

Search for experts participating in Focus Groups of the European Innovation Partnership on "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability"

- Call for expression of interest -

The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" aims to provide a working interface for innovation actors, including farmers, advisors, 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 Service Point to set up focus groups on specific agricultural topics to facilitate innovative actions in the field and better connect science and practice.

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Focus Group Themes:

The first three focus groups on the following topics have started their works and the call for experts for these groups is closed: 1.Organic farming (optimizing arable yields); 2.Protein crops; 3.Animal husbandry (reduction of anti-biotic use in the pig sector).

For the current call, experts are invited to apply for participation in focus groups on the following topics:

- 4. Genetic resources: co-operation models**
- 5. Soil organic matter content: Mediterranean region**
- 6. Integrated Pest Management (IPM): focus on Brassica species**

What is a focus group?

The goal of the groups is to explore practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities in the field, and to draw on experience gained from related useful projects and to share experiences among actors involved in those projects (researchers, farmers, advisers etc.). The groups will also discuss and document research results and implications for further research activities that will help to solve practical problems in the sector. These may be related to production, processing, consumption, transport or other issues. The tangible outputs should be focused on practical knowledge and where to get that knowledge as well as ideas for operational group projects.

Each focus group consists of up to 20 experts: farmers, representatives from industries (where appropriate), consumers (where appropriate), scientists, other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs), etc.

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. Focus groups are expected to last for 12-18 months and the frequency of meetings is estimated to be twice a year. Venues

for the face-to-face meetings of each focus group will be decided following the establishment of the groups.

For more information on the focus groups, please see the [focus group charter](#).

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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.

Focus group profile

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 with relevant technical knowledge and practical experience 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 prospect, production costs, supply, manufacturing, and socio-economic impact for farmers.
- Experts with experience in practical research and innovation action on the concerned topic.

Selection process and constitution of the Focus Groups:

The selection process is developed in two stages where the evaluation of all applicants by experts of the EIP –Service Point against the individual criteria specified below is followed by the constitution of the focus group, taking into account the criteria securing a balanced composition of the group.

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 below - should be given;
- Motivation, reasoning why the expert should be 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, clearly linked to the specific questions for the focus groups listed below.

Balancing criteria:

The focus group will be constituted, taking into account the 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 6 October 2013** (Brussels time).

Please, be aware that the online application tool requires that you complete your application in 90 minutes. When this period of time expires, you will have to restart the process again. Therefore, you are advised to prepare the text for your application beforehand.

The system will notify the successful submitting of the application to the candidate. 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.

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's willingness and ability to share information, knowledge and experience and to contribute actively to work documents to achieving the focus group objectives,
- Attendance of the meetings: in case of a nomination, the applicant's willingness to travel (within Europe) to attend meetings of the focus group. Nominated experts can be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs;
- Transparency: in case of a nomination, the applicant's agreement to publish his/her name along with their professional capacity (e.g. advisor, scientists, etc.) and country of residence on the Europa EIP website.

Questions and Tasks for 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.

The Focus Groups may go in their actual work beyond the issues listed below.

Focus Group 4: Genetic Resources - co-operation models between seed- and cryobanks, research institutes, and private seed companies and breeding firms

What are the bottlenecks that limit co-operation between the different types of stakeholders? How can co-operation between the different types of stakeholders be promoted?

Tasks:

- 1) Stocktaking of the state of the art of practice, including a summary of problems and issues:
 - identify and analyze the different types of agreements between the stakeholders in the field and the successful factors in existing cooperation
- 2) Stocktaking of the state of the art of research, including a summary of possible solutions for the problems listed:
 - propose models and strategies to motivate public and private stakeholders to engage in cooperation models
- 3) Identify needs from practice for further research:
 - prepare a gap analysis indicating where new solutions for cooperation models need to be found
 - identify priorities for further research actions: list the main needs (*i.a.*, pre-breeding and breeding priorities) concerning the generation of knowledge in order to maximize intra and inter-specific variation for the benefit of agriculture and of society at large
- 4) Priorities for innovative actions:
 - identify the priorities for areas of work for the different stakeholders in order to maximize intra and inter-specific variation for the benefit of agriculture and of society at large
 - propose ways to promote the use of locally adapted and under-utilized crops, varieties and breeds
 - propose ways to broaden the genetic basis used in plant and animal breeding so as to strengthen the development of varieties and breeds particularly adapted to social, economic and ecological conditions, also in marginal areas suggest potential projects of practical operational groups and other project formats to test new methods for advancing cooperation in the area of Genetic Resources

Focus Group 5: Soil organic matter content in Mediterranean regions (both arable and permanent crops)

How can we improve soil organic matter content in the Mediterranean region in a cost-effective way? What new solutions for securing soil functionality and soil fertility can be proposed in this regard?

Tasks:

- 1) Stocktaking of the state of the art of practice, including a summary of problems and issues:
 - compare cost effective methods to build up soils naturally (chipped wood, bio char, mulching, direct sowing under cover crops, etc.) / compare different farming sources of carbon that improve soil organic matter content and identify practical

factors (e.g. frequency, period and amount of application or the nature of organic matter)

- identify and explore cost effective factors that improve the benefits of applying exogenous sources of organic matter (e.g. frequency, period and amount of application or the nature of organic matter)
- 2) Stocktaking of the state of the art of research, including a summary of possible solutions for the problems listed:
 - identify and assess different cost effective crop rotation systems that lead to build up Soil Organic Matter content
 - compare different methods to enhance Soil Organic Matter in arable crops
 - compare different methods to enhance Soil Organic Matter in permanent crops
 - list factors or bottlenecks that may limit the use of the identified techniques / systems by farmers and summarize how to address these limiting factors
 - 3) Identify needs from practice for further research:
 - prepare a gap analysis indicating where new solutions need to be found
 - identify priorities for further research actions
 - 4) Priorities for innovative actions:
 - suggest potential projects of practical operational groups and other project formats to test new methods for improving soil organic matter content

Focus group 6: Integrated pest management (IPM) – Brassica species Including specialty crops and rapeseed

What cost-effective IPM solutions are there for Brassica? What other solutions can be proposed?

Tasks:

- 1) Stocktaking of the state of the art of practice, including a summary of problems and issues:
 - identify (types of) pests and diseases relevant for Brassica for different EU regions
 - compare methods between different specialty crops and, particularly, between specialty crops and rapeseed
 - compare existing IPM methods from the cost-effectiveness point of view
- 2) Stocktaking of the state of the art of research, including a summary of possible solutions for the problems listed:
 - list ongoing IPM experiments for Brassica
 - list existing IPM practices (including soil-borne) for Brassica and indicate where improvement is needed

3) Identify needs from practice for further research:

- prepare a gap analysis indicating where new solutions need to be found
- identify priorities for further research actions

4) Priorities for innovative actions:

- suggest potential practical operational group projects to test new IPM methods for Brassica
- suggest potential projects of practical operational groups and other project formats to test new IPM methods for Brassica

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