



2nd EU CAP Network workshop 'National networking for innovation and knowledge exchange'

Reims, France
29 – 30 January 2025



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Sweet potatoes, life before and after an OG project (Flanders)

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Before the OG MEBAT on mechanization sweet potato

- In 2017 a few farmers tried to grow sweet potatoes (10 ha)
- Potential but research needed
- **Multi-actor research project ‘Successful expansion of sweet potato cultivation in Flanders’**
 - 2017-2021
 - Varieties, irrigation, planting time, preservation, cost calculation,...
- **Farmers involved experience lack of mechanization => OG MEBAT**



OG MEBAT

- › **OG MEBAT ‘Mechanization for scaling up sweet potato cultivation’**
 - › 2021-2023
- › Farmers’ needs
 - › Much manual labor
 - › Lack of appropriate mechanization for cultivation
- › Aim
 - › To define and address the main bottlenecks in:
 - › planting mechanization
 - › harvester mechanization
 - › mechanical weed control















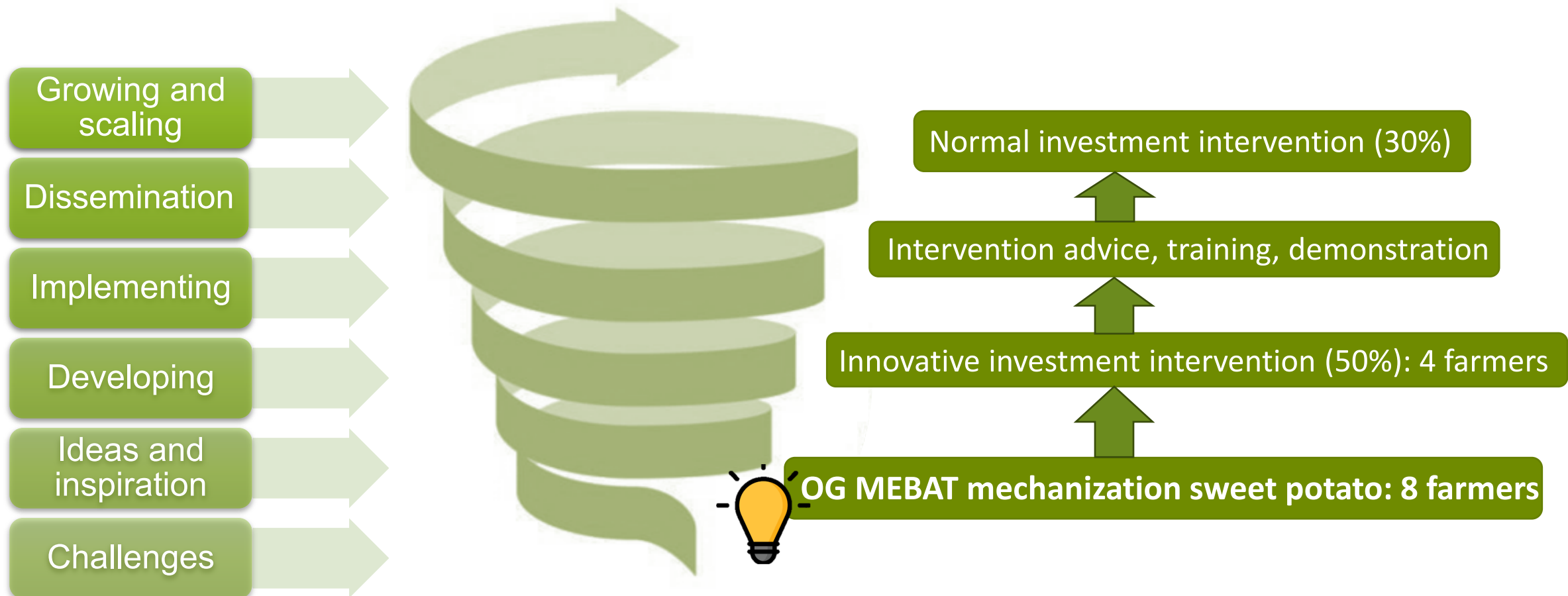
EIP OG MEBAT – Operational group

› transnational collaboration with the Netherlands (NL)



- 
8 farmers (7 BE + 1 NL)
- 
2 practical research organisations (BE)
- 
2 advisors (1 BE + 1 NL)
- 
1 farmers' union (BE)
- 
1 plant breeder (NL)
- 
1 supplier of sweet potato plants (NL)
- 
2 contractors (BE)
- 
3 machine constructors or suppliers (2 BE + 1 NL)
- 
2 sweet potato processors (BE)
- 
2 producer organisations (BE)

Innovation spiral: OG idea proceeds through different funded stages, before turning into an innovation widely applied



EIP OG MEBAT - Results

➤ **Demonstrations** of planting, harvest and weed control machines

➤ **Press articles**

➤ **Video** (important for machinery): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0GvIvVw_FE

➤ **Websites** make all material (video, leaflets, photo material,...) available:

➤ applied research stations:

➤ <https://www.viaverda.be/Publicaties/ArtMID/483/ArticleID/8781/Beeldmateriaal-Mechanisatie-voor-opscaling-van-de-teelt-van-bataat>

➤ <https://www.ccbt.be/sites/default/files/2023-05/Inventarisatie%20mechanisatie%20teelt%20bataat%20MEBAT.pdf>

➤ <https://www.ccbt.be/sites/default/files/Bezoekersgids%20Bataat%202%20september%202019.pdf>



Intervention Innovative investment funding (including advice)

- › In parallel with the OG project 5 farmers (3 OG members) applied for investment support for an innovative planting, harvester and/or mechanical weeding machine for sweet potatoes (2021)
- › Intervention for funding innovative investments
 - › Innovative = for the first time in Flanders in a certain sector
 - › For individual farmers
 - › Independent of EIP
- › **Result: 4 farmers realized the investment project**
 - › **3 planting machines**
 - › **4 harvesters**
 - › **1 mechanical weeder**
- › **The farmers discussed their innovative project questions and experiences in the OG**



Intervention Innovative investment funding (including advice)

> Funding

- > 50% of investment cost => between € 24.000 and € 69.000 per farmer
- > **includes advice offer up to 20% of the total innovative investment project cost**
 - > Used by the majority of farmers
 - > The advisor helps to implement the investment (modifications,...) and learns
 - > Afterwards the advisor spreads the knowledge on the innovative investment.

> Mechanical weeder



Intervention Innovative investment funding (including advice)

> Planting machines

I was a member of the OG MEBAT. My innovative investment experiences were discussed and shared in the OG. Some growers came here on the farm to see the machines and to evaluate how they work in the field. Our constructor has sold a same type of machine to a colleague.



**Farmer
Sam Magnus**



Intervention Innovative investment funding (including advice)

> Harvesters



The OG came up with the idea of using a tulip bulb harvester for the sweet potato harvest. We tested it and made a few adjustments. This harvester is cheaper than the harvesters bought by the other farmers because this one requires more staff. But it is suitable for my smaller cultivation area (picture right).



Farmer
Ann Saerens



Intervention Normal Investment funding

- › Farmers cannot longer apply for innovative investment funding for these types of machines
 - › Not the first time in Flanders anymore
- › **Normal investment funding (30%) is possible**
 - › Machine types are on the list of eligible investments





OG leads to further research and investment OG -> new OG + investment

- › OG MEBAT farmers experience up to 40% of the harvest is residue and unsellable, but waste streams offer potential
- › Farmers, researchers, processor,... launch the OG VALOBAT and apply for EIP funding
- › => **OG VALOBAT 'Valorisation of local sweet potato residue streams'**
 - › 2024-2026
- › => **Processor** in OG receives **investment funding for the agro-food industry** for the creation of innovative products

OG leads to further research and investment

OG -> new multi-actor research project



- OG MEBAT farmers experience that product uniformity is a challenge and important for rendability
- The OG coordinator (research) applies for research funding
- -> **Multi-actor Research Project 'Maxbat: Maximising product uniformity and quality in sweet potato cultivation and storage'**
 - › 2022-2026





**Thank you for
your attention!**



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

<https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2nd-eu-cap-network-workshop-national-networking-innovation-and-knowledge-exchange>

