



EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards 2024 for Operational Groups: seven winners from the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Ireland and Spain

On 7 May 2024 an awards ceremony was held in Estoril, Portugal, to announce the seven winners of the EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards 2024 for Operational Groups. The ceremony was held during the EU CAP Network conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice', to celebrate the achievements of more than 3 400 Operational Groups.

There were six categories with five nominees in each category, and all thirty nominees competed to be voted the public favourite. The winners were Colorado Beetle Catcher: Sustainable Machine Pest Control (the Netherlands) in the category Sustainable management of natural resources; Cultivation, harvesting and processing of hemp straw and hemp seeds (Germany) in the category Business models in food supply chains; Parsutt - Parma ham high sustainability standard (Italy) in the category Animal welfare and husbandry; SUBALMA - Improving the productivity and sustainability of underground drip irrigation systems that use oil mill waste as fertiliser through the use of nanobubbles (Spain) won in the category Climate change mitigation and adaptation; Illaun Farm Forest Alliance (Ireland) in the category Sustainable forest management; and Precision farming in Brandenburg (Germany) in the category Digitalisation.

The seventh award, the 'public favourite' award, went to SHEEP-UP (Italy). Antonella Tormen, project manager, says "We are very happy to have received the public favourite award! We created a united working group of breeders, researchers and public bodies to enhance small mountain farms breeding sheep breeds which are at risk of extinction. It was a great team effort!". The project focuses on values such as biodiversity, sustainability and the quality of production. In total, more than 11 000 people voted online from 15 April to 3 May for their favourite project among the 30 nominees.

A jury of experts selected the winners in the 6 thematic categories. In the category 'Sustainable management of natural resources', the award went to an OG which has developed and tested a mechanical pest control machine for the Colorado potato beetle which has been increasing in the Netherlands due to hotter summers. In the second category 'Business models in food supply chains,' a German OG took the prize for their new value chains for industrial hemp which includes growing and marketing the hemp nuts and the hemp straw, on-site processing and the breeding of adapted varieties. An Italian OG Parsutt won the 'Animal welfare and husbandry' category for their creation of a sustainability protocol for Parma ham based on high standards animal welfare and biosecurity, and responsible use of antibiotics in pig farms. For the category 'Climate change mitigation and adaptation' the award was given to Spanish SUBALMA which reuses oil mill by-products as

fertilisers through techniques that guarantee maximum water-use efficiency, focusing on subsurface irrigation and injection of nanobubbles. Illaun Farm Forest Alliance from Ireland topped the category 'Sustainable forest management' for its farming approach to enhance forestry management and restore local woodland through community engagement. For the 'Digitalisation' category the winner was a German OG working to counteract soil acidification, which has developed a fully digitised site-specific soil acidity management process and decision support system for variable-rate liming.

Roberto Berutti, member of the cabinet of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture "This is the first time in the EIP-AGRI history that we have organised a competition for Operational Groups. We are delighted to see the vast array of innovations being developed across Europe. There were many excellent applications and the jury had a difficult task to select the winners."

Since the establishment of EIP-AGRI in 2012, more than 3 400 OGs have contributed to the increased productivity and sustainability of agriculture and forestry in the EU. The EU CAP Network with the support of the Support Facility 'Innovation and Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' organised the EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards to celebrate the great variety of innovative OG projects and their achievements. The awards recognise and reward outstanding EIP-AGRI OGs which have developed innovative practices, solutions, products and processes. The call was specifically for OGs which had already completed their full projects. It opened at the end of 2023, and from the 240 applicants, five OGs were selected as nominees within each of the six categories.

The awards ceremony took place on 7 May 2024 in Estoril (Portugal) as part of the EU CAP Network Conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'. The conference brought together 550 participants including farmers and foresters and other partners from OG projects. The conference was the opportunity to recognise the successful implementation of the EIP-AGRI through OG projects as one of its main building blocks, and to learn from this experience for the implementation of more than 6000 OG projects that will be set up under the CAP 2023-2027 all over the EU.

Janusz Wojciechowski, European Commissioner for Agriculture thanked all the Operational Groups present at the conference "By developing innovative solutions to our most pressing challenges you are making an incredible impact on farmers, foresters and rural communities and creating a lasting legacy for generations to come."

Please feel free to use this press article and the pictures in your own publications and to inform your colleagues.

If you would like more specific pictures of nominees or winners from your country, please contact communication@eupcapnetwork.eu.

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Background information

- > [EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards 2024 for Operational Groups](#)
- > [Watch the recording of the awards ceremony](#)
- > [Discover the winners and the nominees](#)
- > [EU CAP Network conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'](#)

Project information

More information on the winners:

- > [Colorado Beetle Catcher: Sustainable Machine Pest Control](#)
- > [Cultivation, harvesting and processing of hemp straw and hemp seeds](#)
- > [Parsutt - Parma ham high sustainability standard](#)
- > [SUBALMA - Improving the productivity and sustainability of underground drip irrigation systems that use oil mill waste as fertiliser through the use of nanobubbles](#)
- > [Illaun Farm-Forest Alliance](#)
- > [Precision liming in Brandenburg](#)
- > [SHEEP-UP - Ovine bio-diversity in Veneto: an economic opportunity for farmers and their territory](#)

EU CAP Network contact

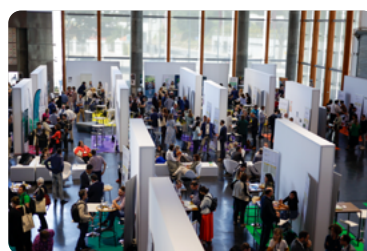
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Project photos:

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Janusz Wojciechowski, European Commissioner for Agriculture addresses participants at the conference - © EU CAP Network



Participants find out about Operational Groups and other innovative projects during the innovation exhibition at the conference - © EU CAP Network



Hugo Almeida (DG AGRI, European Commission) presents SHEEP-UP with their certificate as a nominee during the ceremony - © EU CAP Network



Nominees in the category Business models in food supply chains on stage during the ceremony - © EU CAP Network



Antonella Tormen and the SHEEP-UP team with their public favourite award trophy - © EU CAP Network



Nominees and winners of the EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards - © EU CAP Network

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More information on Operational Groups

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

Events

- > [EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards 2024 for Operational Groups \(2024\)](#)
- > [EU CAP Network conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice' \(2024\)](#)
- > [EU CAP Network cross-visit 'Use of agricultural and forestry residues' \(2024\)](#)
- > [EU CAP Network cross-visit 'Climate adaptation on the ground' \(2024\)](#)
- > [EU CAP Network cross-visit 'Circular and organic soil management' \(2023\)](#)
- > [EU CAP Network cross-visit 'Organic farming supply and value chain optimisation' \(2023\)](#)

Publications & videos

- > [EU CAP Network brochure: EIP-AGRI Operational Groups - Collaboration and funding opportunities \(2024\)](#)
- > [Video: 4 reasons to apply for EU CAP Network cross-visits for Operational Groups](#)
- > [Video EIP-AGRI Challenge: Smart circular farming to address high energy prices](#)

Inspirational ideas from the network

- > [Inspirational idea: FOREST4EU Thematic network broadens outreach of Operational Group results](#)
- > For many other Inspirational Ideas on Operational Groups, browse previous editions of the [Innovation & knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI Newsletter](#)

EU CAP Network website

- > [Webpage on Operational Groups](#)

Operational Groups

Browse the nearly 3000 Operational Groups available in the [EIP-AGRI project database](#).

Horizon Europe and Operational Groups

- > [FOREST4EU](#) - Promoting Operational Groups dedicated to forestry and agroforestry - [CORDIS](#) (1 January 2023 - 31 December 2025)
- > [NUTRI-KNOW](#) - Broadening the impact of Operational Groups in the field of nutrient management - [CORDIS](#) (1 January 2023 - 31 December 2025)
- > [CLIMED-FRUIT](#) - Climate change resilience for perennial crops - [CORDIS](#) (1 October 2022 - 30 September 2025)
- > [Oper8](#) - Unlocking the full potential of Operational Groups on alternative weed control [CORDIS](#) (1 October 2022 - 30 September 2025)

Multi-actor projects are research and innovation 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. Horizon Europe has launched several EU-wide thematic networks that share best practices from EIP-AGRI Operational Groups across borders, for a wider uptake of innovative results. [More information on Horizon Europe thematic networks](#).

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Innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI events 2023-2024

- > **Brokerage event:** [EU CAP Network Brokerage event entitled 'Accelerating the innovation process through Horizon Europe multi-actor projects'](#), 19-20 October 2023 - Antwerp, Belgium
- > **Focus Group** meetings on:
 - > [Regenerative agriculture for soil health](#) (23-24 April 2024)
 - > [Crop associations including Milpa and protein crops](#) (29-30 May 2024)
 - > [Competitive and resilient mountain areas](#) (6-7 March 2024)
- > **Workshop:** [National networking for innovation](#), 30 November-1 December 2023 - Tallinn, Estonia
- > **Workshop:** [Circular water management](#), 12-13 March 2024
- > **Workshop:** [Women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas](#), 17-18 April 2024
- > **Workshop:** [Promoting pollinator-friendly farming](#), 18-19 June 2024
- > **Seminar:** [Skills and lifelong learning](#), 21-22 February 2024 - Vienna, Austria
- > [Conference & award ceremony](#) focusing on Operational Groups, 6-8 May 2024
- > **Ad-hoc national experts meeting**, 12 June 2024 (call open - [applications close 14 May 2024](#))
- > **Cross-visits**, 26-27 June 2024 (*Call closed 14/04/2024*)
 - > [Climate adaptation on the ground](#)
 - > [Use of agricultural and forestry residues](#)

Related videos



[Operational Group: SHEEP-UP - Ovine bio-diversity in Veneto](#)

- > [Watch all 30 videos from the nominated Operational Groups](#)
- > These are also available as a [YouTube playlist](#)

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The Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027

Find [information on the common agricultural policy 2023-2027 on the European Commission's website](#).

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

The new European CAP Network 'Support Facility for Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' acts 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 through efforts to step up innovation.

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. Further, 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.

[Common agricultural policy 2023-27](#).

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 advisers 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.
- More than 3200 Operational Group projects have been notified in the common EU data repository 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 project database](#).

* 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 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.

