

Innovation, Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI



# EU CAP Network Conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'

The EU CAP Network conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice' was organised to highlight the successful implementation of the EIP-AGRI through Operational Group (OG) projects as one of its main building blocks, and to learn from these achievements to prepare the next generation of Operational Group projects under the CAP 2023-2027.

Since the launch of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) in 2012, EU Member States have kept investing in innovation for agriculture, forestry and rural areas through EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects. The 3 400 reported Operational Group projects funded under the CAP programming period for 2014-2022 exceeded the number of projects that was initially planned (3 200).

The [EU CAP Network Conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'](#) was organised by the EU CAP Network with the support of the Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange | EIP-AGRI and in collaboration with the [Portuguese CAP Network - Rede Nacional PAC](#). The event took place in Estoril, Portugal, from 6 to 8 May 2024. More than 500 participants attended the event, representing all Member States, including almost 200 [Operational Groups](#). Various types of profiles were represented, such as farmers, foresters, farm advisors, innovation brokers and innovation support service providers, researchers, NGOs, Managing Authorities, National CAP Networks and Paying Agencies.

The conference had the following specific objectives:

- Spotlight and celebrate the achievements of over 3 400 OG projects in the EU;
- Learn from the experiences of OG projects and boost possibilities to share promising knowledge and innovations developed by OGs;

- Discuss the possibilities, including funding opportunities, to further use and upscale OG outcomes in practice, including through [Horizon Europe](#);
- Discuss challenges and identify good practices that can support the preparation and implementation of OG projects under the CAP 2023-2027;
- Foster further networking and cooperation for innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas, including the creation of transnational or cross-border OGs;
- Enhance the synergies between the CAP and Horizon Europe for the benefit of the OGs.

## Field visits: Seeing innovation in practice

On 6 May, the day before the conference, the event kicked off with field visits, organised by the Portuguese CAP Network - Rede Nacional PAC, to four different locations, where participants had the opportunity to network with several Portuguese Operational Groups. The [field visits](#) focused on four different thematic areas, including fruit orchards, forestry, cereals and horticulture, and viticulture.

*"I have learnt that it is very important to always keep an eye on all innovations, because there are always people working in your field of work and you can learn a lot by sharing and working with them"*

**Ramón Santiago,**

Participant at the EU CAP Network Conference  
'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'

## EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice

### Grassroots innovation for the future of agriculture, forestry and rural areas

On Tuesday 7 May, the first day of the conference opened with a [welcome from Portuguese Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries José Manuel Fernandes](#) and from [EU Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski](#). The welcome session was followed by a presentation that set the scene on EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. Following up on this, two panel sessions welcomed guest speakers who represented various voices of relevant actors in the context of EIP-AGRI. The panelists were invited to look back on the work that was done so far, and to reflect on the path ahead. The first panel discussed the role of grassroots innovation for the future of agriculture, forestry and rural areas, while the second panel focused on effectively sharing, using and scaling up the outcomes of Operational Group projects.

### An innovation exhibition for further knowledge exchange

To foster further networking and knowledge exchange, the conference featured [an innovation exhibition](#) that presented the work and results of 73 Operational Groups and eight Horizon projects. In addition, the EIT Food initiative was represented for its role in creating connections and stimulating innovation across the food system. The Portuguese CAP Network, the Portuguese Horizon National Contact Point, the EU CAP Network and the European Commission – DG AGRI also presented their services and initiatives in the exhibition.

### Celebrating Operational Groups

The first day of the Operational Groups conference concluded with the [ceremony of the EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards](#), celebrating the [achievements of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups](#).

### Seven workshops to prepare the future

The second day of the conference was opened by [Mario Milouchev](#), Director for CAP Strategic Plans II, who introduced the foreseen activities aiming to taking stock of past experiences to prepare the next generation of EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects. The morning session included a presentation on the 'Study on outcomes achieved by EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects under the CAP', carried out

by the EU CAP Network – European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP. Following this presentation, seven parallel workshops were held. These workshops welcomed participants to discuss different topics that could support the successful implementation of an Operational Group project, foster collaboration with other innovative projects, and stimulate the creation of a new type of Operational Groups. The workshop topics were:

- 'Start' – Starting from an innovative idea: developing it into an Operational Group project proposal;
- 'Facilitate' – Ensuring a smooth-running Operational Group project;
- 'Co-create' – Involving farmers and foresters from start to finish: ensuring that end-users are benefitting;
- 'Enable' – Creating an enabling environment to support Operational Groups throughout the project;
- 'Share' – Sharing results for better uptake by practice, during and beyond the lifespan of the project;
- 'Collaborate' – Inspiring Operational Groups to collaborate with other innovative projects;
- 'Transnational' – Fostering transnational Operational Groups.

The agenda, all presentations and relevant conference documents are available [on the event webpage](#). The event's final report will also be added to this page.

#### Feedback and questions:

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#### Find out more about the EU CAP Network

Visit the [EU CAP Network website](#) to discover projects, ideas and resources to catalyse innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas.