The potentials of organic farming in the European Innovation Policy

Madrid, December 10th 2014

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Organic farmers are innovative by nature

- they always tested on their farm alternatives and solutions
- they are keen, able and used to interact with researchers and advisors
- they always used a multidisciplinary approach
- they are often the source of innovation

that's why they have now the best potentials for being active part of the EIP-AGRI (European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability) initiatives
Few examples of “ante litteram” implementation of EIP-AGRI

Compost to control weeds in organic carrots and the machine to facilitate its use
Few examples of “ante litteram” implementation of EIP-AGRI

Participatory breeding for potatoes resistant to blight
Few examples of “ante litteram” implementation of EIP-AGRI

Participatory breeding in cereals and other crops for characteristics that make them fit to organic and low input systems
Few examples of “ante litteram” implementation of EIP-AGRI

Networking and exchange of experiences on organic viticulture and wine-making
Few examples of “ante litteram” implementation of EIP-AGRI

Peri-urban organic agriculture
In Gallec (Barcelona): participation, natural resources preservation, education, minimum tillage and organic
EIP-AGRI Focus group on organic farming

Optimising Arable Yields and reduce the yield gap

Running in 2013-2014, composed by 20 experts of different background

Main outcomes:

“redefinition” of yield: performance stands for production, its quality and ecosystem services provided

“redefinition” of gap: difference in performance between best organic farmers and their organic colleagues in similar conditions

- list of main areas where to act to improve farm performance
- ideas for topics and methods to be used in the establishment of local operational groups (OGs)
- examples of existing OGs

Side products: list of research needs and proposals for training and education
EIP-AGRI Focus group on organic farming
Optimising Arable Yields and reduce the yield gap outcomes

Causes of yield losses/ area for improvement:
1) Poor soil fertility management;
2) Inadequate nutrient supply;
3) Insufficient weed management;
4) Pest and disease pressure
5) Variety choice

Main topics suggested for Operational Groups relate to:
• farming systems co-design;
• information and decision support systems;
• how to increase soil microbial activity and biodiversity by farming techniques;
• fine-tuning of composting techniques;
• nutrient release of organic fertilisers;
• Fine-tuning of new machines;
• organising joint purchase/use of machinery;
• selecting locally appropriate varieties;
• developing innovative tillage techniques;
• fostering the use of companion planting and cover crops;
• introducing new crops and variety trials;
• developing new fertilisers appropriate to the organic concept
Innovation in RDPs 2014-2020

It is a key-word! Several measures to tackle it and specific attention to agroecological methods is recommended.

Main tool: **Operational Groups**

*Multi-actor group active on a specific problem using experience and knowledge (scientific and practical) of participants.*

It is not a discussion group and it is not research (i.e. mis. 124)

**Driven by practitioners** and focused on a problem to be solved

Innovation is not only technology but also organization or social change

And is not only “new knowledge” but often stems by a combination of experience, existing knowledge with new knowledge
Innovation in H2020

Thematic Networks
Projects aiming to facilitate and speed up the combined use of available knowledge (empirical and scientific)

Multi-actor research and innovation projects
Research and innovation projects where non-researchers (farmers, associations, advisory, Smes …) have a relevant role (not stakeholder!)

But also vice-versa

from OGs requests to H2020 for specific topics
(also from already existing OGs)
Focus Groups outcomes and OGs

Topics and recommendations from FGs may be considered and used by OGs but each managing authority should assess local needs and vice versa OGs and RDP managing authorities may suggest further FGs topics

Problem is timing!
How to be active at local level

make use of FGs (not only the organic) outcomes in OGs setting up

OGs: Regional, interregional or National?

There is the need of active and proactive organic farmers and associations!

We have all the knowledge and skills to be front-runners!
For example?

- Soil management and organic matter preservation
- Water conservation (quality and quantity)
- Biodiversity efficient “use”
- Several pests management
- Alternatives to copper
- Innovative systems for perennials (vineyards and olive groves)
- Extensive animal husbandry
How to keep the contacts internationally?

Thematic network on organic arable farming  
starting in March 2015

Thematic network on grapevine wood diseases  
Starting in March 2015

Formal and informal cooperation with other MSs OGs  
(via Ministries but also via associations and researchers)

Using EIP-AGRI facilities.
How to know more?

Dossier from

www.ifoam-eu.org
And keep an eye on the EIP-AGRI web page

www.eip-agri.com
Thank-you for the attention!