



eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

Turning forest innovation into practice

How can we foster social innovation in forestry?

The EIP-AGRI seminar on “Turning forest innovation into practice” focused on the social dimensions of innovation processes. Social innovations are new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships and form new collaborations. These innovations can be products, services or models addressing unmet needs more effectively. In the seminar, the participants discussed several topics inherent to forestry, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, bioeconomy, biodiversity and other forest ecosystem services, as well as multifunctional forest management and monitoring. The seminar addressed various types of innovation, including new technologies and silvicultural approaches, organisational innovation, new forms of cooperation, institutional solutions, and forms of social engagement in forestry. Moreover, participants also discussed new business models, and innovation in marketing and participatory management. Participants identified the following key messages for upscaling and replication of such types of innovation:

- ▶ Any replications need to be adapted to local conditions.
- ▶ A culture that is open to new ideas is conducive to developing new solutions.
- ▶ Collaboration with new types of partners supports innovation.
- ▶ User oriented or co-creation is essential for innovation.
- ▶ Create a clear plan but keep it flexible and adapt to changing developments.
- ▶ Dialogue and participatory approaches are important for developing common visions and for co-creating innovative and realistic solutions.
- ▶ Supportive institutional structures are key at various levels, including municipalities, associations, governments, and specific programmes that can connect top-down support to local bottom-up initiatives.
- ▶ Connect economic and emotional factors, e.g. in developing inspiration and common visions within a project and at the local or regional level.
- ▶ Combine a rational “project plan” with a convincing “story”.
- ▶ Use practical examples as “lighthouse projects” for inspiration, practical advice, and background information.

“Do not hesitate to approach new actors. For example, small forest owners working with architects in southern France discovered new opportunities for their forests using local short value chains.”

- Nicolas Picard (France), Director GIP Ecofor -

funded by



European
Commission

Turning forest innovation into practice

Lessons learnt to approach the innovation process

The innovation process in forestry should follow **three steps** to be effective:

1. **Define goals:** goals in line with the context and aim of the innovation project.
 - a. Clear company/project goals for efficient and focused innovation management.
 - b. Especially for area-based initiatives, find clear common needs of local/regional population.
2. **Connect with stakeholders:** horizontal cooperation (e.g. forest owners) but also vertical cooperation (along the various value chains) is important. Specific aspects mentioned include:
 - a. Peer-to-peer learning
 - b. Learn from others, but always adapt to the local context.
 - c. Try to approach "other" or "new" actors, not the "usual suspects".
3. **Define a clear "plan" and a convincing "story":** Even if in the end, you did not follow the plan at all, you need a plan to start.
 - a. The "plan", e.g. a business plan, includes goals, steps, actions, responsibilities, time plan, etc. This includes legal and financial feasibility studies and planning, market studies, and much more.
 - b. The "story" is not any story but one that needs to be convincing internally and externally. It is the inner logic including the motivation and ambitions and overall benefits of the endeavour.

How to support innovations?

1. **Information** to provide knowledge and support learning: ranging from technical information to business support. The more interactive, the more effective. And the more local the support, the more targeted it can be.
2. **Cooperation:** Institutional structures are important. These may be local governments or existing relevant associations, but also specific innovation or regional development agencies. They may act as important intermediary agencies in innovation support.
3. **Financing:** From small-scale, easy-to-access innovation or start-up support to larger participatory research, development, and innovation projects. Often very small sums can make a huge impact, e.g. for start-ups. For "bigger" (e.g. national scale) topics larger public investments may be needed, such as the development of easily accessible commercial solutions in digitalisation. However, establishing innovations takes more time than the usual duration of research or innovation projects. Therefore, longer-term support may be necessary, e.g. continuous commitment by official structures, such as municipalities or ministries.

More ideas for Operational Groups and research needs are in the Focus final report



More information on the EIP-AGRI website

Seminar 'Turning forest innovation into practice' Final report - Webpage	Inspirational idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrating the multiple benefits of forest regeneration - FR• Social innovation to find ways to spread solutions and best practices for active forest management - IT - FR - SL• Setting up short wood supply chains using hedgerows - FR• Forests for wood, water, food and fun - ES• Spruce needle juice - A product with health benefits which also adds value to the forest - ES• Inspirational ideas: Cork for 3D printing - ES
Forestry in the EIP-AGRI spotlight	
EIP-AGRI publications <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EIP-AGRI Brochure Innovation for European forestry• EIP-AGRI Brochure on Creating diverse forests with multiple benefits• Agrinnovation magazine 2022 with focus on forestry	

Support Facility Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI
Koning Albert II laan 15 - 1210 Brussels - BELGIUM
Tel +32 2 543 72 81 - supportfacility@eip-agri.eu - www.eip-agri.eu

Join the EIP-AGRI Network!

Register to www.eip-agri.eu where you can find peers, projects, ideas and resources to catalyse innovation in agriculture, forestry and horticulture together.