



UNISECO



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Operation of a Multi-Actor Platform in a transdisciplinary project focused on agro-ecological transitions

Photo: Carolus

Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU

POLICY BRIEF

Encouraging the Multi-Actor approach to a wider mechanism of transdisciplinary approaches across science, policy, society and business to tackle shared societal challenges

Successful transitions to agro-ecological farming systems and practices requires shared understanding of innovations required by actors in practice, policy, science and society. Bringing together complementary perspectives in transdisciplinary Multi-Actor Platforms provides forums to co-construct strategies for such transitions, and their implementation.

Research Findings

Experience of running the Multi-Actor Platform showed that their establishment and effective operation requires setting criteria for membership, and following principles and processes that account for equitability, rights of participation, purpose and ethics. Operationally they must enable effective two-way exchange of ideas for co-learning and co-creation of knowledge of agro-ecological farming systems. To do so requires the development of cultures of respect, trust, motivation, shared appreciation of the challenges, and understanding of the processes for approaching them. It also requires insight to the power relationships between actors, and that within the Platform actors are equals. The technical insights come from the complimentary perspectives of the members.

The Platform enabled strategic and tactical engagement to co-construct knowledge to tackle challenges, and the development or implementation of recommendations for action. Strategic impacts are being realised in terms of avenues of influence. Institutional impacts are evidence through the emergence of new thinking of transitions across whole systems, not only practices. Operational impacts are raising awareness of implementing practices. Wider impacts are the creation of new, or strengthening existing, connectivity between actors.

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Multi-Actor Engagement:
Co-constructing key actions through a participatory process that engaged multi-actor platforms in a series of workshops and interviews.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Multi-actor Platforms have demonstrable benefits of joint working to tackle societal challenges, with adding value of strengthening networks between actors. For improving their adoption, recommendations are to:

- advise the design of Platforms in a structured way, aiming to create and strengthen long term relationships and networks;
- require the identification and recruitment of actors following ethical processes;
- guide the co-development of the remit and implementation of Platforms with their members, and with 'rules of engagement' sensitive to local contexts;
- promote the evolution of Platform membership in response to their evaluation and changes in context;
- encourage recognition amongst all Platform members of the shared increase in capabilities in policy, practice and science.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines on the principles and steps for developing, running, monitoring and evaluating a transdisciplinary approach of Multi-Actor Platforms working across science, practice, business and policy are available in the following reports:

Budniok, M.-A., Howe, M., Miles, B., Vlahos, G., Smyrniotopoulou, A., Irvine, K.N., Miller, D. and Schwarz, G. (2021). [Guidelines for the Selection of Multi-Actor Platform \(MAP\) Members](#). Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO), Report to the European Union.

Irvine, K.N., Miller, D., Schwarz, G., Smyrniotopoulou, A. and Vlahos, G. (2019). [A Guide to Transdisciplinarity for Partners](#). Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO), Report to the European Union.

Smyrniotopoulou, A., and Vlahos, G. (2021). Report on assessment of transdisciplinary tools and methods. Deliverable D7.3. Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO), Report to the European Union.

ABOUT UNISECO:

UNISECO is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of socio-economic and policy drivers and barriers for further development and implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems.

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<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/773901>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/uniseco-h2020/>

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>

VISIT THE UNISECO AGRO-ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE HUB: <https://uniseco-project.eu>



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