Pearl Mussel Project is on reward for ecosystem services, rather than restriction and penalty. One farmer at of meetings remarked 'it's the first time we have been told what we can do with our land rather than what we can't do'.  
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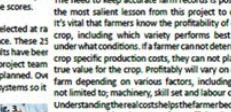
**NRN EIP-AGRI BLOG**  
Should Farmers Score their Own Fields in Results Based Programmes?  
Dr Amanda Browne, Scientific and Technical Officer of the Caomhúni Árann EIP-AGRI Project

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a series of farmer training days were planned to familiarise farmers with the scoring system, the indicator species and the issues that may reduce a land parcel from a score 5 to a score 4, and the actions necessary to improve the score 3 field. With the resulting travel restrictions from March to July 2020, farmer training workshops were not possible, and adaptations had to be made. A scoring leaflet (Fig. 1) and video were subsequently designed in-house by the project team, to encompass the main differences between the scores.

This is why approaches such as "skills based learning" and "context based learning" should be explored as a means for getting the most out of digital technologies. These approaches advocate learning on the job with the instructor role now morphing into the role of facilitator. This social learning approach is already occurring in the successful discussion and knowledge transfer group model in existence in the EU. Social learning involves learning with and from others, and uses digital tools such as private and public online group discussions portals to complement the face-to-face interactions in the real world.

- MIP1: Multi-actors / Stakeholders involved in SMFB
- MIP2: Forest Ownership types
- MIP3: Forest Biomass Markets
- MIP4: Decision support tools
- MIP5: Harvesting technologies
- MIP6: SMFB contribution to environmental issues
- MIP7: Incentives for SMFB
- MIP8: European map of the regional forest-based sector

Over the course of a year the mini-papers were scoped out and developed, before a second and final workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in February, 2017. At this point, the mini-papers were finalised and work began on incorporating them in the final report.



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in rural areas



- ## Guest Blog Series
- Experts
  - Practitioners
  - Researchers
  - Advisors

**Multi-Actor Perspectives: EIP-AGRI Guest Blogs – Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020**

National Rural Network  
NUI Galway OÉ Gaillimh

The need to keep accurate farm records is possibly the most salient lesson from this project to date. It's vital that farmers know the profitability of each crop, including which variety performs best and under what conditions. If a farmer cannot determine crop specific production costs, they can not place a true value for the crop. Profitably will vary on each farm depending on various factors, including but not limited to; machinery, skill set and labour costs. Understanding the real cost helps the farmer become more competitive, improves farm efficiencies and furnishes the farmer with sufficient knowledge to make an informed decision about which crop, market and supply route to choose. To date, two years into the project, we have seen farms change their crop choice when they realise the true production costs, some significantly reducing the range of crops grown and/or opting for more profitable crops, while others choosing to purchase from another project grower because it's more economically efficient.

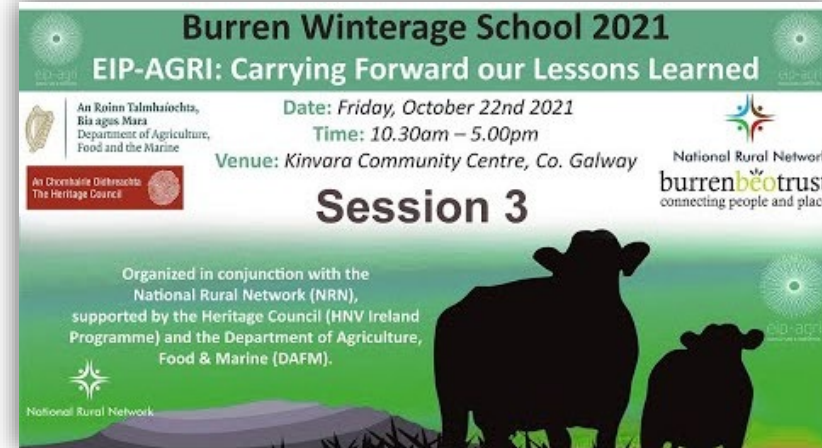
On the island and expertise producing on their farm and are farming to There is a story in maintaining as it was in the Caomhúni farmer takes in (Fig. 3).

its common practice for large retailers to prescribe product specifications, for example the length of carrots, weight of a head of broccoli. If a product doesn't meet the specification, the grower can potentially end up with considerable waste. Waste is obviously undesirable, both environmentally and economically. Although the large retailer can take considerable volume, and suits fieldscale production, waste awareness and the impact on farm profitability has resulted in some of the project farms returning to direct sales. Many of the growers would have started with a box scheme business and/or farmers market and the trend is to return part or all of their business model to direct sales.



# Team-UP:

- Teagasc Signpost Series and the NRN
- University of Galway: Rural Voices
- Burren Winterage



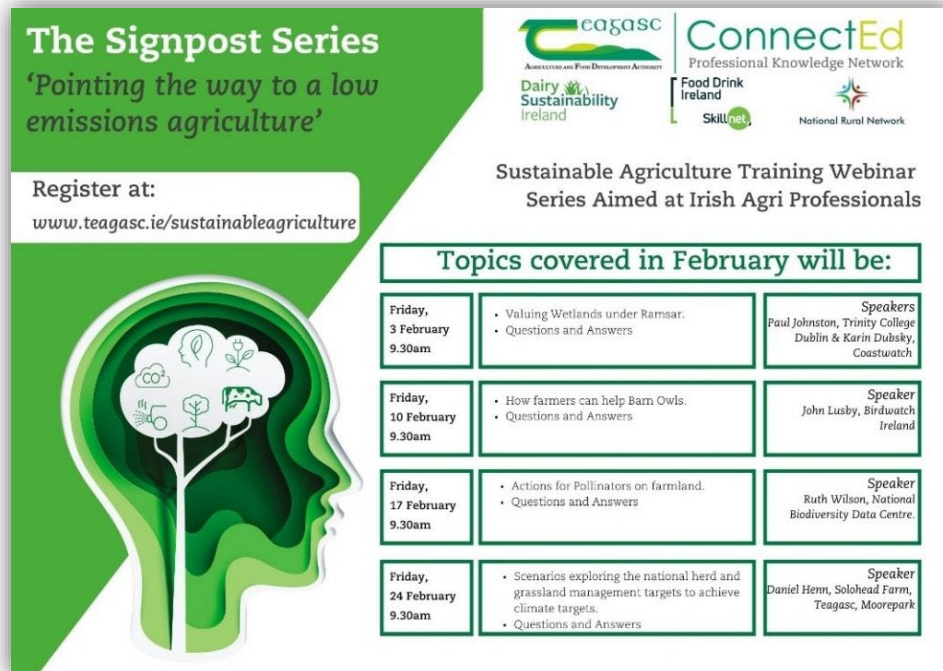
**Burren Winterage School 2021**  
**EIP-AGRI: Carrying Forward our Lessons Learned**

**Date:** Friday, October 22nd 2021  
**Time:** 10.30am – 5.00pm  
**Venue:** Kinvara Community Centre, Co. Galway

**Session 3**

Organized in conjunction with the National Rural Network (NRN), supported by the Heritage Council (HNV Ireland Programme) and the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM).

Logos: An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara; Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; An Oireachtas Dáilroisí; The Heritage Council; National Rural Network; burrenbéotrúst; connecting people and place.



**The Signpost Series**  
 'Pointing the way to a low emissions agriculture'

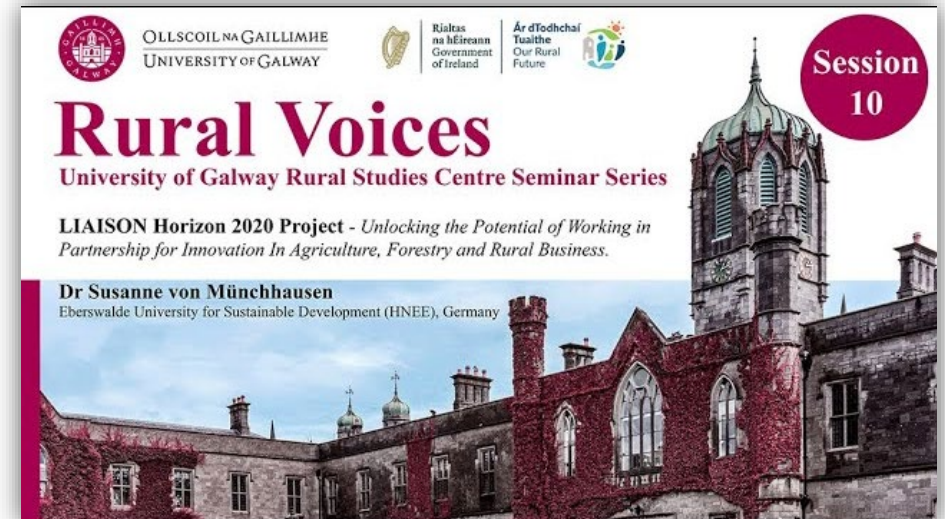
Register at:  
[www.teagasc.ie/sustainableagriculture](http://www.teagasc.ie/sustainableagriculture)

**Logos:** teagasc, ConnectEd Professional Knowledge Network, Dairy Sustainability Ireland, Food Drink Ireland, SkillNet, National Rural Network.

**Sustainable Agriculture Training Webinar Series Aimed at Irish Agri Professionals**

**Topics covered in February will be:**

<b>Friday, 3 February 9.30am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valuing Wetlands under Ramsar.</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<b>Speakers</b> Paul Johnston, Trinity College Dublin & Karin Dubsky, Coastwatch
<b>Friday, 10 February 9.30am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How farmers can help Barn Owls.</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<b>Speaker</b> John Lusby, Birdwatch Ireland
<b>Friday, 17 February 9.30am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actions for Pollinators on farmland.</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<b>Speaker</b> Ruth Wilson, National Biodiversity Data Centre.
<b>Friday, 24 February 9.30am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scenarios exploring the national herd and grassland management targets to achieve climate targets.</li> <li>Questions and Answers</li> </ul>	<b>Speaker</b> Daniel Henn, Solohead Farm, Teagasc, Moorepark



**Logos:** OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY, Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland, Ár dTíorthaí Tualthe Our Rural Future.

**Session 10**

**Rural Voices**  
 University of Galway Rural Studies Centre Seminar Series

**LIAISON Horizon 2020 Project - Unlocking the Potential of Working in Partnership for Innovation In Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Business.**

**Dr Susanne von Münchhausen**  
 Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNEE), Germany

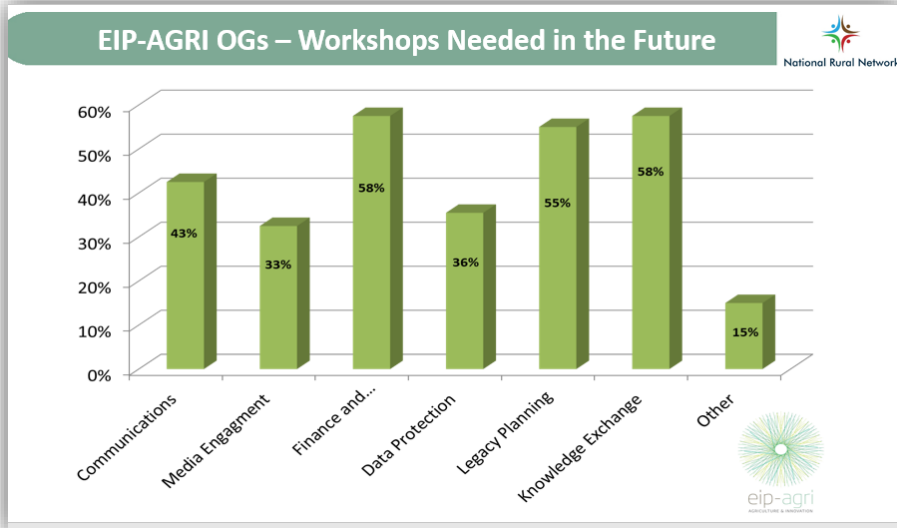


# Find Out What You Don't Know.....

## ▶ NRRN EIP-AGRI OG Survey

- ▶ Set – up Issues
- ▶ Expectations
- ▶ Challenges and Successes
- ▶ Assistance Required
- ▶ What Works and What Does Not..

	NOT AT ALL CHALLENGING	SLIGHTLY CHALLENGING	MODERATELY CHALLENGING	VERY CHALLENGING	EXTREMELY CHALLENGING
Administration	7.32%	26.83%	34.15%	29.27%	0.00%
Working with the different OG members	43.90%	36.59%	17.07%	2.44%	0.00%
Organising the OG finances	34.15%	9.76%	41.46%	9.76%	2.44%
Networking	56.10%	24.39%	17.07%	2.44%	0.00%
Communications	46.34%	34.15%	19.51%	0.00%	



*"Everyone involved has volunteered their time and expertise towards bringing this project to fruition".*

*"It has been a big investment to all involved over the years and all are pleased and more than willing to see it through".*

*"An excellent diverse group of people that put a lot of their own time into it".*

*"OG meets on a quarterly basis and their input to the project is through various ways such as advisory/ research/ farm visits/ application forms and other data collection".*

# Finally....

## ▶ **Lessons Learned for AKIS from our NRN.....**

- ▶ Knowledge is power
- ▶ Information is accessible
- ▶ Visual is key
- ▶ Language is Simple
- ▶ Local is essential
- ▶ Innovation is achievable
- ▶ People are central







# Thank You!

*"Empowering Agriculture through Knowledge, Nurturing Innovation:  
Cultivating a Sustainable Future."*

# 1st European CAP Network workshop 'National networking for innovation'

30 November – 1 December 2023  
Tallinn, Estonia

All information on the workshop is available on the event webpage:

[https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/eu-cap-network-workshop-national-networking-innovation\\_en](https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/eu-cap-network-workshop-national-networking-innovation_en)

