



Low-Input Farming and Territories

Integrating knowledge for improving ecosystem-based farming

LIFT 3rd Annual Newsletter

February 2021

PROJECT'S PROGRESS

LIFT project goal: to identify and understand how socio-economic and policy drivers impact on the development of ecological approaches to farming and assess the performance and sustainability of such approaches, taking into account different farming systems at farm, farm-group and territorial scales.

Research consortium: 17 partners from 12 European countries.

Duration: 48 months, from May 1, 2018 till April 30, 2022.

The LIFT project is currently in its third year (May 2020 - April 2021) with **research activities ongoing in all six scientific workpackages**.

In 2021 the LIFT project expects to deliver numerous analyses and conclusions in regard to adoption of ecological farming across the European Union, which will be made immediately available to the public via the LIFT website.

The public reports LIFT works to finalise and plans to deliver in the next year cover the following aspects: the finalised LIFT **farm typology** (deliverable 1.4 led by JRC) and **drivers of adoption of ecological approaches** (deliverable 2.3 led by SRUC).

In regard to farm performance the expected published results of the current work include: **farm technical-economic performance** depending on the degree of ecological approaches (deliverable 3.1 led by BOKU), **farmer private social performance** depending on the degree of ecological approaches (deliverable 3.2 led by VetAgro Sup), **farm environmental performance** depending on the degree of ecological approaches (deliverable 3.3 led by KU Leuven), and **employment effect** of ecological farming at the farm level (deliverable 3.4 led by UNIKENT).

In terms of territorial performance of ecological farming LIFT works to deliver reports on: **spatial dependencies in patterns of adoption** at local and regional levels (deliverable 4.1 led by UNIKENT), **socio-economic impact of ecological agriculture** at the territorial level (deliverable 4.2 led by UNIKENT), **environmental impact of ecological agriculture** at the territorial level (deliverable 4.3 led by KU Leuven).

LIFT works to finalise the assessment of **farm and territorial level sustainability** of ecological farming (deliverables 5.1 led by BOKU and 5.2 led by UNIKENT), as well as to evaluate the impact of **policies on the adoption of ecological approaches** and on the **performance and sustainability of ecological agriculture** (deliverable 6.2 led by INRAE). In addition, **innovative public and private measures to encourage the adoption of ecological approaches** and enhance the performance and sustainability of ecological agriculture are to be presented (deliverable 6.3 led by INRAE).



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 770747



LIFT deliverable: **D1.2. Interactions with stakeholders on farm typology.**

This deliverable forms the second phase in the establishment of the **LIFT farm typology depending on ecological practices**. The purpose was to gather the opinion of local stakeholders in different case studies, in order to understand the current state of existing typologies and to collect their recommendations for the development of the LIFT typology that was initiated with a literature review in LIFT deliverable D1.1. The qualitative study in deliverable 1.2 summarised here, was carried out using face-to-face interviews or workshops with two or three stakeholders. A diversity of stakeholders was interviewed through a qualitative questionnaire. Twenty one stakeholders from five different case study areas participated.

Four major themes were covered during the interviews: 1) typologies that stakeholders know, use and design; 2) stakeholders' opinions on the practices that should be considered to capture the degree of ecological farming; 3) stakeholders' interests in a user-friendly tool to assign a farm to a farming system through a specific typology of ecological practices; and 4) stakeholders' opinions on the LIFT typology. This study reveals key elements to integrate in the development of the LIFT typology and the LIFT typology-tool. For example, all stakeholders recognised (in their area) one or more farming systems proposed by the LIFT typology, but also indicated that it is difficult to use this typology as it is, given the potential overlaps between different systems.

All of the stakeholders interviewed recognised organic farming as an ecological approach, even if some thought that it does not go far enough because there is no control of external input and use of fossil energy for organic farms. There were also similar opinions on ecological practices according to the same production: crops or livestock. All stakeholders recognised that it is difficult to differentiate farms according to their degree of ecological practices because there were no thresholds and no linear evolution, so they proposed summary indicators based on the use of chemical products and fossil energy. For this, they were interested in a simplified typology-tool.

The report has been prepared by the LIFT partners: VetAgro Sup (France) - lead, INRAE (France), JRC (Italy), IAE-AR (Romania), SLU (Sweden), UNIBO (Italy).



LARGE-SCALE SURVEY OF FARMERS CARRIED OUT

LIFT has successfully carried out the planned large-scale survey across the selected European countries. In total, there were **1,628 completed questionnaires**, with the following geographic distribution: 94 in Austria, 67 in England (UK), 229 in France, 51 in Germany, 108 in Greece, 120 in Hungary, 33 in Ireland, 100 in Italy, 100 in Poland, 52 in Romania, 113 in Scotland (UK) and 561 in Sweden.

Data for a total of 3,429 common variables were collected, including the **basic farm characteristics**, farm employment and working conditions. Among the **characteristics of plant cultivation** were questions regarding pest and plant disease management, fertilisation and soil management of crop areas, seeds, crop diversification, crop rotation and grassland management. Concerning **livestock** the data collected covered feed information for various types of livestock, livestock disease management, livestock location and management of manure and slurry. Information about landscape features and habitats, agroforestry and integrated farming, water management, precision technologies for irrigation, mechanisation, energy management, drivers of practice adoption and factors of production were collected.

Special focus was taken on the **applied farming practices**: soil tillage, planting, fertilising, pest control and harvesting. Fixed assets and investments were assessed, as well as detailed inputs for crop and livestock production. Finally farm outputs, subsidies, income and contracting for agricultural outputs and future policies were evaluated.



SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Here we present several published articles based on LIFT research findings:

Candemir A., Duvalaix S., Latruffe L. (2021). [Agricultural cooperatives and farm sustainability – A literature review](#). **Journal of Economic Surveys**.

The literature review aims at linking the empirical findings to the theoretical understanding of cooperatives, in particular members' heterogeneity. It is shown that cooperatives play a non-negligible role in farm economic sustainability and in the adoption of environmentally friendly practices, suggesting that both public policies and private initiatives in cooperatives may be complementary. However, the trade-off between economic and environmental sustainability in cooperatives would need to be further investigated.

Duvalaix S., Lassalas M., Latruffe L., Konstantidelli V., Tzouramani I. (2020). [Adopting environmentally friendly farming practices and the role of quality labels and producer organisations: A qualitative analysis based on two European case studies](#). **Sustainability**, 12(24), 10457.

The way in which quality labels and producer organisations influence the adoption of environmentally friendly practices by farmers is explored. It is shown that many of the quality labels in both case studies, for which agricultural farming systems must comply with a set of rules, are not specifically aimed at improving environmental impacts; there are several geographical indication labels in the Cretan olive oil sector, and in the French pig sector many quality labels focus on other practices that matter for society, namely improving animal welfare.

Heinrichs J., Kuhn T., Pahlmeyer C., Britz W. (2021). [Economic effects of plot sizes and farm-plot distances in organic and conventional farming systems: A farm-level analysis for Germany](#). **Agricultural Systems**, 187.

Plot sizes and farm-plot distances affect the economic performance of agricultural production. Their economic effects likely differ between conventional and organic farming systems due to major differences in crop production programs. The paper quantifies these effects based on big data on resource requirements of field operations, summarised by regression models. Combined with detailed case study information obtained through interviews, plot size and farm-plot distance effects for three case study farms that recently converted to organic farming are assessed.

Florian V., Rusu M., Rosu E., Chitea M., Bruma S., Pocol C. (2020). [Behavioural factors and ecological farming. Cases studies](#). **Scientific Papers Series: "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development"**, 20(2/2020).

The main objective of the paper is to identify and understand how Romanian farmers relate to ecological farming in terms of ecological practices and ecological products. To achieve this objective, qualitative research methods were used: hybrid forum method and in-depth interviews. The results reveal that in the county Cluj-Napoca, stakeholders opt for building an operational social system (balanced functioning of the education, production, research, distribution systems within multi-dimensional political programmes/projects).

Florian V., Rosu E. (2020). [Ecological farming - rural realities, socio ecological arguments and comments. Cluj county case study](#). **Agricultural Economics and Rural Development**, 17(1).

The investigation of the relationship between ecology and sociology, in a sustainable agricultural matrix, provides possible complete answers to the problems generated by the respect of the environment and building a favourable environmental matrix. The interdisciplinary perspective investigates the following dimensions in sociological terms: environmental, economic and social processes induced by land use or land use changes, spatial interactions of processes and driving forces in anthropogenic landscapes. The specific trends of ecological farming are largely influenced by the behavioural factors and by the cultural and social capital of farmers involved in this type of farming activity.



NEW COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION TOOLS

The LIFT project has launched two new dissemination tools to reach its stakeholders and provide more options to communicate.

The first one is the [LIFT blog](#) aimed to share key researched ideas and provide an additional platform for discussion with the stakeholders. As more research outputs are produced within the LIFT project they will be discussed in its blog articles, facilitating understanding of key research assumptions and conclusions.



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Another communication tool that was launched for project purposes is the [LIFT Instagram](#) account, as sharing graphic information becomes more appealing to stakeholders and LIFT produces increasingly more materials that can be presented visually. Check it out!

INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS



Within the **second project year**, LIFT has managed to carry out 23 workshops across its case study areas delivering valuable information on the researched issues both to project partners and to the stakeholders. Interactions with stakeholders have mostly been carried out face-to-face, with only three workshops that had to be carried out in an online format due to the development of COVID-19 situation in spring 2020. A total of 288 stakeholders participated in the second-year LIFT workshops, with the largest number of participants from Greece (53 persons) and 41 participants from both France and Germany, 28 people came from Poland, 25 from Sweden, 24 from the United Kingdom, 17 from Austria, 14 from Hungary, 13 from Belgium, 11 from both Italy and Ireland, and 10 from Romania.

The **third year workshops** are currently in progress. Key themes being discussed are farm level performance on case study level, how multiple drivers of change interact to determine the delivery of sustainable development in the region under different scenarios of uptake of ecological approaches to farming, the social impact of ecological systems in a region and the role for collective-based policy approaches to encourage the uptake of ecological farming.

Another tool that facilitates online interactions and cooperation with the stakeholders is the LIFT stakeholder platform, which is getting ready to launch the **Massive Online Open Course (MOOC)** for its stakeholders in the next months. The objective of the LIFT MOOC is to transfer knowledge gained on the drivers that facilitate the development of ecological approaches on farms and the improvement of performance and sustainability of such farms.

RELATED PROJECTS

LIFT has created a webpage to enable searches for related projects, which could be beneficial to stakeholders and participants of other projects in finding information about ecological farming and the sustainability and resilience of farming systems. This information with links to other projects' websites and social media accounts is available at <https://www.lift-h2020.eu/links>.





UPCOMING EVENTS

Looking forward to the following events:

- **LIFT 3rd Annual Meeting (online) on 15-16 March 2021**, bringing together all the LIFT partners to discuss the project's progress and next objectives.
- **International Conference on Breeding and Seed Sector Innovations for Organic Food Systems (online) on 8-10 March 2021** organised by EUCARPIA jointly with LIVESEED, BRESOV, ECOBREED, FLPP projects and ECO-PB.
- **UNISECO Final Conference (online) on 18-19 March 2021**, presenting the results of the UNISECO project (ending April 2021) including strategies for agro-ecological transitions in a diverse set of case studies across Europe, territorial implications of agro-ecological transitions at EU-level, and the Agro-Ecological Knowledge Hub and key recommendations for policy and practice.
- **Seminar "Economics, Institutions, Development and Rural Spaces" (EIDER)" by Research Unit Territoires (online or onsite) on 29 April 2021** presenting the results from LIFT stakeholders' survey in France on the socio-economic impacts of ecological agriculture (by INRAE and VetAgro Sup).
- **16th Congress of the European Association of Agricultural Economists (onsite in Prague, Czech Republic or online) on 20-23 July 2021** aimed at raising the impact of agricultural economics and concerning multidisciplinary, stakeholder engagement and novel approaches to research.
- **31st International Conference of Agricultural Economists (online) on 17-31 August 2021** organised to foster the application of agricultural economics to improve rural economic and social conditions, as well as advance knowledge of agriculture's economic organization.
- **20th Organic World Congress (onsite in Rennes, France and online) on 6-10 September 2021** aiming to address questions around resilience, societal transformation, ecosystem regeneration, health, and food sovereignty.

LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFT!



To stay up to date with the latest news, research results and planned workshops for stakeholders in your area or to sign up to receive LIFT newsletters and updates, please visit our website: www.lift-h2020.eu, check out our social media accounts or contact the LIFT project representatives through the website's contact page.

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