

Healthy, tasty and social vegetables

Social farming in Romania creating jobs, reducing waste and providing healthy local produce

Organic vegetables, carefully grown and harvested just 30km from Bucharest (Romania), delivered to consumers in the city on the very day they are picked. 'bio&co' farm applies an inspiring social farming model, creating jobs for disadvantaged people in the local area, "The human being is at the centre of everything we do; our vegetables have a taste of work, of dignity, of solidarity, of nature and of the land from which they grow." explains Damien Thiery, Director general of Ateliere Fără Frontiere.

Ateliere Fără Frontiere ('Workshops without borders') is a Romanian not-for-profit organisation working for the social, professional and civic integration of vulnerable and marginalised people. It has three main 'workshops': recycling electronic equipment; transforming waste advertising banners into bags and accessories; and, bio&co social farm. "In all three of our social enterprises, our focus is the fight against exclusion, poverty and discrimination as well as the fight against waste and pollution. We build solidarity and support local education and development," Damien further explains.

The aim of the bio&co project is to test and prove the efficiency and transferability of a social farming model which can be scaled-up elsewhere in Romania. Ateliere Fără Frontiere began bio&co in 2015 inspired by the [Jardins de Cocagne](#) social farming network in France. bio&co now works with fifteen employees from vulnerable communities in the local area and from Bucharest. Damien explains "We employ people from the local community, mainly from the Roma ethnic group, they are out of the cycle of work because they are marginalised due to their ethnicity, plus they have very limited mobility possibilities to come and work in Bucharest for instance."

An objective of bio&co is to train their employees and prepare them for full and professional reintegration into the conventional labour market. "For our employees, we offer individualised socio-professional support as part of the working day." This includes a range of help from technical training, language support, book-keeping to counselling. "We also only give full-time contracts instead of seasonal, this means our employees have job security," adds Damien.

bio&co has 5 hectares of agricultural land and 4000m² of non-heated greenhouses to produce organic vegetables all year round. They have created a composting platform, they have solar panels and they run a veg-box scheme in partnership with businesses in the city.

bio&co also organises events such as Harvest Feast in October. Participants are taken on a tour of the farm to see how the vegetables are grown, harvested and delivered. "This is the opportunity where the work of our employees on the farm is recognised by the entire community," says Damien.

bio&co is currently trying out a number of new initiatives such as a pedagogical farm providing information on healthy eating, biodiversity, waste reduction and environmental protection. It also includes a sensory discovery for children where they can learn to plant seeds. Funding, however, remains a struggle. bio&co relies on private sponsorship to complete the money made from sales, in order to provide decent wages and support to its employees.

Damien concludes: "It's really important for our project to be scalable to the rest of the country. This kind of initiative could bring real economic, social and environmental benefits."



Using digital tools to promote sustainable and productive organic agriculture

Background information

Social farming makes innovative use of agricultural resources and a farm's natural environment to provide care activities and social services. This enables people who face challenges in life to carry out activities in an agricultural setting, in ways that benefit their well-being and development. See the EU CAP Network Focus Group '[Social farming and innovations](#)' to learn more about social farming.

- > [Website bio-co](#)
- > [Website Ateliere Fara Frontiere](#)
- > [Facebook Ateliere Fara Frontiere](#)
- > [Facebook bio&co](#)
- > [Twitter Ateliere Fara Frontiere](#)
- > Damien THIERY is also an expert in the EU CAP Network Focus Group '[Social farming and innovations](#)'

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Project photos:

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Employees of the farm
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Work on the farm
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Non-heated greenhouses
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Veg-boxes
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More information on social farming

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

Focus Groups

The experts from the EIP-AGRI Focus Group [Social Farming and Innovations](#) cover the question 'How can social farming contribute to innovation in agriculture while strengthening the multi-functional role of agriculture and connecting people from urban and rural areas?' The Focus Group report - including a state of play, recommendations, ideas for Operational Groups and research needs on the topic - will be published Autumn 2023.

Publications & videos

- > [EU CAP Network Brochure: Social innovation – solutions for thriving agriculture, forestry and rural area](#)

Inspirational ideas from the network

- > [Inspirational ideas: Healthy, tasty and social vegetables \(Romania\)](#)
- > [German Operational Group develops job opportunities for people with disabilities \(Germany\)](#)
- > [Social innovation to find ways to spread solutions and best practices for active forest management](#)

Horizon multi-actor projects working on social farming

- > [SIMRA](#) gathered examples of Social Innovations in agriculture, forestry and rural development in rural areas across Europe and includes some examples on social farming.
- > [NEWBIE](#) thematic network worked on business models for new entrants into farming to encourage innovation, resilience and entrepreneurship in European agriculture, including social farming.

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.

Operational Groups working on social farming

A number of other Operational Groups working on social farming are available in the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups database. Some examples below:

- > [Added value of social farming for agricultural production](#)
- > [Organic vegetables: Enabling regional cultivation, creating jobs for people with disabilities, shaping processing, developing sales \(Germany\)](#)
- > [Social farming as an instrument for the diversification of agricultural enterprises in Bavaria - Development of innovative model projects \(Germany\)](#)
- > [Comeragh Uplands and Communities EIP Project \(Ireland\)](#)
- > [BIOSOCIAL_ Small farm organic vegetable production as integrated model between production and local social impact \(Italy\)](#)
- > [Montessori thought as innovation in social agriculture in the Marche Region \(Italy\)](#)
- > [MULTINET - Social and organizational innovation for developing multifunctionality in farms: models, co-production, inclusion \(Italy\)](#)

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The common agricultural policy 2023-27

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

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.

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.

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 2900 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 (May 2023)

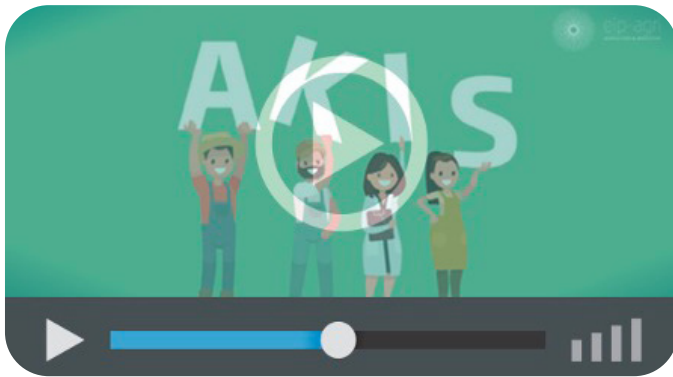
Operational Groups funded under CAP Strategic Plans 2023 - 2027

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.

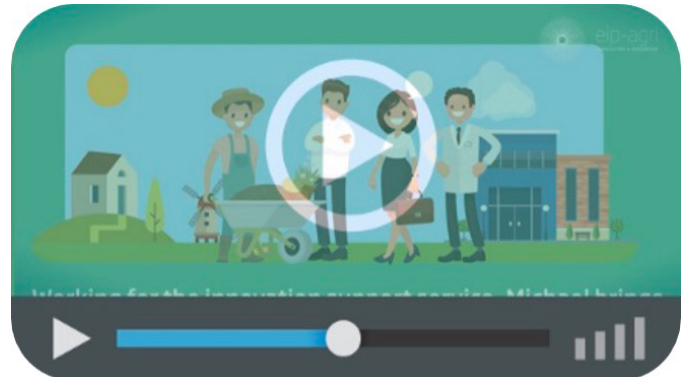
26 CAP Strategic Plans include support for innovative EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. In total, 6600 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects have been planned.

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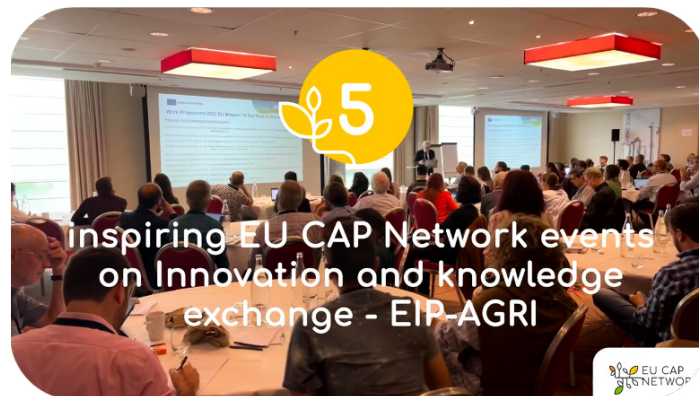
Related videos



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



[Innovation Support Services, supporting innovation in EU farming and forestry](#)



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

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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 EIP-AGRI has grown. [Read the report](#).