



EIP Agri funding can drive innovation in forestry and agroforestry. Supportive administrations and longer project cycles are key

Why interactive innovation across countries matters for forestry and agroforestry in Europe?

Forests and agroforestry systems account for almost 45% of the land in the EU and provide a wide range of ecosystem services, including natural habitats, water regulation, carbon storage and sequestration, wood and non-wood products. Together, they have great potential to facilitate the ambition of a sustainable green transition in Europe yet face significant challenges such as fragmented forest ownership, land abandonment and demographic decline in rural areas. Innovations are key to revitalize and improve long-standing practices, but need to be promoted by knowledge transfer, co-creation of digital solutions for increased efficiency in operations and monitoring of ecosystem services, and development of business models with products from forestry and agroforestry.

FOREST4EU research shows that OG innovators in forestry and agroforestry would recommend participating in the interactive and multi-stakeholder-driven approach proposed by the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP-Agri) of the CAP Network. Yet, the share of forestry and agroforestry projects share is limited, representing only 7%. To enhance uptake and unleash the full potential of forestry and agroforestry for green growth and societal well-being in Europe, administrative and project management barriers must be tackled.



Figure 1: How OG members in forestry and agroforestry look at EIP-AGRI funding (results from FOREST4EU survey research, n = 73)

Who can act and how

Forest owners and managers, farmers and research organization drive partnerships for innovation in forestry and agroforestry. To thrive in collaboration, succeed in implementing their novel solutions and approaches, and create impact, innovators in forestry and agroforestry need supportive government authorities, advisors, and associations.

The EIP-Agri Operational Groups are multi-actor driven innovation partnerships that pull complementary knowledge and expertise together and operate from bottom-up. Their operation at national and regional levels, requires that government authorities create user-friendly and easily accessible rules for project design, selection procedures, eligibility of costs, accounting and reporting, and payment of approved funding.

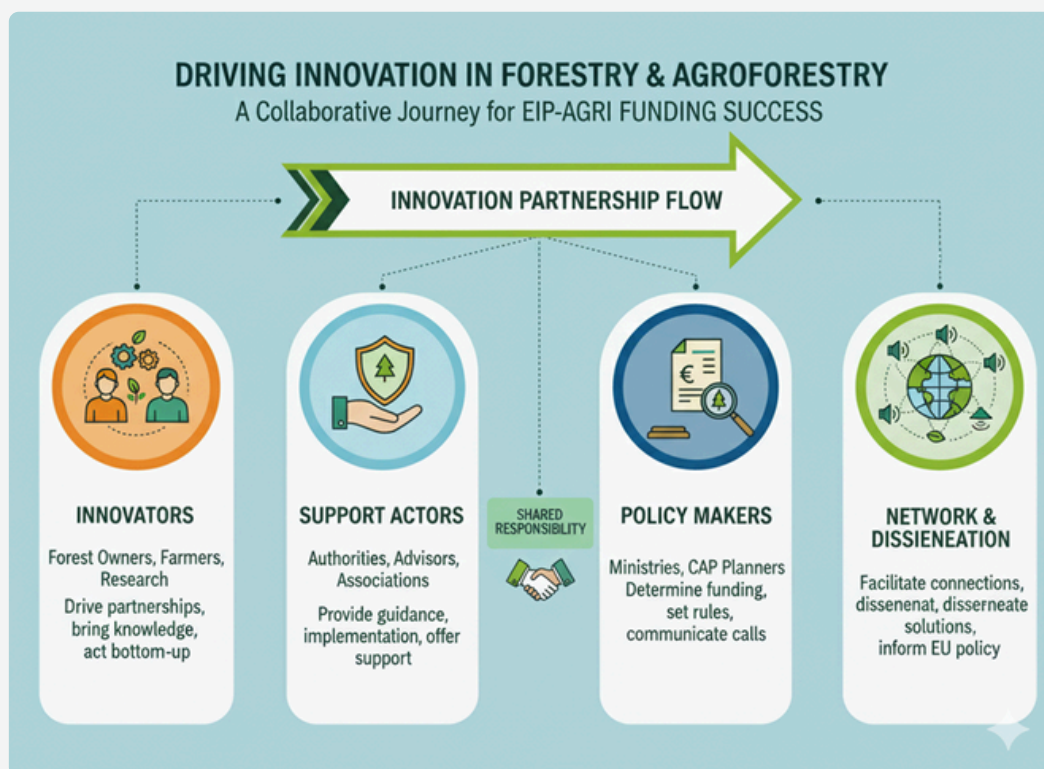


Advisors acting as innovation brokers and project coordinators are key to guide the thorough preparation process, development and implementation of work plans and resolution of financial or organizational issues.

Policymakers in ministries, involved in rural development programming and CAP strategic plans determine funding streams and thus play very important roles in funding for forestry and agroforestry. Policymakers can include topical issues of the forest sector into calls for funding applications, ensure their effective communication, and steer how the different government authorities involved in the administration of EIP-Agri funding collaborate.



National networks for rural development can facilitate the networking of Operational Groups and disseminate the concrete solutions found and implemented through various media and at events. Their accumulated expertise is also salient for policymaking at EU level where decisions about the future of the CAP Network are taken. The national networks can help communicating administrative concerns from local level to the EU level.



Policy recommendations

FOREST4EU offers several recommendations how to improve the enabling environment for interactive innovation in forestry and agroforestry by means of EIP-Agri.

The complex administration and market pressure hamper potential beneficiaries to invest resources in applications for EIP-Agri funding. A less burdensome and more efficient project planning and implementation is highly recommended. This can be done through pre-payments and budget adaptability, as well as administrative simplification and regional policies that put innovation and entrepreneurship at the centre.

KEY CHALLENGES IN FORESTRY AND AGROFORESTRY

LONGER FUNDING CYCLES

Current **funding** cycles often **might not** match the long-term nature of forestry and production **projects**.

BUREAUCRACY VS. MARKET SPEED

Slow bureaucratic **processes** often **fail to keep pace** with and capitalize on fast-moving market **opportunities**, thereby **hindering** market **growth** and development.

IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluate project achievements to establish **credibility** and a **strong role**.

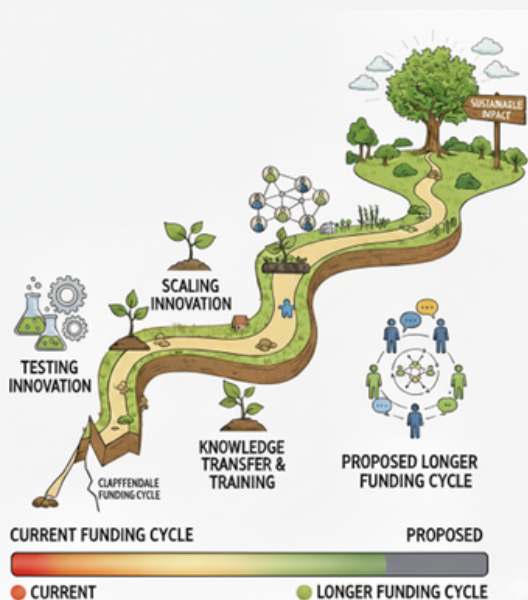
Forestry and agroforestry operate both in short and longer-time horizons. Extending the lifetime of funding projects would allow for thorough knowledge transfer and training within such longer project timelines, helping new practices take root and continue beyond the project's end. The Operational Groups working in this area require longer funding cycles than the standard project duration of 3 years to fully test and scale innovations and ensure knowledge transfer.

The outputs and impacts of innovation projects merit adequate evaluation to learn from practice how to develop forestry and agroforestry into the future. Focusing on the new tools or approaches as means to adjust to changing conditions (economic, social, climatic, etc.), and involving forest owners and farmers increase the validity of the evaluations. Cross-country study visits help to draw lessons learned from innovation practice and multiply the dissemination.



Conclusions

Interactive innovation in forestry and agroforestry is successful if:



- ✔ It creates ownership and commitment from multiple stakeholders in innovation including innovators in forestry and agroforestry, administrations, associations, and networks for rural development.
- ✔ It facilitates knowledge transfer and new solutions at regional, national, and transnational levels.
- ✔ It promotes agroforestry across Europe to improve adaptation to climate change and helps sustaining farmers' income.
- ✔ It operates with longer project timelines, helping new practices take root and continue beyond the project's end
- ✔ It improves management, adaptive capacity, and sustainability to create impact for green growth and well-being.

About FOREST4EU

The key objective of FOREST4EU, funded by the Horizon Europe program, is to connect Operational Groups across Europe, fostering synergies and facilitating the exchange of best practices. The project is actively collecting and disseminating valuable information developed by these OGs, creating a central resource for the forestry community.



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE



cese for
FORESTRY HEART, research spirit



etaflorence
renewable
energies



Regione Toscana



Centar kompetencija d.o.o.
za istraživanje i razvoj



Funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union (Grant n. 101086216). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



FOREST4EU Project



FOREST4EU Project



info@forest4eu.eu



forest4eu.eu

