



UNISECO

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

Deliverable Report D6.5: Issue Briefs for Practitioners and Policy-Makers

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of the Deliverable

This report focuses on and summarises the results of UNISECO Task 6.5 of formulating recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners in the form of policy briefs and issue briefs (and practice abstracts) respectively. The purpose and approach to the development of the briefings is summarised, their dissemination and links to the final documents.

1.2. Policy and Issue Briefs: Purposes and Process of Development

The purposes of the policy briefs, issue briefs and practice abstracts was to disseminate key lessons and recommendations for policy and practice to promote sustainable transitions to agro-ecological farming systems. These include overcoming obstacles in the sustainability performance of farming systems, and supporting the diffusion of agro-ecology for enhancing the provision of public goods. These outputs use key results and insights to agro-ecological farming systems developed in the project, such as the status-quo assessments (Landert *et al.*, 2019; D3.1), trade-off analysis (Albanito *et al.*, 2021; D3.5), analyses of market and policy instruments (Linares *et al.*, 2020; D5.3; Galioto *et al.*, 2021; D5.4), co-constructed transition strategies (Schwarz *et al.*, 2021; D3.4), social network analysis (Vanni *et al.*, D5.2), findings reported in the case study story maps (Landert *et al.*, 2021; D3.6), and lessons learnt in the operation of the Multi-Actor Platforms (Smyrniotopoulou and Vlahos, 2021; D7.3; Irvine *et al.*, 2019; D7.2).

The aim of the briefings was to disseminate knowledge of practice-related insights and recommendations, and facilitate the knowledge transfer between case studies. These publications are designed to be relevant to the communities of place of the case studies, and communities of interest in other geographic settings.

In line with the Communication and Dissemination Strategy (Balazs *et al.*, 2019; D8.1), the target audiences for the policy and issue briefs and practice abstracts were identified as:

- i) **Policy briefs**, for policy-makers at European, national, regional and local levels;
- ii) **Issue briefs** and **practice abstracts**, for practitioners (e.g. farmers, consultants/advisors, businesses, NGOs), generally associated with the national or regional contexts of the Case Studies.

Work on the development of the policy and issue briefs was structured into two levels:

- **Project level (for a European level audience) for policy briefs** to disseminate key lessons learnt and recommendations for improved public policies in the farming and food sectors. These briefs were developed by a team coordinated under Task 6.5.
- **Case Study level for policy and issue briefs**: disseminating key learnings and recommendations from, and mainly targeted at case study and national audiences. These briefs were developed by the case study partners, in collaboration with relevant partners and actors (e.g. case study stakeholder champions).

Selection of the topics of the briefings was informed by feedback from the EU and local stakeholders and Multi-Actor Platforms, and the work undertaken in the case studies.

The preliminary set of policy briefs, covering topics of project level relevance, was prepared on the topics of:

- *The transition to agro-ecological farming systems in the EU: Policy innovations as a driver at a local level*, published in December 2019. This policy brief summarises the inventory of policy and market incentives which support agro-ecological farming systems in the countries represented in the UNISECO consortium. The policy brief integrated the views of stakeholders (members of Multi-Actor Platforms) who participated in the project partner meeting and stakeholder workshop held in Basel,



Switzerland, November 2019. Their recommendations for policies and policy-making have been reflected in the “Recommendations” section of the brief.

- *Towards a typology of agro-ecological farming systems in the EU. Eco-schemes as potential major factor of transition*, published in December 2019. This policy brief summarises the conceptual developments of the project around a potential typology for agro-ecological farming systems (AEFS), and examples of how agro-ecological practices (at field, farming system and landscape levels) could be devised and supported as eco-schemes in the new EU Common Agricultural Policy. The aim of the policy brief is to inform the dissemination of information to support the transition to agro-ecological farming system in the EU.

The second and final set of policy and issue briefs, and associated practice abstracts, were organised as follows:

- Project level (policy briefs) – Topics were chosen by screening the key findings from all of the case studies, brought together in Task 3.4 (Schwarz et al., 2021, D3.4), Task 3.5 (Landert et al., 2021, D3.6), and Task 5.4 (Galioto et al., 2021, D5.4) to identify and prioritise cross-country themes (common threads), and mapping them against European strategies to which agro-ecology is of particular relevance (e.g. Green Deal; European Commission, 2019; European R&I partnership on agroecology living labs and research infrastructures).
- Case study level (policy briefs and issue briefs) – Case Study partners chose from topics reported in Task 3.5 as relevant for development into briefs for policy-makers and practitioners. They identified the topic(s) that could add value and new insights to the local dialogue relating to farming policies (e.g. CAP strategic plans), farming practices and agro-ecology, or to contribute to developing or addressing needs which emerged from their community of practice.

Issue briefs and practice abstracts were to address specific practice-related topics, complementing the content of some of the policy briefs. The topics of the issue briefs and practice abstracts were the same but presented in formats suitable for different dissemination channels.

The practice abstracts were finalised and submitted to the EIP-Agri platform for publication (<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>). These contribute to the overall aim of EIP-Agri of bringing together innovation actors (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs), and helping to build bridges between research and practice.

The issue briefs have been published through project and other channels (e.g. UNISECO website, newsletter, social media, [Zenodo](#)). Across the partnership, this included the communication and outreach channels and professional networks of project partners, and the members of the case study Multi-Actor Platforms.

Almost all of the policy and issue briefs are provided in both English and the relevant languages of the case studies or partner countries.



2. INVENTORY OF POLICY AND ISSUE BRIEFS

2.1. Case Study Policy and Issue Briefs

The final copies are listed in Table 1, presented by Case Study, with a note on the dissemination channels used by April 2021, and links to copies hosted in the Zenodo repository.

Table 1. List of case study policy and issue briefs (PB – Policy brief; IB – Issue brief).

Case Study	Titles of Policy and Issue Briefs	Dissemination Channels	Link to Versions in Zenodo Repository (language of brief)
Austria	PB <i>Mitigation of climate change by humus formation and regenerative arable farming in Eastern Austria</i> IB <i>Mitigation of climate change by humus formation and regenerative arable farming in Eastern Austria</i>	Researchers; Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages	PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4724403 PB German https://zenodo.org/record/4726578 IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4724399 IB German https://zenodo.org/record/4726574
Switzerland	PB <i>Increasing the knowledge about income alternatives to intensive livestock farming of the Swiss Lucerne Central Lakes region</i> IB <i>Reducing the uncertainties about income alternatives to intensive animal production in the Swiss Lucerne Central Lakes region</i>	Researchers; Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages	PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4683855 PB German https://zenodo.org/record/4683846 IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4683836 IB German https://zenodo.org/record/4683783
Czech Republic	PB <i>Improving soil properties on arable land by maintaining organic dairy farming in the Vysočina region</i> IB <i>Enhancing cooperation and capacity building to maintain arable land protection on organic dairy farms in the Czech Republic</i>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Published on bioinstitut.cz (in CZ); Published on ctpez.cz (in CZ); Email to members of CZ Multi-Actor Platform and stakeholders; Conclusions from both Policy and Issues briefs used in article for weekly Zemědělec	PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4718364 PB Czech https://zenodo.org/record/4718352 IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4718337 IB Czech https://zenodo.org/record/4718308



Germany	<p>PB <i>Supporting knowledge networks to foster trust and attitudinal changes in Lower Saxony</i></p> <p>IB <i>Adding value to agro-ecological production in market-oriented arable farming</i></p>	<p>Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Circulated to stakeholders, also through stakeholder champion who co-authored the brief</p>	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4766207</p> <p>PB German https://zenodo.org/record/4766246</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4766248</p> <p>IB German https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4803335</p>
Spain	<p>PB <i>Supporting the development of an agro-ecological market through Measure 16.2 of the Rural Development Program (RDP) in Navarra (Spain)</i></p> <p>IB <i>Farmers' cooperation and networks, a key driver for the transition to agro-ecological farming systems in Navarra and the Basque Country (Spain)</i></p>	<p>Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Email to ES stakeholders, social networks (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook)</p>	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4696008</p> <p>PB Spanish https://zenodo.org/record/4704623</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4695995</p> <p>IB Spanish https://zenodo.org/record/4704683</p>
Finland	<p>PB <i>The profitability of biogas investments remains an obstacle to achieving the carbon neutrality objectives of the dairy value chain</i></p>	<p>Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Luke circular economy focus area, Luke programme managers, Finnish press release 31.5.</p>	<p>PB EN https://zenodo.org/record/4888884</p> <p>PB FI https://zenodo.org/record/4888904</p>
France	<p>PB <i>Viticulture and agroecology (France). Cooperation between farmers to foster agroecological practices in viticulture</i></p> <p>IB <i>Connecting farmers to foster the adoption of agroecological practices</i></p>	<p>Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Email to case study stakeholders; Social networks</p>	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4674341</p> <p>PB French https://zenodo.org/record/4811400</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4811668</p>
Greece	<p>PB <i>The role of collective efforts in fostering agro-ecological transition in Imathia, Northern Greece</i></p> <p>IB <i>Pathways of peach growers for a transition towards sustainability: an eco-efficiency and input substitution tree crop-based farming system in Imathia, Greece</i></p>	<p>Zenodo, project website: case study page and Resources section</p> <p>Email to members of the GR Multi-Actor Platform</p>	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4701810</p> <p>PB Greek https://zenodo.org/record/4701819</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4701318</p> <p>IB Greek https://zenodo.org/record/4701712</p>
Hungary	<p>PB <i>Soil conservation farming in Hungary: How policies could be improved to assist agro-ecological transition?</i></p> <p>IB <i>Soil conservation farming in Hungary - Practical lessons learnt on farm level</i></p>	<p>Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages</p>	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4704719</p> <p>PB Hungarian https://zenodo.org/record/4704733</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4704609</p> <p>IB Hungarian https://zenodo.org/record/4704635</p>



Italy	<p>PB <i>Innovative policy tools and grassroots initiatives to foster the agroecological transition of a market-oriented winegrowing area (Chianti, Italy)</i></p> <p>IB1 <i>Enhancing knowledge exchange for the adoption of agroecological practices in vineyards: the Chianti Biodistrict</i></p> <p>IB2 <i>Promoting cropping system diversification in a highly specialised and market-oriented winegrowing area</i></p>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4710576</p> <p>PB Italian https://zenodo.org/record/4715697</p> <p>IB1 English https://zenodo.org/record/4710698</p> <p>IB1 Italian https://zenodo.org/record/4715851</p> <p>IB2 English https://zenodo.org/record/4710655</p> <p>IB2 Italian https://zenodo.org/record/4715839</p>
Lithuania	<p>PB <i>Small family dairy farms - from status quo to agroecological farming systems?</i></p> <p>IB <i>Improving accessibility to agroecological farming knowledge and practical skills of Lithuanian farmers to support the transition to agroecology</i></p>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4719201</p> <p>PB Lithuanian https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4630360</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4719199</p> <p>IB Lithuanian https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4835650</p>
Latvia	<p>PB1 <i>Differentiation of support for organic farming based on the complexity of agro-ecological farming practices and performance of agro-environmental measures in Latvia</i></p> <p>PB2 <i>Policies Enabling Transition to Organic Dairy Farming Systems in Latvia</i></p> <p>IB <i>Strengthening Agro-Ecological Farming Practices and Economic Viability of Organic Dairy Farms in Latvia</i></p>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Email to LV stakeholders; Published on bef.lv (in LV and EN); Twitter posts (in LV and EN); FB post (in LV)	<p>PB1 English https://zenodo.org/record/4680754</p> <p>PB2 English https://zenodo.org/record/4680784</p> <p>PB1 Latvian https://zenodo.org/record/4681055</p> <p>PB2 Latvian https://zenodo.org/record/4681060</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4680703</p> <p>IB Latvian https://zenodo.org/record/4681037</p>
Romania	<p>PB <i>Support the economic viability of the majority of Romanian farms by investing nationally in storage and processing facilities</i></p> <p>IB <i>Mainstreaming the practice of composting in Romanian farms through an integrated package of financial and technical assistance</i></p>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Email to local stakeholders, NGO alliances, and WWF network colleagues; Shared on WWF-RO social media (Facebook, Twitter)	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4710060</p> <p>PB Romanian https://zenodo.org/record/4772525</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4725021</p> <p>IB Romanian https://zenodo.org/record/4772662</p>
Sweden	<p>PB <i>Agro-ecological diversification to produce more food from Swedish ruminant farms</i></p> <p>IB <i>Agro-ecological diversification to produce more food from ruminant farms in Sweden: possibilities for economic and environmental sustainability</i></p>	Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages	<p>PB English https://zenodo.org/record/4676216</p> <p>IB English https://zenodo.org/record/4676259</p> <p>IB Swedish https://zenodo.org/record/4676270</p>



United Kingdom	<p>PB1 Addressing barriers of culture, mindset and institutions through effective co-creation forums and networking, in North-east Scotland, UK</p> <p>PB2 <i>Tackling the shortage of skilled and informed labour to deliver transitions to agro-ecological farming systems in North-east Scotland, UK</i></p>	<p>Researchers; Zenodo repository; UNISECO website, Case study and Resources pages; Shared with North-East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group and other members of the UK Multi-Actor Platform</p>	<p>PB1 English https://zenodo.org/record/4729443</p> <p>PB2 English https://zenodo.org/record/4729482</p>
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Policy and issue briefs have been disseminated using project level channels of:

i) Project WWWsite news items

- <https://uniseco-project.eu/news/156/>
- <https://uniseco-project.eu/news/157/>
- <https://uniseco-project.eu/news/158/>
- <https://uniseco-project.eu/news/159/>

ii) Final UNISECO project Newsletter

Links to policy briefs organised by case study areas on the newsletter published in April 2021:

<https://uniseco-project.eu/assets/content/resources/03-newsletters/uniseco-newsletter-Nr06-vFINAL.pdf>

iii) Project social media channels

Postings on Twitter and LinkedIn posts. The first Tweet of policy briefs was of Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden at: <https://twitter.com/ProjectUniseco/status/1385243397980577797>

iv) Final UNISECO conference

Accessible from the project conference www site at <https://uniseco-project.eu/final-conference>

These formed part of the #UNISECOresults campaign.

3. Agro-ecological Knowledge Hub

Policy briefs are being linked to relevant sections in the Agro-ecology Knowledge Hub, such as: <https://uniseco-project.eu/akh/science-and-innovation/results-and-tools-from-uniseco>.

2.2. Project-level Policy Briefs

Five project level policy briefs were prepared on topics of interest relating to agro-ecology, including issues common across the case studies. These policy briefs are listed in Table 2, with links to their copies on the Zenodo repository.

Table 2. List of project level policy briefs.

Phase	Title	Link to Versions in Zenodo Repository
Preliminary (2019)	<i>The transition to agro-ecological farming systems in the EU: Policy innovations as a driver, but still very localised</i>	Not published to Zenodo, used for circulation and discussion amongst MAPs.
	<i>Towards a typology of agro-ecological farming systems in the EU. Eco-schemes as a potential major factor of transition</i>	Not published to Zenodo, used for circulation and discussion amongst MAPs.
Final (2021)	<i>Recommendations for future research needs and actions to enhance agro-ecological transitions</i>	https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4964098
	<i>Operation of a Multi-Actor Platform in a transdisciplinary project focused on agro-ecological transitions</i>	https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4980160
	<i>Supporting advice, education and lifelong learning to promote agro-ecological transitions</i>	https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5009012

3. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A total of 22 policy briefs (05 at project level and 17 at case study level), 14 issue briefs and 17 practice abstracts were produced by the UNISECO project. The information covered findings in each of Work Packages 2 to 7, promoted and published through Work Package 8.

The content or process of preparation of the 36 briefings cover the breadth of the 9 overall objectives of the UNISECO project. The project level briefings cover the development of a typology of agro-ecological farming systems, and how they can contribute to informing transitions to such farming systems (Objective 1), and innovation in policies to aid that transition (Objective 7). The processes of working with stakeholders to develop the project activities and co-construct its findings delivers on project objective of improving the capacity and knowledge sharing of end-users (Objective 9) using a transdisciplinary approach (Objective 3).

The content of the briefings address issues of tackling the barriers to transitions identified under Objective 2 (e.g. Czech Issue Brief; Germany Policy Brief; Greece Policy Brief; UK Policy Briefs 1 and 2); the assessment of social, economic and environmental performance of agro-ecological farming systems of Objective 4 (e.g. Switzerland Policy Brief); assessments of sustainability at a territorial level of Objective 6 (e.g. Spain, Policy Brief); assessing the effectiveness of co-constructed innovative market and policy incentives promoting agro-ecological farming systems of Objective 7 (e.g. Hungary Policy Brief); testing the feasibility of the practical implementation of innovative market and policy incentives through multi-actor engagement in case studies at farm level and at regional, national and EU levels, of Objective 8 (e.g. Italy Policy Brief, Latvian Policy Briefs 1 and 2) and providing recommendations for future research needs and actions to enhance agro-ecological transitions of Objective 9 (e.g. project level policy briefs 1, 2 and 3).

The briefings contribute to the legacy of the UNISECO project. They will be provided as a set to the project policy seminars, scheduled for July 2021, disseminated to relevant policy officers at the European Commission through the Project Policy Officer and colleagues and feed into the preparation of the candidate European R&I partnership on agroecology living labs and research infrastructures. At national and regional levels, they will be exploited by project partners through appropriate communication channels, supporting institutional activities with relevant stakeholders, post-project.

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