The FRAMEwork Project
Advancing Farmers Clusters and Lessons Learnt

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The James Hutton Institute

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FRAMEWORK

recodo

Agriculture's Role in Biodiversity Loss

Agriculture contributes significantly to global biodiversity loss, jeopardising ecological functions on which agriculture, human wellbeing, and planetary health depend (IPBES, 2019).

Habitat simplification and intensification drive ecological decline…

- Habitat removal and landscape simplification result in fewer ecological niches.
- Agricultural intensification — pesticides, fertilisers, mechanisation — accelerates biodiversity loss.

Restoring biodiversity requires reintroducing habitat complexity…

- Niche diversification, resource provision, and disturbance reduction

On-Farm Interventions for Biodiversity

From wildflower strips to regenerative agriculture…

- Practical biodiversity interventions:
  - Hedgerows, beetle banks, and wildflower strips.
  - Conservation headlands, cover cropping, crop diversification.
- Holistic approaches: organic, regenerative agriculture.

Why Current Efforts Are Not Enough

Agri-Environment Schemes - uptake significant, but impact moderate

Limitations in AES design…

- Focus on farm-level and single species.
- Little flexibility.
- Limited advisory support.
- No monitoring to assess effectiveness.
- No feedback on the wider successes or failures.

Beyond isolated actions to full system change…

- Barriers: complexity, transaction costs, poor targeting.
- Economic, social, institutional, and ecological barriers are intertwined.
- Conventional farming reinforced by market, policy, and cultural pressures.

…system-wide solutions needed

Successful Collaborative Models

Landscape-scale collaboration - Encouraging ecological restoration, better connectivity, farmer-driven innovation…

- **Farmer Clusters**, UK: farmer-led biodiversity planning.
- **Landcare Farming**, Australia– Community focused, support and access to research programs, partnership opportunities, tools and resources.
- **Dutch cooperatives** – the government ceased accepting AES applications from individual farms in 2016. “Cross-farm” and “flexible”.
- **Greening Waipara**, NZ: integrated viticulture and conservation.

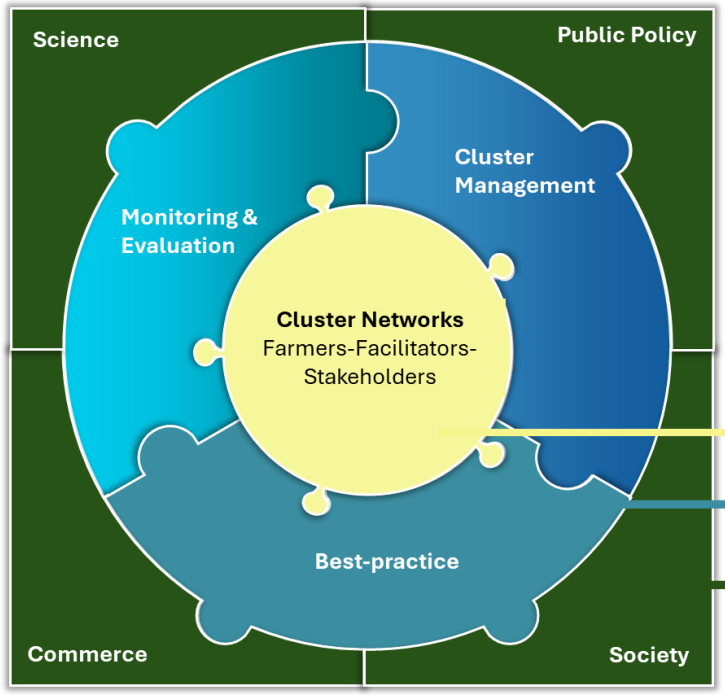
UK Farmer clusters

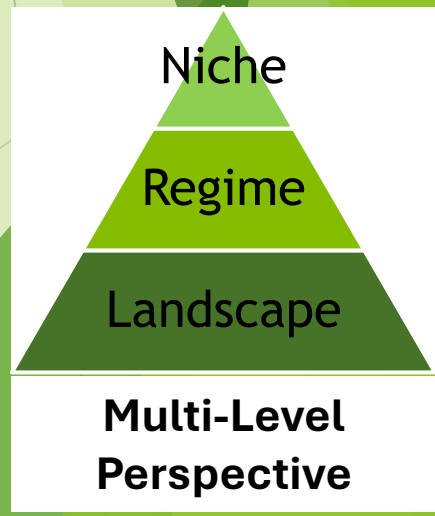
- **Making Space for Nature** (Lawton et al. 2010) – conservation needed to be "bigger, better and joined".
- **Nature Improvement Areas** – piloted in England 2012-2015. One, farmer-led NIA, was particularly successful.
- **Farmer Cluster** – community of farmers + facilitator work together to improve the biodiversity of their farms.
- FC movement expanded – **Facilitation Fund** has supported 177 groups plus others self-funded representing 450,000 ha since 2010.mon

The FRAMEwork Approach

Building Capacity Across the System…

- **Tier 1: Farmer Clusters** – bottom-up biodiversity management.
- **Tier 2: Cluster Resources** – FEAST tool, training, monitoring support.
- **Tier 3: Knowledge Base** – science, policy, market integration.

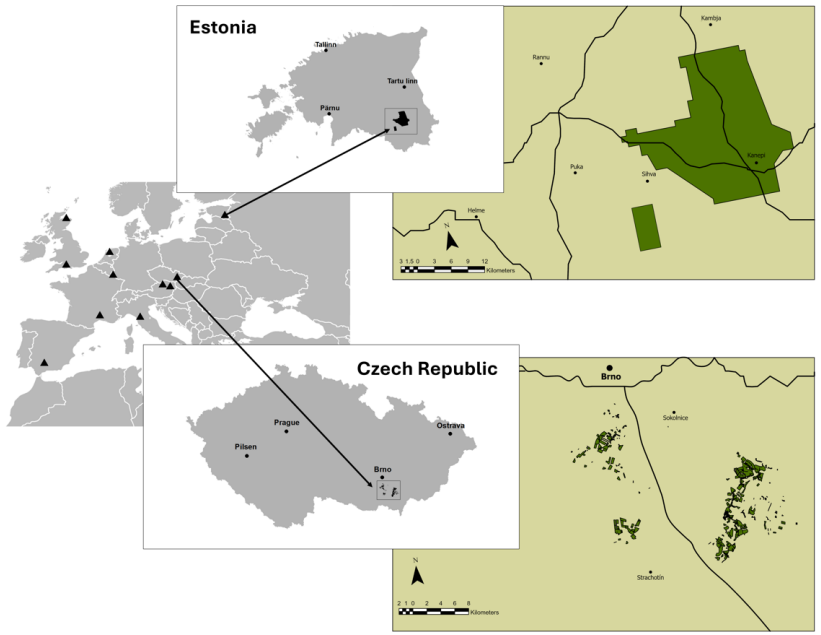




…interaction across tiers amplifies system change

Advanced Farmer Clusters

Operate through **collective**, **landscape-scale action**, taking a **bottom-up**, **flexible approach** that remains **adaptive through monitoring and evaluation**, while being **rooted in local and community engagement**, supported by **facilitation and access to knowledge, resources, and funding**.



- 11 clusters in 10 countries
- 5 farming systems – Arable, field veg, orchards, olives, pasture.
- 7 -22 farms -> 54 – 10,000 Ha
- Geographically neighbouring or dispersed
- Focus – farmland birds, pollinator, natural enemies, vegetation.
- 10 out of 11 project funded

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Biodiversity friendly farming measures





Biodiversity monitoring







Stakeholder engagement




Lessons from working with clusters

Challenges in…

Forming a cluster

- Identifying a **lead farmer**
  - Use existing contacts
  - Advertise locally
  - Emphasise incentives - benefits of business and policy links, feedback, financial
- Identifying a facilitator

Managing a cluster

- Achieving **collaboration**
  - Regular comms, face to face meetings
  - Promote shared goals
  - Training opportunities
  - Share expertise
- Secure funding

Expanding activities

- Time and resources
- **Data** sharing
  - CitSci tools allow data privacy
  - Explore concerns and the positive value of data
- Community engagement

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Factors shaping cluster outcomes

Five factors shaping outcomes - **Social**, **Environmental** and **Economic** goals plus **Durability** and **Acceptance** [Velten et al.'s (2021) 'success' criteria]

- **Governance** – structures and processes set up in the advanced FCs to support and shape group activities and outcomes.
- **Leadership** – presence of a person (e.g. lead farmer) and / or organisation to provide momentum and advance cluster activities.
- **Facilitation** – role of the cluster facilitator (and/or facilitating team) for supporting and shaping group activities and outcomes.
- **Group characteristics** – characteristics that may support or challenge collaboration.
- **Context** – including economic, cultural, social and political context within which the advanced FC operates.

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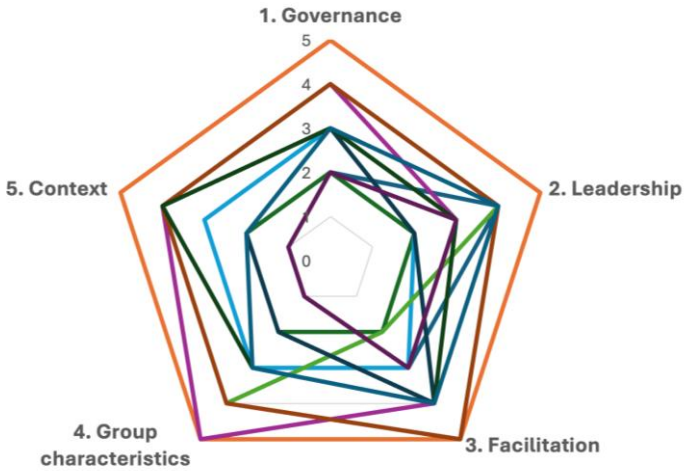
Factors shaping cluster outcomes

- Advanced FCs do not necessarily need high levels of maturity in all dimensions to achieve their goals.
  - **Governance** – can support effective collective actions, social capital building and promote learning
  - **Leadership** – beneficial if power imbalances can be kept in check
  - **Facilitation** – change in facilitation can be beneficial
  - **Group characteristics** – socially homogenous FCs are preferable
  - **Context** – least influenced by individual FC actors directly
- Outcomes of FCs across Europe differ greatly depending on pre-conditions (policy context, trust, norms, pre-existing networks), effective collaboration may require substantial resources and time.
- The maturity framework can serve as a guiding tool for advanced FCs to reflect on their maturity in realising the five factors and whether this aligns with their goals.



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Insights from the UK Farmer Clusters

Impact of cluster membership…

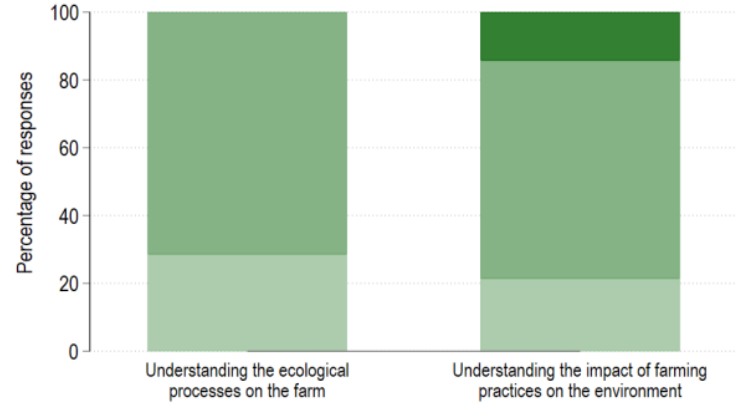
Positive outcomes - social, behavioural, and environmental.

1. All showed **improved understanding of the ecological processes** of the relationship between management measures and ecological indicators on the farm.
2. More than half of the farmers indicated increases or strong increases in ability to **choose, apply, and deliver AES**.

Negative outcomes - time and resources, unequal contributions.

3. Most found (71 % of respondents) found **workload increased** with 43% with **increased need for farm workers** and other employees but for most (86%) there was **not a reduction of farm profits**.

1.



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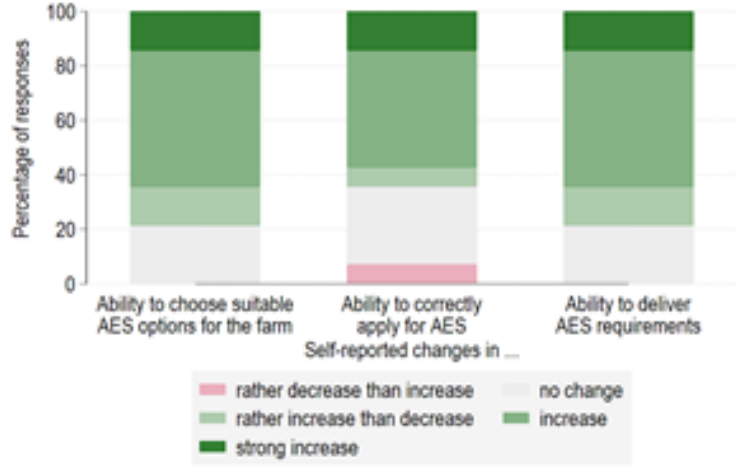

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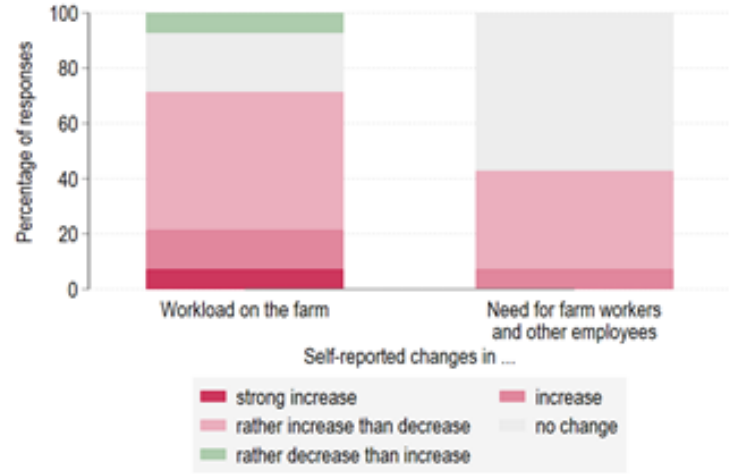

Incentivising farmers

Combining result-based payments with group contracts:

- Combining collective contracts with results-based payments can enhance conservation efforts.
- Collective contracts are more effective in promoting conservation when external risks are high.
- No difference between ‘equal’ and ‘proportional to effort’ payments so individual-level monitoring may not be necessary.

Farmers willingness to participate:

- Higher payments required for contracts with labels compared to those offering flat payment transfers.
- Contracts that include the option to join a Farmer Cluster (FC) require lower payments.
- Mandating FC participation requires higher payments.
- Farmers with a higher productivist identity demonstrate a preference for retailer-organised contracts.

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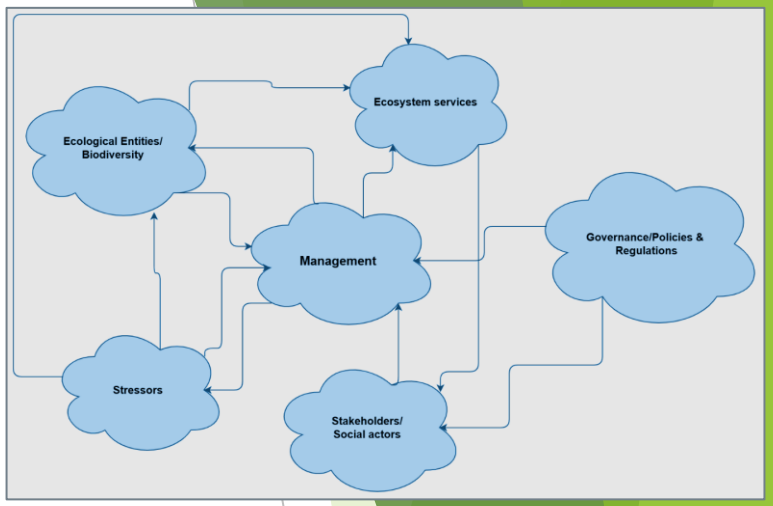
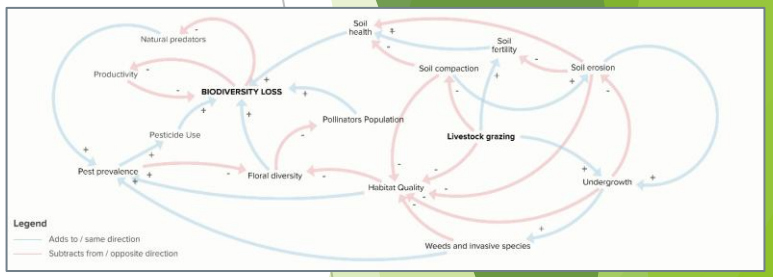
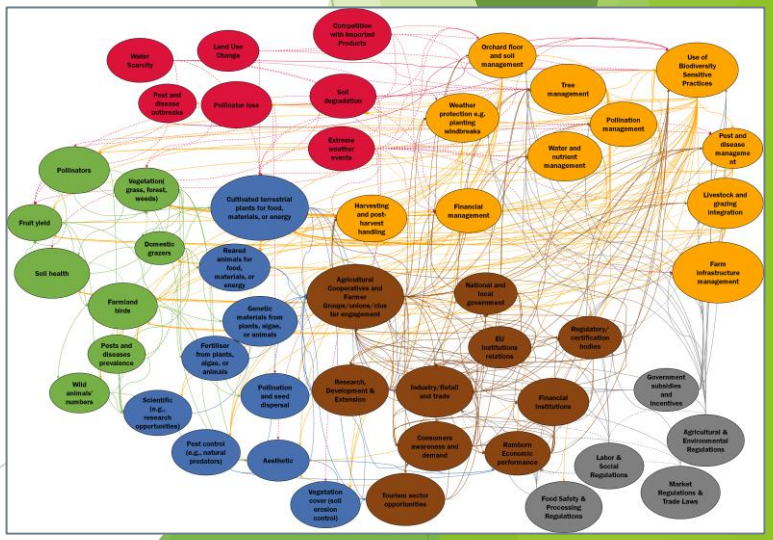
Clusters within the system

Leveraging incentives…

- Strengthen and expand value chain collaborations that offer market incentives tied to biodiversity outcomes.
- Enhance sustainability branding and certification to reward farmers adopting biodiversity-sensitive practices.
- Increase consumer awareness to amplify demand pressure for eco-friendly products through the value chain.
- Align subsidies and financial incentives directly with biodiversity-sensitive management and ecosystem service goals.
- Adjust regulations to allow local flexibility and innovation while maintaining environmental protection.







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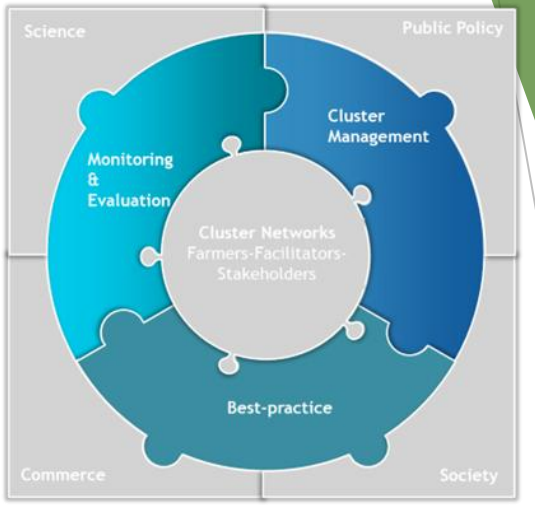
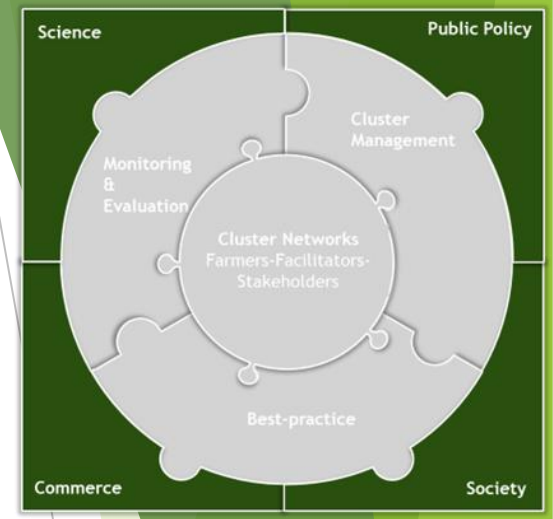
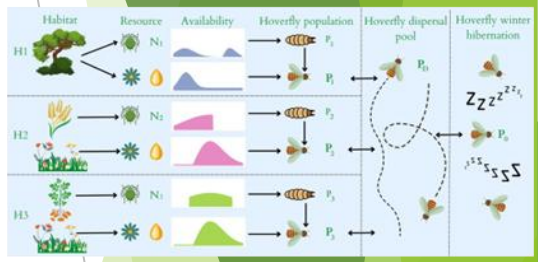
Tier 2 and 3

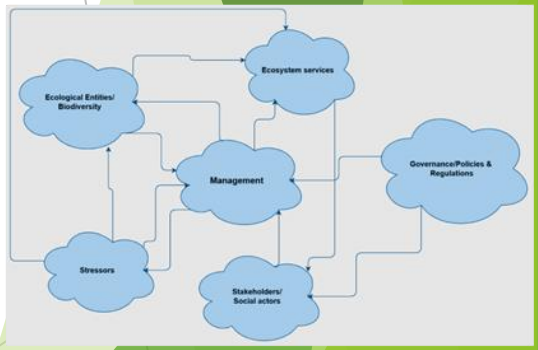
- Tier 2 - Tools, knowledge, and policy mechanisms to support sustainable practices…

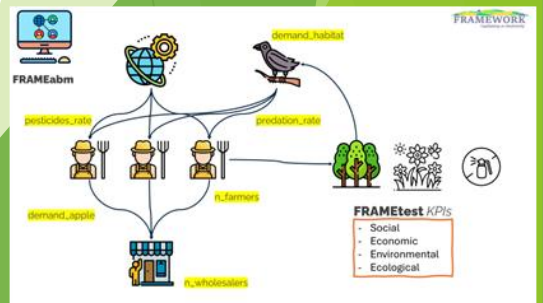
- Tier 3 - The scientific, policy, and commercial background shaping agricultural transitions…











Recodo Overview & Development

What is Recodo?

- An Information Hub: created for the H2020 FRAMEwork WP3 - led by IIASA, with Taskscape and consortium input.
- Purpose: to bring together project activities and outputs for engagement, impact and legacy.

Development Journey

- Strategy - to offer value to target stakeholders via two core functions:
  - Repository - Collating useful resources from inside and outside the project.
  - Discourse - Creating conversation and engagement points around this content.
- Audience and sector analysis, brand development, and user feedback shaped the platform.
- Including consultancy undertaken with teams of MBAs at Lancaster University.

Branding

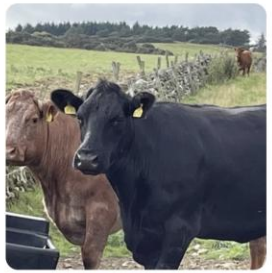
- Neutral, inclusive branding appealing to diverse stakeholders (lead farmers and Cluster facilitators, NGOs, researchers, potential private sector collaborators, policymakers).
- Visual identity: Leaf (nature/biodiversity), infinity symbol (sustainability), arrows (meeting point); 'Recodo' means "turn" in Spanish, often applied to a bend in a river, reflecting the transition towards more sustainable farming.

recodo

About | Farmer Clusters | Resources | Newsfeed | Contact | Login | Sign up

Farmer Cluster ***Finder***

Country | Farming Systems | Main Agricultural Areas | Main Crop



United Kingdom Active

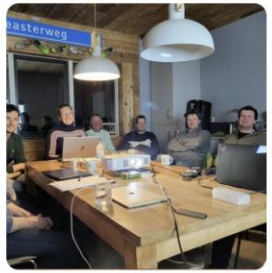
Buchan Farmer Cluster

United Kingdom Active

Cranborne Chase Farmer Cluster

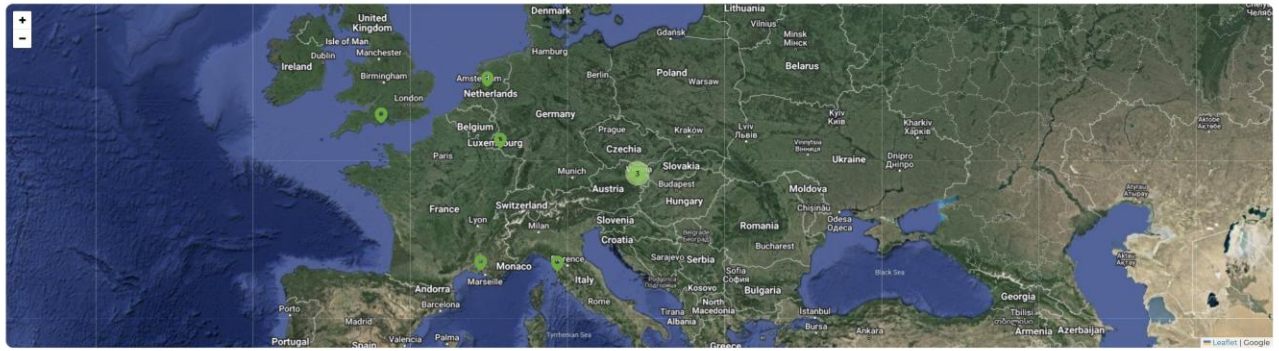
Austria Active

Mostviertel Farmer Cluster



Netherlands Active

Zeeasterweg Farmer Cluster



Our growing collection of ***resources***

Tell us about what your looking for and we will recommend some resources to help you get started.

Resource Finder →

I am a

Select one

I'd like to learn more about

Select one

Farmer Cluster Stories

Hear first-hand what's happening in Farmer Clusters

View all →

Italy

May 27, 2024 Sant'Anna School Team

Local BioBlitz 2024

Val Graziosa Farmer Cluster

Austria

May 24, 2024 Daniela Ablinger

Neue Impressionen am "Naturhof Wieser"

Mostviertel Farmer Cluster

Austria

May 24, 2024 Daniela Ablinger

Gather new impressions of biodiversity on Nature Farm "Wieser"

Mostviertel Farmer Cluster

Screenshots: www.recodo.io

Key Features & Engagement Channels

User-Generated Farmer Cluster Profiles (expandable network)
Cluster information curated by Cluster facilitators, including blogs.

Automated Global News Feed
Web crawlers curate relevant global stories, to encourage return visits and context-awareness.

Interactive Map
Rich data layers on cluster landscapes (developed with CREAF).

Resource Finder
200+ resources, filterable by stakeholder interests and other tags.

Landing Pages
Highlight key H2020 FRAMEwork resources.

Media
Cluster documentaries, short explainer videos, and a project podcast.

YouTube
500+ subscribers, 9,000+ views since May launch.

LinkedIn
Networking and additional legacy curation.

Substack Newsletter
Interviews, Cluster profiles and topic pieces etc.

Events
In-person/webinars and targeted outreach to engage stakeholders through September 2025.

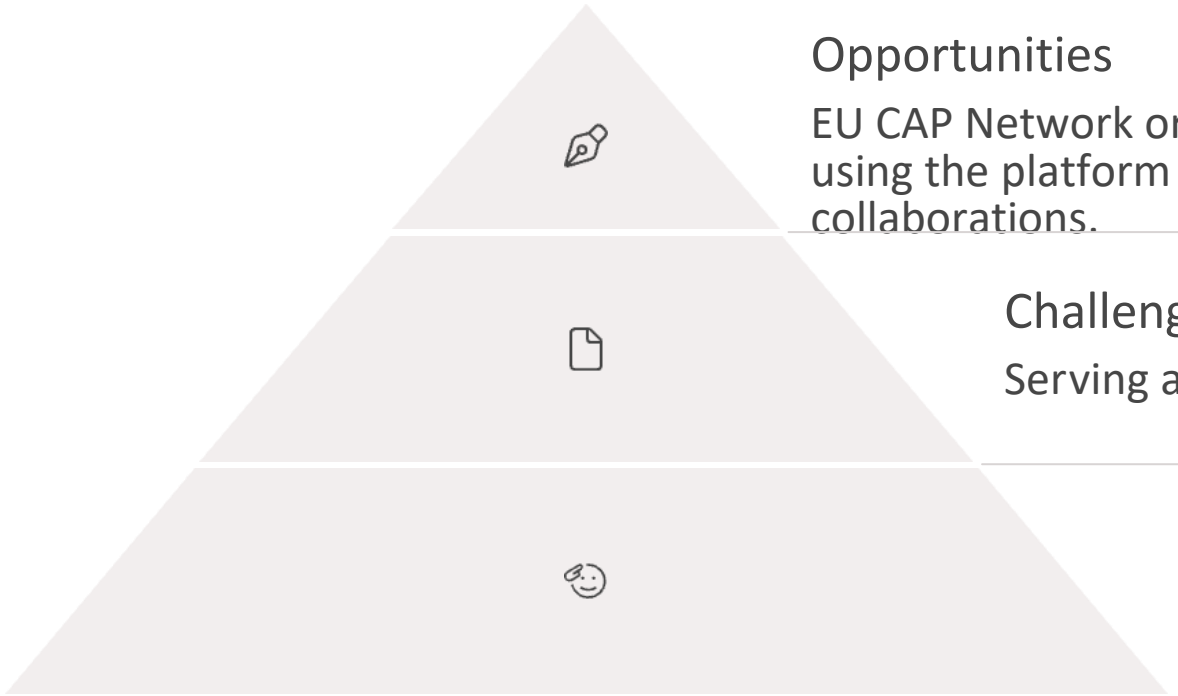
Impact, Feedback, Challenges & Opportunities

Uptake & Impact (as of May 2025)

- Full uptake by Project Clusters - profiles + blogging.
- Spring audience growth: 173%^ in monthly users, 32.5% more sessions, average 4 daily visits in May.

Sector Feedback

- Positive reviews from peer orgs; platform seen as an industry standard and used as a model for others.
- Interest from EU CAP Network and emulation by UK by UK 'SuperCluster' initiative.



Opportunities

EU CAP Network or other projects and initiatives linking with or using the using the platform further, potential for private sector collaborations. collaborations.

Challenges

Serving a broad, multilingual audience

USP

Open, inclusive resource reflects diverse reasons for for stakeholders exploring biodiversity-sensitive farming. farming.

Invitation - ongoing engagement with our events and platform collaborations welcomed through September 2025!

Thank you

https://www.framework-biodiversity.eu

https://recodo.io

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