



UNISECO



European Union's
Horizon 2020
Programme
GA N° 773901

Farmers' cooperation and networks, a key driver for the socio-economic sustainability of agro-ecological farming systems

Photo: GAN Archive

Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU

ISSUE BRIEF

Agro-ecological transition needs a basis of cooperation or collaboration. Especially, cooperation among farmers is indispensable to ensure the long-term sustainability of the agro-ecological farming systems

The ES case study focuses on a group of small-sized agro-ecological farmers from Navarra and the Basque Country (belonging to EHKO association) that are already in an advanced stage of the agro-ecological transition, as they already implement environmentally friendly agro-ecological practices.

Socio-economic fragility

Despite the good environmental performance of their farms, those farmers face up social and economic fragility which is related to several problems, such as: isolation, low social recognition, lack of support in experimentation and knowledge advisory, fragmented and undeveloped agro-ecological market, weak eco-cooperatives and high workload that prevent farmers from participating in collective actions.

Strengthening farmers' cooperation

Based on our research findings, strengthening farmers' cooperation and networks is a key strategy that would help farmers to reduce their socio-economic fragility, without worsening their good environmental performance. Within this strategy, 3 initiatives stand out: learning communities (AKIS), peer-to-peer mentoring and a French measure that promotes farmers' participation in collective actions, known as "replacement services".

Author(s):

Alba Linares, Uxue Iragui and Carlos Astrain

Country:
Spain

Related to UNISECO case study:

Agro-ecological Farming Systems in Navarra & the Basque Country

Languages:
EN, ES

Year of release:
2021

Publisher:
UNISECO project

If you have any questions concerning this Issue brief, please contact the author(s) by e-mail.

Contact email:
alinareq@gan-nik.es



Activities held for members of the farmers' association EHKO



To be more effective, initiatives should follow a bottom-up approach and be planned taken into account farmers' experience to respond to the actual needs of the sector. Farmers and other actors need to associate and create networks and coordination structures to develop agro-ecological market. But the first step must be the empowerment of farmers' associations so that they can negotiate with the rest of the actors at the same level.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

Strengthening farmers' networks might reduce socio-economic fragility of small-sized agro-ecological farmers, ensuring their long-term sustainability and upscaling the agro-ecological model. As the system strengthens, more farmers would be encouraged to start the conversion and consequently the environmental benefits for the whole of society would increase. In addition, enabling cooperation would also develop the agro-ecological market, offering a growing consumer demand a more complete and varied choice of local and organic foods. Include 1-2 visual elements (i.e. photos, schemes, graphics), if relevant [What would be the main effects/added value/benefits/opportunities to the end-user and wider society if the generated

FURTHER INFORMATION

Webpage of farmers association EHKOLEKTIBOA: <https://ehkolektiboa.eus>

Webpage of CS Story Map: <https://uniseco-project.eu/case-study/spain>

About findings obtained from DST tools:

<https://www.navarraagraria.com/categories/item/1734-proyecto-uniseco>

ABOUT UNISECO:

UNISECO is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of socio-economic and policy drivers and barriers for further development and implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems.

Project coordinator: Dr Gerald Schwarz // Email: gerald.schwarz@thuenen.de // Phone: +49 531 596 5140 // Thünen Institute, Bundesallee 63 38116 Braunschweig, GERMANY

Project timeframe: 1 May 2018 – 30 April 2021

<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/773901>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/uniseco-h2020/>

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>

VISIT THE UNISECO AGRO-ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE HUB: <https://uniseco-project.eu>



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 773901. This policy brief represents the views of the authors. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.