



Use of agricultural and forestry residues for creating alternative sources of income for farmers and foresters

**Cross-visit
Final report**
26-27 June 2024
Vic, Spain



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1. Introduction

This report presents the outcomes of the cross-visit (CV) between EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects (OGs), focusing on the theme 'Use of Agricultural and Forestry Residues for Creating Alternative Sources of Income for Farmers and Foresters', which took place from 26-27 June 2024, in Vic, Spain. The cross-visit was organised by the EU CAP Network through the EIP-AGRI Support Facility (SF) with the support of BETA Technological Centre in Vic, Spain.

The following sections present the participants and projects who took part in this networking activity, the programme of the cross-visit and the main outcomes, as well as the participants' feedback on the cross-visit.

1.1. Objectives

The circular bioeconomy offers many opportunities to improve the lives of farmers, foresters and rural communities across the EU. Operational Groups are key in unlocking the innovation potential of the circular bioeconomy. By encouraging the sustainable use of biobased side streams from agriculture, food production, forestry and related sectors, new value chains and business models can be created which are tailored to the needs of producers and rural areas, providing diversified income, added value to their products, and delivering better resource efficiency.

1.2. Purpose and main goals

The **purpose of cross-visits between projects** is to provide opportunities for cross-border knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning between OGs. The visits will create opportunities for the informal exchange of good practices and innovative solutions between OG representatives from different Member States. They may also help foster potential future collaborations between projects/actors in the research and innovation area and/or lead to the creation of transnational OGs.

The **main goals of cross-visits are to:**

- › enable peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange on the innovations that the projects which are involved address, as well as their multi-actor approach, allowing a deeper understanding of the innovation processes, providing further inspiration to participants and fostering synergies between projects
- › discuss common challenges, research needs from practice, inspirational ideas and potential solutions
- › exchange and further disseminate project findings across the EU
- › create opportunities for potential future collaborations and/or partnerships



2. Participants and Operational Group projects

Participants were selected through a call for expression of interest, which opened on 26th of March 2024, and was widely disseminated via a dedicated EU CAP Network newsflash, the EU CAP Network website, and with the support of the National CAP Networks.

The cross-visit welcomed 24 participants representing 15 OGs from six different countries (Spain, Poland, Belgium, Hungary, Greece

and Portugal). The group included stakeholders with diverse profiles and backgrounds, such as farmers, researchers, industry representatives and advisors. The participating OGs worked on plant, animal, or agroindustry residues, and showcased innovative solutions for enhancing the sustainable use of biobased side streams from agriculture, food production, forestry, and related sectors.

Table 1. Participating Operational Group projects

Operational Group projects	Country
OGs related to plant residues	
Polish ginger	Poland
Entomoponics	Belgium
ChicoryRePowered	Belgium
Development of a product and process innovation related to the technology of producing vegan thickets containing dehorned oak nut pulp with a product structure-stabilising effect as a new direction for product development of forest natural resources	Poland
CoopVitiLoop	Spain
OGs related to animal residues	
Bioferti+	Spain
Circular bioeconomy of proximity: organic fertilisation in organic and conventional vineyards	Spain
FERTIEGO	Spain
Actinata	Poland
GOEffluents- Livestock Effluents: strategic approach towards agronomic and energetic valorisation of flows in the farming activity	Portugal
OGs related to agroindustry and other residues	
SUSRICE	Greece
SubProMais - Use of agro-industrial by-products in animal feed	Portugal
Rapeseed meal in pig nutrition	Poland
RE-PEAT - Reuse of growing media for a circular horticulture	Belgium
Implementation of the innovative organic fertilization adapted to precision farming - GRANOFARM	Hungary

The participating projects, besides sharing a common theme, contributed to the sessions in the programme. As a result, the diverse experiences and various stages of project implementation, coupled with a collective willingness to learn and discuss their experiences

and innovative results, created a good ground for potential future collaborations among the participants.

Further information about the participating projects is available on the cross-visit webpage [here](#).



3. Programme of the cross-visit

The programme was designed to maximise interaction, learning, and identification of commonalities and potential synergies among participating OGs. It was organised over one and a half days,

including presentations, interactive sessions, and field visits. The full agenda can be found on the cross-visit web page [here](#).

Short summary of the programme:

June 26, 2024 - Morning session:

The day began with registration and a welcome session led by representatives of DG AGRI, the European Commission and the EIP-AGRI Support Facility. They introduced the objectives of the cross-visit and outlined the agenda, setting the scene for an interactive programme with a focus on knowledge exchange. An

icebreaker activity helped participants to connect, followed by short presentations from participating OGs. Each OG presented their projects with a focus on key challenges and areas for potential collaboration. This session fostered discussions around common themes, and participants were grouped for interactive sessions to identify shared challenges and potential solutions, aiming to identify synergies and complementarities among participating projects.



Source: EU CAP Network



June 26, 2024 - Afternoon session:

The afternoon was dedicated to field visits, providing hands-on insights into innovative practices. The first stop was the Operational Group FERTIECO, where participants learned about a pocket anaerobic

digester for slurry management and the production of biofertilisers. The second visit was to DESEURAS Operational Group, which demonstrated methods for treating digestate to obtain pellet biofertiliser and liquid biofertilizer, including recovery of high-quality water.

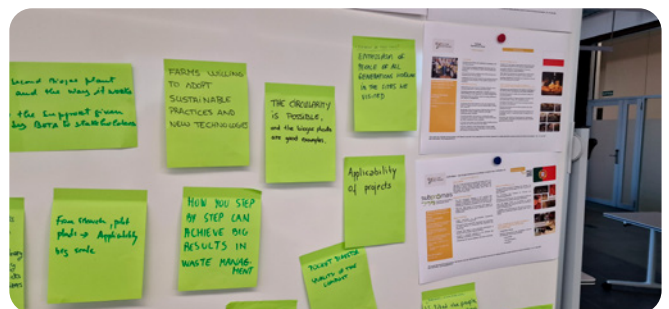


Source: EU CAP Network

June 27, 2024 - Morning session:

Participants visited the BETA Technological Centre to learn about various projects related to nutrient management, biofertilisers, and algae bioreactors. This was followed by an interactive reflection session, where participants shared key takeaways from the previous day's activities and explored potential future collaborations.

An 'Open Space' session allowed participants to propose topics for deeper discussion, leading to collaborative planning for future projects. The event concluded with a summary of the outcomes from the Open Space session, where each group presented their key insights and next steps. The final session also included an overview of upcoming opportunities for OGs, such as funding opportunities under Horizon Europe, and an evaluation of the event.



Source: EU CAP Network



4. Summary of the main outcomes

The cross-visit aimed to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration among Operational Groups on the innovative use of agricultural and forestry residues. Key expected outcomes included the identification of common challenges and opportunities across diverse projects, the development of actionable ideas for future collaboration, and the dissemination of best practices through interactive sessions and field visits. Participants were expected to gain insights into practical applications of residue utilisation, explore potential partnerships, and enhance their understanding of regional and legislative frameworks. Furthermore, the event sought to strengthen peer-to-peer learning, facilitate the adoption of innovative technologies, and support the creation of value chains for circular bioeconomy solutions.

The three key outcomes of the EU CAP Network cross-visit 'Use of agricultural and forestry residues for creating alternative sources of income for farmers and foresters', are summarised in the following points:

1. **Practical demonstration and knowledge exchange:** The cross-visit offered a valuable platform for OGs to exchange knowledge on valorising by-products from various residues in the agri-food value chain, such as pig slurry, rapeseed meal, and chicory roots and leaves. These initiatives demonstrated how alternative sources of income could be created while addressing waste management challenges. Participants had the chance to explore advanced technological solutions through visits to two OGs in Catalonia, gaining practical insights into their application. A key takeaway from the cross-visit was the emphasis on scalability; participants recognised the necessity of designing projects with scalability in mind to ensure a broader impact. Additionally, optimising waste processing through combined energy and biofertilizer production emerged as a priority. The potential for smaller scale biodigesters was identified as a promising innovation, underscoring the need to address the entire value chain, particularly the needs of the final users. Overall, the visits inspired a combination of technical and transversal insights, showcasing advanced biogas technologies, effective waste-to-energy approaches, and the role of institutions such as the BETA Technological Centre in fostering alignment between farmers and researchers. Ultimately, the experience underscored the potential for sustainable practices and new technologies to drive bioeconomy initiatives closer to farmers and rural communities.



Source: EU CAP Network



- 2. Common challenges and solutions:** Participants in the cross-visit identified shared challenges across areas such as technical barriers, market access, and regulatory compliance. To address these challenges, they proposed solutions such as innovative business models, support mechanisms, and peer-to-peer knowledge transfer. The participants worked in groups based on four different themes: technology transfer, nutrient management, biostimulants, and revalorisation in agroindustry.
- **For technology transfer**, solutions included balancing farmer-led and research-driven approaches, fostering collaboration between researchers and farmers, and organising workshops and field demonstrations to enhance practical applications. Improved understanding of legislation and communication strategies was also highlighted to bridge gaps between research and practice.
 - **In nutrient management**, participants explored the characteristics and certification of biofertilizers, emphasising their ecological and economic assessments. They proposed tailored regional applications, efficient collaboration hubs, and comprehensive testing methods to optimise biofertilizer use. Effective dissemination through workshops and consultancy was also prioritised to ensure broader adoption.
 - **For biostimulants**, addressing regulatory challenges through scientific studies and risk assessments was key. Demonstrating biostimulant effectiveness via demo farms and promoting proper nutrient management practices emerged as practical steps to advance this field. Farmer training and creating value chains to connect production and application were seen as critical.
 - **Revalorisation in agroindustry** focused on circularity, optimising by-products for animal feed, biofertilizers, and biogas production. Participants highlighted diverse manure treatment methods and strategies to reduce methane emissions from ruminants. Solutions included adapting to regional and legislative contexts, as well as enhancing communication and marketing to increase acceptance of revalorised products. These discussions underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation, and tailored approaches to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities within these themes.



Source: EU CAP Network



3. Networking and future collaboration: The event served as a platform for the OGs to connect, exchange experiences, and explore opportunities for collaboration. Several OGs expressed an interest in forming partnerships to develop joint projects focused on bio-based products and circular economy solutions. During the discussions, participants shared ideas for future collaborations, selecting and presenting the most relevant ones in plenary. These ideas were further clustered into common themes, and participants began refining them into potential collaborative projects.

Key ideas for collaboration included the multidirectional use of oak in agriculture, agroforestry, and the food industry, as well as the utilisation of acorns in animal and human nutrition. Other proposals involved using forest residues in livestock production, oak leaves and waste for soil fertilization, and food production waste in feed production. Additionally, participants from Greece, Poland, and Belgium expressed a strong interest in applying for Horizon Europe funding to launch a joint project related to the event's themes. The event highlighted the participants' enthusiasm for leveraging shared expertise to drive innovation and sustainability in agriculture and rural development.



Source: EU CAP Network



Conclusion

The cross-visit on the use of residues successfully met its objectives of providing opportunities for cross-border knowledge exchange, fostering peer-to-peer learning, and encouraging collaboration among Operational Groups. The knowledge shared and connections made during the event are expected to contribute to the development of further collaborations, possibly new projects and partnerships, advancing the sustainable use of agricultural and forestry residues

across the EU. For more detailed information about this cross-visit, please refer to the dedicated [webpage](#). If you want to learn about future cross-visits, make sure to subscribe EU CAP Network newsletter, focusing on innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI to hear the information as soon as calls are released. [Fill in the form](#) and select 'newsflashes'.



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