

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

Please note that the date of the first meeting for **FG 33: Pests and diseases of the olive tree** has been modified. See page 4

The European Commission is launching a call for experts such as farmers, foresters, advisers, scientists and other relevant actors for two new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. The Focus Groups will start working in November 2018 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 for each Focus Group. **All applicants must be available to travel to the Focus Group meeting on these dates.** If selected experts fail to confirm their availability on these dates within one week of receiving the selection message, they may be replaced. 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 after the calls below. Please read the entire call text carefully before applying.

Focus Group themes:

For the current call, experts, farmers, advisers, researchers and others¹ are invited to apply for participation in Focus Groups on the following topics, noting that these Focus Groups will complement the work of previous Focus Groups:

32: Non-chemical weed management in arable cropping systems

[More info](#)

33: Pests and diseases of the olive tree

[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](#).

¹ See p. 2 section 'Who can apply'

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](#).

What is the outcome of a Focus Group?

The specific questions and tasks per Focus Group for the current calls 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 32: Non-chemical weed management in arable cropping systems

First meeting: 21-22 November 2018

Weeds compete with crops for water, nutrients and sunlight. Some weeds can also be a host for pests and diseases that can be transmitted to the crops. As weeds therefore threaten crop yield and quality, farmers fight against them and the most common weed management practice is the use of herbicides. Agriculture in the EU and worldwide has become increasingly dependent on the use of herbicides and of pesticides in general, which has helped boost agricultural yield and food production. At the same time, pesticides can have effects on the environment, non-target organisms and animal and human health. Therefore, EU and Member State policies seek to reduce reliance on pesticides by designing and implementing more integrated approaches for pest management, while at the same time safeguarding the competitiveness of agriculture in the EU.

Developing and/or promoting non-chemical weed management techniques could contribute to reducing the risks linked to the use of pesticides. These management techniques range from preventive to curative strategies (e.g. crop rotation, cropping systems, tillage, mechanical weed control, use of alternatives to critical active substances) and cover both the organic and the conventional sectors. Also, assessing current zero-tolerance weed strategies and perceptions of risks at medium-long term through adapted decision support tools could help rationalise and limit the use of herbicides.

Question: What are the options for non-chemical weed management in arable cropping systems?

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

- Make an inventory and clustering of non-chemical weed management practices in arable cropping systems for the different pedo-climatic zones in the EU;
- Analyse challenges and opportunities regarding the implementation of these practices, notably in terms of reliability and cost effectiveness at farm level as well as their transferability to other conditions (location, type of production);
- Identify key factors (such as knowledge requirements, decision support tools, partnerships) and analyse technical/economic/social barriers related to the adoption of these practices by farmers;
- Analyse the interaction of non-chemical weed management practices with other challenges, such as carbon sequestration, nutrient losses, soil degradation/erosion/compaction and biodiversity;
- Collect good practices and success stories on reducing herbicide use from different European areas, taking into account experiences of farmers and advisers as well as the findings of potential innovation activities carried out by EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and research projects in this field;
- Propose potential innovative actions and ideas for Operational Groups to stimulate the use and improvement of non-chemical weed management;
- Identify needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge concerning non-chemical weed management which may be solved by further research.

Focus Group 33: Pests and diseases of the olive tree

First meeting: ~~28-29 November 2018~~ 15-16 January 2019*

*Important note regarding the date of the first meeting for this Focus Group!

Following feedback received from olive growers regarding the dates originally set for the first meeting of this Focus Group, it has become clear that holding the meeting in November, which is still within harvesting season, may mean that it would be difficult for olive growers to attend.

As the participation of olive growers in the Focus Group is crucial to its success, we have decided to change the dates to **15-16 January 2019**.

Over 750 million olive trees are cultivated worldwide, 95% of which are in the Mediterranean region. Most of the global olive production comes from Southern Europe, North Africa and the Near East. In the EU, olive trees are grown in Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, France, Cyprus, Slovenia, Croatia and Malta and the structure of production is often fragmented (small/medium-sized holdings).

Olive production varies greatly and depends on the alternate bearing cycle of the olive tree (a good harvest followed by a poor one), farming methods (use of irrigation), olive varieties, the soil and climate conditions. Olive trees can grow in poor, stony soil where it would be difficult to grow other crops. Consequently, they play an important environmental role (fixing soils, biodiversity). The peak in activity occurs in Autumn, which makes it compatible with other agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Traditional olive-growing is labour intensive during particular periods of the year, and it is an important part of the heritage and socio-cultural life across Mediterranean rural areas.

Trade and the movement of goods and people, climatic variations and changes in farming practices have facilitated the introduction, spread and establishment of pests and diseases. Several insects, diseases, nematodes and weeds affect olive trees, and the number of these occurrences has dramatically increased over the last years, causing serious damage to the overall olive production. Pesticides are often used to protect the olive crop against pests and disease attacks. However, there is increased concern about the effects of pesticides on the environment, human health and product quality. Recognising and understanding the nature of these pathogens and understanding the interactions between crop, climate, environment and pathogens are essential to minimise crop losses and economic damage. The Focus Group will explore more sustainable farming practices, including using non-chemical pesticides, tackling the whole cycle of diseases and pests in olive production: their prevention, detection, management and control. Work shall address both conventional and organic systems.

Question: How to increase the sustainability of olive growing, taking into account the risks brought by pests and diseases?

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

- Make an inventory of the main pests and diseases affecting the olive tree, including their geographical distribution and economic impact.
- Summarise, where possible, how expected climatic changes are likely to impact the distribution and occurrence of such pests and diseases as well as their impact on

olive growing, regarding current practices, socio-economic results and environmental conditions.

- Take stock of good farming practices across different regions in Europe regarding the whole cycle of diseases and pests in olive production, including IPM strategies and organic olive production. The Focus Group should take into account the experiences of farmers and advisers as well as the findings of potential innovation activities carried out by EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and research projects in this field.
- Explore potential solutions to manage pests/diseases based on agro-ecological principles such as biodiversity.
- Discuss these practices and highlight both existing success and fail factors in pest/disease management in olive production, including the socio-economic dimension.
- Identify needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge which may be solved by further research.
- Suggest innovative solutions and provide ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

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 10 September 2018 23:59 hrs CET** (Brussels time).

The system will notify candidates upon successful submission of the application. Please, be aware that if 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 **before 20 October 2018**. All selected experts will need to confirm their attendance at the first meeting within one week of receiving the selection message. If they fail to do so, they may be replaced.

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. NB Once registered to the website, it will not be necessary to publish the email address, as participants can be contacted through the website.

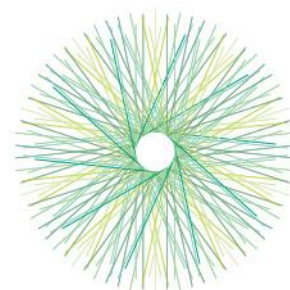
You can start your application by [clicking here](#).

Background:

The European Innovation Partnership ‘Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability’ (EIP-AGRI) connects innovation actors, including farmers, advisers, agri-business, civil society, and researchers, working at EU, national and regional level. The partnership aims to catalyse 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 Focus Groups are now closed, and it is not possible to join them.

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



eip-agri
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

Table of contents (indicative number of pages between brackets)

1. Executive summary (1p.)
2. Introduction (0,5 p)
3. Brief description of the process (0,5 p)
4. State of play (7 p.)
 - a. Framing key issues
 - b. Good practices
 - c. Success and fail factors
5. What can we do? Recommendations: [*most elaborated part and heart of the report*]
(7 p.)
 - a. Ideas for Operational Groups
 - b. Research needs from practice
 - c. Other recommendations, including improving take up
6. Annexes
 - a. Good practices and case studies
 - b. Members of the Focus Group
 - c. List of mini-papers
 - d. Relevant research projects

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.