

# Increasing exchanges between farmers to enhance crop diversification

## Problem

There is a general lack of engagement from grain farmers to crop diversification, namely due to limited markets and outlets for harvested products.

On the flip side, within the dairy sector, there is reliance on imported soybean and it is currently hard to substitute this cheap source of protein with locally produced protein crops.

## Solution

One solution is to increase crop diversification in arable systems, while increasing locally produced protein in livestock systems, by facilitating and promoting win-win exchanges between grain and livestock farmers. Livestock farmers can use protein crops produced by local grain farmers, thus offering a local outlet for enhancing crop diversification in arable systems.

## Outcome

11 exchanges between grain and livestock farmers showed improvements in the sustainability (in its economic, social and environmental dimensions) of both farm systems. Moreover, in most cases (8 out of 11), these exchanges helped to enhance crop diversification within an arable system.

## Applicability box

**Theme:** Barriers and enablers, farms, value chain

**Geographical coverage:** European regions with crop and livestock farming systems

**Required time:** At least a year

**Period of impact:** All year long

**Best in:** European regions with crop and livestock farming systems



Picture 1 Legumes within a cover crop (Jérémy Berthomier, CAPDL)

## Practical recommendation

- The first step is to identify the advantages and barriers (or difficulties) which may exist between grain and livestock farmers. These can be identified by setting up exchange opportunities between the two groups of farmers.
- After identifying barriers, determine the type of exchanges that can be undertaken. From the eleven exchanges studied, three main types of collaborations and their drawbacks were identified:
  1. Livestock farmers can use legumes produced by grain farmers. Grain farmers can see this type of collaboration as risky to implement as it requires some adjustments on their farm. But once implemented, benefits for grain farmers, such as improved soil N content, and for livestock farmers, such as increased local and high quality protein, can be obtained very quickly.
  2. Livestock farmers can use cereals produced by grain farmers. This type of collaboration is more common and documented but it does not completely solve their reliance on imported soybean to meet protein needs.
  3. Livestock farmers can use cover crops produced by grain farmers. This type of collaboration is the most flexible and easy to implement, for both grain and livestock farmers, as it does not require a substantial change in their farm management while it provides benefits for the two farm systems.

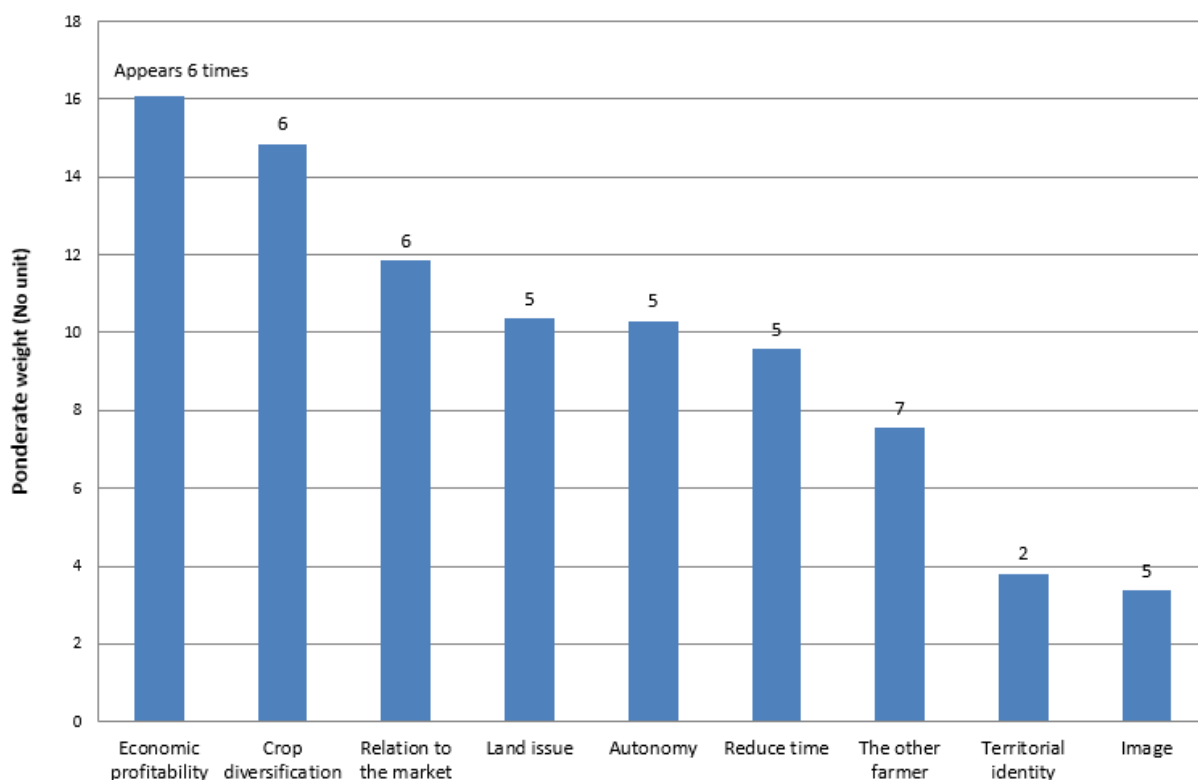


Figure 1: Key drivers of collaboration identified by grain and livestock farmers (Maurice Miara, CAPDL)

- Once the type of collaboration is defined, farmers need to agree and sign off an agreement. Such contracts need to define the crop prices and the roles of each farmer (and other stakeholders, if applicable) involved in the exchange.
- It is key that the farmers involved in the collaboration lead the exchange, and, if it is continued past the initial contract period, solve any potential problems that occur.

## Further information

- A Scientific report has been written by Maurice Miara on the topic of collaborations between grain and livestock farmers - For access contact: [emmanuel.merot@pl.chambagri.fr](mailto:emmanuel.merot@pl.chambagri.fr)- [maurice.miara@gmail.com](mailto:maurice.miara@gmail.com)- [jeremy.berthomier@pl.chambagri.fr](mailto:jeremy.berthomier@pl.chambagri.fr)
- [The Casdar Cerel Project \(Chambers of Agriculture Centre- Loire Valley\) \(French version\)](#)
- Use the comment section on the [DiverIMPACTS discussion forum](#) to share your experiences with other farmers, advisors and scientists! If you have any questions concerning the method, please contact the author of the practice abstract by e-mail.



## About this practice abstract and DiverIMPACTS

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**Project website:** [www.diverimpacts.net](http://www.diverimpacts.net)

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