



eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

EIP-AGRI Network

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Europe 2020 towards a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy

Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade.

In a changing world, the EU's economy needs to become smart, sustainable and inclusive. These three priorities should help all EU countries to provide their citizens a strong economic system with decent job opportunities.

The European Union has set five objectives to be reached by 2020 on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. The strategy underlines the importance of research and innovation to prepare Europe for future challenges. So far, five European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) have been launched in different sectors: active & healthy ageing, water, raw materials, smart cities & communities and agriculture. All EIPs focus on societal benefits and fast modernisation. They support the cooperation between research and innovation partners so that they are able to achieve better and faster results. The agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) was launched by the European Commission in 2012.





EIP-AGRI promoting innovation in agriculture

The agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) has been set up as a new way of helping the agricultural and forestry sector to become more productive, sustainable and capable of tackling current challenges such as fiercer competition, more volatile market prices, climate change and stricter environmental rules.

The EIP-AGRI focuses on forming partnerships and linking the different actors in the EIP-AGRI network through different types of innovation actions such as Operational Groups and Focus Groups. Different actors within innovation and agriculture - farmers, advisors, researchers, agribusinesses, NGOs and other actors - will work together, share their ideas and turn existing knowledge into innovative solutions and research results that can more easily be put into practice.

By joining forces, everyone involved will achieve results more quickly. The EIP-AGRI will help spread all important new and existing knowledge on innovation and agriculture throughout the EU. So, when a Romanian expert comes up with a solution that could help a Spanish farmer, the aim is to get this information to him as soon as possible.





Funding opportunities, boosting agricultural innovation

Having an innovative idea is one thing, turning it into reality is another. There are different types of funding available that can help get a project started such as under the Rural Development programmes or under the EU research and innovation policy Horizon 2020.



EIP-AGRI and Rural Development

It is the EU member states or regions who decide how to support innovation projects through their Rural Development Programmes. They may provide funding to set up Operational Groups working on pilot projects, developing new products, cooperating among small operators, promoting activities etc. Rural Development Programmes can also offer project support for knowledge transfer, advisory services, investments and establishing networks and funding of Innovation Support Services.

Each member state (or in some countries, region) decides if the support would need to prioritise certain issues, areas of action or specific groups of actors. However, all Operational Groups in the EU must contribute to a productive and sustainable agricultural sector

• Setting up Operational Groups

Operational Groups are groups at local level with different actors - such as farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses, NGOs - set up to work on finding an innovative solution to a shared problem or issue. Size and composition of the Operational Group depends on the project. Therefore, one Operational Group can look completely different from another. The results and knowledge developed by an Operational Group must be shared via the EIP-AGRI Network so it can benefit the entire sector.

If you have an innovative idea, it is worthwhile to have a look how your region or country's Rural Development Programme can offer support. You will find a list of all EU Managing Authorities on the ENRD website: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>

Example

A farmer discovers that more than half of his peach harvest does not make it to the market, due to damage to the fruits. He checks with the other farmers and all other parties involved in bringing peaches to the consumer. Together with a researcher and the support of an advisor they decide to set up an Operational Group to find out what they can do in the farm-to-market process to prevent this from happening.

 [Fact Sheet Operational Groups](#)





• Innovation Support Services

Sometimes it is not enough to offer stand-alone funding for groups cooperating on innovation projects. Innovation Support Services and brokering will play a crucial role in getting many worthwhile projects off the ground. Innovation Support Services can take the lead developing initiatives that connect actors with an interest in, and ideas on, finding an innovative solution to a shared problem. These activities can be supported by Rural Development Programmes.

The brokering function can be key to get innovative projects started. In addition to setting up projects, some Innovation Support Services may also prepare such work with thematic groups or networks to bring people together, focusing on specific challenges for a particular sector. Others invite knowledgeable stakeholders or interested parties to develop work on topics that may have innovation potential.

Example

A private consultant offers Innovation Support Services. He visits local companies, farmers, research centres, universities on a regular basis. During one of his visits to a wine farm he discovers an innovative idea that is worth exploring further. He gathers all possible interested parties to see if they are interested in joining a common project. The wine farm, a university and a bottling company decide to work on the idea. The consultant looks into funding possibilities and helps to make the project proposal.

 [Fact Sheet Innovation Support Services](#)



EIP-AGRI and Research and Innovation Policy "Horizon 2020"

Horizon 2020 is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. One of the themes for Horizon 2020 support which is relevant to the agricultural sector is the societal challenge : "Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bioeconomy ". Apart from the more classical research and innovation projects, the first Horizon 2020 call for 2014-2015 includes several opportunities to support multinational innovation projects in agriculture through thematic networks and through multi-actor projects involving different actors such as farmers, advisors, researchers, agribusiness, etc. These projects will produce easily accessible end-user material that can be shared via the EIP network.

Example

Groups with farmers, manure handling companies and research centres in Belgium, UK, Sweden and Latvia gather in a thematic network 'sustainable manure handling'. They share and map best practices, research results and the use of innovative solutions. Based on the knowledge exchange, a uniform approach for sustainable manure handling is set by the network. A video explains the approach and asks farmers and manure handling companies all over Europe to use the new manure approach. The results are broadly spread to all actors involved.

 [Fact Sheet Horizon 2020](#)





Other funding opportunities

Whereas rural development funding primarily supports Operational Groups and Innovation Support Services within a country or region, the Horizon 2020 funds multi-actor projects and thematic networks involving partners from several different EU countries.

Other policies, such as the EU Regional Policy through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund as well as Education Policy may offer additional opportunities. A large share of the ERDF budget concentrates on measures for innovative projects related to agriculture and forestry, the competitiveness of SMEs and the shift towards a low carbon economy, while one of the strategic objectives of EU education and training policies is to enhance innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

- ERDF: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/regional/index_en.cfm
- Cohesion Fund: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/cohesion/index_en.cfm
- Education Policy: http://ec.europa.eu/education/funding-search_en.htm

Also, national and regional policies have additional funding opportunities that are complementary to the EU policies.

Private companies can participate in the EIP-AGRI and be partners of Operational Groups. They can provide co-funding and know-how while benefitting from the outcomes of the cooperation.

The EIP-AGRI network will also work as a way to collect research needs from farming and forestry in view of providing input for the research agenda





EIP-AGRI Service Point, linking all partners in a network

The EIP-AGRI network offers a wide range of tools that can help you tackle the issues you are dealing with.

The European Commission set up the EIP-AGRI Service Point in 2013 to support the EIP-AGRI network.

The objectives of the EIP-AGRI Service Point are sharing knowledge, connecting people and tackling challenges via events such as conferences, focus groups, workshops and seminars, the interactive innovation platform on the website, support for partnering and helpdesk functions. Its primary target is to stimulate the interaction between all people involved in the EIP-AGRI network: farmers, researchers, advisors, NGOs, member states, businesses, public authorities.

Sharing knowledge is key

The EIP-AGRI website, online from May 2014, is a new interactive innovation platform that can bring people and ideas together on the web. At any given time, you will be able to share your own innovation projects and find out which ideas and projects are being developed in different European countries and regions, which innovations have been tried and tested, which research needs have been generated from practice and which case studies are in progress. At the same time you will be able to indicate your innovation and research needs on the platform. There will also be collaborative workspaces for specific innovation topics and an overview of funding opportunities for innovation projects. In short, the goal is to make it the 'one-stop-shop' for agricultural innovation in the EU.



Visit our website:
<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/>



Focus Groups, addressing agricultural challenges

Focus Groups form part of the EIP networking activities. A Focus Group brings together 20 experts with different competencies (farmers, researchers, advisors, people working for businesses) to discuss and find solutions for a very specific agricultural topic. The groups gather and summarise knowledge and experience on farming practices, listing problems, opportunities and solutions. A Focus Group has a relatively short lifespan and is expected to produce a report within 12-18 months. The report is disseminated throughout the EIP-AGRI Network to inspire all actors involved for new Operational Groups or research projects.

The EIP-AGRI Service Point launches about six Focus Groups every year. A call for experts is always announced via the monthly e-newsletter. All information is available on the EIP-AGRI website.

Protein Crops: more cooperation and integration needed

The Focus Group on Protein Crops came together in 2013 to tackle the question 'How can the competitiveness of protein crops producers in the EU be improved?' Half a year later the results of the Focus Group showed that a lot of progress can be made at local scale (on farm consumption), however, improving yield, good advisory services for farmers and breeding will not be enough for the bigger scale protein production for food and processed feed. Cooperation and integration between the compound feed industry and the plant production related stakeholders is needed to make a difference. Solutions can be found on local farms, regional and European market level. The Focus Group illustrated that combining the knowledge and experiences of the industry, farming practice and farming advisors can lead to a new perspective.

