

eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

EIP-AGRI Network 2015



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Europe 2020 towards a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy

Europe 2020 is the European Union's (EU) growth strategy for 2014-2020. In a changing world, the EU's economy needs to become smart, sustainable and inclusive. These three priorities should help all EU citizens to build a strong economy with good job opportunities, based on sustainably managed resources.

The European Union has set five objectives to be reached by 2020 on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. This strategy underlines the importance of research and innovation to prepare Europe for future challenges. So far, five European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) have been launched in different sectors: active & healthy ageing, water, raw materials, smart cities & communities, and agriculture. All EIPs focus on societal benefits and fast modernisation. They support cooperation between research and innovation partners so that they can achieve better and faster results. The agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) was launched by the European Commission in 2012.





EIP-AGRI promoting innovation in agriculture

The European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability (EIP-AGRI) was set up as a new way of helping the agricultural and forestry sectors to become more productive, sustainable and capable of tackling current challenges such as fiercer competition, more volatile market prices, climate change and stricter environmental rules.

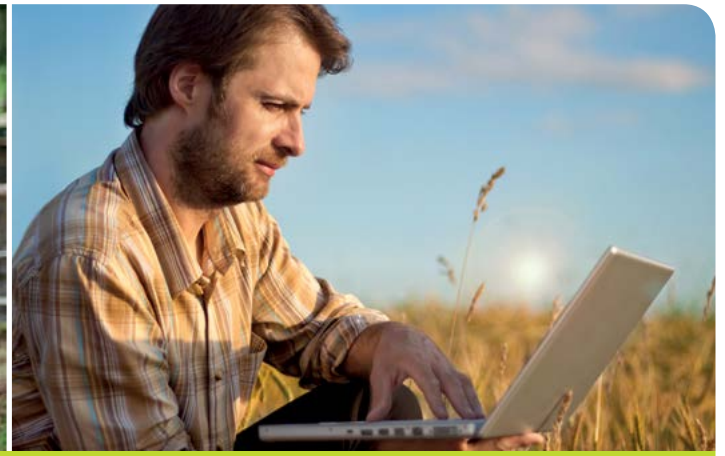
The EIP-AGRI focuses on forming partnerships and linking people from different professional backgrounds in the EIP-AGRI network through different types of activities, such as Operational Groups and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. Different actors within innovation and agriculture - farmers, advisers, researchers, agribusinesses, NGOs and other stakeholders - will work together, share their ideas and turn existing knowledge into innovative solutions and research results that can more easily be put into practice.

By joining forces, everyone involved will achieve results more quickly. The EIP-AGRI will help spread important new and existing knowledge on innovation and agriculture throughout the EU.

So, when a Romanian expert comes up with a solution that could help a Spanish farmer, the aim is to get this information to him as soon as possible.

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the EIP-AGRI network have been connected through the European Rural Networks' Assembly since January 2015. This Assembly forms a platform that aims to prioritise and coordinate the activities of the two EU networks.

The Assembly includes several subgroups. One of them is the 'permanent Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability'. It pays specific attention to the activities of the EIP-AGRI network, and works with the EIP-AGRI Service Point to catalyse innovation to make European agriculture and forestry more sustainable and more productive.



Funding opportunities, boosting agricultural innovation

Having an innovative idea is one thing, turning it into reality is another. There are different types of funding available that can help you to get a project started, such as funding under the Rural Development Programmes or under the EU research and innovation policy Horizon 2020.



EIP-AGRI and Rural Development

It is the EU member states or regions who decide how to support innovation projects through their Rural Development Programmes. They may provide funding to set up Operational Groups to work on pilot projects, develop new products, involve actors from different regions, promote activities and so on. Rural Development Programmes can also offer project support for knowledge transfer, advisory services, investments, marketing, establishing networks, and provide funding for Innovation Support Services.


Each member state (or in some countries, region) decides if the support would need to prioritise certain issues, areas of action or specific groups of actors. However, all Operational Groups in the EU must contribute to a productive and sustainable agricultural sector.




• Setting up Operational Groups

Operational Groups are groups at local level with people from different backgrounds - such as farmers, researchers, advisers, businesses, NGOs - that are set up to find an innovative solution to a shared problem or to test an innovative idea in practice. Both the size and composition of the Operational Group depend on the project. Therefore, one Operational Group can look completely different from another. The results and knowledge developed by an Operational Group must be shared via the EIP-AGRI network so it can benefit the entire sector.

If you have an innovative idea, have a look how your region or country's Rural Development Programme can offer support. You will find a list of all EU Managing Authorities in the EIP-AGRI Brochure on Operational Groups.



In Montejunto, a Portuguese region known for its fruit production, a farmer discovered that 25% of his total fruit production did not make it to the market due to damage to the fruit. To find a solution, a local network of 32 fruit producers joined forces with the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, the Centre for Rapid and Sustainable Product Development, and the advisory centre COTHN. They designed an 'electronic fruit' that allowed them to measure the damage caused by impact during harvesting, transportation, storage and packaging. By identifying the critical points in the processing line, they were able to minimise damage to the fruit and increase its market value.

 [EIP-AGRI Brochure on Operational Groups](#)




• Innovation Support Services

Sometimes it is not enough to offer stand-alone funding for groups that work together on innovative projects. Innovation support services and brokering will play a crucial role in getting many valuable projects off the ground. Innovation support services can take the lead in developing initiatives that connect actors with an interest in, and ideas on, finding an innovative solution to a shared problem. These activities can be supported by Rural Development Programmes.




A private consultant offers Innovation Support Services. He visits local companies, farmers, research centres and universities on a regular basis. During one of his visits to a vineyard he comes across an innovative idea that is worth exploring further. He gathers and connects all possible interested parties to see if they are interested in joining a project together. The farmer, a university and a bottling company decide to develop the idea. The consultant looks into funding possibilities and helps to prepare a project proposal that is endorsed by all parties involved, and that can be turned into a successful funding application.

 [EIP-AGRI Brochure
Innovation Support Services](#)



EIP-AGRI and Research and Innovation Policy "Horizon 2020"

Horizon 2020 is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. One of the themes for Horizon 2020 support which is relevant to the agricultural sector is the Societal Challenge for "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy". Apart from the more classical research and innovation projects, Horizon 2020 calls include several opportunities to support multinational innovation projects in agriculture, through thematic networks and through multi-actor projects that involve different actors such as farmers, advisers, researchers, agribusiness, and others. These projects produce easily accessible end user material that will be shared through the EIP-AGRI network.

 [EIP-AGRI Brochure
Horizon 2020 - calls 2016](#)





• Thematic networks

Thematic networks are innovative projects, funded through Horizon 2020, that aim to find solutions for the most urgent needs of agriculture and forestry production. They do this by involving a range of actors from science and practice.

These networks aim to collect existing best practices and research results that are close to being put into practice, but that are not sufficiently known and used by people in the field. They need to develop accessible and easily understandable material for practice, such as information sheets and audio-visual material. It may serve as input for education and for a research database, and should feed into the EIP-AGRI database for broad dissemination to farmers, foresters, and other actors in the agricultural innovation chain.



The OK-NET Arable thematic network is one of the four first thematic networks funded through Horizon 2020. It aims to improve knowledge exchange among farmers, farm advisers and scientists, to increase productivity and quality in organic arable cropping all over Europe.

The project started in March 2015 and will last for 3 years. It will:

- summarise the practical and scientific knowledge about organic arable farming that is already available, and identify the best methodology in knowledge exchange;
- create a European network of farmer innovation groups, to exchange experiences and test educational material developed in the project;
- create an online platform for knowledge exchange across Europe.

The consortium consists of 17 partners, covering in total 13 countries from all corners of Europe.

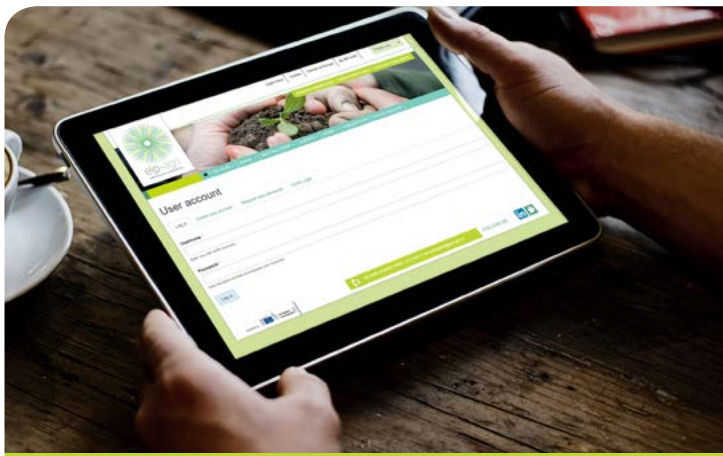
More information: www.ok-net-arable.eu

Other funding opportunities

Visit our [webpage on funding opportunities](#)

 [EIP-AGRI Brochure on Funding Opportunities](#)





EIP-AGRI Service Point, linking all partners in the network

The EIP-AGRI network offers a wide range of tools that can help you tackle the issues you are dealing with. The main objectives of the EIP-AGRI Service Point are sharing knowledge, connecting people and tackling challenges. It facilitates events such as conferences, focus groups, workshops and seminars, the interactive Meeting Point on the EIP-AGRI website, support for finding project partners, and a helpdesk to answer your questions. Its primary goal is to stimulate the interaction between everyone involved in the EIP-AGRI network: farmers, foresters, researchers, advisers, NGOs, member states, businesses, and public authorities.

Join the EIP-AGRI network

The EIP-AGRI website is an interactive platform that brings people and ideas from across Europe together on the web. As a [registered member](#), you will be able to get the most out of the website:

- **Share** your own innovative projects, project ideas and research needs from practice.
- **Search and find** potential project partners, interesting projects, best practices and funding opportunities at the [EIP-AGRI Meeting Point](#).
- Make use of the **collaborative workspaces** on specific topics in agriculture and innovation.
- **My EIP-AGRI** connects you to your own EIP-AGRI dashboard, allowing you to follow the information, themes, events and people you are interested in.

As more people join the EIP-AGRI network, the EIP-AGRI website will gradually become the 'one-stop-shop' for agricultural innovation in Europe.



Visit the [website: www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu)

[Register and join the network](#)



Focus Groups, addressing agricultural challenges

EIP-AGRI Focus Groups form part of the EIP-AGRI networking activities. Each group brings together 20 experts with different backgrounds, including farmers, researchers, advisers, and agri-business representatives. The groups collect and summarise knowledge on best practices in a specific field, listing problems as well as opportunities and solutions.

Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group meets at least twice over a period of about one year. When their final report has been completed, group members can continue their work in collaborative work spaces on the EIP-AGRI website. All Focus Group reports and results are published on the EIP-AGRI website, to inspire all actors from the EIP-AGRI network to set up new Operational Groups or research projects.

 [EIP-AGRI Brochure on Focus Groups](#)

Protein Crops: more cooperation and integration needed

The EIP-AGRI Focus Group on Protein Crops came together in 2013 to tackle the question "How can the competitiveness of protein crop producers in the EU be improved?" About a year later the results showed that a lot of progress can be made at local scale (on-farm consumption), but that improving yield, breeding, and good advisory services for farmers may not be enough for bigger-scale protein production for food and processed feed. To make a difference, the sector needs better integration of and cooperation between the compound feed industry and stakeholders involved in plant production. Solutions can be found on local farms, and at regional and European market levels. The Focus Group illustrated that combining the knowledge and experiences of farming practice, farm advisers and the industry, can lead to new perspectives for protein production in Europe.

