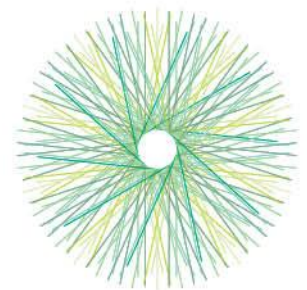


EIP-AGRI

Focus Group charter

15 JANUARY 2014



eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

CHARTER

What is an EIP-AGRI Focus Group?

A temporary group of selected experts focusing on a specific subject formulated by DG AGRI which is creating a forum for sharing knowledge and experience on that subject. The group discusses and documents best practices and research results, exploring practical innovative solutions to the problems or opportunities in the field that were listed, and drawing on experience derived from related useful projects. The focus groups catalyze sharing and exchange among actors involved (researchers, farmers, advisers etc.).

The focus group results may have implications for dissemination and possible further directions for research that may help to solve practical problems in the sector. These may be related to production, processing, consumption, transport, to mention some but not all issues.

The tangible output is focused on practical knowledge and where to get that knowledge as well as ideas for operational group projects (in future, please see the database of operational groups).

An EIP-AGRI Focus Group is moderated by DG AGRI and several (usually two or three) experts of the EIP-AGRI Service Point. An additional expert can be invited on ad hoc basis, subject to the authorization of DG AGRI.

The output of every EIP-AGRI Focus Group is published on the dedicated website.

Objectives of an EIP-AGRI Focus Group

1. To take stock of the state of the art of practice in the field of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group activity, listing problems and opportunities.
2. To take stock of the state of the art of research in this field, summarizing possible solutions to the problems listed.
3. To identify needs from practice and propose directions for further research.
4. To propose priorities for innovative actions by suggesting potential practical operational groups or other project formats to test solutions and opportunities, including ways to disseminate the practical knowledge gathered.

The output of the focus group will feed into the EIP network which will share the knowledge and practical experience with the wider public.

Terms of reference

- An EIP-AGRI Focus Group meets twice a year, for one year only, or for several consecutive years, depending on the theme and the results.
- EIP-AGRI Focus Group meetings may be combined with a field visit.
- Participants may be requested to prepare a document and attend a web conference to discuss the output of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group, and to further document results.
- EIP-AGRI Focus Group meetings are moderated by DG AGRI and the EIP-AGRI Service point experts.

Membership

- Members of an EIP-AGRI Focus Group are selected in a transparent manner from the pool of applications according to their competences based on documented expertise to support the work of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group.
- With the main emphasis on the expertise, the EIP-AGRI Focus Group is also composed with the intention of geographical balance and an adequate proportion as regards the fields of expertise and professional activity.
- Members of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group participate in the work of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group without any financial compensation, however, their travel costs and accommodation costs may be reimbursed in cases where members do not have other means to cover their travel and accommodation costs.
- Each member shall attend and actively contribute during the EIP-AGRI Focus Group meetings. Members may be asked to prepare a document for the meetings and/or attend a web conference to further improve, complete, or focus the output of the group.
- Where a member of an EIP-AGRI Focus Group becomes unavailable to contribute to the tasks of the EIP-AGRI in an efficient manner (e.g. will be unavailable to attend one or more meetings), DG AGRI reserves the right to replace this member by another one from the same professional category.

Selection of EIP-AGRI Focus Group members

EIP-AGRI Focus Group members will be selected from the applicants who have successfully completed the online application procedure following the open call for expression of interest, published by DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

The applications are scored independently by at least 3 evaluators in terms of relevant expertise, motivation, extent of the professional capacity (-ies), and any other criteria specified in the call. Consequently, the evaluators draw up lists per professional capacity, based on the scores (i.e. a list of scientists, a list of farmers, etc.).

When composing each focus group, these lists are used as the point of departure. Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group typically consists of 6-12 scientists, 3-6 farmers, 2-4 advisors and 2-4 other relevant actors (such as for instance agri-business, NGOs), depending on the specific questions to be addressed in order to strike a balance among the different professional capacities within each group. In that sense, the individual lists are used to fill these quotas. Finally, a very limited number of changes can be introduced in the final composition of the focus group, taking the geographical balance into account.

Focus Group members participate in the Focus Group as experts in their personal capacity and do not represent organisations or other entities.

EIP-AGRI Service Point team

Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group is supported by a designated EIP-AGRI Service Point team member and outsourced expertise. The EIP-AGRI Service Point facilitates the EIP-AGRI Focus Group, including deliverables as described below. The EIP-AGRI Service Point is responsible for all issues related to the logistics of the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups.

The EIP-AGRI Service Point prepares the EIP-AGRI Focus Group meetings, including agenda, discussion paper(s), proposals for a location and field visits, working closely and coordinating with DG AGRI.

Deliverables

For each EIP-AGRI Focus Group, the EIP-AGRI Service Point establishes a road map for actions to be taken related to the Focus Group, including dissemination plans for the call for experts and for the final report (deliverable 1)

Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group receives a minimum list of topics from DG AGRI. These topics are further elaborated by the EIP-AGRI Service Point team and formalised in discussion paper(s) (deliverable 2). The discussion paper clearly identifies points of discussion for the first/next meeting of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group. The discussion paper not only outlines the topic at hand and provides the analysis, but it also provides the first inputs for the discussions by formulating needs, mapping existing or new solutions and asking questions to the group. The discussion paper will be distributed to members of the focus groups at least 15 working days before the first meeting. The members of the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups are expected to comment on all discussion points/selected points, according to their fields of expertise.

The EIP-AGRI Service Point prepares the draft agenda for the meeting (deliverable 3). For the first meetings of any EIP-AGRI focus group, venues and dates are set by the EIP-AGRI Service Point in agreement with DG AGRI. For the second and any subsequent meeting, the proposals for next meeting's venue, field visits and agenda stem from the group. The actual organisation of the meeting is the responsibility of the EIP-AGRI Service Point, in coordination with DG AGRI.

In the first meeting of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group, a round table is organised where, apart from introducing themselves, members identify possible subjects for further reflection by the group.

The discussions evolve around the points listed in the discussion paper as well as around other points taken up from the round table. Members may send their written comments before (no later than 5 working days) and after the meeting, respecting the deadline announced during the meeting in the latter case.

The EIP-AGRI Service Point and DG AGRI will draw conclusions on individual points/discussion points, in agreement with the members of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group and will set a clear task list with a timetable for the run up to the next meeting/ for closing the activities of the group. In that context, members may volunteer or may be requested to draft "mini-papers". These documents will provide a deeper analysis of a specific issue (going beyond what had been set out in the discussion paper) but more importantly, they will provide a list of solutions as well as recommendations for further development. The EIP-AGRI Service Point is responsible for collecting these mini-papers and synthesizing them (deliverable 4).

In each meeting, the EIP-AGRI Service Point is responsible for taking minutes in the meeting (deliverable 5). The minutes, which are subject to approval by DG AGRI, are sent for comments to all participants of the meeting within two weeks of the meeting date.

Consequently, the EIP-AGRI Service Point prepares a document that includes all the meeting results (deliverable 6) and after agreement by DG AGRI, it is circulated to the members of the focus group. This document includes deliverables 1 – 5, where applicable the project and best practice info sheets and, depending on the maturity of the discussions of the focus group, it provides a synthesis of the work done so far. Where applicable, it outlines the next steps of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group's work. After the last meeting of the focus group, a final outcome report (deliverable 7) should pay particular attention to formulating specific issues that could be taken up by operational groups in the sense of Article 56 of the draft rural development regulation 2014 – 2020. It also summarises the gathered knowledge and best practices (following the established template and the four objectives of the Focus Group) and lists its sources - lessons learnt, audio-visual material, further recommendations, ideas for dissemination etc. The final document is distributed for comments to the EIP-AGRI Focus Group no later than 4 weeks after the meeting of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group and published no later than 6 weeks after the meeting.