



EU CAP Network seminar ‘On-farm demonstrations for peer-to-peer learning & innovation’

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All resources, annexes and background documents can be found on [the event webpage](#).



1. Introduction

On-farm demonstrations are key for knowledge exchange, peer-to-peer learning, and showcasing innovative, practical agricultural solutions. They take place on demonstration farms, lighthouse farms, living labs, experimental farms, or in schools and research institutes. They help to implement and promote solutions from EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) and Horizon multi-actor projects, supporting peer-to-peer learning, innovation, skills development and the dissemination of results.

In this context, the EU CAP Network organised the seminar 'On-farm demonstrations for peer-to-peer learning & innovation' with a focus on innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI, with the support of the Veneto Region and the Italian CAP Network. It brought together 179 participants from various professional backgrounds representing 25 EU Member States, North Macedonia, and Montenegro.

The seminar aimed to promote the use of on-farm demonstrations as essential tools for peer-to-peer learning and to improve the setting up and visibility of demonstration farms, as well as to foster their networks and connections with other relevant initiatives. The specific objectives were to:

- Highlight inspirational practices for organising on-farm demonstrations and facilitating peer-to-peer learning.
- Discuss challenges and opportunities in establishing, funding, running, and managing demonstration farms and networks within AKIS.
- Assess how on-farm demonstrations during and after EIP-AGRI OGs and Horizon projects improve farmers' adoption of knowledge and innovations.
- Identify gaps and improvements needed to scale up and harness the full potential of on-farm demonstrations for farmers.

2. Setting the scene

Federico Caner, Regional Minister of Tourism, Agriculture and EU Funds, Veneto Region, Italy, welcomed participants and introduced them to the Region's agriculture and rural sector and their main priorities: Youth, Environmental Sustainability, Innovation and AKIS.

Klavdija Ramsak-Noemi, Unit D.1. 'Rural areas and networks', DG AGRI, European Commission, highlighted the existing support for on-farm demonstrations and demonstration farms under the CAP through CAP Strategic Plans (Article 78). The presentation also focused on EIP-AGRI OGs. There are more than 4,000 OGs in 25 Member States. These projects are required to disseminate their results, and on-farm demonstrations are key in that process. With 31% of OG partners being farmers, projects offer strong potential for peer-to-peer learning.

Orsolya Frizon Somogyi, Unit F.2. 'Research and Innovation', DG AGRI, European Commission, explained the key role of living Labs and lighthouses under Horizon Europe and specifically under the Horizon Mission Soil. Living labs are sites where different actors co-develop and test at real sites, including on farms, locally adapted solutions, while lighthouses are exemplary farms demonstrating best practices supporting peer-to-peer learning. The Mission Soil aims to establish 100 living labs with around 1,000 test sites across the EU for all land uses by 2030. The first five projects¹ launched 25 living labs in 2024, and 20 new living labs are starting in 2025.

In January 2024, the Horizon Europe co-funded European Partnership on Agroecology was launched. It is creating an EU-wide network of agroecology living labs.

Margarida Ambar, EIP-AGRI Support Facility, EU CAP Network, introduced the EU CAP Network and its aim to foster innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas. The EIP-AGRI Support Facility organises various networking activities focusing on innovation and knowledge exchange, including focus groups, workshops, seminars and conferences, cross-visits between OGs and brokerage activities. It also contributes to the EU CAP Network's communication.

Laure Triste, EIP-AGRI Support Facility, EU CAP Network, introduced the main concepts of the seminar, which are elaborated in the supporting background document.

Peer-to-peer learning stimulates the adoption of innovations, as farmers prefer learning from fellow farmers. It enhances understanding through observation, discussion, and the sharing of tacit, local knowledge. Participants are both learners and teachers. While often informal, its impact increases when peer-to-peer learning is well-organised—particularly through on-farm demonstrations².

¹ GOV4ALL, LIVINGSOILL, iCOSHELLS, LILAS4SOILS, and SOILCRATES.

² Guidelines on how to organize effective demonstrations have been developed in Horizon projects [AgriDemo-F2F](#), [PLAID](#), [NEFERTITI](#), [IPMWORKS](#) and [ClimateFarmDemo](#).



On-farm demonstrations, as defined by Cooreman (2021)³, are socially and physically embedded authentic learning settings, enabling shared exploration among farmers and other actors. Demonstrations can raise awareness, disseminate innovation, or provide training, and facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges.

Demonstration farms are the physical sites of these activities, ranging from commercial to experimental or public farms, and serve

as centres for hands-on, experience-based learning. Their setup and function vary based on location, sector, and involvement in projects or networks.

This seminar focused on two key pathways for leveraging on-farm demonstrations: improving their organisation and facilitation, and discussing structural support.

3. Session I: Inspirational practices in the organisation and setup of on-farm demonstrations

This interactive session included short pitches of inspiring examples, followed by group discussions on tools and practices, which were later displayed on a “wall of learning”.

3.1 Pitches of inspiring examples

Luís Alcino Conceição, Portugal, presented a **Virtual Reality (VR) tool used at [InovTechAgro](#)** for simulating tractor operations with variable rate control. Participants immerse themselves in a 360° environment using Oculus headsets, while others observe on large screens and discuss. Guided reflections after each session link decisions made in VR to real field outcomes, enhancing engagement and understanding.

Agnès Fiamma Papone, France, introduced an **incubator program supporting new entrants and new adopters of community-supported agriculture**. Through tailored peer exchanges—including farm visits, video calls, on-demand videos and practical demonstrations—trainees gain hands-on knowledge. A funding scheme (via FEADER and Region Sud) helps cover travel and time costs, making support more accessible to farmers.

Tamara Urbančič, Slovenia, described the “**cycling with pollinators**” project combining farm-based pollinator education, demonstration, and eco-tourism. Participants follow a cycling route with interactive learning stations on farms, co-created by farmers and experts. These visits raise awareness of biodiversity and sustainable farming practices through on-site experiences.

Rossano Filippini, Portugal, introduced the **[TRANSFARMERS Erasmus+](#) project**, organising cross-region and cross-border visits for farmers to see sustainable practices at first hand. Matching visits to similar agro-cultural contexts builds trust, as farmers observe results, share data, and taste local products. Language support, context-relevant examples, and follow-up monitoring are key success factors.

3.2 Exchanging inspirational practices for facilitating on-farm demonstrations

Inspired by the pitches, participants exchanged in groups on practices and suggestions for organising and facilitating impactful on-farm demonstrations.



Source: EU CAP Network

a. Stimulating demonstration events

Defining the selection and delivery criteria for demonstration farms is central to stimulating on-farm demonstrations. For example, in Poland, farms are selected based on their demonstration potential, relevance to other farmers, openness to collaboration, economic viability, and accessibility. While criteria ensure quality, flexibility is essential to create room for farmers to adapt.

To promote wider dissemination, OGs could use demonstration activities to strengthen AKIS linkages by involving host farmers and other actors. A Greek example showed how a demonstration event at the farm of an OG partner engaged other farmers, advisors, and researchers.

Governments could impose, for example, a requirement on those farmers receiving investment support to host demonstration events. Support could also come from private sources.

³ Cooreman, H. (2021) Enhancing peer learning for sustainable agriculture. On-farm demonstrations as spaces for embedded, embodied and transformative learning. Faculty of psychology and educational sciences, KULeuven, p. 203.



In Denmark, a collaboration between a farmers' organisation (www.FRDK.dk) and Carlsberg Brewery resulted in farmers carrying out field trials on regenerative barley and hosting field days while receiving a premium for their produce.

b. Demonstration event organisation

Collaboration is key for successful demonstration events. Farmers listen most to other farmers, as trust and peer credibility are essential. Strong pre-existing relationships between advisors and farmers lead to effective co-organisation. Examples include open-field bus tours where farmers share practical experiences and advisors provide the broader context.

Involving innovative SMEs was also mentioned. SMEs can benefit from feedback on their products and services during demonstrations on farms. Involving multiple farmers besides the host, e.g. in providing equipment, sharing testimonials, and catering, can foster a sense of shared ownership. To capitalise on the momentum of demonstration events, follow-up support and information on funding opportunities linked to demonstrated innovations would be useful.

c. Maximising the role of the host farmer

Host farmers are vital in demonstration events, sharing personal stories and guiding participants through the farm and their decision-making processes. This real-world perspective can be complemented by the input of researchers or advisors and builds trust. Host farmers could become ambassadors for specific innovations. They may also serve as mentors, train students, or help scale innovations developed in OGs. However, selecting "champion" farmers must be handled carefully to avoid competition. Beyond the farming community, host farmers may engage with tourism and product marketing. Given their central role, host farmers need training in communication and facilitation, and appropriate remuneration.

d. Series of demonstration events (as part of networks)

A series of demonstrations helps to build trust and engagement over time, and farmers gain more opportunities to ask questions, compare results, and adopt new practices. Examples include Stammtisch (Austria), interest groups, farmer-led learning circles, and thematic schools or farmer hubs. These demonstrations may take various formats, e.g. peer visits, facilitated discussions, workshops, or recurring school visits to farms. Follow-up on long-term trials is key, as innovation requires time and space to test, fail, and improve. The "open farms - open protocol" model in [Vallevecchia \(Italy\)](#) is a good example of this.

e. Engaging participants

Several methods to engage attendees in a more meaningful way were shared:

- › Informal kitchen-table talks to build trust in a relaxed setting.
- › Farmer-to-farmer walks enable informal exchange in the field.
- › Group assessments of, for example, soil samples and ecosystems, foster hands-on learning.
- › Animal welfare assessments promote active involvement (e.g. participants observe animal behaviour and interpret sensor data).

Other formats include guided farm tours where farmers, advisors, and researchers co-lead discussions, and discussion group workshops, where farmers prioritise and explore specific questions. Innovation cafés allow participants to rotate through themed tables led by peers or experts. Continued engagement, e.g. through WhatsApp or Facebook groups, is valuable after demonstration events.

f. Use of props and the farm environment

Props such as information boards, soil or feed samples, machinery, and other aspects of the farm environment support and bring key messages to the fore during demonstrations. The farm environment can be used in demonstrations by comparing side-by-side trial plots ("with vs. without"), tests and assessments (e.g. slake tests, soil biological quality tests, using portable kits to test plant nutrition).

Further, the use of equipment in the presence of participants was suggested (e.g. water and temperature sensors), performing live demonstrations of system calibration (e.g. pH levels) or exploring sensor-app interfaces for remote monitoring.

When direct engagement with the farm environment is not feasible, virtual reality or drone imagery can support interpretation with AI. Graphs and infographics can be used to explain results.

g. Whole farm approach

Participants noted the importance of viewing farms as a whole, with interconnected practices, and addressing their agronomic, economic, social, and regulatory dimensions. Demonstrations should cover techniques, but also costs, risks, market implications, and relevance to gender, generational change, and mental well-being.

h. Hybrid/virtual events

While physical visits remain preferred, there is also value in hybrid and virtual formats. "Farminars", live-streamed farm tours where participants can ask questions, offer an engaging option where in-person access is limited (e.g. biosecurity in poultry farms).

Social media tools—such as Instagram stories, Facebook groups, and WhatsApp chats—were also suggested. Videos (e.g., on YouTube) and TV programs showcasing farmer stories can be powerful tools to disseminate practices.



4. Session II: Perspectives of on-farm demonstration practitioners within EIP-AGRI and Horizon projects

Four panellists discussed how new knowledge and innovation can be made easily available to farmers through the organisation of on-farm demonstrations within the frame of OGs and Horizon projects.

Sonsoles Jimenez, farm entrepreneur and consultant from Spain involved in Horizon and [EIT Food](#) projects, stressed the link with tradition as an important success factor for innovations to be taken up by farmers, so they can easily relate to it. It is important to pay attention to the time, risks and budget related to innovations. These practical aspects are often overlooked in projects, where post-project support and continuity are often not foreseen. Trust building through shared experiences and personal connections is important, both between farmers and with advisors and researchers, to allow farmers to share their experiences and challenges. The research process should actively involve farmers.



Source: EU CAP Network

There are further challenges related to the participation of farmers in research projects. **Audrone Ispiryan**, berry grower, demonstration farmer and scientist from Lithuania, participating in Horizon projects, mentioned rigid project structures as a major bottleneck, while innovation demands flexibility and problem-based collaboration.

5. Field visits

On the afternoon of 17 June, participants visited public and private demonstration farms in the Veneto region. Detailed descriptions of the field visits can be found in Annex 1.

Field visit 1: 'Vallevecchia' and 'La Fagiana'

'Vallevecchia' is a 400ha public demonstration farm, managed by Veneto Agricoltura (Veneto Region), which also participates in numerous European and national projects. During the visit, participants learned about the importance of 'Vallevecchia' in knowledge transfer within AKIS, where main target groups are farmers, advisors and scientists.

Often, adopting innovations on farms is a systemic issue. On-farm demonstrations should not only focus on solutions, but also on discovering issues and questions that need to be solved from the start of the project. Flexibility would allow projects to be adapted based on farmers' real-time feedback. **Christine Mittermeier**, leader of the EIP-AGRI project [DaLeA](#) and 'Gut Westerwald' living lab (Horizon Europe project [Prepsoil](#)), added that bureaucratic overload, and inadequate compensation and appreciation for farmers, are major barriers. Farmers can feel unequal project partners when compared to advisors and researchers.

On-farm demonstrations and peer-to-peer learning are integrated differently in projects. For instance, **Anna Bago Mas**, from the Horizon project '[NUTRI-KNOW](#)', highlighted the different types of activities combined within the project: regional short trainings in local languages on OG outcomes, and farm visits organised in the country of origin of the OG but open to foreign participants. In '[NUTRI-KNOW](#)', the demonstration farmers act as ambassadors for the innovation and help to inspire other farmers. Knowing the local context well prior to organising demonstration activities is key (i.e. knowing the farmers' community in the region, their needs, challenges).

Christine added how she adjusts the format of demonstrations to match the target group. Based on knowledge of the local challenges, inspiration can be found by visiting demonstrations in other regions. Christine's most important motivation for participating and organising demonstration events is to acquire new knowledge to practice and share with other farmers.

To conclude, the panellists agreed that on-farm demonstrations are most successful when they are locally relevant and linked to farmer traditions, grounded in trust between participants, preferably embedded in networks, and delivered in the farmers' language.



Source: EU CAP Network





Source: EU CAP Network

The farm has conference rooms, a visitor information point, an on-site museum, and demonstration fields, which are used for hosting demonstration days, workshops, training and trials. 'Vallevecchia' applies an "open farm - open protocol" approach in which visitors can use a map of all field trials that contains descriptions of the applied trial protocols. Experiments are open to visitors during the whole season, and QR codes direct visitors to relevant information on each experimental plot.

During the field visit to Società Agricola "La Fagiana", a private rice farm, the farm manager shared the farm's evolution into a multifunctional operation offering educational tours for different target groups, including students, professionals, and tourists, without external subsidies or funds. The farm works closely with agricultural schools, with over 1500 students visiting annually and the training of numerous young farmers. Farm visits are key for the marketing of the farm, since "La Fagiana" only sells directly to consumers and relies heavily on publicity through word of mouth.



Source: EU CAP Network

At the farm, participants explored the visitor centre - an educational hub, containing an immersive video experience of the farm activities, and a visitor's room which offers activities for visitors (e.g., tasting sessions). Besides this, the farm has developed educational pathways with signage on the farm.



Source: EU CAP Network

Field visit 2: Agripolis (University of Padova) and Società Agricola Dante

The Agripolis Campus of the University of Padova stands out with its direct interaction between researchers, farmers, and technicians. In the frame of the INNOFARM programme, the University organises open days for many stakeholder groups (citizens, farmers, children, schools) during which they share practical and sensorial experiences and training on the role of pollinators, insects, cultivation of plants and greenhouses. Schools are consulted annually on the demonstration programme, which is integrated into the school curricula. Seminar participants observed experiments at the University's aquaponics greenhouse, including the strawberry-fish production system and salicornia-shrimp system. The University connects regional actors and private companies to set up a hydroponic vegetable production. They stressed the fundamental role of the advisory services to help with administrative burdens.

Società Agricola Dante is a private dairy cattle farm participating in the GRINZOVE innovation hub, with a strong connection to the University of Padova. The GRINZOVE beef innovation hub provides advisory services to farmers, and remunerates those who perform assigned experiments on their farms. The Dante farm is an example of the strong synergy between research and practice, a powerful and replicable model which allows for adapting global innovations to local conditions.



Source: EU CAP Network



The young farmer Simone Dante explained how, in the OG **LOWeMEAT**, the farm organised demonstration activities and contributed to the development of an information brochure with project results. Dante's farm is the lead partner and coordinator of the new OG 'RistallaBen',



Source: EU CAP Network

which aims to connect advisors and companies to improve the animal welfare of young Limousin cattle. The monitoring of water consumption as an indicator for the cattle's well-being on Dante's farm is shared with 740 other cattle farms.



Source: EU CAP Network

6. European Commission: A Vision for agriculture and food

On the second day, **Fabio Cossu, Unit A.1 'Policy perspectives', DG AGRI, European Commission**, presented the new Vision for agriculture and food adopted by the Commission in February 2025. The Vision builds around four pillars: attractiveness, sustainability, competitiveness and resilience, and fairness. Key priorities include ensuring fair farmer incomes, bolstering the competitiveness of

the farming sector and building resilience against crises, aligning agriculture with climate and biodiversity goals, and fostering vibrant rural communities. The strategy emphasises research, innovation, digitalisation, and skills development as catalysts for transition, supported by advisory services and knowledge-sharing networks.

7. Session III: Case studies for structural support to on-farm demonstrations

Participants discovered 10 poster cases with different types of (structural) support for on-farm demonstrations (from local, regional and national support for demonstration networks and projects, to EU initiatives under Horizon Europe). For each case, participants discussed the advantages, challenges and suggestions for improvement. The full discussions can be found in Annex 2.



Source: EU CAP Network

Highlights include:

First, the need for a **shared and consistent definition of demonstration farms** was pointed out. Clarifying what they are, and distinguishing them from ad hoc demonstration events, can help streamline support policies, enable coherent programming, and ensure more strategic investment across Member States. **Clearly defined roles and eligibility criteria** for demonstration farms are also important. The flexibility to accommodate different types of models (e.g. farm-to-farm exchanges, research-based, policy-based, or educational) helps with reaching different audiences and farming systems.

One of the most consistent suggestions was **establishing dedicated coordination structures at national or regional levels**. Network coordinators, demonstration coaches, or Managing Authorities could be key in organising and synchronising demonstration activities, avoiding duplication, and providing practical support to farmers (e.g., communication support). They can contribute to increasing the **visibility and accessibility** of demonstration farms (e.g. by setting up a shared digital mapping platform) and act as critical links between demonstration farms, advisory services, researchers and CAP Networks, ensuring that demonstrations are fully integrated within the broader AKIS.



Through sustainable and accessible funding mechanisms, farmers should be remunerated fairly for their time, effort, and knowledge-sharing roles. Simplified payment schemes (e.g. lump sums or flat rates) can reduce administrative burdens and make participation more attractive. Long-term funding is essential for continuity, knowledge co-creation and ensuring that demonstration farms extend beyond short-term projects. A platform with existing funding mechanisms is necessary. Participation in demonstration activities could be linked to other CAP measures, offering incentives such as bonus selection points or making it a requirement for certain beneficiaries (e.g. those in organic farming schemes).

To make networks effective, a significant investment in **training and capacity building** is needed for host farmers, such as training in event facilitation, communication, and technical knowledge delivery. **Building networks of demonstration farms** can help, contributing to the continuity and scalability of demonstration activities. Advisors also need training in emerging topics such as carbon farming, biodiversity, and regenerative agriculture.

Another important pillar of structural support is the **development of robust monitoring and evaluation systems** to understand the real

impact of demonstrations, including whether farmers adopt new practices as a result. Evaluation should be part of the demonstration cycle from the start, using participant surveys, follow-up consultations, and data aggregation to inform policy and future programming.

To broaden the reach of demonstration farms, **cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange** should be encouraged (e.g. through study visits, virtual exchanges, harmonised data collection, benchmarking tools). These efforts help overcome regional silos and ensure that successful practices are shared and adapted across different agro-ecological and socio-economic contexts.

Public-private partnerships and multi-actor collaboration are critical to success. Demonstrations that actively involve farmers, advisors, researchers, private companies, and policymakers tend to be more dynamic and impactful. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain the independence and trustworthiness of advisory services and avoid conflicts of interest. Collaboration between multiple projects through demonstration farms is also a successful approach.

8. Session IV: Harnessing the full potential of on-farm demonstrations in OGs and Horizon projects, and beyond

The final interactive session of the seminar called on participants to reflect on how, in their daily work, they could strengthen the role of on-farm demonstrations in scaling up innovation and knowledge in agriculture.



Source: EU CAP Network

Farmers stressed that they are not passive recipients of innovation but essential co-creators. To make on-farm demonstrations truly relevant, activities should include farmers from the start, considering their needs and learning preferences. Farmers can have a role in organising demonstrations that address real, practical problems and clearly communicate the benefits, expected actions, and cost-effectiveness of new practices in a language that other farmers understand and trust. They should be fairly compensated for their time and expertise, whilst being supported by educational opportunities, enabling regulations, platforms for knowledge exchange, and opportunities for (informal) peer-to-peer exchanges. For farmers, the quality and visibility of demonstration farms matter more than their number. Developing a staged approach to engagement, with realistic goals, stakeholder involvement, and clear data collection aligned with action plans, can ensure that demonstrations remain focused, credible, and impactful.

Advisors and innovation brokers see themselves as the bridge between research and practice, taking an independent and impartial stance, avoiding conflicts of interest, and working transparently to build lasting trust. Their role in facilitating demonstrations is also critical. To ensure quality, a common framework is needed to guide the setup and management of demonstration farms, including minimum standards, selection procedures, training for demonstration farmers, and more flexible regulation for innovation. Advisors must have the skills and time to do this effectively, requiring continuous professional development on technical expertise, facilitation, communication, and dissemination. Dedicated budgets for farmer involvement, advisors' time and training, and dissemination of OG results are necessary.



To maintain farmer engagement, it is essential to provide longer-term contracts, introduce periodic reviews, and implement follow-up strategies beyond written reports. Advisors can help create videos, infographics, or podcasts to share learning outcomes in engaging formats. With advisory contribution, hybrid models, ambassador farmer networks, and cross-border visits with translation support can enhance reach and motivation.

Researchers believe they can enhance the value of demonstrations by working closely with farmers from the start, speaking their language, understanding their needs, and defining audiences more clearly. Soft skills in communication, empathy, and co-design are as important as scientific expertise.

Researchers should provide farmers with clear feedback, benchmarking opportunities, and practical tools to ease data collection. They can perform social benchmarking, market analysis, and economic viability studies to better demonstrate the practical relevance of innovation.

Researchers should ensure that demonstrated results are field-tested and farmer-validated before dissemination. Follow-up evaluations help in identifying outcomes and refining future efforts. Researchers should include funding for farmer participation in project proposals, and the CAP can support demonstration programmes to communicate OG findings in farmer-friendly formats. Above all, researchers should recognise and celebrate the farmers who make innovation tangible on the ground.

Educators can play a role in competence building in on-farm demonstrations. They can match innovations with on-site needs and support farmers in creating welcoming, practical learning environments. They can develop frameworks for demonstration events by including hosting conditions, required infrastructure,

resources and time. They can also help develop an open catalogue of peer-to-peer learning and on-farm demonstration formats, as well as monitoring and validation mechanisms to understand which learning outcomes emerge from demonstration events.

Educators should support peer-to-peer exchange programmes, mentoring, and co-creation of educational materials. On-farm training programmes and vocational schools can act as living labs, and learning trips can stimulate cross-regional inspiration. Demonstrations should also be open to policymakers, helping them understand the real-world impact of innovation.

CAP Managing Authorities (MAs) and National Networks are key in providing the structural backbone for demonstration activities. First, they acknowledged the need to clearly define demonstration farms as different from experimental or research farms (aligned with CAP Strategic Plans). MAs can identify relevant thematic priorities for demonstrations and select demonstration farms in collaboration with farmers and advisors. They can create better systems to evaluate the effectiveness of demonstrations in meeting farmers' needs and promoting innovation uptake, as well as support systems for training of hosts. Funding must reflect the true effort and fair compensation for farmers' demonstration work. Safety conditions and insurance measures on farms must be improved to ensure secure learning environments.

To support dissemination, MAs can promote on-site visits, videos, articles, mailing lists, and online groups, and encourage regional meetings, cross-visits, and thematic events through National CAP Networks. A strong cooperation between MAs, researchers, and advisors is essential to embed demonstration activities within Horizon projects. Innovation hubs can help translate research into practice through identifying innovations, creating pathways for demonstration, and mainstreaming adoption.

9. Conclusion

Anikó Seregélyi, Unit D.1. 'Rural areas and networks', DG AGRI, European Commission, closed the seminar by highlighting that "*seeing is believing. Farmers learn best from their peers, but this peer-to-peer learning doesn't happen by accident. On-farm demonstrations work best when they are simple, hands-on and grounded in real farmers' needs and experiences.*"

The seminar reaffirmed the role of on-farm demonstrations and peer-to-peer learning in accelerating agricultural innovation. A central theme was the need for **farmer-centred approaches**, designing demonstrations with and for farmers - starting with identifying their needs, learning preferences, and real-life challenges. Peer mentoring, hands-on experiences, storytelling, and the use of simple, relatable language are essential for impactful learning. Fair compensation and training in communication and facilitation are essential to empower demonstration farmers.

In terms of **tools and methods**, the focus was on delivering practical, problem-solving events that are easy to understand and context specific. Simple field experiments, storytelling, and visual materials can increase impact. Digital tools can engage broader

audiences, while open protocols and video documentation enhance transparency and accessibility. Carefully designed, interactive formats and post-event follow-up can extend learning and increase impact.



Source: EU CAP Network



Stronger networks and multi-actor collaboration are needed. Cross-visits, regional and virtual exchanges, and small-group interactions can facilitate deeper, more sustained learning. Long-term peer-to-peer fora and national demonstration farm networks can maintain momentum and foster cooperation between farmers and other actors. Social media and digital hubs help in disseminating knowledge, engaging farming communities and the general public. Further integrating demonstrations in the regional or national AKIS increases their impact.

From a structural perspective, **sustainable funding and policy support** are urgently needed. Concrete guidelines and dedicated resources can support technical aspects of demonstrations

(e.g. registers, linking with CAP and Horizon funding, long-term strategies beyond project lifecycles). A central communication body could translate research into farmer-friendly materials.

Challenges include the need for clarity in definition and quality standards for demonstration farms and in measuring their impact, while ensuring their relevance to regional realities and connection to existing networks and initiatives. The distinction between peer-to-peer and multi-actor exchanges still causes confusion.

Overall, participants left with concrete ideas and an enlarged network to bring meaningful change to their projects, regions, and sectors.



Source: EU CAP Network



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