



European Agricultural Research Initiative

Annual Report 2022

1. Introduction

EURAGRI is a not-for-profit organisation that acts as a forum for representatives from European public research and innovation (R&I) institutes, universities, funding bodies and ministries engaged in the agri-food sector and the broader bioeconomy. It provides a platform and a network for discussion and reflection on strategic R&I themes, as well as enabling members to learn from each other regarding best practices in delivering, managing and evaluating their outputs.

EURAGRI's interests and concerns include natural science, economics, social science, and technology in its academic presence for the agri-food sector. It is also open to practice actors and general research policy actors at several levels – international, EU, multi-national, regional, national and subregional. It also promotes the participation of various business interests - especially those dealing with R&I policy.

EURAGRI facilitates rigorous and innovative debates on the challenges facing predominantly European agriculture, food, forestry and marine sectors and the responses required within our public and private institutions organisations to deal with these challenges. There is also an interest in scanning and reflecting on the broader international system – not least through the UN system. It encourages and stimulates debate also on key relevant R&I policy issues of strategic importance at EU, member state, and organisational levels. It provides members with a network to freely exchange views on the impact of policies and technological and societal developments on public R&I activities, trends and infrastructures. The EURAGRI investigative actions thus help member organisations to develop their perspectives and agendas further.

In our broader annual report, we outline how in 2022, EURAGRI continued to provide an essential platform for the strategic discussion of R&I issues in the EU and the wider global agri-food sector. We describe its proactive role in addressing the "Grand Challenges", e.g., climate change, food security, biodiversity loss and natural resource scarcity.

In 2022, we continued to broaden the range of participants engaged in this discourse, reflected not least in the contributions to the 2022 annual conference but also through the workshops of different kinds involving engagement by stakeholders, e.g., from policy, the academic sector, food producers and processors, and consumer organisations.

We believe that EURAGRI can build further on the sectoral transformations and changes now underway, thereby continuing to play a vital role in mobilising and supporting various forms of coordinating natural resources R&I and thus supporting related bodies throughout Europe to promote the needed transition towards sustainable food systems.

2. Annual activities report

During 2022, EURAGRI organised an annual conference and four online workshops:

- The annual conference ***European Food Systems' Innovation for Resilience – the short- and long-term challenges***, was held digitally on 4-5 October 2022, hosted by the Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops (IFVCNS), Serbia.
<https://www.euragri.org/conference-new/european-food-systems-innovation-for-resilience-the-short-and-long-term-challenges/>
- Four online workshops:
 - ***TRANSITIONING TO A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM AND DELIVERING ON THE SDGS – THE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL MEALS***, hosted by Cirad, March 21, 2022.
<https://www.euragri.org/workshops/transitioning-to-a-sustainable-food-system-and-delivering-on-the-sdgs-the-potential-of-school-meals/>
 - ***THE NEW CAP AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES – CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS***, hosted by INRAE, May 31, 2022.
<https://www.euragri.org/workshops/the-new-cap-and-sustainability-issues-challenges-and-progress/>
 - ***WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON EUROPE: TOOLS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESSING RESEARCH NETWORKS FOR EUROPEAN FUNDING***, hosted by IFVCNS, 24th June 2022.
<https://www.euragri.org/workshops/widening-participation-in-horizon-europe-tools-and-opportunities-for-accessing-research-networks-for-european-funding/>
 - ***LIVING LABS – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES***, hosted by Teagasc, July 4, 2022.
<https://www.euragri.org/workshops/living-labs-opportunities-and-challenges/>

3.1 The annual conference

The annual EURAGRI conference, hosted in rotation by members in different countries, is the main event where representatives gather to exchange views and ideas and to learn from each other about the practice of R&I in various organisations across Europe. The conference programme reflects the specific situation of the host and includes a European but also a broader global dimension.

The 2022 conference was hosted by IFVCNS Serbia and was held online due to the continuing COVID restrictions. The event's theme focused on the difficulties of building resilient food systems globally due to challenges arising, e.g., from climate change and influenced by the

geopolitical situations causing increasing uncertainty and volatility in European food production and supply chains.

The main conclusions reached by the participants included:

- R&I are critical enablers of food systems transformation and provide prerequisites for achieving food security and the EU Green Deal and Farm-to-Fork targets. Fully optimised systems founded on the sole criterion of profit are efficient in sustained and stable conditions but become extremely fragile when impacted by disruptive events. As such, there was a consensus on the need to ensure the stability of food supply and security by creating less optimised and more resilient food systems.
- During this change, the emphasis must be put on collaboration, coordination, complementarity, monitoring, free circulation of goods and people, and communication. Participants again stressed the importance of regional cooperation, different partnerships and innovative approaches to building resilience for better control and management of supply chains.
- They also emphasised the significance of diversification and co-creation and the need for collaborative experience among practitioners and citizens in developing the sustainability of food systems and the transformation of local, national, European and global food systems.
- Finally, participants agreed that innovation, co-creation, diversification and flexibility are keywords for achieving sustainability and resilience of European food systems.

In his address to the conference, the President, Prof Gerry Boyle, stated that EURAGRI has played, and will continue to play, a vital role in assisting European R&I organisations. However, to continue to play this central role, he stressed the need to capitalise on the traditional strengths of the EURAGRI membership network by broadening the diversity of the membership base throughout Europe and by expanding the scope of its deliberations beyond the organisation's traditional frame of reference.

He concluded that there is a rich opportunity to embrace in our future activities new types of actors, stronger institutional connections, and potential strategic collaborations with the broader community of stakeholders in the development of sustainable food systems and the transformation of local, national, European and global food systems.

3.2 Workshops

EURAGRI workshops focus on current, specific issues that require in-depth debate and often provide insights from domains outside the experience of Euragri members.

The first 2022 online workshop, hosted by CIRAD, was held on March 21. The focus was on addressing food security and food systems' sustainability and their contribution to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The workshop considered explicitly a systems approach to creating networks, sharing knowledge, coordinating actions and impacting policy schemes. The event examined the specific case of the **School Meals**

Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child, which has been established by and supported by most EU states.

The second workshop, hosted by INRAE on May 31, addressed several issues relating to the *new* CAP (2023-2027). The latest CAP strongly emphasises sustainability and the linking of payments more directly to the targets of the European Green Deal. It includes provision for enhanced mandatory requirements regarding biodiversity and eco-schemes, thereby providing more substantial incentives for climate- and environment-friendly farming. However, it may also result in low-ambition implementation pathways.

The specific questions addressed were:

- What are the systemic weaknesses of the proposed new CAP?
- Which solutions are science-based, and what new technologies provide for enhanced sustainability?
- Which challenges remain for scientific evidence, methodology, and technology?

The third workshop in the series was hosted by IFVCNS on June 24 and addressed widening participation in Horizon Europe, particularly by enhancing the involvement of low R&I-performing countries and relevant stakeholders. The event stressed that common European and global challenges can be addressed only with the participation of a broad range of partners across the European Research Area (ERA).

The Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence sub-programme under Horizon Europe 2021 - 2027 programme aims to build R&I capacity for low R&I-performing countries, strengthen their potential for successful transnational R&I processes, and promote networking and access to excellence. The areas of intervention include Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs, and European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) actions. The Horizon Europe Hop-On Facility was recently opened, enabling a partner from a widening country to join a project throughout its lifetime.

The final 2022 workshop was hosted by Teagasc on July 4 and invited participants to reflect on the opportunities the living lab approach can provide for the research community to test and up-scale findings, to co-operate and co-create with relevant stakeholders to implement practical solutions, focusing on the respective roles of the different stakeholders involved and their power to set 'the scene'.

4. Other activities

In recent years, the EURAGRI Board has sought to diversify its activities by broadening the diversity of the membership base throughout Europe and expanding the scope of its deliberations beyond the organisation's traditional frame of reference. It recognises a rich

opportunity to embrace new types of actors in its future activities, stronger institutional connections, and potential strategic collaborations with a broader community of relevant stakeholders.

The Board embarked on a new path in 2022 by joining as a partner in submitting the EU-FarmBook project (<https://eufarmbook.eu/>), which will be funded for seven years. The overall goal of the project is to support knowledge exchange between all EU and national AKIS actors by further developing, expanding, exploiting, and maintaining an easily accessible and user-friendly EU-wide digital platform for practitioners in agriculture, forestry, and other rural sectors (including farmers, foresters, advisors, educators and trainers).

The project will initially involve the development of a digital platform to test a big idea: can all of the tangible outputs of EU-funded R&I projects be brought together and organised in one user-friendly platform to help get practical knowledge into the hands of the farmers, foresters and advisors across Europe who need it most?

The challenges to doing this are substantial – data(base) quality and compatibility issues, language barriers, and intergenerational considerations, to name a few – but project promoters believe that the future of agriculture and forestry innovation in Europe is digital and requires a vastly increased and improved digital exchange of knowledge between EU regions and Member States, as well as between different agricultural stakeholders: researchers, policymakers, SMEs, advisors, farmers and foresters.

As a partner, EURAGRI will, in particular, contribute to developing and implementing activities under work package 3 of the project, which includes the concept of *FarmBook Ambassadors* with geographical and or sectoral responsibility. The Ambassadors will cover the 27 Member States. They will work to set up and develop/grow a network of "institutional AKIS actors" at the national and EU level who will be in a position of influence to make strategic decisions about promoting project activities within their i) national AKIS, ii) sectoral AKIS, or iii) project communities.

The Secretary-General has been in contact with the project leaders and, together, are exploring ways and means by which the EURAGRI network can be exploited to disseminate research outputs better and play a role in the broader dissemination of relevant research information, thereby opening up a new era of EURAGRI collaboration with a range of new institutional partners and collaborators.

5. EURAGRI survey

The results from the survey conducted as part of the 2022 EURAGRI conference add further weight to the view that now is the opportune time to engage with potential new members

actively. The survey results show that over 63% of non-member organisations were interested in joining EURAGRI.

In addition, respondents made clear their expectations that EURAGRI should provide a broader range of services for its members. The survey results reflect critical take-home messages from the conference, namely the need for greater collaboration, coordination, complementarity, communication, partnerships and innovative approaches among all R&I stakeholders in developing sustainable food systems.

6. The General Assembly

The 2022 EURAGRI General Assembly (GA) was held online on October 27, and representatives of nine member organisations attended, in addition to the President and the outgoing Secretary-General.

The President positively assessed the workshops and the annual conference in his address. He noted that the events had been of great interest to EURAGRI members and a wider group of participants. All had been rated as high quality and of considerable practical value for participants. The members present expressed the hope that during 2023 EURAGRI would continue to organise similarly high-quality events that would facilitate the European debate on relevant issues of concern.

The President thanked Dr Bettina Heimann for her work and commitment to EURAGRI over the past fifteen years as Secretary-General and wished her well in her new position. He also thanked Dr Sylvia Burssens for securing EURAGRI's participation in the EU-FarmBook project team.

2022 Board

Professor Gerry Boyle, President

Professor Gottlieb Basch, University of Evora, Portugal

Mr Adrien Guichaoua, Director of European and Regional Affairs, ACTA, France

Dr Dragana Miladinovic, Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops (IFVCNS), Serbia

Professor Frank O'Mara, Director of Teagasc, Ireland

Professor Wayne Powell, Principal and CEO, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Scotland

Dr Bettina Heimann, outgoing EURAGRI Secretary-General

Professor (retired), senior researcher Dr Uno Svedin, Stockholm Resilience Centre/Stockholm University, Sweden.