



Low-Input Farming and Territories

Integrating knowledge for improving ecosystem-based farming

LIFT 1st Annual Newsletter

January 2019

THE LIFT PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

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 EU countries

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

Ecological approaches to farming practices are gaining interest across Europe. As this interest grows there is a pressing need to assess the potential contributions these practices may make, the contexts in which they function and their attractiveness to farmers as potential adopters. In particular, ecological agriculture must be assessed against the aim of promoting the **improved performance and sustainability** of farms, rural environment, rural societies and economies, together.

The overall goal of LIFT is to identify the potential **benefits of the adoption of ecological farming** in the European Union (EU) and to understand how socio-economic and policy factors impact the adoption, performance and sustainability of ecological farming at various scales, from the level of the single farm to that of a territory. To meet this goal, LIFT will assess the determinants of adoption of ecological approaches, and **evaluate the performance and overall sustainability** of these approaches in comparison to more conventional agriculture across a range of farm systems and geographic scales.

LIFT will also develop new private **arrangements and policy instruments** that could improve the adoption and subsequent performance and sustainability of the rural nexus. For this, LIFT will suggest an innovative framework for multi-scale sustainability assessment aimed at identifying critical paths toward the adoption of ecological approaches to enhance public goods and ecosystem services delivery. This

will be achieved through the **integration of transdisciplinary scientific knowledge and stakeholder expertise** to co-develop innovative decision-support tools.

The project will inform and support EU priorities relating to agriculture and the environment in order to promote the performance and sustainability of the combined rural system. At least **30 case studies** (see map on the right) will be performed in order to reflect the enormous variety in the socio-economic and bio-physical conditions for agriculture across the EU.



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



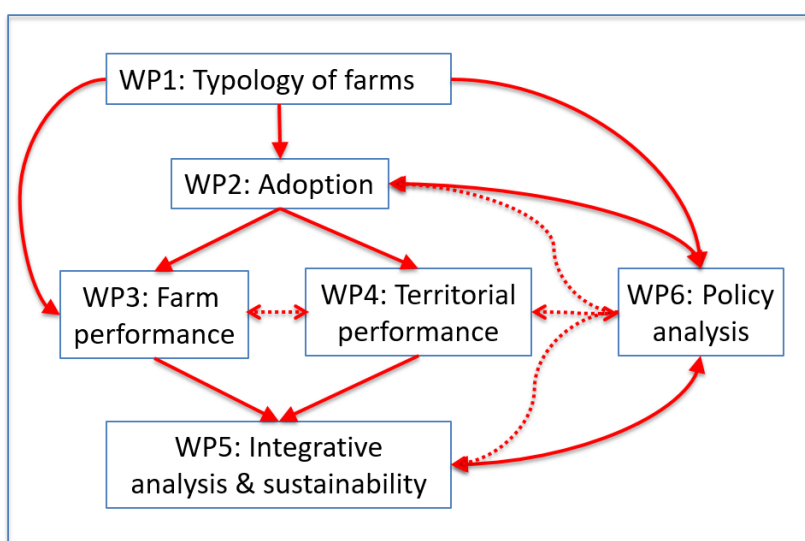
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To meet its goal, the LIFT project will pursue the following **scientific and technical objectives**:

1. To investigate the socio-economic and policy drivers that hinder or enhance the development and adoption of ecological approaches to farming.
2. To evaluate and compare the performance and overall sustainability of farming systems across different levels of incorporation of ecological approaches and across different scales.
3. To propose new private arrangements and new policy instruments which could improve performance and sustainability, and the development of ecological agriculture.
4. To produce comprehensive insights into ecological approaches based on a wide range of case studies and a mix of relevant methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, participatory approaches, modelling) and actors (scientists and a wide range of stakeholders).
5. To achieve targeted dissemination of results with free decision support tools and a massive open online course (MOOC), and reach out to students, policy makers and farm advisory services.

WORK PLAN

The **LIFT project research process** consists of 9 work packages, all of which are interconnected and supplement each other in various ways. Six research work packages are presented on the graph, while the work packages 7-9 serve as an internal fundamental basis and support for the project activities.



Red solid lines indicate connections and information transfers among work packages (WPs); dotted red lines represent loops and feedback

The objectives of work packages (WP) are:

WP1 “Typology of farms” will set the reference frame for farm typologies to be used in the LIFT project and to develop a user-friendly typology tool.

WP2 “Adoption and incentives for transition to ecological approaches” will provide a value chain approach to analysing the exogenous and endogenous influences towards adoption of ecological approaches.

WP3 “Farm performance of ecological agriculture” will assess technical-economic performance; private social performance; environmental performance; employment effects of farms implementing ecological approaches.

WP4 “Territorial aspects of ecological farming systems” will look at the impact of adoption of ecological agriculture at local, municipal and regional level.

WP5 “Integrative analysis: trade-offs and synergies” will develop an integrative framework for assessing the wide variety of (dis)benefits of ecological approaches.

WP6 “The role of policies in the development of ecological agriculture” will reveal policy-induced barriers, opportunities and incentives that influence the adoption of ecological approaches on farms.



ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN LIFT

LIFT considers all degrees to which farms adopt ecological practices. **LIFT covers the whole continuum of farming approaches**, from the most conventional to the most ecological, including the widest range of ecological approaches. This comprises the existing nomenclatures such as organic farming, low-input farming, agroecological farming, extensive farming, farming implementing biological control, high nature value farming and other. It also encompasses approaches that are not yet part of a nomenclature, but that can be identified with various criteria such as management practices, on-farm diversification, etc.

INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Involvement of stakeholders is one key element of LIFT project, therefore **stakeholders of various groups are welcomed to participate** in creation of knowledge and networking processes, which are beneficial to both scientific output of the project, as well as practical implementation of ecological approaches by farms in the EU.

Stakeholders include: farmers, farmers' representatives (e.g. unions, farm producer groups), up- and downstream companies, retailers, other economic actors (e.g. banks), governments and local administration, citizens' associations (with objectives towards environment, communities, etc.), non governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumers.

Workshops with local stakeholders will be organised annually in up to 24 case study areas in selected EU countries.

NEWS & EVENTS

The first annual ("kick-off") meeting of the LIFT consortium has taken place in Rennes, France on June 19-20, 2018

The kick-off meeting of the LIFT project has officially set off the research activities and helped coordinate the planned actions for the first year of the project's duration.

During the meeting, the different teams and work packages of the LIFT project were presented. The meeting consisted of overview sessions and parallel sessions. The parallel sessions aimed to trigger discussions between partners involved in specific work packages and to organise the work to carry.

In total there were 68 people present, 61 directly involved in the research activities, 4 members of the LIFT advisory board, two representatives of the European Commission overseeing the project's progress and a representative of the partnering UNISECO project.

First annual workshops with local stakeholders across the EU during November 2018 - February 2019

Workshops in the first year of the LIFT project have been conducted mostly in the form of Hybrid Forum in order to achieve active participation of local stakeholders.

Opinions obtained from the stakeholders shall serve needs of all the work packages and address issues such as: barriers and solutions to the adoption of ecological practices by farms, innovativeness and profitability of ecological farming, changes in farming technologies and implications for economic, social and environmental performance.





PROJECT RESULTS

The first scientific deliverable has been published: **D1.1. Review of the definition of the existing ecological approaches**

The deliverable is available for download on the LIFT website: www.lift-h2020.eu.

The report has been prepared by the partners from: JRC (Italy), SRUC (United Kingdom), UNIBO (Italy), UBO (Germany), INRA (France).

The report presents the first steps to the definition of a framework that identifies main farming systems and the degree to which each of them adopts ecological practices. This early phase of the typology work aims at providing a consolidated framework composed of farming systems and farming practices, and a first screening of which practice is associated with which system.

A literature review was conducted to identify existing categorisations of farm types based on the degree of uptake of ecological approaches and practices. The review involved a detailed search of three databases: Web of Science – WoS Core Collections; Scopus; CAB Direct.

Results of this review lead to the identification of the following farming systems, characterised by a decreasing rate of adoption of ecological practices: agroecological, organic and biodynamic, integrated, low-input, conservation, conventional.

Based on the literature and expert judgement a framework to cluster farming practices, and provide a first attempt to link farming systems with farming practices is proposed.

Next steps consist in attaching data and thresholds to the farming practices, to feed the analysis and the modelling processes to characterise individual farms with reference to their uptake of ecological practices.

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 in order 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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