

Press article long

Growing industrial crops: opportunities for farmers and land-managers

Industrial crops are often multi-purpose crops. These crops have the great advantage of being able to be grown on land that may be considered too unproductive for food because of elevated levels of harmful elements. Besides, industrial crops can provide resources for high value-added products and bioenergy and can therefore increase farmers' income. Researcher Efi Alexopoulou and Polish farmer Mateusz Ciasnocha share their experiences.

Utilisation of marginal lands and establishment of supply chains

Researcher Efi Alexopoulou is involved in Horizon 2020 project MAGIC. This project wants to make it easier for farmers to start growing industrial crops. Therefore they have developed a database of existing resource-efficient industrial crops with information on their agronomic characteristics, input requirements, yield performance and quality traits for end-use applications. Access to information on the crops and cultivation techniques is important, but so is access to knowledge of the market needs and a well-functioning supply chain.

Efi: "Besides the technical information of the crops, it is important that farmers understand the market need for the industrial crops that they want to start growing. If there is a market need for a certain crop, a supply chain is the second necessary step. Most industrial crops are cultivated in smaller areas compared to conventional agricultural crops. Therefore, their supply chains are not well established, like from the farm to the factory, which can lead to problems in harvesting, transportation, pre-treatment, etc. Bringing together all the relevant actors in the supply-chain is key. This could include farmers, advisors, scientists, farmers unions, farmers' cooperatives and industry. In this respect, EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and European projects such as Horizon thematic networks (like Panacea) can provide the necessary help to farmers on both how to grow the industrial crop and how to build a strong supply chain."

Hay for industrial purposes

Polish farmer Mateusz Ciasnocha works on his family farm in the Żuławy Wiślane region in northern Poland, covering 720ha of land. They export hay within in the European Union for paper production, animal consumption and energy. In setting up a supply chain, Mateusz used his network to identify potential buyers. Mateusz: "I spoke with several people in my network and asked them for referrals to their colleagues. You can get access to markets through building relationships with your customers. A reason why we are not venturing into more exotic industrial crops, is that the markets and the supply chains don't exist here in Poland. But, I am convinced, that as soon as there will be demand for a certain crop, the supply chain will follow!"

The experiences of Mateusz with industrial crops are good. Mateusz: "First, these crops could offer a higher profit per hectare than other crops in marginal areas. Input costs in growing can sometimes be lower than in case of food or feed crops. Therefore, this offers an interesting economic opportunity for a farmer. Finally, we cannot forget the environmental benefits of industrial crops including the potential to diversify your crop rotation, enhance soil health or reduce erosion. So, with industrial crops you can generate revenue and simultaneously improve the health of your soil."

Press article short article

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Industrial crops are often multi-purpose crops. They can be grown on marginal lands, they can provide resources for high value-added products and can therefore increase farmers' income. Researcher Efi Alexopoulou and Polish farmer Mateusz Ciasnocha share their experiences.

Researcher Efi Alexopoulou is involved in Horizon 2020 project MAGIC. They have developed a database of existing resource-efficient industrial crops.

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Background information

Project information

Horizon 2020 project MAGIC - Marginal Lands for Growing Industrial Crops

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EIP-AGRI project factsheet: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/magic-marginal-lands-growing-industrial-crops>

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Pictures

Click on the pictures to download the pictures. The pictures are free for use, please mention copy right: Mateusz Ciasnocha.



Polish farmer Mateusz Ciasnocha: "You can generate revenue and simultaneously improve the health of your soil with industrial crops."



Polish farmer Mateusz Ciasnocha: "You can get access to markets through building relationships with your customers."

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More information on Industrial Crops

The experts from the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group Sustainable industrial crops in Europe: new market opportunities and business models which do not replace food production](#) covered the question 'How can industrial crops contribute to new market opportunities, business models and sustainable farming systems which create value for farmers in the EU, while not replacing food production?' The Focus Group report - including a state of play, recommendations, ideas for Operational Groups and research needs on the topic - will be published in 2021.

Other European projects on Industrial Crops

Horizon 2020 project

- [GRACE](#) explores the potential of the non-food industrial crops miscanthus and hemp as a source of biomass for the bio-economy.
- The [PANACEA Network](#) aims at the dissemination of near to practice applicable cases of non-food crops. They also aim to improve the cooperation between research, industry and the farming community, to increase the contribution of non-food crops to the [European bio-economy strategy](#).
- MAGIC, [industrial crops grown on marginal land](#)
- [Crop diversification and low-input farming across Europe: from practitioners engagement and ecosystems services to increased revenues and chain organisation](#)
- [DiverIMPACTS](#) - Diversification through Rotation, Intercropping, Multiple Cropping, Promoted with Actors and value-Chains towards Sustainability
- [EcoStack](#): Stacking of ecosystem services: mechanisms and interactions for optimal crop protection, pollination enhancement, and productivity

- **Pro-Enrich**: Development of novel functional proteins and bioactive ingredients from rapeseed, olive, tomato and citrus fruit side streams.
- **Turn agrarian woody residues into valuable biomass**

Operational Groups

- Operational Group GO CARD: **Productivity and sustainability of cardoon** - Italy
- Operational Group Fertibio: **Biofertilisers to improve soil fertility** – Italy

Other projects

- **PlantaRes** project - the Italian Window to Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- SUCELLOG project: **Triggering the creation of biomass logistic centres by the agro-industry**

EIP-AGRI

The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI) has been launched by the European Commission in a bid to promote rapid modernisation of the sectors concerned, by stepping up innovation efforts. The EIP-AGRI aims to foster innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors by bringing research and practice closer together – in research and innovation projects as well as via the EIP-AGRI network. Also grassroots ideas from farmers get developed into innovations through the so-called 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. Two specific funding sources are particularly important for the EIP-AGRI: the EU Research and Innovation framework, Horizon 2020, as well as the EU Rural Development Policy.

[EIP-AGRI Brochure on the EIP-AGRI Network](#)

(EN – BG – DE – ES – FR – GR – HU – IT – PT – RO)

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

- 98 Rural Development programmes provide support to EIP Operational Group innovative projects *
- Over 3200 Operational Groups are planned to be established under the approved RDPs (2014 – 2020)
- Around 2000 Operational Groups projects have been selected for funding and are currently ongoing (or already finished)*. Member States will still start more Operational Group projects which may run until 2023.

* Information officially submitted to the European Commission by RDP managing authorities (November 2020)

EIPAGRI Operational Groups **are groups of people who work together in an innovation project funded by rural development programmes** (RDPs). 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, advisers, 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 be cooperating 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.

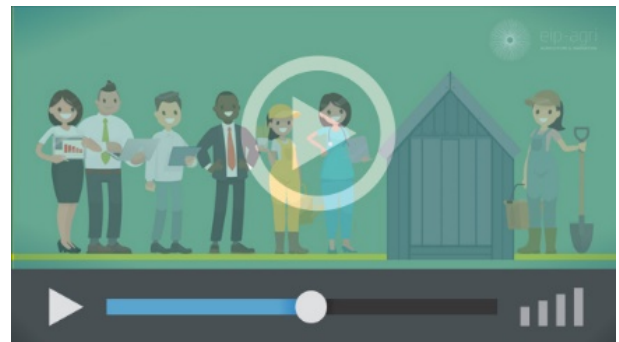
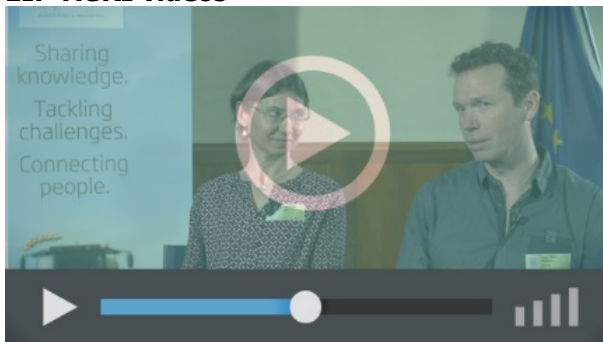
Find out more in the **EIP-AGRI brochure on Operational Groups**. The brochure on Operational Groups is available in English, Bulgarian, Czech, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Spanish.

Operational Groups can benefit from networking and collaborating with organisations from outside their partnership and from other regions and countries, such as other Operational Groups, research projects, farmers' organisations or local authorities and European knowledge networks. Read the [EIP-AGRI Brochure 'Operational Groups – Collaborate to innovate'](#). It shows some examples of successful collaboration. It provides Operational Groups with inspiration and tools for further knowledge exchange within the EIP-AGRI network. This brochure is available in English, Latvian, Romanian and Slovenian.

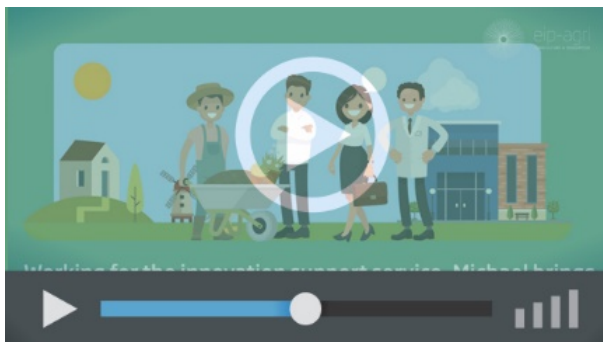
Check out the '[Operational Groups](#)' dedicated section on the EIP-AGRI website, including:

- More than 1600 Operational Groups available in the database
- detailed information on how to set up Operational Groups, on supporting networks and relevant EIP-AGRI seminars and workshops
- links to results and contact details of ongoing Operational Groups in the [EIP-AGRI database](#)
- a [list of all RDP Managing Authorities](#)

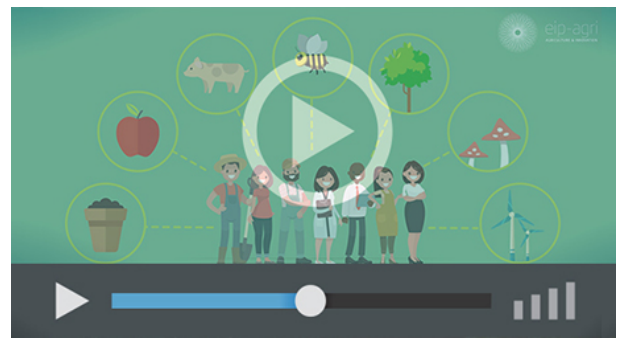
EIP-AGRI videos



[Operational Groups – first experiences](#)



[Operational Groups – collaborate to innovate](#)



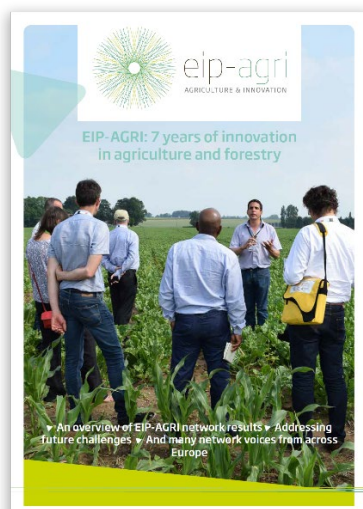
[Innovation Support Services, supporting innovation in EU farming and forestry](#)

[EIP-AGRI Focus Groups, sharing knowledge to inspire innovation](#)

EIP-AGRI, 7 years of innovation



The enthusiasm of the EIP-AGRI network members is essential to the success of the EIP-AGRI, and in ensuring that everyone can benefit. [Watch this EIP-AGRI video](#) to hear researchers, farmers, advisers, managing authorities and national rural networks about how the EIP-AGRI has helped them over the past 7 years.



Since 2013, the EIP-AGRI has been promoting interactive innovation to make EU agriculture and forestry more sustainable, productive, and fit for the future. This report shows how the EIP-AGRI network has grown into a thriving network. [Read the report](#)