



Protecting farmland pollinators

Irish Operational Group promotes actions to support biodiversity within productive farming system

The Protecting Farmland Pollinators Operational Group project encourages farmers in Ireland to make small changes on their farms which will make big differences to pollinators. These changes include providing habitats on their farms that will offer food, safety and shelter for wild bees and hoverflies and increase biodiversity in general.

Pollinators are essential for farmers growing insect-pollinated crops, fruits and vegetables. However, there are many factors, including intensive specialised agriculture, which have led to a wide-scale loss of wild pollinators on farmland over the last fifty years. In Ireland, one-third of their bee species are threatened with extinction ([All Ireland Pollinator Plan](#)). Improving agricultural systems to reverse the degradation of ecosystems would create significant and sustainable economic value and improvements to the health of the environment.

Saorla Kavanagh - The National Biodiversity Data Centre, Operational Group project manager explains "Pollinators are basically a proxy for biodiversity. If you help pollinators, it will have knock-on effects and you'll help biodiversity." They created a scoring system which would help farmers to understand how pollinator-friendly or not their farm currently is, and to identify the type of simple, low-cost management practices they could take to improve their score. Saorla says "It is not about making huge changes, but integrating small actions that will allow biodiversity to coexist within an already productive farming system."

The Operational Group is working with 40 farmers, Saorla continues "What's really useful within this project is that we've got a huge range of farms involved, beef, dairy, tillage and mixed with different farming intensities." They have been examining the impact of pollinator measures on broader biodiversity as well as looking into their cost-effectiveness in the Irish farmed landscape.

The farmers chose the actions to take on their farm. One arable farmer, for example, planted grass margins at the start of the project, and has noticed a great increase in biodiversity, most plants now are ones that he did not sow initially. Another tillage farmer has created a wildlife area where he planted many different species of trees as well as allowing a natural meadow to grow. He has seen a visible increase in moths, bees and other wildlife. Many of the farmers have also expressed that the increase in biodiversity has had an effect on their own well-being, that it creates a more calming working environment.

Throughout the project, the partners monitored all the participating farms, scoring them annually and providing regular advice to farmers. Over 3 years, 31 farmers have made changes and increased their pollinator points.

In 2023, a guidance document on how to take action to protect pollinators on the farm will be produced. This document will contain evidence-based action sheets. It will provide real examples on how best to provide food, safety, and shelter for pollinators and wider biodiversity on the farm.

The partners ran a results-based payment scheme for the farmers involved. Farmers are paid annually depending on their score and the amount and quality of habitat they maintain. Saorla adds "Although the money is a good incentive, it's about the knowledge, farmers want to know what is on their farms and how they can help biodiversity and sustain their farms for future generations."

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Background information

On 22 May 2023, the International Day of Biodiversity, the Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI Support Facility published a thematic newsletter on biodiversity.

In 2023 the [Focus Group Enhancing the biodiversity on farmland through high-diversity landscape features](#) answered the question on how farmers can create and maintain high-diversity landscape features (HDLF) that positively impact farmland biodiversity. The Focus Group report, including a state of play on the topic, research needs from practice and ideas for Operational Groups, will be published Autumn 2023.

More information:

Protecting Farmland Pollinators is an Operational Group funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (Ireland). In 2015, The National Biodiversity Data Centre published the [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan \(AIPP\)](#), in 2019, they started the Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project which is part of the AIPP.

- > [Website](#)
- > [Operational Group database](#)

Project information:

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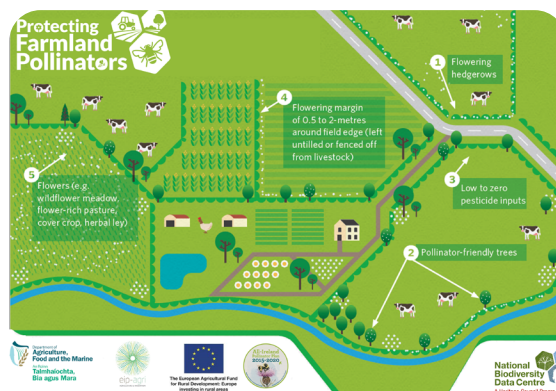
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Project photos:

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Common carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*) on devils bit - © Saorla Kavanagh



Project flyer © Protecting Farmland Pollinators

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More information on biodiversity

1. EU CAP Network 'Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' activities

A. Focus Groups

- › [EU CAP Network Focus Group: Enhancing the biodiversity on farmland through high-diversity landscape features](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Focus Group: High Nature Value \(HNV\) - Farming profitability](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Focus Group: Bee health and sustainable beekeeping](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Focus Group: Optimising profitability of crop production through Ecological Focus Areas](#)

B. Events

- › [EIP-AGRI Workshop Conversion to organic farming](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI seminar: Healthy soils for Europe: sustainable management through knowledge and practice](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Workshop Cropping for the future: networking for crop rotation and crop diversification](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI workshop 'Organic is Operational'](#)

C. Publications & videos

- › [EIP-AGRI Brochure Organic farming: Innovative approaches to support conversion](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Brochure Sustainable and resilient farming: Inspiration from agro-ecology](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI Brochure Cooperating for genetic resources](#)
- › [AGRI challenge: biodiversity - 14 September 2022](#)

D. Inspirational ideas from the network

- › [Inspirational ideas: Inishowen Upland Farmers project - IE](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Biostimulants for sustainable agriculture - IT](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Restoration of degraded forest areas - FR](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Multifunctional buffer zones - SE](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Pasture for pollinators - UK](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Creating a buzz in Romanian greenhouses - RO](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: A hive of digital activity - BG](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: From deserted area to oasis of biodiversity - GREECE](#)

- › [Inspirational ideas: Ecofriendly techniques for organic orchard pest management - RO](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Improving soil biodiversity to reduce inputs - ES](#)
- › [Inspirational ideas: Farm data for water management of boundary meadow soils - HU](#)

Read the thematic newsletter on biodiversity published by the Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI Support Facility on 22 May 2023

2. Horizon multi-actor projects working on biodiversity

- › **ECOSTACK**: Stacking of ecosystem services: mechanisms and interactions for optimal crop protection, pollination enhancement, and productivity - [project website](#)
- › **HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMING**: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge - [Cordis](#) - [project website](#)
- › **SHOWCASE**: SHOWCASing synergies between agriculture, biodiversity and Ecosystem services to help farmers capitalising on native biodiversity - [Cordis](#)
- › **BIOVALUE**: set-up a holistic perspective, under the "multi-actor" approach, to analyse the link between biodiversity, the agro-food value chain agents, the environment, consumer food preferences and health - [Cordis](#)
- › **CROPDIVA**: Innovative solutions in order to facilitate biodiversity management at all levels - [website](#)
- › **FRAMEwork**: Farmer Clusters for Realising Agrobiodiversity Management across Ecosystems - [website](#)

More Horizon projects working on biodiversity are available [here](#)

Multi-actor projects are research projects in which end users and multipliers of research results such as farmers and farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises and others, closely cooperate throughout the whole project. Operational Groups are strongly encouraged to participate in this type of research project.

Thematic networks are multi-actor projects which collect existing knowledge and best practices on a given theme to make it available in easily understandable formats for end-users such as farmers, foresters, advisors etc.

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3. Operational Groups working on biodiversity

[380 Operational Groups working on biodiversity](#) are available in the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups database (update March 2023)

- › Austria: 8
- › Bulgaria: 1
- › Finland: 1
- › France: 28
- › Germany: 41
- › Hungary: 6
- › Ireland: 24
- › Italy: 80
- › Latvia: 6
- › Lithuania: 1
- › The Netherlands: 59
- › Portugal: 11
- › Romania: 6
- › Slovenia: 27
- › Spain: 68
- › Sweden: 2
- › UK: 12

EU's biodiversity strategy

The EU's [biodiversity strategy for 2030](#), part of the Green Deal, is a long-term plan to improve resilience, to protect and restore nature and biodiversity across Europe. Objectives include a target for 10% of agricultural land to incorporate landscape features or non-productive areas.

The common agricultural policy 2023-2027

Find [information on the common agricultural policy 2023-27 on the European Commission's website](#).

1. Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI in the EU CAP Network

Since 6 October 2022, the EIP-AGRI network has joined forces with the European Network for Rural Development, merging into the new European CAP Network. The 'Support Facility for Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' continues to act as a mediator, enhancing communication and cooperation between everyone

with a keen interest in innovation and sharing knowledge for sustainable agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI) was launched in 2013 by the European Commission in a bid to promote rapid modernisation of the sectors concerned by stepping up innovation efforts. The EIP-AGRI aims to foster innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas by bringing research and practice closer together – in innovation projects as well as via the European CAP Network and the national CAP Networks. Also, grassroots ideas from farmers are developed into concrete innovative solutions through 'Operational Group' innovation projects. The EIP-AGRI aims to streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives, and complement them with actions where necessary.

More information on [Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI](#) on the EU CAP Network website.

2. EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups **are groups of people who work together in an innovation project**. They bring together partners with complementary knowledge. The composition of the group will vary according to the theme and specific objectives of each project. Farmers, advisors, scientists, businesses or other relevant partners work together to find practical solutions for specific problems or opportunities for European farmers and foresters. Farmers and foresters need to cooperate throughout the project to ensure that the innovative solutions are practical and likely to be quickly applied in the field. Read the [basic principles](#). [Innovation support services](#) (including advisors with a focus on innovation), and in particular innovation brokering, can therefore play a crucial role in getting worthwhile projects off the ground by facilitating contacts.

A. Operational Groups funded under Rural Development Programmes 2014 - 2022

- › 98 Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 (RDPs) provide support to innovative EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects
- › Over 3200 Operational Groups are planned to be established under the approved RDPs
- › More than 2700 Operational Group projects have been selected for funding and are currently ongoing (or already finished)*. Member States will still start more Operational Group projects which may run until 2025 (under current transitional rules for EU Rural Development Programmes). [Find information on all of these projects in the EIP-AGRI database](#).

*Information officially submitted to the European Commission by RDP Managing Authorities (April 2023)

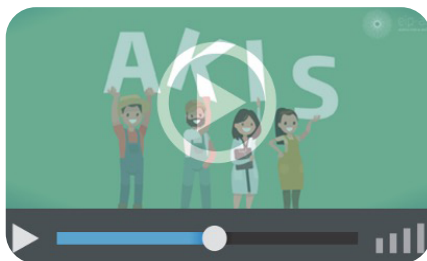
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B. Operational Groups funded under CAP Strategic Plans 2023 - 2027

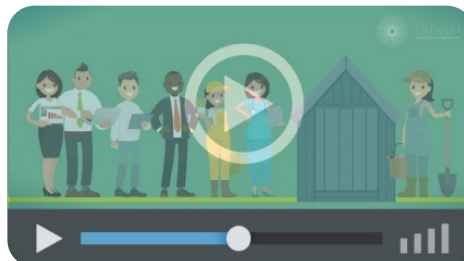
Within the common agricultural policy 2023-27 (CAP), the EU Member States have designed national CAP Strategic Plans combining funding for income support, rural development, and market measures. All CAP Strategic Plans have been adopted and their implementation started on 1 January 2023.

26 CAP Strategic Plans include support for innovative EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. In total, 6600 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects have been planned.

EIP-AGRI videos



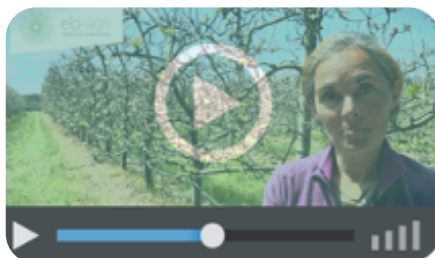
[AKIS: building effective knowledge flows across Europe](#)



[Operational Groups - collaborate to innovate](#)



[EU CAP Network events on Innovation and knowledge exchange - EIP-AGRI - Spring events 2023](#)



[AGRI challenge: biodiversity](#)

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EIP-AGRI, 9 years of innovation



The enthusiasm is essential for the success of the EIP-AGRI, and in ensuring that everyone can benefit. [Watch this EIP-AGRI video](#) to hear researchers, farmers, advisors, Managing Authorities and National Rural Networks explain how the EIP-AGRI has helped them over the past 9 years.



Since 2013, the EIP-AGRI has been promoting interactive innovation to make EU agriculture and forestry more sustainable, productive, and fit for the future. This report shows how the EIP-AGRI network has grown. [Read the report](#)