

Call for expression of interest for experts participating in EU CAP Network Focus Groups

The European Commission is launching a call for experts, including farmers, foresters, advisors, scientists and other relevant actors, for three new [EU CAP Network Focus Groups](#) (FG) with a focus on innovation, knowledge exchange and EIP-AGRI. The FGs will start their work in autumn 2026 and are expected to deliver their results by summer 2027. Candidates for each one of the FGs below are invited to apply, in accordance with the guidelines set out in this notice.

Please note that the dates for the first meetings of the FGs are indicated below. **All applicants must make sure they will be available to travel to and participate in the FG meetings on these dates.** If selected experts fail to confirm their availability on these dates within one week after having received a notification that they have been selected, they may be replaced.

FG participants will be requested to do some preparatory work before the first meeting, and in between the first and second meetings. No remuneration will be provided for participating as an expert in the FG. **Travel and accommodation for the selected experts will be covered** by the European Commission according to the EU CAP Network travel and accommodation policy.

You will find the link to the application form at the end of this document, following the description of the FG call. Please read the entire call text carefully before applying.

Focus Group themes

For the current call, farmers, foresters, advisors, scientists and others¹ are invited to apply for participation in the FGs on three different topics, noting that these FGs will complement the work of previous ones. Topics in the current call are:

FG 59: Integrated approaches to forest wildfire prevention

[More information](#)

FG 60: Innovative on-farm fertiliser strategies

[More information](#)

¹ See p. 2 section 'Who can apply'



FG 61: Innovative protection measures against extreme weather events in pome and stone fruit orchards

[More information](#)

What is a Focus Group?

A Focus Group is a temporary group of experts with relevant expertise who are invited to share their experiences, knowledge and insights on a particular topic.

The purpose of a FG is to explore practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities, and to draw on and share experience gained from relevant innovative projects. The group discusses and documents innovative (agricultural / farming and/or forestry) practices, research results and implications for further research activities that will help to solve practical issues in the sector. Such issues may be related to organisational questions, production, processing, consumption, logistics or other areas. The group is asked to focus on practical knowledge and dissemination to the sector, and on developing project ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects.

FGs are expected to work for around twelve months and meet face-to-face twice. For more information on FGs, please see the [Focus Group charter](#).

What is the outcome of a Focus Group?

The specific question and tasks per FG for the current calls are listed below in the section '[Detailed description of the Focus Groups](#)'. Candidates should carefully study these questions and refer to them in their applications, indicating how their experience is relevant to answering the questions.

All FGs will be required to:

- **make a summary description of the issue**
- **take stock of the state of play of practice in the field of its activity, listing problems and opportunities**
- **take stock of the state of play of research in its field, summarising possible solutions to the problems listed**
- **identify research needs from practice and possible directions for further research**
- **propose priorities for innovative actions by suggesting ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups or other project formats, to test solutions and opportunities and ways to exchange the practical knowledge gathered beyond the Focus Group**



The outcome of the FG will be presented in a report, and results will be taken up by the EU CAP Network, which will share the knowledge and practical experience with the wider public as well as with relevant programming authorities. FG members are also expected to help disseminate these outcomes.

Who can apply?

The composition of the FGs will take into account the different characteristics of the specific challenge or objective at stake, and a good balance in the composition of the group (area of expertise, professional capacity and experience, geographical balance, etc.). It will also be based on the following profiles:

- experts such as farmers, foresters or advisors with relevant practical experience and technical knowledge on the topic, who can contribute with practical solutions to problems or opportunities in the field
- experts with a good understanding and experience of the relevant economic situation related to the topic concerned, including market prospects, production costs, supply, manufacturing, and socio-economic impact for farmers and the forest sector
- experts with experience in practical research and innovation actions related to the topic

If you are selected as a FG expert, your travel and accommodation for participating in the FG meetings will be provided.



Detailed description of the Focus Groups

Focus Group 59: Integrated approaches to forest wildfire prevention

First meeting: 25-26 November 2026

Background information

Wildfire risk in Europe is no longer confined to the Mediterranean region. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and the accumulation of vegetation fuels are increasing fire risk in many regions, including areas that have not traditionally been affected. Despite increasing prevention and preparedness efforts, the cumulative burnt area in the EU in 2025 was bigger than ever registered before: it exceeded one million hectares ([European Commission, Communication on integrated wildfire risk management](#)).

At the same time, structural changes in rural areas are contributing to this trend. In many regions, declining population and limited profitability of forestry and agricultural activities lead to land abandonment or reduced management intensity. As a result, vegetation accumulates and fuel continuity increases, creating conditions for more frequent and more intense wildfires. European forests are highly diverse in structure, ownership and management objectives, which creates challenges for implementing and scaling up wildfire risk reduction strategies. In particular, fragmented ownership and insufficient coordination between actors can limit the implementation of preventive measures at the landscape scale, where they are most effective. At the same time, traditional practices that reduce fuel load (i.e. the amount of combustible vegetation) and its continuity in the landscape, such as prescribed burning and grazing, transhumance and other types of grassland management, have been underutilised.

Addressing these challenges requires more integrated approaches that combine active sustainable forest and land management with improved coordination among actors. Adaptive land management and holistic landscape approaches play a key role by creating multifunctional fire-resilient landscapes. Diversified and multifunctional land-use systems, including the integration of forestry and agriculture, can help reduce fuel loads and continuity, while maintaining economic activity in rural areas.

Strengthening the economic viability of forest management is a key enabling factor. Incentive schemes, new value chains, and alternative income opportunities can support more active management and contribute to wildfire risk reduction. At the same time, improved knowledge exchange, advisory support and collaboration mechanisms are needed to facilitate the uptake of these approaches across different regions and contexts.



Main question

How to improve wildfire prevention in European forests through integrated approaches?

Tasks

- **identify existing and innovative practical forest and landscape management approaches, including on agricultural land**, that reduce wildfire risk while supporting ecosystem services, post-fire recovery and sustainable forest management; identify effective practices that have been successfully demonstrated in various (EU-funded) projects
- **collect and share successful practices and initiatives** related to wildfire prevention, fuel management, fire-resilient landscapes and forest diversification, including business and management aspects, across different European contexts
- **identify effective collaboration and governance approaches at landscape level** that support innovation and coordinated action among forest owners, forest managers, farmers, local communities and other actors
- **identify incentive schemes, innovative business models and value chains** that can support sustainable forest management and wildfire prevention, such as rewarding ecosystem services, diversified forest-based and bioeconomy activities
- **assess the potential of innovative tools, technologies and advisory approaches** supporting (forest) wildfire prevention, risk assessment, knowledge transfer and decision making
- **identify barriers limiting the uptake of existing knowledge, successful practices and innovations** by forest owners, forest managers, rural actors and farmers, and propose solutions to improve their implementation through capacity building, awareness raising and stakeholder involvement
- **identify research needs from practice** and possible knowledge gaps
- **suggest innovative ideas** for EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects and other innovation projects



Focus Group 60: Innovative on-farm fertiliser strategies

First meeting: 28-29 October 2026

Background information

As a result of supply disruptions and price volatility, prices for agricultural inputs have been rising, and have become highly unstable. Trade disruptions, increased transportation costs and uncertainties regarding global agricultural markets highlight the dependency of the EU agri-food sector on the import of agricultural inputs. Uncertainties related to fertiliser imports to the EU are putting severe pressure on our agriculture and food production. This contributes to an increased vulnerability of food systems, and threatens food security in the long term. To address these challenges, the European Commission recently adopted the [Fertiliser Action Plan](#). This plan envisages to strengthen in the long term domestic fertiliser production, improve supply resilience, and accelerate the transition to bio-based, low-carbon and circular fertilisers. Furthermore, the European Commission's recent Bioeconomy Strategy emphasises that circular and sustainable production, and consumption of biological resources can increase efficiency and reduce pressure on resources.

In this context, there is a need to increase efficiency, use resources more sustainably, and create synergies between different parts of the bioeconomy system, while ensuring farm resilience, competitiveness and food security. Innovative management of fertilisers at farm level is one of the components in this transition process, further supporting viable farm income and the resilience of the agricultural sector.

Within this scope, the EU CAP Network will organise the Focus Group '**Innovative on-farm fertiliser strategies**'.

Main question

How can innovative on-farm fertiliser management strategies enable farmers to reduce fertiliser dependency and nutrient losses while maintaining crop productivity?

Tasks

- **take stock of relevant practical fertilisation strategies** and their advantages and disadvantages for various crops and local conditions
- identify and assess **innovative local sources** for bio-based, low-carbon and circular fertilisers



- **examine circular nutrient systems** to reduce dependency on mineral and fossil-based fertilisers across different farming conditions
- **review the role of impartial fertiliser management advice** in addressing the challenges identified, while taking into account economic viability, environmental sustainability and efficiency
- identify **research needs** from practice and possible knowledge gaps
- suggest **innovative ideas** for EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects and other innovation projects



Focus Group 61: Innovative protection measures against extreme weather events in pome and stone fruit orchards

First meeting: 18-19 November 2026

Background information

Pome and stone fruit growers across Europe are increasingly facing challenges related to frequent and unpredictable [extreme weather events](#).

Spring frosts, hailstorms, strong winds, drought, heatwaves, sunburn, flooding, changing precipitation and temperature patterns can cause major yield and quality losses, while changing climatic conditions may also increase pressure from pests and diseases. At the same time, orchards require long-term investments, meaning that decisions taken today may influence orchard performance for many years under uncertain future conditions.

A wide range of innovative, active and passive protection measures and support tools for European stone and pome fruit orchards already exist. They increasingly combine physical barriers, microclimate control technologies, and agroecological management to reduce damage from hail, frost, heat, wind and excessive rain. Passive protection measures include site selection, orchard design, choice of cultivars, windbreaks and shelterbelts, soil and orchard management. Active protection systems intervene dynamically to modify the orchard microclimate, such as precision irrigation, wind machines, etc.

Although many solutions are already available, information on their applicability, effectiveness and practical implications is often fragmented. In addition, the benefits and drawbacks of the different measures need to be considered in relation to the specific orchard context and future climatic conditions.

Fruit growers across Europe often face similar questions: Which measures are most appropriate under their conditions? Under which circumstances are they effective? Can experiences from other regions be transferred to their own orchards? And are the benefits worth the investment?

Therefore, in view of the above, this Focus Group will bring together fruit growers, advisors, researchers and other relevant experts to exchange experiences and identify practical approaches that can help stone and pome fruit production systems adapt to increasing climate variability and extreme weather events. It will explore innovative protection measures that not only reduce climate risks but also contribute to the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of European fruit production.



Main question

How can pome and stone fruit growers protect their orchards against increasing climate variability and extreme weather events through effective, economically viable and environmentally sustainable methods?

Tasks

- collect and highlight successful examples, inspiring stories, approaches and methodologies to protect orchards against increasing climate variability and extreme weather events, in different European regions
- make an inventory of the current state of practice regarding relevant active and passive protection measures in stone and pome fruit orchards
- assess the impact of the most promising practices on environment, orchard productivity and profitability, and identify barriers to their implementation including the advantages and disadvantages of those practices
- discuss solutions and explore the role of innovation and knowledge exchange in addressing the challenges identified
- identify research needs from practice and possible gaps in knowledge which may be solved by further research
- suggest ideas for EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects and other innovation projects



Selection process and terms of agreement

Each Focus Group (FG) consists of up to 20 experts: farmers / foresters, advisors, scientists and, where appropriate, representatives from industry, civil society or other relevant actors.

Experts will be chosen according to their qualifications and proven expertise to support the progress of the FG (relevant information to be submitted via the application form). The European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development will select the group of experts.

Please note

- There will be no translation or interpretation, so it is essential that FG members can express themselves in English.
- Selected experts will need to be available to participate in both meetings - the date for each FG's first meeting is provided in this text.
- Selected experts will be requested to prepare for the first meeting and to complete some work between meetings, so they need to reserve some time for this.
- Results produced within the FG are always attributed to the group as a whole, not to individuals.

Selection criteria (individual)

Technical and professional capacity – evidence of the technical and professional capacity of the applicants based on:

- **familiarity** with the context of the topic: how familiar are you with the context of the FG, how familiar are you with the topic or challenge of the FG and what is your vision on the topic or challenge?
- proven **practical experience** that is relevant for the Focus Group:
 - For example, if you are a farmer/forester, you should describe your practical experience on the farm / in the forest, related to the topic. Are you applying innovative practices on the topic? Are you facing any specific challenge(s) within the context of the FG topic?
 - If you have another profile, for example if you are a researcher or advisor, you should highlight how your work or experience supports farmers / foresters in the field, or how your work is relevant for gaining practical experience on the topic.
 - Are you involved in innovative projects related to the topic?
- **knowledge and skills**: how did you gain the knowledge and/or skills relevant to the topic? This includes practical experience.



- **motivation:** explain your motivation for being part of this FG, including your expectations, why you want to take part, but also how the FG may benefit from your participation, and what your contribution might be.
- **membership** in any relevant networks or organisations

Balancing criteria

The composition of the FGs will take into account a balance in the areas of expertise, professional profile, geographical origin, and gender.

Application procedure

Candidates need to complete the online application form and **submit it by Friday 31 July 2026, 23:59 hrs CET** (Brussels time).

The system will notify candidates upon successful submission of the application. Please be aware that if this notification is not displayed, the submission of your application was not successful, and you will have to start again.

Applicants will be informed whether or not they have been selected **by end of September 2026**. All selected experts will need to confirm their attendance at the first meeting within one week of receiving the selection message. If they fail to do so, they may be replaced.

Terms of agreement

By submitting an application, the applicant agrees to the following and confirms that:

- the applicant can easily express him/herself in English (as this will be the working language in meetings, documents and in all means of communication) in both oral and written forms
- in case of selection, the applicant is willing and able to share information, knowledge and experience and to contribute actively to work documents, to achieve the FG objectives
- attendance at the meetings: in case of selection, the applicant is willing and available to travel (within Europe) to attend meetings of the FG (the dates for the first meeting of each Focus Group are indicated in each respective section of this document)
- availability: in case of selection, the applicant will be available to attend the first meeting on the dates specified in the call; should this, for whatever reason, not be the case, the applicant will [inform the EIP-AGRI Support Facility as soon as possible](#), to allow for the selection of another expert to replace him or her
- transparency: in case of selection, the applicants agree to publish their name along with their professional capacity (e.g. advisor, scientist, etc.), country of residence, and email address on the EU CAP Network website.



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

Background

EU CAP Network Focus Groups connect innovation actors, including farmers, advisors, agri-business, civil society, and researchers, working at EU, national and regional level.

For information about previous Focus Groups, please see the [EU CAP Network Focus Group pages](#).

