



Agricultural & Rural
Inspiration Awards

Agriculture & Rural Inspiration Awards 2026:

When equality powers the next generation

GUIDELINES FOR ENTRY SUBMISSION AND APPLICATION FORM

Agriculture and Rural Inspiration Awards (ARIA) 2026 focus on good practice projects supported by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in line with the [Vision for Food and Agriculture](#) and the [Rural Pact](#). This year's themes will spotlight "gender equality" and "generational renewal", reflecting priority areas for the EU CAP Network and its stakeholders.

ARIA objectives

- To increase the visibility of agriculture and rural development in the EU.
- To demonstrate innovative solutions having an effect on rural communities.
- To explore the tools being used to support skills development, training and employment of young people in rural areas.
- To highlight projects that involve women and advance gender equality.
- To highlight and showcase best practice examples.
- To identify projects which signal a step change in approach, are inspirational or have the potential to be widely transferable within rural communities and thereby may contribute to building an attractive and inspiring agri-food sector (as set out in the Vision for Agriculture and Food).
- To promote knowledge exchange and networking among rural and agricultural stakeholders.
- To assist NNs, in the following tasks:
 - the collection of examples of projects and best practices;
 - provide project examples to support the work of the EU CAP Network; and
 - facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges.



ARIA thematic categories

1. **Smart and competitive agriculture:** CAP-funded projects that contribute to a smart, competitive, diversified and more resilient agricultural sector by supporting digitalisation in farming, and by improving productivity, risk management, market access and bargaining power.
2. **Environmental protection:** CAP-funded projects that enhance environmental sustainability, address climate change, support biodiversity, and contribute to increased water resilience, climate adaptation and green recovery.
3. **Socio-economic fabric of rural areas:** CAP-funded projects that reinforce the wider rural economy and community beyond primary production, by creating non-agricultural jobs, addressing social inclusion in innovative ways, improving local services and infrastructure, generating social capital and promoting community-led initiatives in rural territories and, empowering rural entrepreneurs and businesses.
4. **Gender equality:** CAP-funded projects that clearly empower women in agriculture and rural areas, for example by supporting their leadership and entrepreneurship, improving their access to resources and opportunities, or fostering more inclusive decision-making and working environments.

Cross-cutting theme

A **cross-cutting theme** will highlight projects that demonstrate enhancing generational renewal across all four categories. The jury will select a winner from the 24 shortlisted CAP-funded projects, specifically those that promote vibrant rural communities by engaging young people while developing their skills and creating high-quality rural jobs throughout any of its stages. Any project submitted in any category that advances generational renewal is eligible for this cross-cutting award.

Popular vote

The **popular vote** will be awarded to one of the 24 shortlisted CAP-funded projects, and it will be chosen through a public vote.

ARIA award criteria (applied within each category)

The **award criteria** will include the following:

- **Direct benefits:** evidence of concrete positive outcomes such as job creation, environmental improvements, market/policy uptake, increased sustainability and/or greater resilience.
- **Networking benefits:** evidence of links with other projects and initiatives, stakeholder involvement, creation of synergies, and, where relevant, connection to National Network activities and priorities.
- **Transferability potential:** clear potential for the project's approach, tools or results to be scaled or replicated in other geographical areas, sectors or organisations.



- **Innovative aspect:** evidence that the project has created new or significantly improved processes, services, products and/or technologies compared to “business as usual” in its context.
- **Gender equality:** evidence of involvement of women at the project management and implementation level and/or as beneficiaries as well as how the project contributed to advance gender equality in the target area.
- **Cross-cutting theme on ‘Generational renewal’:** Projects that actively include youth in their activities will not be awarded extra points. However, a section in the final descriptions of the projects will be added on the Good Practice template so that the jury and readers are informed about the inclusion of youth in the projects. This includes evidence of active youth involvement through skills development, high-quality job creation in rural areas, participation in decision-making, or youth-focused initiatives, training sessions, and networking targeted at younger age groups (under 40).

IMPORTANT !

NN/NSUs **must** submit their project to the category that best reflects its primary objectives and strongest results. Before applying, please **read the [category descriptions](#) and [assessment criteria](#)** carefully and select the category where your project can make the clearest and strongest case, in order to maximise its scoring potential.

Eligibility criteria and process

- The projects may only be submitted by [National Networks/National Support Units \(NN/NSUs\)](#). Projects that are submitted by non-NN/NSUs contacts will not be considered.
- All projects must have been funded by the CAP during the 2014-2022 and the 2023-2027 periods. Projects that are funded in the 2023-2027 period are preferable.
- Projects should, as a general rule, be completed. Exceptions are made for projects funded from the 2023-2027 period, and land management actions under annual/multi-annual commitments (e.g., agri-environment, forestry). For entries by ongoing projects, these must already be sufficiently advanced to be able to demonstrate impact or transferability.
- Up to eight (8) projects can be submitted per NN/NSU, this may include up to three (3) LEADER projects.
- **Each NN/NSU can submit entries** for any or all of the four themed categories and is responsible for nominating projects to the most appropriate category. A project can only be nominated in one category!
- Projects from **operational groups** that were submitted in the EIP AGRI Awards are allowed to participate in the ARIA Awards unless they won an award at the EIP AGRI edition.
- The templates must be submitted in **English** and in **Word** (please do not share PDF files).



- All final project nominations by **NNs/NSUs must be submitted to the EU CAP Network by 8 July**. This date will only be communicated to NNs/NSUs, who can select their own deadlines for project submission.
- An online environment will be used to upload applications and all visual material.
- Evaluation will start in mid-July and further information about the applications will be shared in early September.
- There will be 24 shortlisted candidates and six prize winners.
- No previously **shortlisted** RIA/ARIA entries may be (re)submitted.

Please ask any questions to: aria@eucapnetwork.eu.



Agriculture & Rural Inspiration Awards 2026

Application form

Competition category

Please assign only one category from the drop-down menu.

Choose an item.

Please make sure that everywhere in the application form you highlight the elements that are most relevant for the category you have selected.

Project title

Summary of project/actions (max. 200 words)

Please explain the project in 200 words as if you were talking to a friend. The summary should indicate 1) what was the project about, 2) what did it do (activities) and 3) what did it achieve.

Context (max. 250 words)

Please give some background information about the beneficiary, the situation, and other information to understand why this project was needed.

Aims & Objectives (max. 100 words in bullet points)

In response to the context set out above, what did the project/action hope **to achieve** (e.g. reduce GHG emissions, increase the number of jobs in an area)? Do not list planned activities here, they will be covered below.

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Activities of the project (max. 400 words)

When it is a complex project (funded from multiple sources), please explicitly indicate which activities of the project were funded by the CAP.

Please list and explain the activities undertaken in the project in chronological order and include dissemination activities.

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What are or were the main target groups of the project/initiative (if applicable)? Which groups is the project hoping to benefit?



Project achievements

These are all the criteria that your project will be scored with. Good descriptions help us understand the project better and increase your scores.

Examples of direct benefits

- Climate and environmental benefits (e.g. reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing carbon sequestration and conservation, contribution to climate adaptation and resilience reduction of environmental impact, biodiversity conservation, etc.)
- Economic benefits (e.g. job creation, increased revenues, etc.)
- Societal benefits (e.g. foster gender equality, generational renewal etc.)

Please explain in the boxes below what the project/action achieved. Please consider benefits in terms of climate and environmental action, economic benefits and societal benefits. Please explain briefly the benefits in relation to the target groups (if applicable) and the objectives of the project.

Quantitative benefits (max. 200 words)

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Qualitative benefits (max. 200 words)

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Networking value (max. 100 words per answer)

Who/which stakeholders are or were involved in the implementation of the project? (List the members of the partnership/project in bullet points).

Describe how the project can be considered an example of good networking. List the synergies or collaborations developed through the project (e.g. with organisations, administration, universities, etc.) (in bullet points).

Transferability (max. 100 words)

What features/parts of this project can be implemented in other regions/organisations/sectors? Please also explain if the project has been implemented (or is considered to be implemented elsewhere).

Innovative aspect (max. 150 words)

Can the project be considered innovative? Choose an item.



If yes, how did it create new or significantly improved processes, services, products and/or technologies?

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Generational renewal (max. 150 words)

This is a cross-cutting theme across all the categories. All projects (in the shortlist) that include young people (as target groups, partners or stakeholders) will be eligible for the “generational renewal” award.

Does this project actively involve young people (under 40 years old)?

Choose an item.

If yes, please describe how young people have been involved in the project and list how it has created opportunities for them to choose an agricultural career e.g. development of skills, involvement in decision making processes, potential to be involved in the agricultural and rural development businesses, networking targeted at specific age group, training sessions (in bullet points).

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Project general info (all fields are mandatory)

If the below sections are incomplete, the project may not be considered as a finalist.

Name (project title)	
Dates (Indicate both start and end dates of the CAP funding)	
Member State (or region if regionalised RDP)	
Type of beneficiary (public/SME/farmer/EIP OG/NGO, etc.)	

If the project received funding from the 2014-2020 RDP, please fill in the information in the following table:

Measure (or measures) / Intervention	Choose an item.
Priority	Choose an item
Focus Areas	Choose an item.

If the project received funding under the 2023-2027 CSP, please fill in the following table:

CAP General Objectives (GO)	Choose an item.
CAP Specific Objectives (SO)	Choose an item
Type of intervention	Choose an item.



Funding in EURO ¹ (all fields are mandatory and make sure that the values provided sum up)

Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) + (iv) =	
+ (i) CAP support (a)+(b)	
+ (a) <i>EAFRD/EAGF (EU) contribution</i>	
+ (b) <i>National / Regional contribution</i>	
+ (ii) Private / Own funds	
+ (iii) Other non- EU funding sources	
+ (iv) Other EU funds (please specify the name of the fund)	

Contact details

Project beneficiary name/organisation	
Contact person	
Contact email	
Telephone	
Address of beneficiary or implementing body	
Other contact details	

Further information

Website	
Additional info sources, links (Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn)	

Quotes from beneficiaries/project participants

These are very helpful if available as they help to grab the reader's attention and bring the project to life through a key message of the project. Please mention who the quote is attributed to.

Project/action photos and/or videos with information on copyrights

Add a number of photos and/or videos, as available. Photos should be 3MB or larger. Copyrights may be the name of the photographer or in general, the owner of the material's copyrights, as indicated by the provider of the project's content. A maximum of 3 photos will be used in the final entry. Please **upload the pictures in the online folder** (to be shared with NNs/NSUs), not in the word document.

When uploading pictures and videos, please rename the files in the following format: 1) title of picture, and 2) the copyright name e.g. *Green landscape, Cooperative of farmers.*

¹ In case more than one measure/intervention was used then please provide the above financial data for all measures/interventions involved



I have read, understood, and provide my consent for the information I am submitting to the EU CAP Network to be processed according to the privacy statement explained below. Read [the privacy statement](#). *(please tick the box below)*

Yes

For more information about privacy, please contact us at privacy@eucapnetowk.eu.

