Minutes from FarmBioNet Kick-Off Meeting for Romania's

Farming and Biodiversity National Network (FaB NN)

Rețeaua Națională pentru Biodiversitate în Agricultură (RNBA)

Date: Wednesday 5 March 2025
Time: 11am (EET)
Location: Online

Minutes prepared by Ben Mehedin and George Cățean, 10-03-2025.

Attendees:

All in total were 38 attendees:

Farmers – 8	Education – 2
Foresters – 3	NGOs – 10
Advisors – 4	Business – 5
Academia and research – 4	Policymakers & Government – 2

Note: The agreement among the project partners is that the complete list of names is not shared, is kept by the national coordinator's organisation.

1. Introduction of participants and agenda

- Ben Mehedin (Fundația ADEPT) – National Network lead
- FarmBioNet – project and the agenda for the day:
- George Cățean (Fundația ADEPT) – National Network Coordinator.
- Cristi Gherghiceanu (Fundația ADEPT) – technical support.
- Laura Chirilă Pașca, (Fundația ADEPT) – communication.

All attendees introduced themselves (name and affiliation) and a short description of their interest in the topic.

2. Presentation

Ben Mehedin lead presented the FarnBioNet project in few words.

George Cățean presented the project's objectives, network composition, and structure, planned activities, and expected results, using PowerPoint presentation attached.

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FarmBioNet project was presented as a European network that aims to promote the Biodiversity Friendly Farming practices (BFF) and build a knowledge bridge between agriculture and biodiversity. George presented the functioning and objectives of the new national farmers' network focusing on biodiversity in agriculture. Key objectives include:

- review already known practices and exchange between farmers, researchers and other stakeholders
- innovative governance to support sustainable farming practices
- build trust between main Agricultural Knowledge and Inovation System (AKIS) actors;

The nine Work Packages (WP) were presented consisting of: gathering info about the existent BFF practices, and the incentives where they exist, review BFF practices, gaps and needs, networking and knowledge exchange, development of BFF decision making tools, then the most important one: communication and dissemination of information. The results will be communicated through various media outlets or channels.

Questions/comments by attendees were noted throughout the presentation:

The meeting focused on promotion of regenerative and sustainable agricultural practices. The participants, representing various institutions and organizations in the fields of agriculture, biodiversity and rural development, presented their experience and activities, with a focus on regenerative agriculture, which aims at carbon storage, water retention and the creation of functional and ecologically efficient farms. Questions and comments included:

- conservation of indigenous breeds and promotion of agricultural practices that support biodiversity.
- Who is leading the project? TEAGASC for the general management and ADEPT will lead setting up the National Networks (NN). When the National Networks (NN) are established in each country, the combination of NN form the EU Network on Farming and Biodiversity
- Land workers are extremely important in this context, as co-generators of biodiversity, when they work in accordance with the laws of nature.
- the challenges facing traditional shepherds in mountain regions were discussed
- some other problems in mountain area are: biodiversity loss, depopulation and misallocation of EU subsidies.
- Farmers to be taught how to be profitable by practicing this kind of BFF farming on the farm.
- Biodiversity focused legislation, involvement in the preparation of the new CAP, funding for these practices
- Measures to facilitate close collaboration between the network and those who actually do the farming.
- it is important to address the socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects influencing biodiversity

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- Compensation payment schemes in situations where this is absolutely necessary (not for activities that should normally be carried out in a "nature-friendly" way), promotion of models of traditional nature-friendly practices, identification of needs for professional training and networking of entities that can contribute to professionalizing the occupation of peasant

The group expressed interest in developing projects that integrate holistic agriculture with nature, working with research institutions and private partners. They have also invited other stakeholders to join their initiatives.

3. Roles and responsibilities of NN members

Members Approx. 1 – 2 days, time effort per year.	Lead
- Share knowledge on biodiversity-friendly farming practices - Workshops - Exchange visits (farm walks) - Events - Online surveys.	- Offer members opportunities to contribute to national and EU thematic discussions - Disseminate information (via email and quarterly newsletter) - Facilitate knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer.

4. Discussion of biodiversity-friendly farming practices that could be included:

The questionnaire included the question: “What are Biodiversity-Friendly Farming practices?”. Answers were obtained from 28 participants. Most of the comments were discussed further (see below). The answers have been summarised into ANNEX A to be retained in RO (data protection).

- Unproductive areas/landscape elements
- Knowledge and Protection of mycorrhizal and saprotrophic fungi to increase biodiversity, plant health, increase soil carbon sequestration rates, increase plant mass yields and combat climate change
- Maintenance of permanent grassland, conservation of own vegetable seeds.
- Grazing with nature: every day I plan on which plots I graze depending on: weather, grass height, soil quality, etc so that I return to the same plot after 30-60 days or more.
- Keeping water on the landscape,
- mowing with light equipment,
- mob grazing,
- keeping landscape elements (solitary trees, shrubs, etc
- Restoring grass cover on degraded pastures.
- valorization of by-products from the wine-growing sector
- agroforestry;

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- no-till agriculture
- restoration of grassland habitats for the benefit of bird species
- grassland management, animal rotation on pasture,
- permaculture and biodynamic agriculture
- Extensive grazing
- Soil testing and making decisions based on test results.
- Removal of invasive species, supporting activities and traditions of mountain households, information on the importance of biodiversity, etc.
- Maintenance of permanent grassland, but also in line with the climate changes that are having a dramatic effect lately
- removal of invasive species,
- regenerative farming practices
- non-use of chemicals
- Holistic Grazing Management.

5. Suggestions for other potential members (no names can be shared here because of GDPR, instead share institution and/or stakeholder group):

Attendees suggested professional vets who should be part of the NN, and The Institute for Pastures from Brașov.

6. Explanation of online questionnaire and next steps

An explanation of the online questionnaire and the NN next steps given.

All participants were invited to complete and submit the online questionnaire, either during the meeting or afterwards (sent by e-mail). To join the FaB NN (RNBA in Romanian) simply say yes on the questionnaire.

Questionnaire: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/FarmBioNet_RO (Passwd = farmbionetro25)

- All participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire for joining the national network for biodiversity in agriculture.
- the questionnaire link and password will be send by e-mail to participants who have not filled it in yet.
- George sent in the chat of the online meeting the address of the project website (farmbionet.eu) where the updated results and ongoing information will be presented.
- All participants will share examples of biodiversity-friendly farming practices they know or are implementing.
- Fundatia ADEPT will coordinate the establishment of the national network and organize future meetings.
- All participants should consider sharing the questionnaire with other potential stakeholders to expand the network.

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- One of the participants will host a farm visit in the spring to present his farm and how he manages the pastures.
- All participants who wish to share planned activities that relate to the RNBA network theme in a common calendar are invited to do so.
- a visit to Bucovina was proposed.
- help create an integrated calendar of events related to project activities was offered.
- **The next network meeting will be online on April 7, 2025.**

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