

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 two new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. The Focus Groups will start working in May/June 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.

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:

19: Nutrient recycling

[More info](#)

20: Sustainable mobilisation of forest biomass

[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](#).

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.

¹ See p. 2 section 'Who can apply'

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, advisers, forest managers, forest owners, forest industries (supply chain; harvest-transport-primary processors), 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 19: Nutrient recycling

First meeting: **31 May – 1 June 2016**

Nutrient recycling and nutrient efficiency are induced by environmental policies like the Nitrates directive² and the Water framework directive³ and, indirectly, by other EU level strategic policy frameworks such as the Raw materials initiative (including phosphate rocks)⁴. They also play a key part in the development of the circular economy. More specifically, a revised regulation on fertilisers will be delivered by the European Commission within the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy. Through it, the European Commission aims to establish a level playing field for mineral and organic and waste-based fertilisers, a situation that will contribute to the creation of new business opportunities and more options available for farmers.

A circular approach to the agronomic use of key nutrients - nitrogen and phosphorus - would ensure a more efficient and sustainable use of these resources in the long term. However the (re)use of recycled nutrients in agriculture is not yet well established. This Focus Group wants to explore how innovation can address this.

The [mini-paper – ‘Opportunities and bottlenecks in the utilisation of new kinds of organic fertilisers’](#) drafted by 4 experts from the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group on fertiliser efficiency in horticulture in open field](#), already indicates some specific areas related to new organic sources of fertilisers which should be developed, including opportunities and bottlenecks for a wide use of new organic fertilisers.

QUESTION: How to improve the agronomic use of recycled nutrients (N and P) from livestock manure and other organic sources?

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

- Identify relevant techniques (e.g. composting, bio-digestion, etc.) to process livestock manure and other organic sources and assess the agronomic and environmental value of the derived products (e.g. nutrient availability, quality, impacts on soils, contaminants, etc.).
- Contextually, identify tools and instruments to help farmers to measure the nutrient content (and availability for crops) and recommendations for the application of these products.
- Analyse economic and technical factors (e.g. livestock management practices, sanitary aspects, etc.) that stimulate or limit the use of these products in agriculture and indicate how to address them exploring the role of innovation and knowledge transfer.
- Illustrate possible strategies to adapt derived products to market demands (e.g. development of quality standards) and successful business cases that exist at farm level, local and regional scale.

² Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources

³ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy

⁴ See the EC communication: On the review of the list of critical raw materials for the EU and the implementation of the Raw Materials Initiative, [COM\(2014\) 297 final](#).

- Identify research needs from practice, possible gaps in technical knowledge, and further research work to address them.
- Suggest innovative solutions and provide ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

Focus Group 20: Sustainable mobilisation of forest biomass

First meeting: 21-22 June 2016

This group will concentrate on innovation in mobilising different types of forest biomass for all potential markets and better interlinking supply and demand. Overall demand for forest biomass is forecast to increase in the future. This is currently driven by an increasing demand for biomass for energy generation, but other new and innovative uses for wood fibres and chemicals are on the horizon. Questions of sustainability, competitiveness of the forest-based industries, efficiency and economic viability and fragmentation, organisation and motivation of forest owners represent the major challenges for forest biomass mobilisation. In mobilising forest based biomass, economic, environmental and social functions of forests have to be safeguarded⁵.

A clear potential to increase forest biomass utilisation for energy exists in most countries of the EU as only 60-70% of the annual increment of EU forests is harvested. Much of the potential for expansion can be found in small private holdings and silvicultural practices such as pruning and complementary fellings (namely first thinnings).

Previous work on this subject includes the publication in 2010 of the 'Good practice guidance on the sustainable mobilisation of wood in Europe', produced jointly by the European Commission, FOREST EUROPE, and the UN's Economic Commission for Europe and Food and Agriculture Organisation⁶. This publication addressed good practice across a wide range of aspects of mobilisation.

This Focus Group however, will address in particular the currently underused potential supply of forest biomass, and will consider challenges and opportunities to increase the sustainable supply of forest biomass as a raw material for all potential markets.

QUESTION: How to improve the sustainable mobilisation of biomass from our forests in the EU?

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

- Identify success and fail factors that stimulate or limit the sustainable mobilisation of forest biomass, and summarise how to address these factors and explore the role of innovation and knowledge exchange in addressing these fail factors.
- Identify, describe with adequate examples and compare different means of improving the cooperation of small forest owners with regard to forest biomass. Provide examples of best practices, and also identify barriers to implementation.
- Analyse supply and demand factors, and the means to provide a link between the two – for example electronic marketing tools.
- Propose potential innovative actions to stimulate the knowledge and use of management practices and strategies in mobilising forest biomass.
- Identify remaining research and innovation needs coming from practice associated to sustainable biomass mobilisation in forests, and provide ideas for Operational Groups and other innovative projects.

⁵ See the EU Forest Strategy <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52013DC0659>

⁶ http://www.foresteuropa.org/documentos/Wood_Mobilisation_Guidance_Report.pdf

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 21 March 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 25 April 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 18 groups are now closed, and it is not possible to join them.

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



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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.