



UNISECO

UNDERSTANDING & IMPROVING THE
SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRO-ECOLOGICAL
FARMING SYSTEMS IN THE EU

Deliverable 7.1 Guidelines for the Selection of Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) Members

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DATE OF APPROVAL:	06.11.2018
APPROVED BY PROJECT COORDINATOR:	Gerald Schwarz (Thünen Institute)
DATE OF APPROVAL:	07.11.2018
CALL H2020-SFS-2017-2	Sustainable Food Security-Resilient and Resource-Efficient Value Chains
WORK PROGRAMME Topic SFS-29-2017	Socio-eco-economics - socio-economics in ecological approaches
PROJECT WEB SITE:	www.uniseco-project.eu

This document was produced under the terms and conditions of Grant Agreement No. 773901 for the European Commission. It does not necessarily reflect the view of the European Union and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 773901.

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ACRONYMS

AEFS	Agro-ecological farming systems
D	Deliverable
DST	Decision Support Tools
EC	European Commission
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
EU	European Union
MAA	Multi-Actor Approach
MAP	Multi-Actor Platform
MS	Milestone
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAG	Project Advisory Group
SES	Socio-Ecological Systems
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SRG	Stakeholder Reference Group
UNISECO	Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guideline sets out the process for the selection of individuals to participate in the Multi-Actor Platforms associated with the UNISECO project. An EU-level and 15 case study scale Multi-Actor Platforms will be brought together for the duration of the project.

Multi-actor engagement will be used to ensure the consistent application of transdisciplinary methods. This approach, embedded in the composition of the consortium partners, seeks to strengthen the capacity of the project partners, the stakeholders and end users to assess the sustainability of different agro-ecological approaches and to prioritise policy interventions. A key aim of the use of the MAPs is to operate without gaps between science and practice, and to provide an advisory framework that will support a “systems approach”.

An aim of this document is to ensure that partners will follow agreed steps in selecting and inviting appropriate stakeholders to participate in the platforms. It includes a range of actors at EU level (such as EU wide environmental NGO’s, sector organisations, policy makers and European Commission) and case study level (such as farmers, farm advisors and local and national authorities).

This Guideline sets out the:

- i) purpose, aims and objectives of MAPs
- ii) criteria for identifying actors
- iii) procedure for selecting EU-Level MAP and Case Study MAP
- iv) procedure to explain and inform MAP’s participants
- v) management of MAP participation.

This provides a coherent and streamlined approach to the selection of members of the Multi-Actor Platforms in the UNISECO project.

The purpose of the approach is to ensure that the UNISECO project addresses directly, and is relevant to, the real needs on the ground, and to ensure that people with different types of knowledge are included throughout the project’s lifetime and beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidelines for the selection of members of the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) for use in the UNISECO project.

Call SFS-2017-2 did not specifically stipulate a Multi-Actor Approach to tackling the challenges of improving the sustainability of agro-ecological farming systems in the European Union. However, the approach is merited through the project's intrinsic implementation of a transdisciplinary focus, with engagement from a broad set of non-academic actors. The UNISECO project is now listed as a Multi-Actor Approach project with the European Commission.

The MAPs are an important element of the transdisciplinary character of the UNISECO project. The guidelines for selection of members of the MAPs will be complemented by a guide to transdisciplinary for UNISECO partners (D7.2) and approaches to the evaluation of MAPs into the UNISECO project (D7.3).

2. BACKGROUND

A central aim of the European Commission's strategy for EU agricultural research and innovation (European Commission [EC], 2016) is to 'boost demand-driven innovation and the implementation of research, creating synergies between EU policies' (p. 3). To facilitate achievement of this aim, the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' advanced the 'interactive innovation model' which 'aims to increase project impacts through the establishment of a process of genuine co-creation of knowledge (EC, 2016; p. 8).

Measures and instruments have been put in place to support implementation of this model. The Multi-Actor Approach (MAA) is one such mechanism. A MAA should facilitate "demand-driven innovation through the genuine and sufficient involvement of various actors ... all along the project: from the participation in the planning of work and experiments, their execution up until the dissemination of results and a possible demonstration phase (Horizon 2020; p.10)." Through the cross-fertilization of ideas between actors from across sectors and practices, innovative solutions can be co-created with co-ownership of results (EC, 2017).

Consistent with the Strategy for EU agricultural research and innovation (EC, 2016), the MAA is heavily dependent upon human and social capital. It acknowledges the value and necessity of bringing together multiple sources of knowledge and experience, from across different backgrounds, roles and disciplines (i.e. science, practice, business, enterprises, advisory services, NGOs, training and education); categories of actors (knowledge producers, users and intermediaries between the two, networks, clusters); and capable of reflecting different types of innovation (technological, social, organisational).

The purpose of a MAA approach is to ensure that the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme is relevant to real needs on the ground, and to ensure that people with different types of knowledge are included throughout a project's lifetime and beyond. The approach has been identified as being "... key for generating impact and co-ownership of solutions" (EC, 2016; p. 8).

The approach necessitates knowing the actors of relevance now, and in the future, using networks of participants in MAPs to reflect on sectors or groups of relevance as an ongoing process, providing feedback on the membership profile of a MAP, and its operation.



3. MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH IN UNISECO

The Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) of UNISECO will provide ongoing involvement, and open two-way exchange of ideas for co-learning and co-creation of knowledge with end users and stakeholders at the levels of the EU and the local case studies. This will facilitate the planned impact of UNISECO as well as informing its scientific activities.

Each MAP will comprise 10 to 20 representatives, selected to reflect the range of relevance to the topics of the project, its case studies, and the overall research in UNISECO. Membership of MAPs will include individuals, groups and/or institutions which affect, or are affected by, the processes and outputs of agro-ecological farming systems (AEFS) including non-agricultural actors (e.g. consumers, retailers, processors); NGOs and service providers; potential end users of products including educators, technical advisors, farm business consultants, policy implementation officers and farmers.

During the course of the project, a Champion Stakeholder will be sub-contracted in order to organise workshops, focus group meetings and other end user stakeholder engagement to occur as part of the in-depth case studies. This individual will also be involved in the selection process of candidate members for the case study MAPs. It is anticipated that in some situations the Champion Stakeholder will be able to identify potential members of the case study MAP with a higher likelihood of recruitment than the project researcher.

The MAPs will co-create knowledge with actors in agro-ecological farming systems in implementing more sustainable management practices, the development and application of decision support tools, and policy support embedded in transdisciplinary research. The MAP participants will provide advice and feedback on activities and materials as appropriate, ensuring relevance of outputs to their needs.

UNISECO will use two levels of Multi-Actor Platform:

1. EU-level MAP – A MAP with membership that reflects an EU-level perspective. Individuals for the EU-level MAP will be drawn from, for example, EU-wide environmental NGOs and sector organisations, and the EC.
2. Case Study MAP – Each case study will have an associated MAP. Individuals for the Case Study MAP will be drawn from, for example, companies along the supply chain, farming advisory services and local / regional administration.

To further facilitate co-learning and knowledge exchange within UNISECO, a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) combines representatives from each of the case study level MAPs. The SRG provides a forum to promote dialogue and collaborative learning between science and stakeholders, interacts with the EU-level MAP and integrates local stakeholder interests and concerns into project activities and outputs of EU-wide relevance.

A summary of the specific Tasks and Activities in which the MAPs will be involved is summarised in Table 1. Reference is made to whether these MAPs require inputs from EU-level or case study level MAPs, or both, and the timing of engagement with the SRG in project tasks and activities. MAP members will also have the opportunity to review and reflect on the MAP approach as part of UNISECO's monitoring and evaluation framework (D7.3).

Table 1. Summary of Tasks and Activities in which the Multi-Actor Platforms will be involved, and the timing of their engagement.

Work Package	Task	Activity	Description	Lead Partner(s)	Start and End Date
2	Task 2.2	2.2.9	Consultation with EU-level MAPs on farming systems and agro-ecological approaches inventory and typology	Task Leader: HUT	1 Nov-31 Dec 2018
2	Task 2.2	2.3.5	Complete identification of case studies (involving EU-level MAP) and synthesise case study inventory (MS8)	Task Leader: UZEI	1 Nov-31 Dec 2018
2	Task 2.2	2.4.3	Review advantages, limits, difficulties in applying the SES framework for sustainability assessment of farming systems, with PAG and SRG (MS9)	Running of session at project meeting led by ISARA	1 Oct - 30 Nov 2020
3	Task 3.1	3.1.5	Data from in-depth interviews / surveys in case study areas with the stakeholders, for Deliverable D3.3. [This will include people who are on or become members of a Case Study MAP]	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Feb – 31 May 2019
3	Task 3.2	3.2.5	Adapt the indicators in the Decision Support Tools (DSTs) in close consultation with the stakeholders (Case Study MAPs and selected farmers)	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Dec 2018 – 31 Jan 2019
3	Task 3.2	3.2.10	Focus group discussions in each case study using the DSTs to explore key parameters of uncertainty to assure broad coverage of potential impacts and performance. [Case study MAPs, reflecting their interest and relevance.]	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 May – 30 June 2019
3	Task 3.3 / 5.3	3.3.4 Joint Task 5.3.6 with 5.3/	Interviews with key actors in each case study; [Case Study MAPs, reflecting their interest and relevance.]	Data collection from by all case study partners.	1 Sept – 30 Nov 2019

Work Package	Task	Activity	Description	Lead Partner(s)	Start and End Date
3	3.3	3.3.5	Focus Groups in each case study, for Deliverable D3.4. [Case Study MAPs, reflecting their interest and relevance.]	Data collection from by all case study partners.	1 Sept – 30 Nov 2019
3	Task 3.4	3.4.5	Focus group discussions using the DSTs with participants of the Case Study MAPs and other local actors involved in the application of DSTs, for Deliverable D3.5	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Apr – 30 June 2020
4	Task 4.3	4.3.4	First stakeholder workshop with EU-level MAP for participatory scenario development at EU level, for Deliverable D4.2	Running of workshop led by SLU.	1 Nov 2018 – 31 Mar 2019
4	Task 4.3	4.3.6	Second stakeholder workshop with EU-level MAP for participatory scenario development at EU level, for Deliverable D4.2	Running of workshop led by SLU.	1 Sept 2019 – 31 Mar 2020
5	Task 5.2	5.2.6	Focus groups and interview-based mapping tools with participants for Social Network Analysis (SNA), for Deliverable D5.2. [Case Study MAP, possibly with some new participants]	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Mar 2018 – 30 Apr 2019
5 & 3	Task 5.3	5.3.6 Joint task with 3.3 (3.3.4)	Focus groups / workshops with local stakeholders in case studies. [Case Study MAP, possibly with some new participants]	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Aug – 30 Nov 2019
5	Task 5.4	5.4.5	Focus groups with local stakeholders in case studies. [Case Study MAP, possibly with some new participants]	Data collection by all case study partners.	1 Mar – 30 Apr 2020
6	Task 6.1	6.1.6	Multi-actor consultation of prototype plans with PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG.	Data collection LUKE and WWF.	1 Jan – 28 Feb 2019
6	Task 6.2	6.2.5	Validate sustainability assessment with the PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG.	Data collection LUKE.	1 Dec – 31 Dec 2020

Work Package	Task	Activity	Description	Lead Partner(s)	Start and End Date
6	Task 6.3	6.3.6	Validation of the tool with the PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG at the 3rd GA	Validation session at project meeting led by LUKE	1 Mar – 30 Apr 2020
6	Task 6.4	6.4.6	Multi-actor consultation of handbook with PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG.	Validation session at project meeting led by TI	1 Mar – 15 Mar 2021
6	Task 6.5	6.5.5	Consultation of briefs with PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG	Data collection WWF.	1 Oct – 31 Oct 2019
6	Task 6.5	6.5.8	Consultation of briefs with PAG, EU-level MAP and SRG	Data collection WWF.	1 Apr – 30 Apr 2021
8	Task 8.3	8.3.5 and 8.3.7	Collection of videos (vox pop) interviews, testimonials, etc. for Knowledge Hub and communications media (including social media). [Anyone who has participated in a research activity which could include EU/ Case Study MAPs]	Data collection by partners recording the video interviews.	1 Nov 2018 – 30 Apr 2021

4. DIVERSITY OF ACTORS IN MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORMS

Facilitating actor engagement through MAPs is a central part of the UNISECO approach to co-construction of knowledge, which is based upon the principle that knowledge flows in both directions through discussion and deliberation. To tackle the challenges being addressed in UNISECO, and develop a robust approach to the use of agro-ecological approaches, a diversity of perspectives will be sought in the membership of the MAPs (e.g. expertise, responsibilities, geography, gender).

A key aim of the use of the MAPs is to operate without gaps between science and practice, and to provide an advisory framework that will support a “systems approach”. This means “taking into account the dynamic interaction of different components of production systems and value chains at various temporal and spatial scales” (EC, 2016; p. 7). Integral to achieving this aim will be designing the operation and membership of the MAPs such that there are no barriers to participation due to financial, social, linguistic, cultural, gender, age or abilities. The project team will respond to any evidence of issues arising for member(s) and respond through engagement with the relevant parties, Work Package Leader, Project Coordinator, or Executive Board.

Membership of the MAPs will be drawn from land manager groups and advisors, public administration, business, NGOs and civic society. A list of target groups identified as candidate members from which final MAP members is provided in Deliverable D8.1 (Balazs *et al.*, 2018).



5. IDENTIFICATION OF ACTORS

The UNISECO consortium aims to include people in the MAPs who are drawn from farming advisory services, policy and public administration, companies along the supply chain, and NGOs.

The selection of individuals and/or organisations will be based upon the criteria set out in Table 2. Members of the MAPs can freely stop their participation at any time and personal data will be managed in line with our ethics and health and safety policies (Schwarz and Miller, 2018, D1.3; Miller and Schwarz, 2018a, D9.1; Miller and Schwarz, 2018b, D9.3; Miller *et al.*, 2018, D9.4) in accordance with national and European-level legislation.

Awareness of the possible participation of actor's in other similar projects will be considered, and where possible, synergies created with other stakeholders.

Table 2. Criteria for selecting actors to be applied for selection of EU-level and case study level MAP membership as appropriate.

Interest	Actors should demonstrate an interest in the topic. Even if they do not know a lot about agro-ecology to begin with, they should at least express an interest in learning more.
Availability /Commitment	Actors will be asked if they can make a commitment to being part of a MAP for the duration of the project lifecycle. It is valuable for the groups of people who make up each MAP to remain consistent over the course of the project so that the members get to know each other, build trust, and are more comfortable participating together in an open way. Too much change in the make-up of the groups over time may hinder the ability of the group to work together in an effective way.
Relevance	<p>The relevance of each actor will be considered with respect to their relationship with the types of groups identified for the EU-level MAP (e.g. EU-wide environmental NGOs and sector organisations, EC), and the Case Study MAPs (e.g. companies along the supply chain, farming advisory services and local / regional administration).</p> <p>The balance of membership of the MAP as a whole will be considered to ensure that it represents the range of groups, views, approaches, etc; no one individual group should make up a disproportionate proportion of a MAP which might render its purpose ineffective.</p>
Appropriateness	Each actor should be well-suited to participation in a MAP, having no declared implacable opposition to a particular stance, open to considering credible scenarios of alternative futures, farming and land management options.
Representativeness	This criteria describes the extent to which an individual or body can be considered as representative of a particular group. This may be evaluated based on their participation in existing networks, or if they are part of a membership organisation. Invitations to actors will specify if they are representing an organisation or as individuals.
Willingness	Actors will be selected for their willingness to share their own knowledge but also to listen to others. For the MAPs to work effectively, actors need to be willing to share their own opinions, to listen to others and take the concerns or points of view of other actors into consideration.

Gender	Efforts will be made to ensure that no single gender dominates a MAP.
Age	Efforts will be made to ensure that the actors in the MAPs represent a broad span of ages.
Geographical spread	Efforts will be made to ensure that the people in the EU-level MAP are drawn from across Europe to bring particular perspectives linked to their region e.g. Eastern Europe, Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and North-West Europe. Efforts should be made to ensure that the case study MAPs comprise representation of locally significant geographical variations.

Selection criteria will be informed by:

1. The adapted SES framework defining the theoretical scope of the sustainability assessment of farming systems selected as case studies;
2. The thematic emphasis and key research questions to be answered by the case studies;
3. A participatory exercise with national stakeholders in the partner countries to identify, interpret and prioritise societal expectations from the systems analysed in terms of agricultural products (food/fibre, energy) and public goods (provision of environmental services).

6. PROCEDURE FOR SELECTION

To apply the selection criteria set out in Section 5, the partner teams will assess the proposed candidates for the MAPs using the criteria in Tables 3 and 4.

Identification of perceptions will be achieved through workshops with a wide range of stakeholders at the EU level (stakeholders representing interests of farmers, actors in the value chain, consumers, environmental interests and policy development), national level (farmers, experts, actors in the value chain, consumers, NGOs and policy makers), and end users and stakeholders at the agroecosystem/ case study level (practitioners, educators, local authorities).

Table 3. Assessment table for use in applying criteria for selection of individuals to participate in MAP. For use in selection of individuals for EU-level MAP and Case Study MAP.

Criterion	Assessment (written comments)
Interest	
Availability/Commitment	
Relevance	
Appropriateness	
Representativeness	
Willingness	

An example of the criteria sheet is shown in Figure 1.

Selection of Candidates for the Multi-Actor Platforms	
Candidate: Actor 1	
MAP: Local Case Study XX, Greece	
Evaluation Team: AUA	
Criterion	Assessment
Interest	Actor 1 has been dealing with the implementation of environmentally friendly practices for the last 10 years
Availability/Commitment	Actor 1 is available and willing to participate for the duration of the project lifecycle
Relevance	Actor 1 is active in advising farmers of the Producer Group etc.
Appropriateness	Actor 1 has no known opposition to topics associated with UNISECO
Representativeness	Most of the producer groups involved, provide advice to farmers, and the specific one is one of the largest PGs
Willingness	The UNISECO partner has no experience of Actor 1 with respect to their willingness to listen and share; the actor has some level of familiarity with these forms of knowledge co-creation activities - workshops, focus groups etc.

Figure 1. Example of completion of criterion sheet for selection of member of Multi-Actor Platform.

Table 4. Assessment table for use in considering the factors (gender, age and geographical location) in selection of individuals to participate in a MAP. For use in selection of individuals to participate in EU-level MAP and Case Study MAPs.

Factor	Assessment (written comments)
Gender	
Age	
Country/Region	

The operation of the MAPs will be reviewed during the first periodic reporting, considering the fit of the members against the selection criteria (Table 2). If it becomes apparent that a difficulty has arisen then a member could be asked to stand down from a MAP, and an alternative member will be sought, not necessarily from the same organisation. The aim will be to retain the balance of the MAP across the criteria set out in Table 2.

If a member has to withdraw from a MAP, as above, an alternative member will be sought.

6.1. EU-level MAP

The identification of candidate members of the EU-level MAP will be in three steps:

- a) Creation of a preliminary list of potential members of the EU-level MAP.

Each Partner:

- (i) Using the information in Balazs et al. (2018; D8.1), categorise individuals as either 'Candidate for EU-level MAP' or 'Primarily Target Group for dissemination' using the Selection Criteria for MAP Involvement (Table 2).
- b) Provision of a short note, incorporating completed Tables 3 and 4, explaining why individuals have been identified as candidate members of the EU-level MAP. This is followed by the development of a short list. The two steps are:
 - (i) WP7.1 lead will compile a list of 'Candidates for the EU-level MAP', based upon the information provided by all partners.
 - (ii) The Executive Board will refine the initial list of candidates and produce a short list.
- c) Invitation to Participate in the EU-level MAP:
 - i) Initial contact with candidate members of the EU-level MAP will be made by the leader of WP7.1. Candidate members will be provided with the Information Sheet about the UNISECO project and note of the roles of members of the EU-level MAP. A draft of the Information Sheet for EU-level MAP is provided in Appendix 2;
 - ii) The official letter of invitation will be sent by the Project Coordinator. A draft of the letter of invitation to be part of the EU-level MAP is provided in Appendix 1.

6.2. Case Study MAPs

The identification of candidate members for each Case Study MAP will be in three steps:

- a) Creation of a preliminary list of potential members for the Case Study MAP, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Champion Stakeholder.

Each partner leading a case study will:

- (i) use the information in Balazs et al. (2018; D8.1) to characterise individuals as 'Candidate for Case Study MAP' with the Selection Criteria for MAP involvement (Table 2);
 - (ii) identify other individuals as needed if the information in D8.1 is not comprehensive for applicability to the case study;
 - (iii) provide a short note incorporating the completed Tables 3 and 4, explaining why individuals have been identified as candidate members of the Case Study MAP.
- b) Development of a short list:
 - (i) The partners leading a case study will compile a list of 'Candidate Members for the Case Study MAP';
The final decision of membership of the Case Study MAPs will be taken by the partner leading a case study in consultation with the leaders of Work Package 7 and with representatives of the Work Packages where the case studies will be used (Work Packages 3 and 5).



- c) Invitation to Participate in a Case Study MAP:
 - i) Initial contact with candidate members of the Case Study MAP will be made by the partner leading the local case study and/or the Champion Stakeholder. Candidate members will be provided with the Information Sheet about UNISECO and the roles of the members of the Case Study MAPs. A draft of the Information Sheet for Case Study MAPs is provided in Appendix 4;
 - ii) The official letter of invitation will be sent by the case study Partner. A draft of the letter of invitation to be part of a Case Study MAP is provided in Appendix 3.

7. CONCLUSION

The guidelines for the selection of individuals to participate in the EU-level and Case Study Multi-Actor Platforms associated with the UNISECO project have been prepared to ensure best practice for the involvement of stakeholders from across sectors and practice to inform the project's research and dissemination activities.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is compiled for the H2020 UNISECO project which received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 773901.

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APPENDIX 1. EU-LEVEL MAP INVITATION LETTER

Thünen-Institut (BW) · Bundesallee 63 · 38116 Braunschweig

Name of EU-level MAP member
Organisation
Address

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Date
06.11.2018

Invitation to join the EU-level MAP of the UNISECO project

Dear **ADD TITLE AND NAME**,

Thank you for your interest in the UNISECO project (Understanding and improving the sustainability of agro-ecological farming systems in the EU; https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/215949_de.html; www.uniseco-project.eu) coordinated by the Thünen Institute. Thank you also for your interest in contributing to the project as a member of our EU-level Multi-Actor Platform.

The UNISECO project aims 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. The project seeks to co-create innovative management strategies and incentives for agro-ecological farming in the EU. Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) will provide ongoing involvement, and open two-way exchange of ideas for co-learning and co-creation of knowledge with stakeholders and end-users to generate an improved understanding on how to strengthen the sustainability of EU farming systems.

The UNISECO EU-level MAP has been created to reflect different EU-level stakeholder perspectives and interests. EU-level MAP members will have the opportunity to contribute throughout the 3-year project to provide advice and feedback on different research activities and materials as appropriate, ensuring EU level relevance of outputs to their needs and, when suitable, will offer practical guidance and recommendations. Travel, accommodation and subsistence cost incurred in taking part in a research activity in the EU-level MAP will be reimbursed by the UNISECO project.

You are cordially invited (upon your acceptance of this invitation) to become an EU-level MAP member. To confirm your willingness and availability to join the EU-level MAP, please send me your answer by the end of **ADD MONTH AND YEAR**.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Schwarz (Project Coordinator)



APPENDIX 2. EU-LEVEL MAP INFORMATION SHEET



EU-level MAP

Study Information Sheet (04-11-2018)

What is the Project about?

UNISECO (UNderstanding and Improving the Sustainability of agro-ECological farming systems in the EU - UNISECO) is a European research project aiming 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. The UNISECO project seeks to promote the co-creation of knowledge with actors and stakeholders in farming systems. This will feed into the development of innovative management strategies and incentives for the implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems in participatory case studies in 15 European countries, and the assessment of their environmental, economic and social impacts at farm and territorial levels.

What are you being asked to do?

As a member of our EU-level Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) of key stakeholders / actors, we would value your perspective and contribution for the duration of the 3-year UNISECO project. Opportunity for involvement is via different research activities, specifically, one-to-one interviews, participation in a focus group or workshop, or completing a survey. The focus of these activities will vary depending upon the stage of the project. For example, initial research activities will focus on interviews to review the EU-level relevance of existing policy incentives and farming systems while later activities will focus on workshops on future scenarios and management strategies for agro-ecological farming.

How long will the activity last and where will it take place?

Activities will vary in length and location. Interviews on average should last no more than one hour and take place in a location and at a time most convenient for you. Focus groups are typically 2-3 hours; workshops can be a half-day, full-day or two days in length. These activities would take place at a designated location. Surveys would be online although paper versions could be provided if preferred.

Specific details about activity length, focus and location would be provided at the time of invitation to take part in the research activity.

How will the information be used?

Information will be used for research purposes only. It will be analysed together with other information collected through other research activities which focus on the UNISECO project objectives. Project findings will be published in the form of reports to the European Commission, articles in scientific journals, conference papers and presentations, and to research teams participating in this research.

Pseudonymity and confidentiality

We will ask for your name and contact details, which we will only use for our own research records, and so that we can contact you to share research outputs if you so wish. At any time, you have the right to ask for your contact details to be deleted from our records.

The information you give us will be treated as confidential and will be pseudonymised so that it cannot be linked to you personally. We will not disclose any details that could be used to identify you. If quotes are used in any output these will be pseudonymised.

No obligation to take part

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. During any activity you are free not to answer questions without having to explain why. You will be asked to provide a consent prior to joining the EU-level MAP to show that you understand your rights as a participant.

Reimbursement of eligible costs incurred

Eligible costs incurred in taking part in a research activity will be reimbursed. Further details will be provided with letter of invitation.

Liability

The UNISECO project and project partners accept no liability for stakeholders participating in the research activity.

For more information please contact: **INSERT NAME, address and email address of Lead Investigator for the Research Activity.**



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 773901.



APPENDIX 3. CASE STUDY MAP INVITATION LETTER

Example letter from Thünen Institute. Relevant letter headings to be inserted by project partners.

Thünen-Institut (BW) · Bundesallee 63 · 38116 Braunschweig

Name of Case Study MAP member
Organisation
Address

Institute of Farm Economics

Gerald Schwarz
Bundesallee 63
38116 Braunschweig
Phone 0531 596-5140
Fax 0531 596-5199

gerald.schwarz@thuenen.de
www.uniseco-project.eu
www.thuenen.de

Date
06.11.2018

Invitation to join the Case Study MAP **ADD CASE STUDY TITLE AND REGION** of the UNISECO project

Dear **ADD TITLE AND NAME**,

Thank you for your interest in the case study **ADD CASE STUDY TITLE AND REGION** of the UNISECO project (Understanding and improving the sustainability of agro-ecological farming systems in the EU; https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/215949_de.html; www.uniseco-project.eu) carried out by the **ADD NAME OF CASE STUDY PARTNER**. Thank you also for your interest in contributing to the project as a member of our Case Study Multi-Actor Platform.

The UNISECO project aims 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. The project seeks to co-create innovative management strategies and incentives for agro-ecological farming in participatory case studies in 15 European countries. The main objective of the UNISECO case study **ADD CASE STUDY TITLE AND REGION** is **ADD SHORT TEXT**. Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) in each case study will provide ongoing involvement, and open two-way exchange of ideas for co-learning and co-creation of knowledge with stakeholders and actors to generate an improved understanding on how to strengthen the sustainability of farming systems.

The UNISECO Case Study MAP for **ADD CASE STUDY TITLE AND REGION** has been created to reflect different actor and stakeholder perspectives and interests. Case Study MAP members will have the opportunity to contribute throughout the 3-year project to provide advice, feedback and contribute to different research activities and materials as appropriate, ensuring local relevance of outputs to their needs and, when suitable, will offer practical guidance and recommendations. Travel, accommodation and subsistence cost incurred in taking part in a research activity in the Case Study MAP will be reimbursed by the UNISECO project.

You are cordially invited (upon your acceptance of this invitation) to become a member of the case study MAP **ADD CASE STUDY TITLE AND REGION**. To confirm your willingness and availability to join the case study MAP, please send me your answer by the end of **ADD MONTH AND YEAR**.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Schwarz (Project Coordinator)



APPENDIX 4. CASE STUDY MAP INFORMATION SHEET



Case Study MAP

Study Information Sheet (04-11-2018)

What is the Project about?

UNISECO (Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of agro-ECOLOGICAL farming systems in the EU - UNISECO) is a European research project aiming 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. The UNISECO project seeks to promote the co-creation of knowledge with actors and stakeholders in farming systems. This will feed into the development of innovative management strategies and incentives for the implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems in participatory case studies in 15 European countries, and the assessment of their environmental, economic and social impacts at farm and territorial levels.

What are you being asked to do?

As a member of our Case Study Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) of key stakeholders / actors, we would value your perspective and contribution for the duration of the 3-year UNISECO project. Opportunity for involvement is via different research activities, specifically, one-to-one interview, participation in a focus group or workshop, or completing a survey. The focus of these activities will vary depending upon the stage of the project. For example, initial research activities will focus on interviews to review drivers and barriers for the implementation of agro-ecological practices while later activities will focus on focus group discussions to identify and assess future management strategies, opportunities for cooperation along the value chain and policy incentives to enhance the sustainability and economic viability of agro-ecological farming.

How long will the activity last and where will it take place?

Activities will vary in length and location. Interviews on average should last no more than one hour and take place in a location and at a time most convenient for you. Focus groups are typically 2-3 hours; workshops can be a half- or full-day. These activities would take place at a designated location. Surveys would be online although paper versions could be provided if preferred.

Specific details about activity length, focus and location would be provided at the time of invitation to take part in the research activity.

How will the information be used?

Information will be used for research purposes only. It will be analysed together with other information collected through other research activities which focus on the UNISECO project objectives. Project findings will be published in the form of reports to the European Commission, articles in scientific journals, conference papers and presentations, and to research teams participating in this research.

Pseudonymity and confidentiality

We will ask for your name and contact details, which we will only use for our own research records, and so that we can contact you to share research outputs if you so wish. At any time, you have the right to ask for your contact details to be deleted from our records.

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Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. During any activity you are free not to answer questions without having to explain why. You will be asked to provide a consent prior to joining the Case Study MAP to show that you understand your rights as a participant.

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For more information please contact: **INSERT NAME, address and email address of Lead Investigator for the Research Activity.**



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