



## Actor groups and Future of Farming workshops: How to balance productivity and biodiversity in farming systems?

The overall objective of EcoStack is to develop and support ecologically, economically and socially sustainable crop production via enhancement of ecosystem services provision and protection of functional biodiversity.

### Four specific objectives:

1. Multi-stakeholder approach: creation and sharing of knowledge on sustainable crop production needs and solutions among different actors: farmers, advisors, policy makers, industry, and scientists
2. Evaluate and optimise services provision from pest antagonists and pollinators together with management of landscape elements (e.g. hedgerows, flower strips)
3. Design and test practices that support ecosystem services provisioning within the crop (e.g. varieties mixtures, intercropping, mulching)
4. Develop integrated systems and bio-based plant protection tools for ecological, economic and social sustainability of farming systems



24 PARTNERS FROM 13 COUNTRIES

As part of the EcoStack's multi-actor engagement strategy, a series of participatory workshops were carried out in 8 countries (France, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, Germany) from March 2019 to January 2020. The Future of Farming workshop helped gaining insights on the vision of various stakeholders (farmers, advisors, researchers, agricultural enterprises, policy makers) about the future of sustainable farming, in particular on how to balance productivity and biodiversity in farming systems. Participants discussed the actual challenges in agriculture and created new scenarios, identifying barriers and opportunities to achieve desired futures.

## Main results



## What could the future of farming be like?

- Farmers face an impasse due to increasing regulation constrains in pesticides use. On one hand they are asked to limit their use to reduce detrimental environmental effects; on the other they lack alternatives to avoid using pesticides.
- Globalized markets put sustainability of farms at risk.
- They recognize the importance of biodiversity but they lack knowledge and tools to apply biodiversity-based practices. Moreover regulation and legislation is not adapted to farmers' needs.
- Despite many challenges, farmers and other actors are willing to embrace solutions for a sustainable farming future where biodiversity thrives and productivity is maintained.

## How would the desirable future of farming be like?

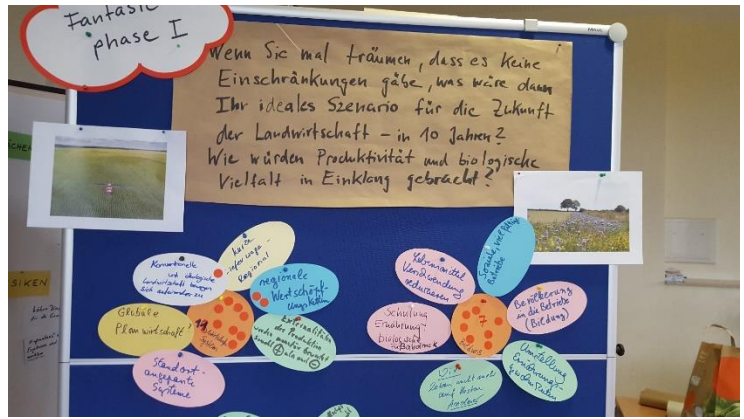
Several key themes were expressed by participants across European countries to achieve a sustainable future:

### Changing climate and nature of farming

- Farmers can adapt to climate change; however, it is already severely challenging farming in southern EU countries.



- Farmers are interested in changing their farming systems to increase farm sustainability, e.g. transition to conservation agriculture, organic farming, adoption of environmentally friendly practices.
- Conflicting views on the role of technology in the future: highly automatized and mechanised vs more extensive, nature-based systems.
- Technological innovations must fit with farmers' social and economic needs.



## Information exchange and public relations

- Need for know-how, education and training on how functional biodiversity (i.e. that part of biodiversity which provides benefits to the farming system) can be implemented.
- Need quantification of benefits provided by biodiversity e.g. benefits of predatory insects, effect of field margins on pest control and yield.
- Need to boost practical application of advancements in research. Practical trials may help reduce perceptions of risk and mistrusts towards new technologies.
- Better exchange between researchers and advisors, keeping extension services up-to-date.
- Use of social media to improve exchange among group of farmers.
- Concerns about public image of farmers: need to regain trust by building relationships with local communities.



## Supply chain and extended farming community

- Development of shorter supply chains.
- Strengthen the link between actors in the supply chain.
- Family-farming anchored in the community, reconnect with consumers.
- High-quality food production, fairly remunerated.
- Need to improve labour supply to promote biodiversity management.
- Education of citizens on the work of farmers and on consumption habits.

Pictures were taken during workshops in France (page 1), Spain, Serbia and Italy (page 2), Germany, Portugal, Bulgaria (page 3), and Sweden (page 4)

## Regulatory support and risk management

- Policy makers need to better understand the reality of farming, with greater engagement with stakeholders



## Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all the participants who willingly gave their time and energy to share their knowledge, perspectives and enthusiasm about farming and its future. We are very grateful for their inputs and hope that EcoStack research activities in the coming years will help provide the information and support they desire.



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