

Speaker and facilitator bios (in order of the programme)

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Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle

European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis

Since 1 January 2023, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle has been Director Strategy and policy analysis at DG AGRI (European Commission). From 1 September 2020 to 31 December 2022, she was Director at the General Secretariat of the Council, responsible for Veterinary and Plant Health Questions, Food and Forestry. Between December 2019 and August 2020, she was Deputy Head of Cabinet of the EU Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development. Between 2013 and 2018, she was responsible for the implementation of the CAP in France, in her capacity as Director general for Economic and Environmental Performance of Enterprises. Between 2006 and 2013, she was Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Prior to that, she was Director General of the Food Department within the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. She also worked at the European Commission from 1991 to 1993.



Maura Farrell

**Coordinating expert
 Support Facility 'Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI'**

Maura Farrell is an Associate Professor in the School of Geography, Archaeology, and Irish Studies at the University of Galway. Maura's lecturing and research revolve around Rural and Agricultural Geography, focusing on processes of social, cultural, and economic change for rural inhabitants. Dr Farrell has considerable experience in national and EU-funded projects, as Lead Coordinator on the Horizon Europe FLIARA project (Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas), Principal Investigator on the Horizon Europe PREMIERE project for the University of Galway, and on the Irish National Rural Network and the Horizon 2020 RURALIZATION Project. Maura is a widely published academic and is extremely active in community engagement outside of university life.

Ann-Sofi Backgren

Finnish Rural Network



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Ann-Sofi has been working with rural development and rural policy for a long time. At the moment she works at the Finnish Rural Network (CAP Network) as a Network Coordinator. She has also worked with gender related projects for many years (for example ERASMUS+ funded projects). Ann-Sofi has been chairwomen of the gender committee at the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia for 10 years. She was also Vice President in a women organisation in Finland for five years and she was elected to be the chairwoman of the Assembly in the municipality of Korsnäs for 12 years. Female entrepreneurship in rural areas is at the center of her interest at the moment.

Met opmerkingen [MM(1): I guessed that was the meaning



Mariya Nikolova
Opora Zaden Bulgaria Ltd

Mariya Nikolova has more than 20 years of experience in agriculture:

- Administrator Bulgarian Greenhouse Growers' Association (BGGGA) - 2001-2006
- Project manager Supply Chain Service Center Bulgaria - (Netherlands Private Sector Investment Programme - PSI) -2006-2009
- Administrator - Sustainable ecosystem management through implementation of monitoring and biological control methods (EIP-AGRI Operational Group) project - 2020-2023
- Trial station and farm manager Opora Zaden Bulgaria Ltd - 2009-present



María Soto Gallardo
COOPRADO Foundation

María is the director of a Foundation based on R&D, training and social action called COOPRADO Foundation. She studied veterinary medicine and since then she has worked as a researcher and R&D project management technician. Nowadays, through COOPRADO Foundation, she runs a Shepherds' School that allows to train girls and boys interested in staying in rural areas and becoming shepherds. In addition, they are developing some projects focused on sustainability and digitalisation of the sector.

Arianna Pasa
European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, F.1 Research and Innovation





Arianna Pasa is Research Programme Officer in the Research and Innovation unit at the European Commission (DG AGRI). She is responsible for the rural research portfolio and she is also part of the Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' (Mission Soil) Secretariat where she works on the programming and implementation of the EU Mission Soil activities related to soil literacy, communication and citizen engagement. Before joining the Commission in 2018, she was part of the Italian Civil Peace Corps in Peru and she worked both in the private and public sectors, including at FAO. She studied international studies and holds a 2-year masters' degree in Human rights and multilevel governance. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Bologna with a thesis on rural regeneration through the valorisation of cultural heritage.

Marije van Santen
SWIFT Horizon Europe Project



Marije is a MSc student of Resilient Farming and Food Systems at Wageningen University & Research. She is currently doing an internship for the SWIFT project (a project with the aim to advance the position of women and LGBTQI+ persons in farming, and to investigate how agroecological processes can promote gender equality). She is working on a gender analysis on the Common Agricultural Policy, based on literature and a participatory needs assessment. Previously, Marije has written her thesis on a policy analysis of women farmers in the Dutch National Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027.

Louise Weir
FLIARA Horizon Europe Project



Louise Weir, based in the University of Galway, Ireland is an Associate Researcher, Professional Town Planner and is currently the Principal Project Manager for the Horizon Europe project, FLIARA. Louise is currently involved in other projects- HORIZON Europe Project concerned with Multi-Actor proposals- PREMIERE; DG MOVE project SMARTA-NET and an Irish Human Rights and Equality project investigating economic inequalities as experienced by migrant women in rural areas. In addition to working on previous projects, Louise previously also led and lectured on a postgraduate Professional Planning Degree in University College Cork. Louise's research expertise lies in gender research, rural innovation and the sustainability dimensions of rural development, rural planning and the relationship between people, place and the environment in rural contexts.





Branwen Miles
Copa-Cogeca/ Grass Ceiling Horizon Europe Project

Branwen is a policy advisor and advocate for women in agriculture and agricultural and environmental research, bringing a unique blend of experience and passion to her role. Raised on her family's organic dairy farm in Wales, Branwen's roots in farming run deep. With a degree in international politics and French from Aberystwyth University, including a year studying in Strasbourg, she combines her academic background with a hands-on approach, actively participating in her family's dairy farm. Today, Branwen plays a pivotal role in shaping policies that impact agriculture, the environment, and rural development across Europe. As part of this role, she coordinates Copa-Cogeca women's committee which provides a platform to highlight the challenges faced by women in agricultural and rural areas, as well as ensuring a gender perspective to agricultural and rural policies. She also organises the biennial women farmers innovation award, as well working on the Horizon Europe project Grass Ceiling supporting women -led innovation in rural areas and the Erasmus+ project GAEA which is creating training, educational and mentorship material for female rural entrepreneurs.



Lidia Moroń-Morawaska
Operational Group: Małopolska Group of Food Producers

Lidia runs a certified organic apiary. Together with her husband, they published the 'Great Encyclopedia of Beekeeping'. She is the leader of the EIP Operational Group 'Małopolska Food Producers Group', where she actively engages in promoting sustainable food production by introducing innovative solutions. In 2023, Lidia received a prestigious award from the Minister of Agriculture for the best female farmer in Poland in the 'Woman for the Polish Countryside' competition. Her work combines a passion for beekeeping with a commitment to the development of the local community and organic farming.



Helena Golden
Rural Entrepreneur – Heritage and Craft

Helena is an Irish artisan basket maker based in county Leitrim. From her origins in rural Leitrim growing up on a farm, to her early career working in community development, she is passionate about sharing heritage craft and making her workshops accessible to all regardless of age, location or ability. She was part of ACORNS: Accelerating the Creation Of



Rural Nascent Start-ups and have since been part of many projects focusing on isolated community groups such as the Clare Island Social Inclusion Programme.

Maria Elf
Artisan Food Industry



Maria is a Swedish multitasker with many things going on. She has been an entrepreneur for four years now. She lives in the north of Sweden in a rural area and makes artisan food products such as jam, lemonade, sauerkraut etc. Maria does caterings and in the autumns she helps the hunters to take care of their meat, cut it out from the mooses (mostly). She had many jobs in her life but her biggest interest has always been food, because she has a background as a chef. Her focus now is on local ingredients from small farmers in her area. She has a part time job on the Swedish "Systembolaget".

Lina Noreikite-Rimkiene
NGO 'Pociūnėliai Community'



The chairman of Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association council (since 2023);
The member of Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association (since 2018)
The member of Pociūnėliai Community council (since 2008)
The owner of family farmhouse 'Panekelpių kaimas' (since 2005)
The agricultural family farm (since 2002)

Magdalena Mach
European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, D.1 Rural areas and networks



Magdalena Mach is a Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Rural Areas & Networks Unit. She holds a Master's degree in International Relations. Before joining the EC she worked for the Agriculture and Fisheries Section of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the European Union and Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development where for 6 years she was responsible for the implementation of LEADER approach under Rural Development Programme.

DG Agriculture and Rural Development

Elin Johnson



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Policy officer

Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG AGRI, unit D.1 Rural areas and networks. Part of the team working on innovation and knowledge exchange/EIP-AGRI within the EU CAP Network. Before joining the Commission in 2022, she worked with rural development with a special commitment to environmental sustainability and climate action. Agronomist with an MSc in Rural Development and Natural Resource Management.



EU CAP Network Team

1. Support Facility 'Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' team

Niels Rump
Main facilitator



Organic farmer since 1989, agronomist and independent consultant and facilitator at KEK - CDC www.kek.ch

Marta Yonkova
Task manager



Marta is a Smart Farm Practices & Rural Development Officer at the EIP-AGRI Support Facility team. She has a Master degree in International Projects' Management and has studied Economics in Bulgaria and Italy. Experienced in Marketing and Consultancy in the agri-food sector, Marta has a rich portfolio, which includes a vast number of projects, social activities and even issuing an agricultural magazine. Her work experience includes working for one of the biggest NGOs in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria, several information campaigns and many initiatives aimed at farmers and their needs.

Anne Kinsela
Co-task manager



Anne Kinsella is an economist in the Rural Economy and Development Programme, Teagasc (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Ireland). In recent years, she has taken on an additional EIP-AGRI role with Division B: "Fostering a smart and resilient agricultural sector and food security". Anne complements her economics research with her professional qualification as a chartered certified accountant (ACCA) and also holds a Master of Science from University College, Dublin. She is the Teagasc Principal Investigator on the Ruralization research project, funded under the Horizon 2020 programme and on forthcoming FLIARA, Female-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas Horizon Europe project. Anne is the Irish representative on the OECD International Network for Farm Level Analysis and the International agri benchmark Network. She is a member of numerous national steering committees, groups and professional bodies which include Farming for Nature, National Rural Network and Agricultural Economics Society of Ireland. Anne is currently the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Galway Rural Development clg, the largest local development company in



Ireland, who administers several programmes including the LEADER Programme. She is also the Teagasc representative on the Board of Directors of Comhar na nOileán CTR, the integrated local development company with responsibility for the offshore islands of Ireland, and is joint treasurer of Embrace farm, an organisation who provides a caring and supportive network for all those affected by farm accidents in Ireland.

Kaat Van Royen
Event communication officer



As part of the European CAP Network's EIP-AGRI Support Facility's communication team, Kaat Van Royen, is responsible for the video production and website content management, and contributes to social media. She also contributes to other communication projects at WETA (communication agency), such as awareness raising campaigns, workshops and podcasts. Kaat recently obtained a master in Sociology focusing on international development, and experience as production officer and event manager for socio-cultural events.

Pacôme Elouna Eyenga
Team Leader



Pacôme Elouna Eyenga is Belgian and was born in Yaoundé, Cameroon. He graduated as agronomist in the field of rural economy and sociology, at Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech / Université de Liège in Belgium. Since July 2021, he is the Team Leader of the Support Facility for 'Innovation & Knowledge Exchange | EIP-AGRI. From 2013 until May 2021, he has been Deputy Team Leader and then Team Leader of the EIP-AGRI Service Point established by the European Commission - DG AGRI.

Liisa Kübarsepp
Facilitator



Liisa is working in the EIP-AGRI Support Facility since 2022, mainly focusing on the stakeholder's database, website and event organisation. She previously worked in the EIP-AGRI Service Point from 2017-2021 as facilitator in different events and task manager for the Focus Groups on soil contamination and plastic use in agriculture as well as task manager for the workshop on shaping the EU Soil Mission and co-task manager for the seminar on soil health. She has a masters' degree in plant biology from the University of Tartu and is currently pursuing PhD in agriculture in the Estonian University of Life Sciences. She also works in the Centre of Estonian Rural



Research and Knowledge innovation service where her task is to foster innovation in the agricultural sector in Estonia.

Tajana Radić
Facilitator



Tajana Radić is the Head of Division D “Strengthening the Socio-economic fabric of rural areas” in EIP-AGRI. Her main work involves coordinating activities aimed at attracting young farmers, promoting employment, local development, including bioeconomy and sustainable forestry, and improving the response of EU agriculture to societal demands regarding food and health. This includes safe, nutritious, and sustainable food, as well as animal welfare policy. She holds a Ph.D. degree in Agricultural Science and has 13 years of experience in agriculture and rural development as the Head of the Policy, Innovation, and International Cooperation Department of the Croatian Chamber of Agriculture. She has managed projects funded by the European Commission, such as the “CAP for you” and “CAP for us” programs, which focused on demonstrating the benefits of the Common Agricultural Policy and promoting synergy among stakeholders.

2. Communications and Events Support

Sophie Plattard
Travel & logistical support



Sophie is an experienced event professional with a strong interest in communication and international politics. Based in Brussels, she joined the EU CAP Network – Communication and Logistical Support – in May 2022 as an event organiser. She holds a Master of Arts in Conflict, Security and Development, as well as a Bachelor’s degree in German and History.

Curious about meeting new people and culture, Sophie has lived in Austria, England and Germany. In her spare time, she loves swimming and going for walks in the forest.

