



UNISECO



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# Supporting advice, education and life-long learning to promote agro-ecological transitions

Photo: Carolus

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

## POLICY BRIEF

***UNISECO findings reveal the importance of advice, research, innovation and training in the social networks of farming systems, delivering to SDG 4 on education and life-long learning.***

A main aim of the UNISECO project was to improve the understanding of how barriers of drivers of agro-ecological transitions in the EU can be addressed. Bringing together complementary perspectives of actors in practice, policy, science and society in transdisciplinary Multi-Actor Platforms the UNISECO project co-constructed strategies for agro-ecological transitions to inform future policies at European, national and regional levels.

## Research Findings

Insufficient targeting of policy towards supporting knowledge creation and the establishment of knowledge networks of farmers (e.g. with trusted and skilled agro-ecology advisors as local and permanent network managers), reinforces the barrier of the lack of access of farmers to advisory services for agro-ecological practices and a need for specialised knowledge networks. In turn, this results in a lack of education and training of farmers and advisors of the requirements and benefits of agro-ecological practices. As a consequence, there is no improvement in the level of awareness of farmers of the benefits that different agro-ecological practices can provide in the specific contexts of their farms.

The co-constructed transition strategies identified a particular role for farmers with advanced know-how in agro-ecological practices, supported by advisors, to work with schools and vocational schools. The purpose would be to increase the knowledge of agricultural students of agro-ecology, including information on new technologies to increase the attractiveness of agro-ecological farming for young farmers, and to raise public awareness of the benefits of agro-ecologically produced goods.

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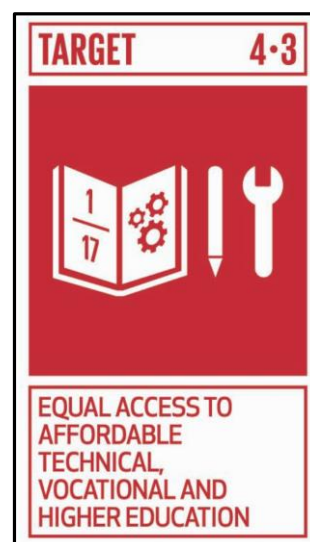
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## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Improving farmer knowledge of the benefits of agro-ecological practices and economic opportunities is a key aspect for successful agro-ecological transitions. This can be achieved by: i) on-farm peer-to-peer learning; ii) actor-led knowledge and innovation and active sharing of place-based knowledge; iii) principles and practices of agro-ecology in school curricula covering principles of food production and consumption, agricultural practices, and social responsibility.

Trends of increasing demand for food labelled as healthy, sustainable and local food have been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. If sustained after the end of the pandemic, these trends in consumer behaviour would support awareness campaigns and public procurement programmes in schools and canteens, as suggested in the co-constructed transition strategies. This underlines the importance of policy to support advice, education and life-long learning by:

- including principles and practices of agro-ecology in school curricula, continuing professional development, and citizen focused learning;
- increasing the capacity of local actors to create agro-ecological networks, and cooperation with schools through public learning and procurement programmes.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Schwarz, G., Prazan, J., Landert, J., Miller, D., Vanni, F., Carolus, J., Weissshaidinger, R., Bartel-Kratochvil, R., Mayer, A., Frick, R., Hrabalová, A.,..., Smith, P. (2021). Report on Key Barriers of AEFS in Europe and Co-constructed Strategies to Address Them. Deliverable D3.4. Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO), Report to the European Union, pp. 128.

Galioto, F., Gava, Oriana, Povellato, A., Vanni, F. (2021). Innovative market and policy instruments to promote the agro-ecological transition strategies. Deliverable D5.4. Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO).

### 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>

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