



Action-oriented recommendations for upskilling and reskilling the EU agricultural workforce

Produced by the Thematic Group on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector.

Introduction

This document presents eight action-oriented recommendations to improve skills in the EU agri-food sector elaborated by the members of the EU CAP Network's Thematic Group (TG) on [Nurturing skills for a thriving and sustainable agricultural sector](#). The recommendations target various levels of policymaking and outline concrete measures, key actors to be involved, enabling factors, and the expected benefits.

The TG had clear and comprehensive objectives. First, the TG aimed to delve into the needs and opportunities associated with agricultural skills development and their continuous updating. The focus was on the agricultural workforce (both employees and self-employed workers), emphasising the acquisition of (new) skills crucial for strengthening farmers within the food supply chain.

This mission was inspired by the [European Year of Skills](#) and intended to raise awareness about the skills-related requirements in agriculture. Furthermore, the TG aimed to underscore the significance and benefits of investing in the development and update of agricultural skills, including upskilling and reskilling.

An equally important objective of the TG was to identify specific skill gaps and explore the potential of measures within the CAP Strategic Plans and other EU, national, and regional funding sources to support agricultural skills' developments. These measures aim to foster collaboration, promoting sustainable development and economic growth in rural communities, also including a focus on the opportunities offered by producer organisations.

All the outputs produced by this Thematic Group, including a collection of good practices and an overview of possible approaches for skills development, are available on the [EU CAP Network website](#).

Disclaimer

This document has been developed as part of the work carried out by the CAP Implementation Contact Point under the EU CAP Network to support the activities of the Thematic Group (TG) on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector. The information and views set out in this document do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

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Recommendations

1

Promote an EU-wide, standardised certification programme for sustainable agricultural practices, potentially led by the European Commission. Allocate funds for programme development, training and certification processes to enhance the adoption of sustainable farming practices, improve environmental outcomes and align the workforce with evolving agricultural trends. This certification system should be integrated with existing farm certification schemes, including private labels, with the aim of fostering the recognition of skills in sustainable farming and ensuring a standardised approach across the European Union.

2

Initiate a cross-border skills sharing programme based on peer learning. This could involve e.g. agricultural European Innovation Partnerships (EIP-AGRI) Operational Groups, farmers, researchers, advisors, National Networks (NNs), Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, schools and teachers. Ensure funding for events with simplified implementation to accelerate innovation, foster trust and enable practical insights through peer-to-peer interactions.

3

Initiate a comprehensive skills diversification programme led by the EU and national institutions in collaboration with universities and other educational and training bodies at both EU and national levels. Implement a multidisciplinary and multi-target educational programme, leveraging the diversity of participants, regions, production systems and required competences. Foster learning across topics, with collaboration through targeted partnerships, and a coalition of educators/trainers and learners to broaden the agricultural skills toolkit. This initiative aims to cultivate agricultural networks of professionals, increase positive impact through innovative knowledge, and ensure a well-rounded skills set within the agricultural sector.

4

Establish a comprehensive, centralised skills and knowledge management platform led at the EU or national level, offering a unified framework that encompasses all EU stakeholders. This platform should promote access to training, policy drivers, legislative frameworks and funding opportunities, fostering a collaborative and efficient approach to skills development and knowledge exchange among advisors, researchers, national authorities, farmers and foresters.

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5

Establish an EU-wide skills tracker funded through a Horizon project, collaborating with Eurostat and training providers to deliver comprehensive yearly data on training programmes with carefully chosen syllabuses. Create a central location to store data on training products, offers and materials to address the current gap in the analysis of existing training programmes. This initiative would also aim to provide flexible indicators, which are easily adaptable to a variety of training programmes, enabling the assessment of skills building practices, and fostering the accessibility and dissemination of best practices in skills development.

6

Make access to funding and information easier and faster, for projects whose quality and goals are clear. This should involve institutions, both public and private, possessing human, logistical and technological capabilities (e.g. schools, associations, cooperatives, professional guilds). Take steps to simplify the funding application processes of EU and national funds.

7

Establish an inclusive voucher system for farmers, including new entrants and young farmers, through collaboration between farmers, national governments and the EU. Provide farmers with directly targeted vouchers to attend diverse and tailored training sessions, ensuring accessibility and addressing the specific needs of individuals. This initiative aims to eliminate financial barriers, enabling lifelong learning and enhancing agricultural skills for the continuous development of farmers.

8

Implement an EU-wide training package on agro-ecology using demonstration farms across various countries, facilitated by an overarching EU umbrella organisation. Prioritise the training and promotion of agro-ecology practices contributing to a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among farmers, researchers and stakeholders throughout the European Union.

