

Innovation, Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI



# Recovery of abandoned agricultural lands

## How to foster new, practical ways for better management of abandoned agricultural land in a sustainable way?

Abandoned farmland is a considerable issue in Europe, especially in remote areas with scarce populations. The risks associated with it include aggravated natural disasters such as fires and floods, loss of biodiversity, and accentuated depopulation.

19 experts have identified the mechanisms that hinder strategies for halting and recovery of abandoned land and that, when understood, can provide the ground for such strategies:

- › land tenure and farm structure, including the precise identification of land right owners;
- › the identification and motivation of the multiple stakeholders that are required for collaboration and recovery strategies to become successful;
- › factors that need to be in place for business models to be viable, in the land abandonment context;
- › sustainable land and particularly soil management towards resilient farm systems;
- › and finally, the particular case of land abandonment in peri-urban areas.

Agricultural land abandonment has significant and worrying dimensions in many remote and peripheral regions of Europe. Recovery of abandoned land will never be possible in all areas. Therefore, a selection will have to be done, if efforts are to be successful.

Those areas where recovery is not possible should be managed, as rewilding and biodiversity reserves and as protection of fragile soils, but also with some form of management, for instance, to control fire risks.

Many bottom-up initiatives can help recovery, but the identification of ownership right holders, and support for viable enterprises demand robust public intervention at local, regional or national level. These are needed especially because the regions where agricultural land abandonment is a most severe problem, there is also a lack of strong governance structures.

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*“There is a need to think about how land abandonment can also represent opportunities – besides dealing with the challenges created by land that has been abandoned.”*

**John Feehan (Ireland),**

participant at the EU CAP Network Focus Group ‘Recovery of abandoned agricultural lands’

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### Knowledge gaps and research needs

- › Characterise the specificity of the land abandonment process;
- › Create maps with the state of land in remote and marginal areas and establish benchmarks for the status of abandonment;
- › Assess factors related to transaction costs of land ownership and identify solutions to overcome these limitations and explore factors that hinder higher mobility of land markets in high-risk areas;
- › Assess the potential of the LAGs and LEADER approach to support mitigation actions of land abandonment;
- › Identify and propose new forms of collective arrangements that can help cope with the extreme fragmentation;
- › Find innovative grazing strategies that can support a business model for livestock production and that can at the same time be supported with public policies due to their nature and conservation value;
- › Identify how to integrate different 'peri-urban food visions' and improve cooperation among the different food sectors in peri-urban areas.

### Ideas for Operational Groups

- › Development of biomass value chains: set up and test a biomass processing unit using available biomass in abandoned land, and assess the viability of such biomass-based processing units in remote areas;
- › Development of value chains based on the specificity and native species of the local areas: set up value chain arrangements of products where the added value is mainly based on their territory of origin and their specificity;
- › Develop and set in place a platform, where farmers or municipalities can offer activities on their farms for tourism or other activities and offer team events and recreational activities for businesses and other groups;
- › Classification of the status of the land that shows signs of being abandoned to map the status and boundaries of abandoned land with precision.

**For more ideas for Operational Groups and research needs, please see the final report.**

### More Information

- › [EU CAP Network Focus Group Recovery of abandoned agricultural lands: Final report](#)
- › [Mini paper 1: Land abandonment: Identification and assessment of viable business models](#)
- › [Mini paper 2: Sustainable land management as a lever to land abandonment](#)
- › [Mini paper 3: Ownership, farm structure and behavioural aspects of land abandonment](#)
- › [Mini paper 4: Securing Stakeholder Involvement in the Recovery of Abandoned Farmland](#)
- › [Mini paper 5: What can we do to preserve agriculture in peri-urban areas?](#)
- › [EU CAP Network FG 49: Recovery of abandoned agricultural lands: Starting paper](#)
- › [EU CAP Network Focus Group webpage](#)
- › [EIP-AGRI and multi-actor projects working on abandoned agricultural lands](#)

### Inspirational ideas

- › [EIP-AGRI Challenge video: recovery of abandoned agricultural lands \(Spain\)](#)
- › [From deserted area to oasis of biodiversity \(Greece\)](#)

#### Feedback and questions:

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