

Call for expression of interest for experts participating in Focus Groups of the European Innovation Partnership on 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'

The European Commission is launching a call for experts such as farmers, foresters, advisers, scientists and other relevant actors for three new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. The Focus Groups will start working in October 2016 and are expected to present their results and recommendations within 12 months. Candidates for each of the Focus Groups below are invited to apply in accordance to the rules set out in this notice for the purpose specified.

Please note that the dates for the first meetings of the Focus Groups are indicated below per Focus Group, and that experts are expected to be available to travel to the Focus Group meeting on these dates. Focus Group participants will also be requested to do some preparatory work before and in between the first and second meetings.

You will find the link to the application form underneath the calls below. Please read the entire call text carefully before applying.

Focus Group themes:

For the current call, experts, farmers, foresters, advisers, researchers and others¹ are invited to apply for participation in Focus Groups on the following topics:

21: Robust and resilient dairy production systems

[More info](#)

22: Agroforestry: introducing woody vegetation into specialised crop and livestock systems

[More info](#)

23: Diseases and pests in viticulture

[More info](#)

What is a Focus Group?

The purpose of a Focus Group is to explore practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities and to draw on and share experience gained from relevant innovative projects. The group discusses and documents research results and implications for further research activities that will help to solve practical issues in the sector. Such issues may be related to production, processing, consumption, transport or other areas. The group is asked to focus on practical knowledge, dissemination to the sector as well as developing project ideas for [Operational Groups](#).

Focus Groups are expected to work for around 12 months and will meet face-to-face twice. For more information on the Focus Groups, please see the [Focus Group brochure](#) and the [Focus Group charter](#).

¹ See p. 2 section 'Who can apply'

What is the outcome of a Focus Group?

The specific questions and tasks per Focus Group for the current call are listed below. Candidates should carefully study these questions and refer to them in their applications, indicating how their experience is relevant to answering these questions.

All Focus Groups will be required to:

- ✓ **make a summary description of the issue**
- ✓ **take stock of the state of play of practice in the field of its activity, listing problems and opportunities**
- ✓ **take stock of the state of play of research in its field, summarising possible solutions to the problems listed**
- ✓ **identify needs from practice and possible directions for further research**
- ✓ **propose priorities for innovative actions by suggesting ideas for Operational Groups or other project formats to test solutions and opportunities and ways to exchange the practical knowledge gathered beyond the Focus Group**

The outcome of the Focus Group will be presented in a report (see example of outline in [annex 1](#)) and feed into the EIP-AGRI Network, which will share the knowledge and practical experience with the wider public as well as with relevant programming authorities.

Who can apply?

The composition of the Focus Groups will be based on the following profiles, while taking into account the different characteristics of the specific challenge/objective at stake and a good balance in the composition of the group (area of expertise, professional capacity and experience, geographical balance, etc.):

- Experts such as farmers, foresters, advisers, with relevant practical experience and technical knowledge on the topic, who can contribute with practical solutions for problems or opportunities in the field.
- Experts with a good understanding and experience of the relevant economic situation related to the topic concerned, including market prospects, production costs, supply, manufacturing, and socio-economic impact for farmers and the forest sector.
- Experts with experience in practical research and innovation actions related to the topic.

Detailed Description of the Focus Groups

Focus Group 21: Robust and resilient dairy production systems

First meeting: **23-24 November 2016**

The competitive environment of dairy cattle production systems is often linked to increased pressure on animal welfare due to various stressors. It is argued that there is a trade-off between production and animal welfare, which includes animal health. However, this is not always the case. Increasing attention is paid to existing and possible synergies between both concepts. This includes the idea that general welfare conditions positively affect animal health, or for example the increased attention for robustness-related traits in breeding resulting in a higher farm income.

Robustness combines both sides of the productivity versus welfare debate. It can be defined as 'the ability to express a high production potential combined with resilience to stressors in a wide variety of environmental conditions'. It is therefore the link between economic competitiveness, resilience and animal welfare, which are all key priorities in dairy cattle production.

In view of the sustained economic pressure on the dairy cattle sector and demand for animal welfare, this Focus Group will investigate the following question:

QUESTION: how to create good conditions for dairy cattle husbandry in different production systems? The group should look for approaches and practices which take into account **breeding, nutrition, fertility, health, welfare, monitoring, and overall management in all parts of the life cycle of animals**. The impact on profitability and sustainability (in animal welfare terms) should be assessed.

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- To identify new or underused approaches and practices which increase robustness in dairy cattle husbandry in different production systems and regions. Practices and strategies increasing robustness at animal, farm, species and/or production system level can be taken into account.
- To analyse the impact of the most promising identified approaches and practices on profitability and animal welfare, their success and fail factors and barriers for implementation.
- Summarise how to address these aspects and explore the role of innovation and knowledge exchange in addressing the challenges identified.
- Propose potential innovative actions and ideas for Operational Groups to stimulate the use and improvement of robustness related practices at farm level.
- Identify needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge related to robustness which may be solved by further research.

The Focus Group is encouraged to make use of insights created by previous and on-going projects. The group could look into paradigm shifts related to robustness, such as the move from productivity per lactation to productivity per lifetime.

Focus Group 22: Agroforestry: pathways to integrate woody vegetation with specialised crop and livestock systems

First meeting: **30 November-1 December 2016**

Agroforestry is the practice of integrating woody vegetation with crops and/or livestock systems to optimise the benefits from their ecological and economic interactions. Agroforestry systems can increase resource efficiency, enhance productivity, and improve the overall resilience of agro-ecosystems.

The introduction of agroforestry practices can greatly contribute to increasing the sustainability of specialised production systems such as arable, horticulture and livestock farming. It also contributes to diversifying production (e.g. fruits, woody biomass, fibres) making farms more resilient to market changes and more profitable. However, due to production diversification and greater complexity, agroforestry systems are usually more labour and knowledge intensive than specialised conventional ones. Therefore, many of the above mentioned benefits, although widely recognised, are difficult to turn into concrete economic benefits at farm level.

The Focus Group will look into how innovative agroforestry designs and practices can unlock the productivity potential of combinations of trees/crops/animals at the farm level – maximising the overall ecological performance of agro-ecosystems, while considering the development of new market solutions and diversified value chains.

QUESTION: How to develop agroforestry as a sustainable farming system which can boost agricultural productivity and profitability?

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- Provide and compare relevant examples of the integration of woody vegetation with crop and livestock farming systems on the basis of traditional and/or innovative designs of agroforestry system in Europe.
- Identify and analyse the opportunities for the integration of woody vegetation into specialised farming systems and assess the potential economic benefits linked to additional sources of income (e.g. product diversification, green marketing, public incentives such as payments for biodiversity and landscape scenery,...).
- Identify and describe limiting factors generated by the combination of agricultural and forestry practices (e.g. farm size, labour and management, knowledge, legislation, equipment, market outlets, land tenure,...) that can hinder the adoption of agroforestry at farm level.
- Provide practical indications for the further development and introduction of agroforestry, identify innovative approaches combining scientific and practical knowledge with new business models, modern technologies and practices. Consider the role played by advisory systems and the existence of relevant value chains.
- Provide recommendations in terms of further research needs and ideas for Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

The work of the Focus Group will build upon the outcomes of relevant EU-funded projects (such as [AGFORWARD](#) or [AgroFe](#)) as well as by other EIP-AGRI Focus Groups, in particular: [High Nature Value farming](#), [Mixed farming systems](#) and [Ecological Focus Areas](#). The latter has extensively

looked into ecosystem services from the introduction/maintenance of woody vegetation and other landscape features for the profitability of arable crops production.

Focus Group 23: Diseases and pests in viticulture

First meeting: 25-26 October 2016

Agricultural yield losses are caused by many different pests and diseases. Recognising and understanding the nature of these pathogens and also understanding the interactions between the crop, the environment and the pathogens is essential in order to minimise crop losses and economic damage.

This Focus Group will tackle the whole cycle of diseases and pests in grape production: prevention, detection, management and control. The role of disease management in supporting resilience of grape vines to biotic stresses should deserve special attention.

QUESTION: How can we increase resilience of grape vines to pests and diseases and support the productivity of the sector in sustainable ways?

The Focus Group will consider disease prevention, diagnostics and monitoring and tools for disease management including the use of ecosystems services.

The Focus Group is expected to carry out the following main tasks:

- Make an inventory of the main pests and diseases affecting grape vines, including their distribution and economic impact. Where possible, summarise how expected climatic changes will impact the distribution and occurrence of pests and diseases.
- Take stock of state of play with regard to prevention practices, early detection, diagnostics and monitoring.
- Take stock of main current methods for control. Particular care should be taken to highlight both existing problems and opportunities in pest/disease management
- Make an inventory of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) strategies (including biological control) to combat pests and diseases in grape vines. Compare these different management practices and strategies, having also practicability and costs in mind.
- In particular explore potential solutions to manage pests/diseases based on agro-ecological principles such as biodiversity. The role of disease management in supporting resilience of grape vines to biotic stresses should deserve special attention.
- Compile examples of 'good practice', i.e. a number of case studies, from farm level in particular, across different regions in Europe. Identify needs from practice (farming sector) and possible gaps in knowledge on particular issues concerning the management of pests and diseases in grape production which may be solved by further research.
- Propose priorities for relevant innovative actions / projects including practical ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups.

Selection Process and Terms of Agreement

Each Focus Group consists of up to 20 experts: farmers, advisers, scientists and where appropriate representatives from industry, civil society or other relevant actors.

Experts will be chosen according to their qualifications, based on proven expertise to support the progress of the Focus Group (relevant information to be submitted via the application form). The European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, will nominate the group experts.

Please note:

There will be no translation, it is essential that group members are able to express themselves in English.

Selected experts will need to be available to participate in both meetings; the date for the first meeting is mentioned for each new Focus Group.

Selected experts will be requested to prepare for the first meeting and do some work in between meetings, and they should be able to reserve some time for this.

Results produced within the Focus Group are always attributed to the group as a whole, not to individuals, and conflicting views should be included in the final report.

Selection criteria (individual)

Technical and professional capacity – evidence of the technical and professional capacity of experts based on:

- Proven professional experience that is relevant for the Focus Group at stake: examples linking experience to the specific questions for the Focus Group – detailed above – should be given;
- Motivation, reasoning why the expert should be a member of the Focus Group;
- Potential contribution to the Focus Group by the expert – the candidate should clearly state how, and what he or she can contribute to the Focus Group;
- **Relevant** educational and professional qualifications – this includes practical experience – clearly linked to the specific questions for the Focus Groups listed above.

Balancing criteria:

The Focus Group will be composed taking into account a balance in the areas of expertise, professional capacity and experience, and geographical balance.

Application procedure:

Candidates need to complete the on-line application form and **submit it by 11 July 2016 23:59 hrs CET** (Brussels time).

The system will notify candidates upon successful submission of the application. Please, be aware that in the case that this notification is not displayed, the submission of your application was not successful and you will have to start again.

Applicants will be informed whether or not they have been selected **by 8 September 2016**.

Terms of agreement

By submitting an application, the applicant agrees on the following and confirms that:

- The applicant easily expresses him/herself in English (as this will be the working language in meetings, documents and in all means of communication) in both oral and written form;
- In case of a nomination, the applicant is willing and able to share information, knowledge and experience and to contribute actively to work documents, to achieve the Focus Group objectives;
- Attendance at the meetings: in case of a nomination, the applicant is willing and available to travel (within Europe) to attend meetings of the Focus Group (the dates for the first meeting of each Focus Group are indicated under the respective call). Nominated experts can be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs according to established guidelines ([annex 2](#));
- Availability: in case of a nomination, the expert will be available to attend the first meeting on the dates specified in the call; should this, for whatever reason, not be the case, the nominated expert will inform the EIP-AGRI Service Point as soon as possible, to allow for the selection of another expert to replace him or her.
- Transparency: in case of a nomination, the applicant agrees to publish his/her name along with their professional capacity (e.g. adviser, scientist, etc.), country of residence and e-mail address on the EIP-AGRI website. The applicants also agree to register to the EIP-AGRI website to facilitate the Focus Group work.

You can start your application by [clicking here](#).

Background:

The European Innovation Partnership ‘Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability’ (EIP-AGRI) aims to provide a working interface for innovation actors, including farmers, advisers, agri-business, civil society, and researchers, working at EU, national and regional level. The partnership aims to act as a catalyst for innovation-related actions to foster enhanced productivity and sustainable resource management across the whole value chain. In line with this, the European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, requested the EIP-AGRI Service Point to set up Focus Groups on specific agricultural topics to facilitate innovative actions in the field and better connect science and practice.

For previous EIP-AGRI Focus Groups, please see the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group pages](#). Please note that the calls for the previous 20 groups are now closed, and it is not possible to join them.

Annex 1: Draft outline for EIP-AGRI Focus Group Final reports



Table of contents

1. Summary
2. Introduction
3. Brief description of the process
4. Theme / issue 1 (actual problem, how does it relate to the Focus Group topic)
 - a. State of play
 - b. Innovation process and fail factors
 - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
 - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
5. Theme / issue 2 (actual problem, how does it relate to the Focus Group topic)
 - a. State of play
 - b. Innovation process and fail factors
 - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
 - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
6. Theme / issue 3 etc. (depending on the number of themes identified by the Focus Group)
 - a. State of play
 - b. Innovation process and fail factors
 - c. Overview of research – missing implementation – missing testing – missing research
 - d. Recommendations / ideas for Operational Groups – recommendations for dissemination of results and solutions – recommendations on how to ensure a broader take-up
7. Epilogue from the group: broader ideas, things that the group would like to say but don't fit into the Focus Group framework – general recommendations etc.
8. Annexes
9. List of members of the Focus Group
10. List of relevant research projects
11. List of relevant Operational Groups
12. List of documented best practices

Annex 2: Practical arrangements for EIP-AGRI Focus Groups



What will the EIP-AGRI Service Point provide during an EIP-AGRI Focus Group meeting?

1. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides Travel and Accommodation for Focus Group participants. We can only provide travel by public transportation. For local travel to the train station or the airport we do our best to make proposals within our limits.
2. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides the needed travel and accommodation with the help of its travel agency. The travel agent will send the selected participants travel proposals based on their requirements.
3. Priority is given to travel on regular flights, but low cost flights can also be proposed. Participants will not be requested to start travelling before 07:00 (trains) or 8:00 (planes) respectively or to arrive at their destination later than 22:00. If this is not possible, the travel agent can propose to travel on the days before and/or after the meeting.
4. For participants who have to travel on the day before or after the meeting because of flight or train schedules, the EIP-AGRI Service Point will arrange for accommodation and breakfast for an extra night. *No other meals will be provided.*
5. Once a ticket has been issued, it is final and cannot be changed.
6. The EIP-AGRI Service Point provides meals and catering during the event. However, participants have to pay their meals outside the event themselves. Participants will also have to pay themselves for any extra services they request from the hotel.
7. All other costs: taxi, tolls, use of private car, parking fees, local bus or metro are not covered and cannot be reimbursed.
8. Costs related to personal travel arrangements are not reimbursable (change of travel dates, different town of departure and return,...). Some local travel costs can be refunded based on a substantiated request before the event.