

Field visits for policy makers to boost peer-to-peer learning in agriculture: NEFERTITI project

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NEFERTITI H2020 project, “Networking European Farms to Enhance Cross Fertilisation and Innovation Uptake through Demonstration” focuses on international network of demo farms to strengthen the knowhow and innovations in agriculture. It aims to connect farmers in peer-to-peer learning, but also to include wide audiences in the EU agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS), including policy makers.

The project has been running since 2018 and is coming to an end in September 2022. As final activities, it’s important to share the lessons learnt and to disseminate the importance of demo farm activities to wider audiences. Policy makers in different levels are one of they key target groups considering the future possibilities of demo farms. Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences is involved in the NEFERTITI project, in the work package that the involves disseminating the demo farm activities and it’s importance to policy makers. Focusing to this, during spring 2022 there is three field visits to demo farms, specifically targeted for policy makers and other members of the AKIS networks.

The first field visit was the “Policy Dialogue Event on Farm Demo networks for sustainable agriculture” (read more here in Finnish) in Brussels 10th May. The three H2020 projects NEFERTITI, IPMWORKS and IPM Decisions jointly organized a Policy Dialogue event in Brussels on the afternoon of May 10th, 2022. Presentations and discussions were combined with a visit to a demonstration farm that implements holistic Integrated Pest Management, thus significantly reducing pesticide use. The objectives of this Policy Dialogue event were to inform relevant policy makers about our networks, methods, and tools, and to discuss the longer-term sustainability and possible extension of our Farm Demo networks.



Picture 1. Field visit at Cesa Demo farm (Soila Huhtaluhta).

The second field visit was to the public Demo-farm of Cesa in Tuscany, Italy, on 30th-31st of May 2022:

1st day – Monday 30th May 2022: Introductory workshop on the role of demo farms and preparation of the visit

In the introductory workshop of first day of the event, the participants learned about Nefertiti project; Framing on demofarms – the Tuscany region approach; Demofarm as an enabler of territorial development; Demo activities on Demo – Farm: a national strategy; The regional approach in Italy to the Demo-Farm development; The «Centro Avanzi» Demo Farm case (Centro Avanzi – Pisa University) and the IPM works project. In the discussions, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions, share their insights and expectations about the following study visit.

2nd day – Tuesday 31st May 2022: Field Visit with a focus on research activity and knowledge transfer dedicated to the Agricultural Technical High schools of Tuscany

In the Field visit to the Demofarm of Cesa, the participants had the opportunity to follow an educational demo day for students in action. The subjects included Viticulture – Project “Applications of precision viticulture for the estimation of yield and quality of grapes with non-destructive methods of proximal and remote monitoring” by CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche and CREA – Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l’analisi dell’economia agrarian; Agroforestry and climate change – Sustainability and resilience to climate change by

MA4SURE H2020 Prima Project – Università degli Studi di Firenze, and Safety in Agriculture – The yard safety in agriculture by Università di Firenze.

By NEFERTITI project, the visit vas concluded with a follow up brainstorming and conclusions on future perspectives and policies. Fabio Boscaleri prepared the ground for discussion by presenting WP6 and the state of play, and short introduction of the policy recommendations process, to which the discussion was also expected to feed. The main topics of discussion were: The role of the policy makers; Funding demo farm activities in the long term as well, demo farms as infrastructure/projects/skills; Position and role of the demo farms in AKIS, how are they connected and more importantly, what is their active role in AKIS.

In the discussions, the participants raised their thoughts about e.g. acknowledging the pedagogical approach in demo activities, and that cultural approach is also important. Bringing actors together to solve concrete tasks was found valuable, as well as interregional cooperation and connection with other networks and multi-actoral approach with industry. Synergy and cooperation with education and demo activities was emphasized, educational focus also supports demo farms in long term. Important role of public demo farms was seen to be out of the comfort zone, where the commercial farms can’t stay, and sharing also the failure. The discussion supported the policy recommendations process and gave support and ideas.

The event ended with lunch including the products from the demo farm, and the participants also had the opportunity to test the results of the presented viticulture project to evaluate.

The event all in all was an effective way to bring the policy makers and AKIS actors to see the demo farm activities personally and collect their inputs for the NEFERTITI project and supporting future demo farm activities.



Picture 2. Event venue at Cesa Demo farm (Soila Huhtaluhta).

The third field visit will be in Thessaloniki, Greece in 16th June 2022, back to back with ERIAFF conference. There we will visit The American Farm School's Demo Farm. The visit includes a meeting with relevant AKIS actors and a final policy dialogue to discuss the importance of regional and national support tools.

Based on the knowledge transfer in these events and the lessons learnt in NEFERTITI project, we aim to create effective and meaningful policy recommendations that lead to development and active demo farm activities all over Europe in the future as well.

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