



## ENRD webinar

# 23rd NRN meeting

## Highlights report

The [23rd NRN meeting](#) in Heerenveen was co-organised with the Dutch NSU / Regiebureau POP, on 20 and 21 September as part of the [international conference 'It's time to fly'](#). It ran in parallel with a [Workshop on Implementing the CAP Green Architecture](#) with common plenary sessions where participants could exchange on the topics.

A joint plenary session opened the international conference with a celebration of [60 years of CAP](#) and high-level speeches linked to the events' common theme – green architecture.

NRN meeting participants discussed networks' roles in supporting green architecture within the CAP, NSUs updated them on rural networking activities. Ways for NSUs to strengthen innovation support were explored e.g. through work with researchers, advisors and practitioners on preparing innovative projects. Working sessions on networking activities were also provided. The Rural Inspiration Awards (RIA) involved regional NSU clusters in identifying their preferred project from the 2022 RIA shortlist.

The international conference closed with an inspirational future-orientated presentation and a panel discussion on joint efforts in delivering green goals. A field trip, organised by the Dutch NSU provided an opportunity to attend one of [five parallel field visits to EAFRD-funded projects](#) in the Heerenveen area. These included Nature inclusive dairy farming, Agricultural Nature and Landscape Management, Dairy factory Royal A-ware, The free Colonies of Benevolence and The Farm of the Future.

### Opening of the international conference



Mihail Dumitru (Deputy Director-General, European Commission, DG AGRI) opened the overall conference recalling the founding objectives of the CAP – ensuring food security, a fair income for farmers and reasonable prices for consumers. In addition, the new CAP is expected to support the longer-term transition to more sustainable climate-resilient farming systems, contributing to the delivery of the EU Green Deal goals.



Annemiek Hautvast (CAP Strategic Plan Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands) emphasised the important intergovernmental cooperation – between the Ministry, the provinces, the water boards and the paying agency – supporting the drafting of the Dutch CAP Strategic Plan.



Prof. Dr. Martin Scheele (Honorary Professor, Humboldt University) highlighted the wide degree of flexibility that the new CAP framework offers to Member States, to deal with different conflicting challenges, in different territories which require differing responses.

All speeches are reported on in greater detail in the highlights report of the [Workshop on Implementing the CAP Green Architecture](#).

### Event Information

**Date:** 20 - 21 September 2022

**Location:** Heerenveen, Netherlands

**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point and the Dutch Network Support Unit (NSU)

**Participants:** 67 NRN representatives from 21 Member States

**Outcomes:** Exchanges on NRN green topics linked work; better understanding of CAP Networks' role vs support and networking for innovation; peer-to-peer exchanges on specific networking activities.

**Web page:** [23rd NRN Meeting](#)



## Introduction and CAP networks' support on green architecture



[Veronika Korcekova](#) (ENRD Contact Point - CP) introduced the NRN meeting and outlined NSU green theme work linking this to the parallel Green Architecture Workshop.



[Meeri Maastik](#) (Estonian NSU) shared the Estonian green architecture work experience, aiming to be a neutral platform for networking, example and best practice sharing, collecting and distributing information on green topics while adapting them to the needs of stakeholders. Estonian NSU activities include webinars on climate change, food loss or supply chain waste - which remain available online for further dissemination. A 'Green LEADER' interactive exhibition features LEADER support for green outcomes. Participants worked in groups to discuss stock-taking on the five distinct topics while exploring what worked well, what were the challenges and what lessons should be considered in the future.

The follow-up exchanges stressed that the independent role of the NSU and Managing Authority support is critical in addressing environmental issues.

## Rural Networking Update

An [ENRD Contact Point \(CP\) update](#) on EU level rural networking activities provided information on the CP's activities and upcoming events and the EU CAP Network Launch (6 October 2022).



[Valdis Kudins](#) of the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk updated the meeting on their recent and upcoming activities e.g. guidance on evaluating AKIS strategic approach, guidance to support MS in designing evaluation plans to be finalised by end of 2022, and guidance on assessing LEADER added value (planned in 2023). He encouraged NRNs to get involved in the Helpdesk work, most of the activities take place online.



[Willemine Brinkman](#) (EIP-AGRI Support Facility) pointed out that innovation is crucial for successful green architecture and presented their current work including Focus Groups, workshops, seminars and standalone brokerage. She thanked the NSUs for their help in disseminating the various calls for applications, including the recent call for Focus Group experts in the fields of biodiversity on farmland, social innovation and agriculture and recovery of abandoned agricultural lands.

## CAP networks & innovation



[Inge Van Oost](#) from DG AGRI outlined the CAP network's role regarding the innovation support service and innovation networking, a new addition to complete the innovation ecosystem is envisaged in the new CAP. Member States (MS) are obliged to put dedicated innovation support services in place including activities oriented on individual projects and emerging operational groups (OGs). Innovation networking under the new CAP would build on the current programme and involved collective actions around innovation, including supporting calls and bringing OGs together. CAP Networks can play a key role in strengthening synergies between innovation support services and innovation networking.



A **panel discussion** moderated by Alistair Prior (ENRD CP) included NRN colleagues Kees Anker (Dutch NSU) and Pawel Krzeczunowicz (Polish NSU) who highlighted important elements to consider. Each panellist gave a brief overview of NSU work around innovation networking so far, in particular focusing on research connections (NL) and advisors (PL).

Agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) whilst broadly successful in the Netherlands can also be fragmented. The Dutch NSU is inviting H2020 research projects to join the network exchange, making knowledge accessible for advisors and researchers whilst proactively contacting farmers and supporting a green knowledge network. Potential to promote innovation elsewhere in the CAP is thought to remain e.g. in LEADER projects. Pawel explained Polish NSU support for OGs and undertaking innovation brokerage. They are also focusing on connecting smart villages and LEADER stakeholders.



CAP networks' role in strengthening innovation support was discussed. Ideas included:

- Looking for innovation at farm level i.e. farm advisors should go to the farmers to collect ideas and share reflections on the farm's future.
- Trust is essential and has to be built up through brokerage.
- Use the right language to capture innovation ideas.
- Appoint someone to oversee innovation support, need not be the CAP Network.
- The CAP Network role is to bring everyone together.

Five Dutch stakeholders offered advice during the session sharing their key observations:

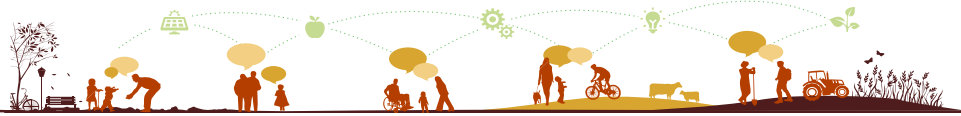
- Sytze Waltje (advisor) - People might not know they have an innovative idea - listening to each other is essential to capture it. A platform for sharing ideas might be helpful.
- Olga van der Valk (researcher) - Relationships are crucial for getting ideas from farmers - top-down expert advice is not the right way of approaching farmers.
- Iris Bouwers (farmer) - Farmers need to be present when they are the topic of a discussion, their practical perspective is needed.
- Kees Anker (National Rural Network) - There is a difference between the private and public advisory services, they need different approaches.
- Marieke Kok (LAG administrator) - Taking action and working with each other should be the first step.
- Willemine Brinkman (EIP-AGRI representative) - Innovation support needs to fit with the farming year and duties.

## Networking activities - Parallel working sessions

Participants of the NRN meeting could join discussions in one of three parallel sessions:

- **CNS Indicators for the national CAP networks**  
[Veronika Korcekova](#) (ENRD CP) provided an overview of current Common Network Statistics (CNS) indicators collected annually from NSUs. She outlined potential future programming period improvement suggestions. Following lively discussion, agreement was reached for a separate working group to be established to refine the CNS Indicators.
- **Building towards a more cooperative network**  
The key question 'Do you need more integration in your network?' aimed at sharing experience and inspiration. Different levels of network integration were introduced and two NRN colleagues - Jurgita Butrimiene (LT NSU) and Tamar Kok (NL NSU) - shared their own experiences. The question was further discussed in smaller groups. One of the outcomes was the desire to create stronger extended links towards advisors, researchers and farmers.
- **How to communicate green themes with the farmers**  
Participants discussed NRN practices and challenges in communication about the green themes to farmers. [Geert Plender](#) (NL NSU) and [Shane Conway](#) (IE NSU) presented their means of communication with farmers. Follow-up group discussions exchanged on those methods and tools already being used and valuable for future use (e.g. training, consultation, simulation tools, local communication, newsletter, interactive platform, social media, local media, webinars).

The meeting was closed by an exchange on the [Rural Inspiration Awards](#) and regional cluster voting exercise.



## Closing plenary session

The second day of the international conference provided an inspirational reflection by Cecile Cremer (Trend and Innovation expert, the Netherlands) on the future trends, followed by Flavio Conti and Veronika Korcekova (ENRD CP) who presented summary of key points resulting from day 1.



Closing panel discussion linked to the overarching green theme and addressed the question 'How can we all cooperate to deliver green goals?'. Henk Reinen (Director of Regiebureau/NSU, the Netherlands) highlighted that communication plays a crucial role and it is important to correctly communicate with the farmers, explaining the overall expected goals, letting them decide what set of interventions they want to implement to reach the objectives. Alžběta Prochazkova (WWF-Central and Eastern Europe, Czech Republic) underlined the important role that NGOs can play to improve the design and implementation of green interventions under the CSPs. Alex Datema (farmer and chairman of the BoerenNatuur, the Netherlands) shared the perspective of farmers, demanding greater freedom in the choice of intervention types and practices to be implemented at farm level to achieve the goals of the policy. He stressed that challenging farmers to achieve specific objectives may be more effective than asking them to follow regulations.

More details of the discussion are provided in the highlights report of the [Workshop on Implementing the CAP Green Architecture](#).