



A network self-sustainability strategy

Deliverable D7.3



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A network self-sustainability strategy

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A

bstract

This deliverable summarizes the culmination of efforts to devise a sustainability strategy for the IPMWORKS project, to ensure that the network that has been created along the project continue its operation and effectiveness beyond the project's conclusion. Through a specific methodology that involved extensive stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and iterative refinement, this report offers a comprehensive strategy to maintain and increase the IPMWORKS network of IPM Demo farms, hence enhancing the project's impact on the medium term. The strategy sets the ambition of deploying the IPMWORKS network of demo farms in all EU member states and regions, and in all agricultural sectors, with the challenging target of integrating about 300 hubs and 4.000 farms engaged in the network in the future.

The methodology section outlines the systematic approach that was undertaken to develop the sustainability strategy. Key steps included gathering insights from Hub Coaches and National Focal Points, organizing workshops, and fostering collaboration at both regional and national levels. The process culminated in the formulation of a sustainability plan poised to guide the project's future trajectory.

The analysis of the results reveals significant achievements by the hubs during the project. These include meeting the demo events requirements, fostering farmer engagement, and promoting knowledge transfer. These successes underscore the project's effectiveness and its potential for sustainability, despite the future challenges, such as sustaining the demo event adherence and overcoming language barriers (that still persist and require ongoing support).

The national stakeholder meetings convened across various European countries have provided valuable insights into regional perspectives and funding opportunities for sustaining IPM hubs in the post-project period. These discussions have highlighted the importance of tailored approaches, considering the unique needs and contexts of each region/country. Some National Focal Points consider the integration into existing networks or research centers, while others advocate for broader network integration or novel funding mechanisms. This underscores our commitment to ensuring sustainability in a diversity of social, economic and agricultural contexts.

The IPMWORKS sustainability strategy is based on several components, namely (i) the coordination at the EU level, (ii) the sustainability of current IPMWORKS individual hubs, mainly based on local funding, either public or private, (iii) the joining of new hubs, and (iv) the connection with pre-existing local initiatives that wish to officially adopt the IPMWORKS methodology. At the hub level, pathways for sustainability delineate potential avenues for IPMWORKS hubs to navigate in the coming years. These pathways include the integration into national networks with established funding, the participation in new European projects focused on pesticide reduction / holistic IPM, or the creation of novel initiatives to expand the IPMWORKS network.

This deliverable proposes a comprehensive sustainability strategy informed by stakeholder insights, regional perspectives, and best practices. By embracing collaborative partnerships, innovative funding mechanisms, and strategic integration, IPMWORKS will manage to ensure its sustainability, along with a sustainable future for the hubs and the network, and for integrated pest management in European agriculture.



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1. Objectives

This deliverable aims to develop a strategy for self-sustainability of the network after the end of the project. A draft Sustainability Strategy Plan was first produced in M36 with the definition of the initial activities to be implemented and monitored during the final year of the project. This initial plan included a series of analysis and evaluations of the project network of hubs. This was subsequently used to build this self-sustainability strategy of the overall project. Hub coaches were questioned regarding governance, partnerships (public and private), and financing (again public and private) of their hubs. In addition, National Focal Points were asked to initiate dialogues at regional/national level, with private and public stakeholders, to discuss their partnerships and financial involvement. The conclusions of these different activities are now presented in this deliverable, together with a proposition for the self-sustainability of the IPMWORKS hubs and activities.

2. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology that guided us in crafting the sustainability strategy. We will provide a detailed explanation of the step-by-step process that was followed to ensure a comprehensive and effective strategy for long-term sustainability. The methodology encompasses key components such as data gathering, stakeholder engagement, analysis, and decision-making. By following this methodology, we aim to develop a robust and actionable sustainability strategy that addresses the unique needs and challenges of the project.

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1. In the initial phase (M36), a draft strategy plan for ensuring long-term sustainability was developed and presented to WP Leaders, focusing on outlining the key elements and tasks of the hubs, with the invaluable support of WP2. Two documents were produced to support Hub Coaches and National Focal Points in their follow-up tasks, outlining what was needed for the AKIS meetings, communicating clear intentions, and seeking collaboration, as well as a document detailing what is a hub and an IPM demo event. Another document was produced with a Sustainability Strategy for the Hubs Network, proposing that IPMWORKS would keep working together as a European Network of hubs after the end of the project. This document was then put on hold, as it was decided to first gather the input from Hub Coaches and National Focal Points, before finishing the final sustainability deliverable. In this final deliverable this document was used as a basis and will be further discussed.
2. To gather the valuable input from Hub Coaches, a comprehensive questionnaire was prepared (M36). This questionnaire gave an insight on the thoughts, perspectives, challenges, and suggestions of Hub Coaches regarding their work on the network in the last 3 years, as well as on the future of the network.
3. To foster collaboration and knowledge exchange, a workshop was organized with the Hub Coaches and National Focal Points during the project's 3rd annual meeting in Almeria (M38). This workshop served as a platform for hearing Hub Coaches and National Focal Points opinions on the sustainability of their hubs, as well as to address concerns, and collectively work towards developing a robust and inclusive sustainability strategy.
4. National Focal Points were asked to take the lead in organizing national AKIS meetings (M40-42). These meetings aimed to engage stakeholders, foster dialogue, and strengthen national and/or regional partnerships for sustainability.



5. Building upon the insights and feedback received, the sustainability strategy was then revised and refined (M42). This phase ensured that the strategy aligns with the evolving needs and aspirations of the Hub network.
6. The IPMWORKS self-sustainability strategy will serve as a guiding framework for the continued growth and resilience of the project.
7. In addition to Hub coaches securing national or regional funding, the project will investigate EU funding to maintain the European network alive. To enhance coordination and further collaboration, a project will be developed, bringing together stakeholders from various domains. This initiative will facilitate knowledge sharing, promote synergies, and foster a united approach towards sustainability.
8. Recognizing the importance of financial support, a meeting with the European Commission was also arranged, to discuss budgetary considerations for coordination efforts (M43). This meeting can play a crucial role in securing the necessary resources for sustained success.
9. During the Final Conference, and in the Final Annual Meeting, the task leader will organize comprehensive discussions on the implementation of the final sustainability strategy. These meetings will mark a significant milestone in the journey, as partners will collectively work towards achieving a sustainable and thriving future for the hub network.

3. Draft action plan

As outlined in the previous chapter, in preparation for the work carried out in this task, CONSULAI outlined a detailed action plan in M32 for the activities that were planned for the remainder of the project time. The action plan had the following structure:

- Summary
- Methodology
- Support documentation.

The full document is available in ANNEX I.

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4. Questionnaire

As described in the methodology chapter, a questionnaire was developed for Hub Coaches during the Almería Annual Meeting, in November 2023, to get a better understanding of their views and opinions regarding their role in the project. This questionnaire was developed in a Web platform, to facilitate the answering and analysis of results. The final version of the questionnaire was as follows:

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1. Name
2. Country
 - a. Belgium



- b. Denmark
 - c. Finland
 - d. France
 - e. Germany
 - f. Greece
 - g. Ireland
 - h. Italy
 - i. Poland
 - j. Portugal
 - k. Scotland
 - l. Serbia
 - m. Slovenia
 - n. Spain
 - o. Switzerland
 - p. The Netherlands
 - q. United Kingdom
3. Which sector is your Hub a part of?
- a. Greenhouse horticulture
 - b. Outdoor vegetables and ornamentals
 - c. Orchards
 - d. Viticulture
4. How would you best describe your Hub?
- a. It is integrated into a Chambers of Agriculture or public advisory services, supported by public funding.
 - b. An existing private advisory service (profit or nonprofit) that needs to find external funding to develop demo activities.
 - c. It was created for the project and needed more funding to keep going after the project.
 - d. Other (Please specify)

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5. How many demo events has your Hub organised in the context of IPMWORKS so far?
6. Do you expect to reach 10 by the end of the project?
- a. Yes
 - b. Yes, and I'm expecting to organise even more.
 - c. No
 - d. Not sure yet
7. If you will not manage to organize the expected number of demonstration events by the end of the project, please explain the reason(s).
8. Between 0 (bad) and 5 (excellent), how would you rate the adherence of your hub members to the demonstration events the Hub has organized?
9. Between 0 (very bad) and 5 (excellent), how would you rate the level of interaction and involvement among your hub members?
10. What were the main achievements of your Hub during the IPMWORKS project? (Matrix 0 to 5)
- a. Comply with the required number of demonstration events.



- b. Continuous adherence of farmers to demonstration events along the project.
 - c. Ensure the quality, effectiveness and/or diversity of demonstration events.
 - d. Find interested farmers to participate in demonstration events.
 - e. Find interested farmers to be part of the Hub.
 - f. Foster the interaction between hub members.
 - g. Get farmers to participate in hub activities other than demonstration events.
 - h. Promote effective knowledge transfer.
 - i. Overcome language barriers in cross-visits.
 - j. Other (please specify)
11. What were the main challenges faced by your Hub during the IPMWORKS project? (0: not at all a challenge, I will easily reach the number of demo events. 5: Yes, it is a big challenge and I will be far from reaching the expected number...)
- a. Comply with the required number of demonstration events.
 - b. Continuous adherence of farmers to demonstration events along the project
 - c. Ensure the quality, effectiveness and/or diversity of demonstration events.
 - d. Find interested farmers to participate in demonstration events.
 - e. Find interested farmers to be part of the Hub.
 - f. Foster the interaction between hub members.
 - g. Get farmers to participate in hub activities other than demonstration events.
 - h. Promote effective knowledge transfer and peer to peer learning.
 - i. Overcome language barriers in cross-visits.
 - j. Other (please specify)
12. Between 0 (very bad) and 5 (excellent), how would you rate the overall performance of your Hub?

13. Between 0 (very bad) and 5 (excellent), how would you rate the importance of maintaining the Hub and actively developing demonstration events after the project concludes?
14. Between 0 (very bad) and 5 (excellent), how motivated are you, as a hub coach, to maintain the Hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?
15. Between 0 (very bad) and 5 (excellent), how willing/motivated is your organisation to maintain the Hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?
16. What resources or support would be needed to establish long-term sustainability for your Hub?
- a. Policy support
 - b. Financial support
 - c. Organisational support (from your hierarchy)
 - d. Other
17. How important is it to have a European network to continue the work undertaken by IPMWORKS?
- a. Very important
 - b. Important
 - c. Not very important
 - d. Not relevant
18. Please explain your answer to the previous question.
19. Will you keep in contact with other hubs of the IPMWORKS network?



- a. Of course
- b. Probably yes
- c. Probably not
- d. No

20. With which hubs will you keep in contact?

21. By what means do you expect to keep exchanges with the other hubs? (If yes or probably yes)

- a. Continue cross-visits in the long term.
- b. Network on-site meetings
- c. Hub coaches' capacity building sessions (on-site)
- d. Virtual meetings
- e. Email exchanges
- f. Other (Please specify)

22. Would a long-term contact and exchange with other hubs of the IPMWORKS network be valuable for your Hub?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

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24. At this moment what's the likelihood (on a scale of 0: Not likely at all, to 5: almost 100% likely) of assuring financing to maintain the Hub and the hub activities after the end of the IPMWORKS project?

25. If you answered 3, 4, or 5, please specify the funding source and the level of demonstration activities that will be developed.

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5. Questionnaire results and analysis

The results presented in this chapter were collected in November 2023, eleven months before the end of the project (not considering the extension that was granted). The results are presented and discussed in this chapter, for each question in the questionnaire and at the country, hub, and type of hub levels.

Three types of hubs are considered in the analysis:

- i. Hubs integrated into a Chambers of Agriculture or public advisory services
- ii. Hubs integrated into an existing private advisory service (profit or nonprofit)
- iii. Hubs that were created specifically for the project.



5.1. How many demo events has your Hub organized in the context of IPMWORKS so far?

This section presents the answers to the question, "How many demo events has your Hub organized in the context of IPMWORKS so far?" Figure 1 shows the number of demo events organized in each country by IPMWORKS hubs, until November 2023.

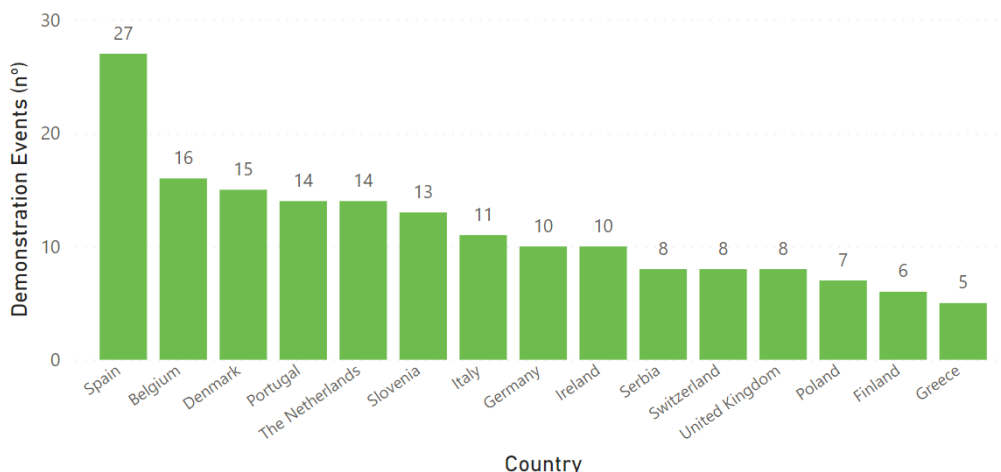


Figure 1 Number of demo events organized per country (until November 2023).

In the IPMWORKS project, one country (Spain) has three hubs, six have two hubs, and eight have just one Hub. Spain and Belgium hosted the greatest number of demonstration events, while Finland and Greece hosted the fewest, regardless of the number of hubs per country. In total, **172 demonstration events** were held when the questionnaire was completed (November 2023), which shows an overall good performance.

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Figure 2 shows the number of demonstration events held in countries with two or more hubs. Most countries are aligned with what was proposed initially and would be expected at this stage of the project. This shows that most hubs have developed a good dynamic, which gives good prospects for the future of the network.

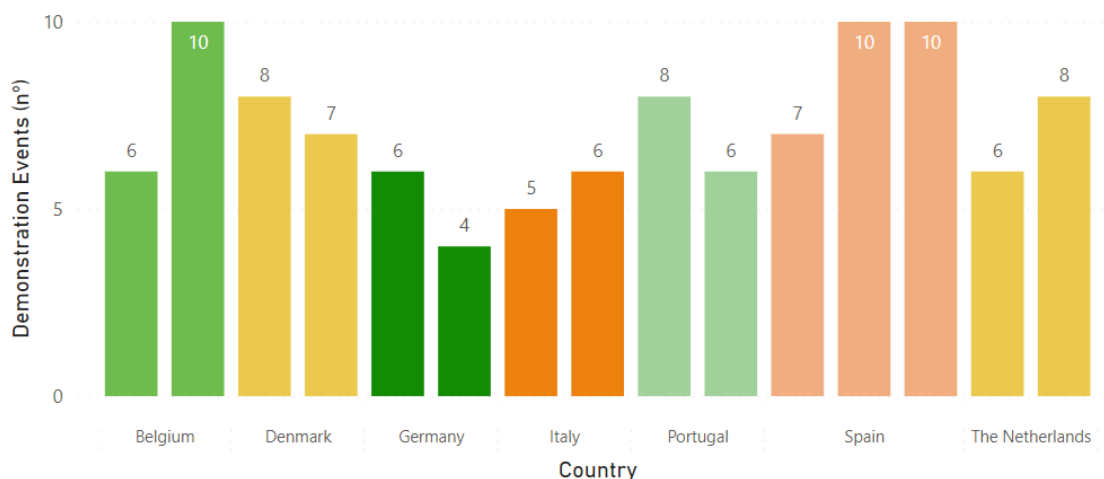


Figure 2 Number of demonstration events organized per country with two or more hubs. Each column represents one Hub, and each color represents one country.

In countries with two hubs, an average of seven demonstration events were held per hub.

By November 2023, ten demonstration events had been organized in three hubs (Belgium and Spain), the minimum number stipulated for the project, and five or fewer events had been organized in two hubs (Germany and Italy).



Figure 3 shows the number of demonstration events held in countries with only one Hub.

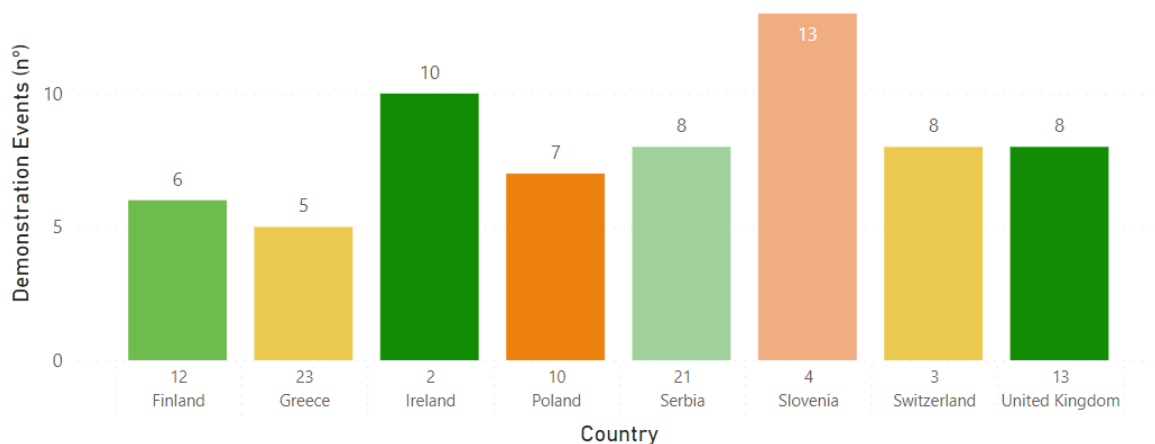


Figure 3 Number of demonstration events organized per country with only one Hub.

By November 2023, the Slovenia hub had the highest number of demonstration events (thirteen events), exceeding the minimum number stipulated for the end of the project. Ten demonstration events had been already organized in Ireland, i.e., the minimum number of events stipulated for the end of the project.

Only five hubs existed before the project. They are all part of Chambers of Agriculture/public advisory services or private advisory services: the hubs in Greece, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia, and the arable Hub in Spain. Apart from Greece, these hubs organized 13, 10, 7, and 10 demonstration events, respectively. Not surprisingly, they are among the most dynamic in the project.

5.2. Do you expect to reach 10 demo events by the end of the project?

The question "Do you expect to reach 10 demo events by the end of the project?" had four answer options: 1) Yes, and I'm expecting to organize even more; 2) Yes; 3) Not sure yet; and 4) No. Figure 4 shows the distribution of answers by IPMWORKS hub.

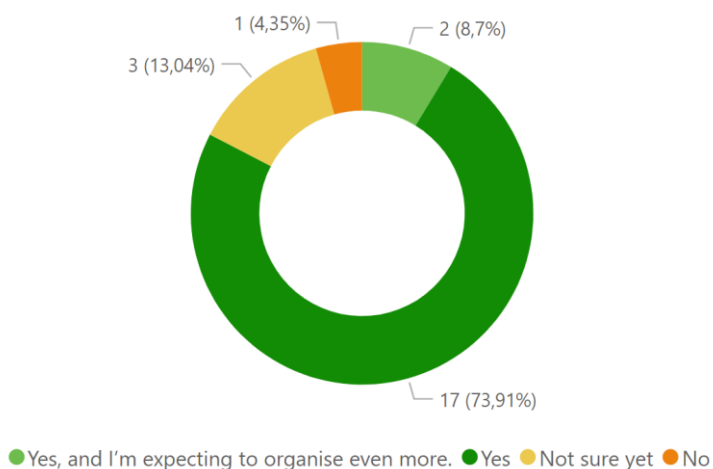


Figure 4 Distribution of the answers to question 2 among IPMWORKS hubs.



Most IPMWORKS hubs expect to be able to organize the stipulated minimum number of demonstration events (10 events) by the end of the project. Only one Hub, the Hub in Germany, does not expect to be able to organize 10 events by the end of the project. In fact, the Hub in Germany had only four events organized by the time of the questionnaire. In addition, three hubs were unsure whether they could organize 10 demonstration events (the minimum expected number) by the end of the project. Overall, it is reassuring to see that the vast majority of the hubs are in line or will exceed what was initially planned. This shows, once again, that there is a good dynamic among most of the hubs, which is a very important point to build the future sustainability of the project.

5.3. How would you rate the adherence of your hub members to the demonstration events the Hub has organized?

The question analysed in this section had response options on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to "very bad" and 5 to "excellent". Figure 5 shows the hubs' answers.

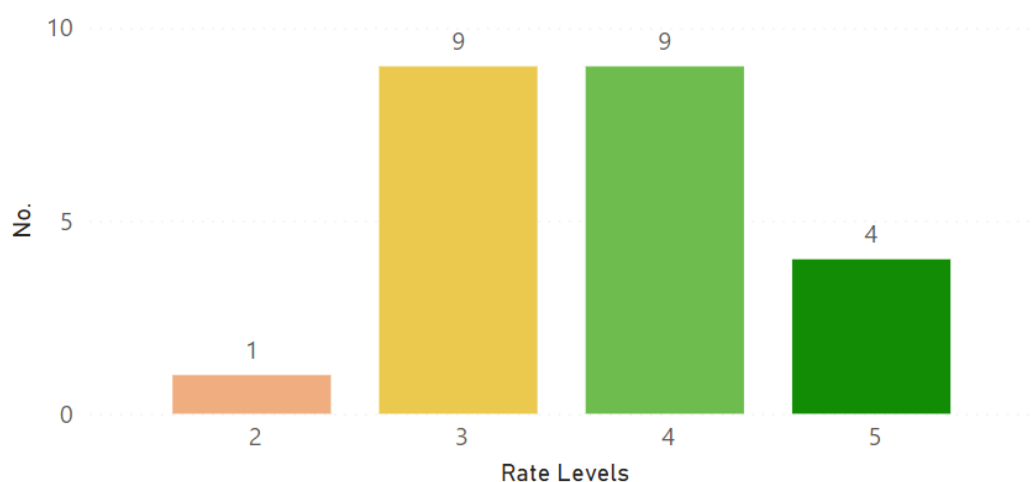


Figure 5 The Hub's answers to the question, "How would you rate the adherence of your hub members to the demonstration events the hub has organized?"

Most Hub Coaches (56.5%) rated farmers' adherence to demonstration events at levels 4 and 5. In addition, no hubs were classified as having level 1 ("very bad") adherence.

The lowest rating (2) was given by a hub created for the project, which again is not surprising. In fact, there are a few hubs, not many, that struggled to develop a good demonstration dynamic, and in these cases we cannot expect much in terms of future sustainability.

Ratings 3, 4, and 5 were in most cases given by hubs that are part of Chambers of Agriculture or other public services, but also, a few, by hubs created specifically for the project. The obvious conclusion is that these public services have been, and will be, developing demo activities in the context of IPM, with or without a project to support them. The project was very important to setup the EU network and to improve what they were already doing, but they will likely continue in the future even without a supporting network. In other cases, namely in private hubs, this will only happen if there is a way to finance the activities. And, in any case, developing a EU network to support this aim will always have a strong positive impact.



5.4. How would you rate the level of interaction and involvement among your hub members?

This question had response options on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to "very bad" and 5 to "excellent." Figure 6 shows the hubs' answers.

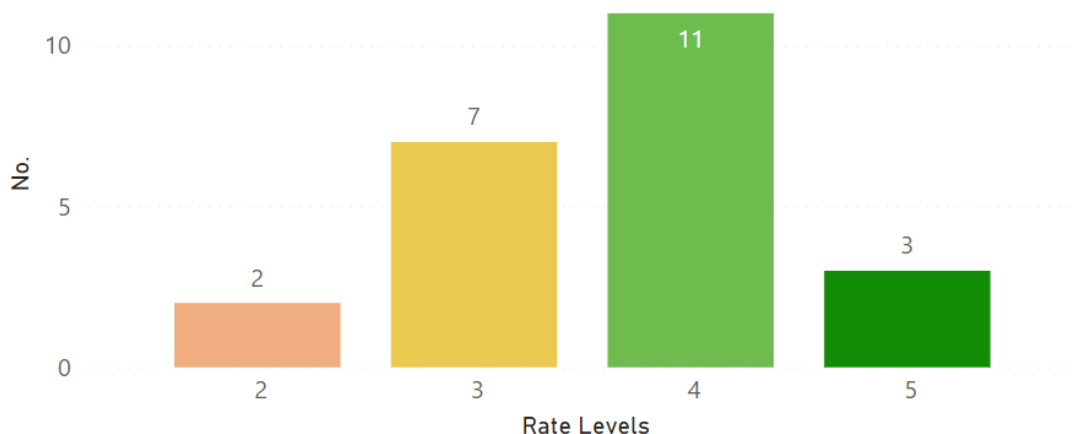


Figure 6 The Hub's answers to the question, "How would you rate the level of interaction and involvement among your hub members?"

Most Hub Coaches (65%) rated the level of interaction and involvement of hub members in the context of demonstration events at levels 4 and 5. In addition, no hubs were classified as having level 1 ("very bad") of interaction and involvement.

Like in the previous section, the lowest rating (2) was given by (private) hubs created for the project. Ratings 3, 4, and 5 were given in most cases by hubs that integrate Chambers of Agriculture/public services, but also by a few hubs created specifically for the project.

The results here are similar to the previous section, and similar conclusions can also be reached. The overall dynamic of the hubs is good, and most hubs have all the operational conditions to develop activities in the future. Competences, local networking, experience, dynamic will not be limitations for future sustainability. The lack of financing of the activities and EU level networking might be a problem, especially for private hubs (profit or nonprofit).



5.5. What were the main achievements of your Hub during the IPMWORKS project?

The question "What were your hubs main achievements during the IPMWORKS project?" had several predefined answers, shown in Figure 7, which had to be classified between 1 (not achieved) and 5 (achieved).

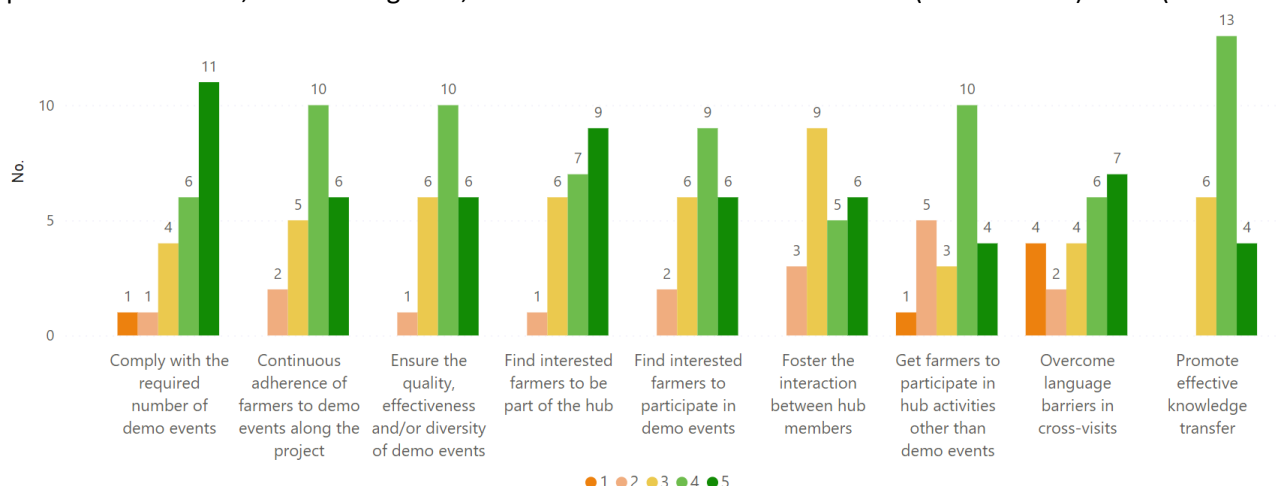


Figure 7 The Hub's answers to the question "What were the main achievements of your hub during the IPMWORKS project?"

A level 5 rating was obtained in all answers, with the highest number of 5 ratings in the following answers:

- Comply with the required number of demo events (given by all three types of hubs)
- Find interested farmers to be part of the Hub (given by all three types of hubs)
- Overcome language barriers in cross-visits (given by hubs that were created for the project)

The highest level 5 rating was obtained for "Comply with the required number of demo events."

The only answer that did not receive a level 1 or 2 rating was "Promote effective knowledge transfer." It also received the highest number of level 4 ratings. This result highlights the excellent outcome of the methodology developed by IPMWORKS, based on peer-to-peer learning facilitated by a hub coach, to foster the development of knowledge for crop and pest management in networking farms.

Looking at the overall rankings it is again possible to be optimistic about the future. Classifications of 4 and 5 were dominant in all the questions. Some issues may be of concern, like language barriers or participation in activities other than demo events, but nothing that may raise doubts about the capacity or the will of the hubs to continue the activities after the project.

5.6. What were the main challenges faced by your Hub during the IPMWORKS project?

The question "What were the main challenges faced by your Hub during the IPMWORKS project?" required several predefined answers, shown in Figure 8. The answers had to be classified between 1 (not a challenge) and 5 (a big challenge).



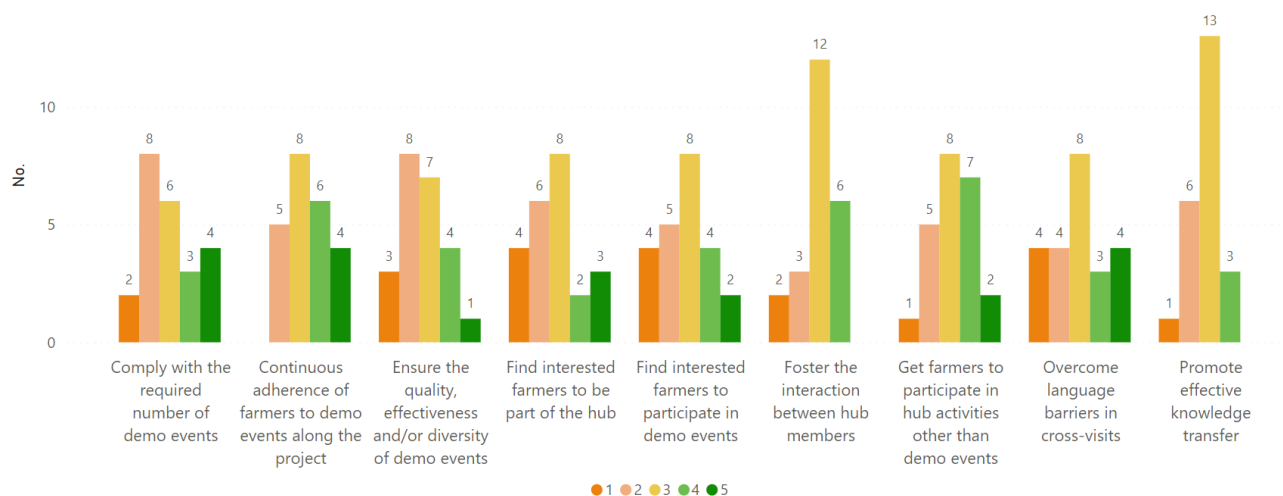


Figure 8. The Hub's answers to the question "What were the main challenges faced by your hub during the IPMWORKS project?"

The level 5 classification (it was a big challenge) was obtained in all the answers except the following two:

- Foster the interaction between hub members
- Promote effective knowledge transfer

The following answers obtained the highest number of level 5 ratings:

- Comply with the required number of demo events
- Continuous adherence of farmers to demo events along the project
- Overcome language barriers in cross-visits

These results are all associated with hubs created for the project and integrated into private services.

Looking at the overall scoring, it is possible to say that the results are highly positive, with a few points of concern. The interest and adherence of farmers in the demo activities may be an issue for a few hubs, which is also related to the quality and effectiveness of the demos. This usually happens in hubs that are private and have been created for the project. In most cases, they do not have a close and systematic relation with farmers, and did not have demo experience or competences before the project. Although this has improved considerably with the project, it is reasonable to expect that a few hubs will cease the activities after the project, especially if there is no financing available to support them. In any case, for the vast majority of the hubs this is not the case, namely if they are public (and have public financing).

5.7. How would you rate the overall performance of your Hub?

The question analysed in this chapter had response options on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to "very bad" and 5 to "excellent". Figure 9 shows the hubs' answers.



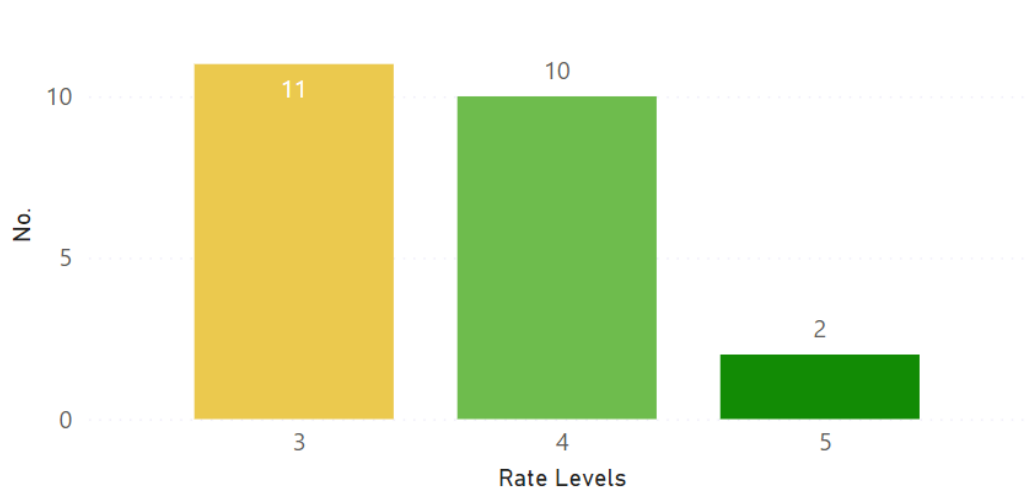


Figure 9 The Hub's answers to the question "How would you rate the overall performance of your Hub?"

No hub coach rated their Hub's performance at level 1 or 2, and the majority of Hub Coaches (52%) gave their Hub's performance a rating of 4 or 5. Interestingly, the highest rating (5) was given by two hubs that were created for the project, which may show that they are proud of what was achieved.

It may be of some concern that almost half of the hubs gave a classification of "only" 3 to their own performance. We could see this as a degree of modesty, but we should also understand it as a need to continue the work that has been developed, strengthening the network and improving the capacities and the competences of the Hub Coaches after the end of the project.

5.8. How would you rate the importance of maintaining the Hub and actively developing demonstration events after the project concludes?

This question had response options on a scale of numbers between 1 and 5, where the rating 1 corresponded to "not important" and 5 to "extremely important". Figure 10 shows the hubs' answers.

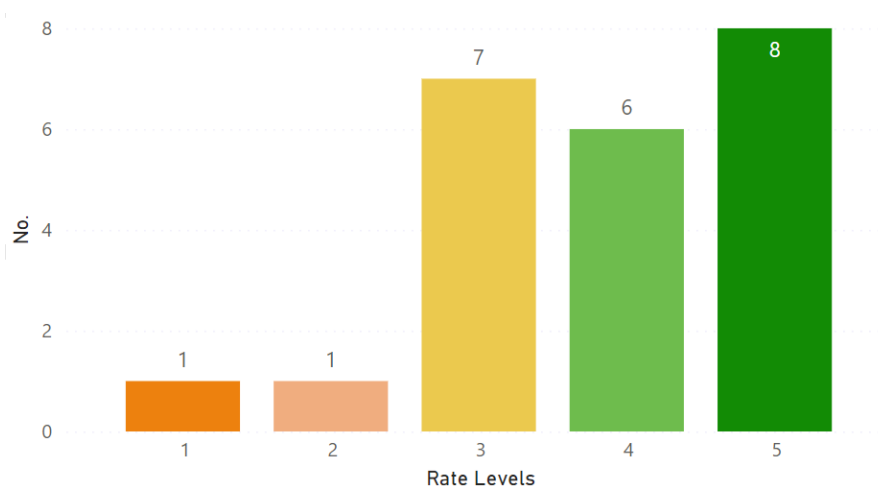


Figure 10 The Hub's answers to the question "How would you rate the importance of maintaining the Hub and actively developing demonstration events after the project concludes?"



Most Hub Coaches (61%) rated the importance of keeping the hubs active after the project has finished at levels 4 and 5. On the other side of the scale, there was only one level 1 and one level 2 ratings. This is possibly the result that gives a better perspective for the future of the network, and the sustainability of the hubs. The majority of the hubs want to continue their activities, and find that this is very important. About one third of the hubs are not so sure, but if they have the incentives and adequate support, they will likely continue. This shows very good prospects for the sustainability of the network, especially if the hubs (namely the private ones) find a way to finance their activities.

5.9. How motivated are you, as a hub coach, to maintain the Hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?

The question analysed in this section had response options on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to "not motivated at all" and 5 to "extremely motivated". Figure 11 shows the Hub Coaches' answers.

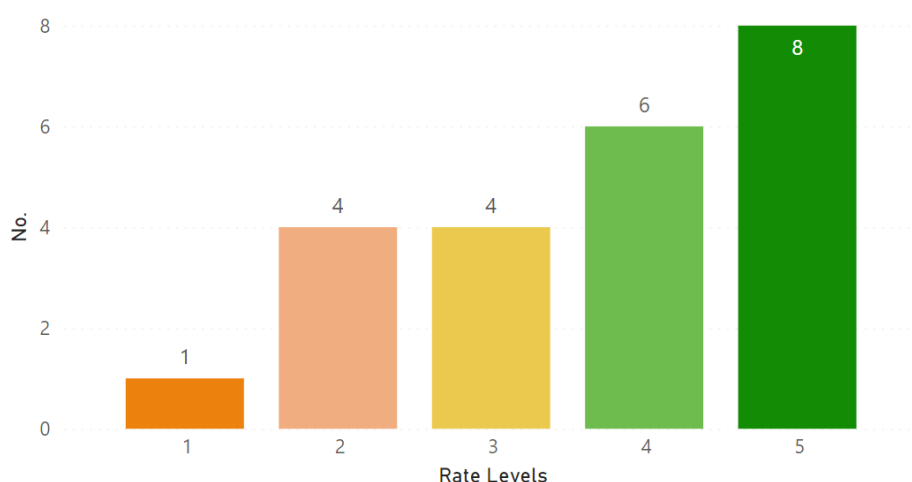


Figure 11 The Hub's answers to the question, "How motivated are you, as a hub coach, to maintain the hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?"

Most Hub Coaches (61%) rated their motivation to keep the Hub after the project's end at levels 4 and 5. On the other side of the scale, there were 4 level 2 responses and 1 level 1 response. These results are not as positive as in the previous section, especially if we consider the 5 Hub Coaches that ranked 1 or 2, and do not seem motivated to continue.

This is, however, not surprising. It is reasonable to accept that some Hub Coaches want to do something else, especially those who met some difficulties in facilitating the farmers of the hub or met some difficulties to achieve the challenging working program planned in the project. But this raises an issue that may be important for the future. We must separate the hubs from the Hub Coaches, because the most important is to keep the hub network. During the project several Hub Coaches were replaced, for different reasons, and in most cases, this did not affect the performance of the project. The most important is, in fact, to maintain the network for the hubs, and assure its sustainability. People will always come and go and be replaced in their responsibilities.



5.10. How willing/motivated is your organization to maintain the Hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?

The question analysed in this section had response options on a scale between 1 and 5, where the rating 1 corresponded to "not motivated" and 5 to "extremely motivated." Figure 12 shows the Hub Coaches' answers.

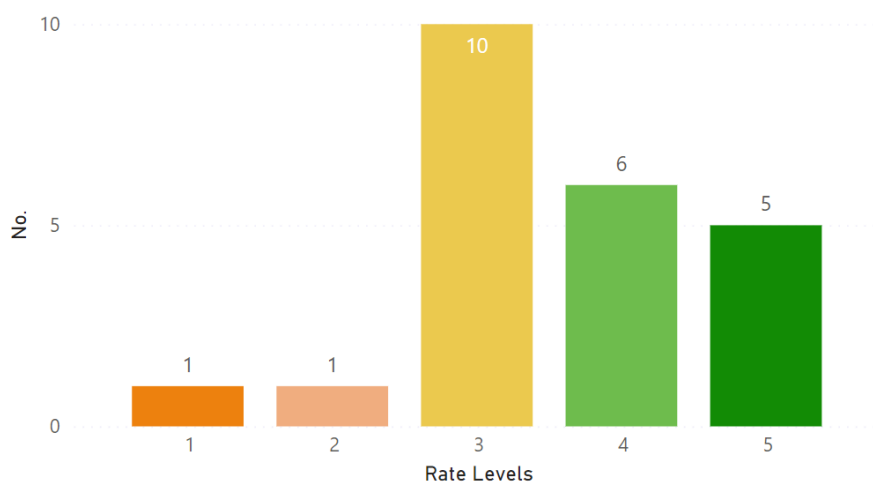


Figure 12 The Hub's answers to the question, "How willing/motivated is your organization to maintain the hub and actively develop demonstration events once the project concludes?"

The motivation of organizations to maintain the Hub after the project has been completed was rated level 3 by 44% of the Hub Coaches, with the percentage of responses being very similar to ratings 4 and 5 combined (another 48%). A level 1 and 2 response was given by only two Hub Coaches. This again is a very good result, that provides good prospects for the future of the network. The fact that almost half of the hubs have doubts about the willingness/motivation of their organisation to continue is normal. When the questionnaire was made, the hubs had no idea about the possibility of assuring financing for their activities after the end of the project (unless they are public funded), and they had no idea if the whole network will continue to support them. These are, in fact, two major issues that can change the game and assure that the hubs are sustainable. To make sure that the hubs are sustainable, there must be a way to finance their activities, and ideally there must be a path to maintain the whole network, developing knowledge exchange activities at EU level.



5.11. What resources or support will be needed (and are not assured yet) to establish long-term sustainability for your Hub?

The question under analysis had three answer options, namely: 1) Financial support, 2) Organisational support (from your hierarchy/organisation) and/or 3) Policy support. Figure 13 shows the Hub Coaches' answers.

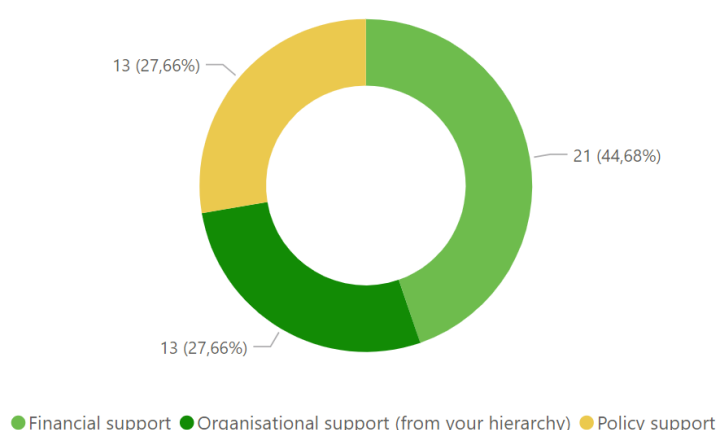


Figure 13 The Hub Coaches' answers to the question, "What resources or support will be needed (and are not assured yet) to establish long-term sustainability for your hub?"

As shown in the figure, 21 Hub Coaches considered financial support necessary to establish long-term sustainability for your Hub, while the remaining support (both organisational support and policy support) was considered necessary by 13 Hub Coaches. The answers "Organisational support" and "Policy support" were given by Hub Coaches associated with the three types of hubs. The answer "Financial support" was given by Hub Coaches responsible for hubs created for the project, most of them private, and in a few cases by hubs that are part of Chambers of Agriculture/public services.

The analysis shows very clearly that financial support is a requisite for almost half of the hubs, and for all the hubs that are not publicly financed. This is potentially the most important topic to assure the sustainability of the hubs and the network after the end of the project. Nevertheless, the analysis also shows that assuring financial support may not be enough in many cases, because policy and organisational issues are also important. This is why it is important to maintain networking and knowledge exchanging activities after the end of the project. Without a structure to support these activities it is likely that many hubs will cease their demo activities at some point.

5.12. How important is it to have a European network to continue the work undertaken by IPMWORKS?

The question analysed in this section had response options on a scale between 1 and 5, where the rating 1 corresponded to "not important" and 5 to "extremely important". Figure 14 shows the Hub Coaches' answers.



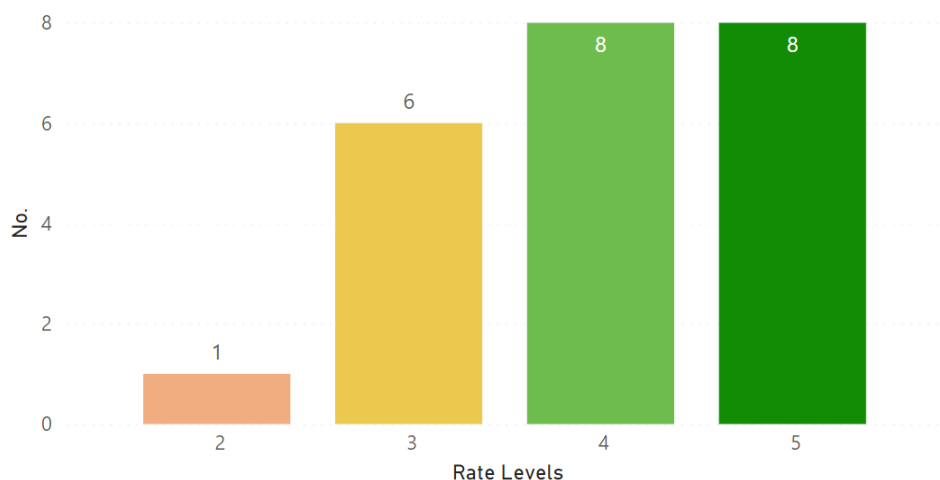


Figure 14 The Hub Coaches' answers to the question, "How important is it to have a European network to continue the work undertaken by IPMWORKS?"

The importance of having a European network to continue the work carried out by IPMWORKS was rated by 70% with levels 4 and 5. Only one level 2 rating was obtained, and no level 1 ratings. The level 2 rating was given by a hub coach who integrated a hub created for the project.

The results corroborate previous answers, showing the relevance of the EU network. As mentioned before, the sustainability of the network has to be built by adding to components: developing the conditions to assure that the hubs have the resources (including financing) to continue developing demo activities. And make sure that there is an organisation that will coordinate the process at EU level, promoting knowledge exchange, interacting at policy level, and strengthening the network. The long-term sustainability of the project will only exist if these two components are developed.

5.13. Will you keep in contact with other hubs of the IPMWORKS network after the end of the project? & by what means do you expect to keep exchanges with other hubs?

The question "Will you maintain contact with other hubs in the IPMWORKS network after the end of the project?" had the following answer options: 1) Of course, 2) Probably yes, 3) Probably no, and 4) No. Figure 15 shows the Hub Coaches' answers to this question.



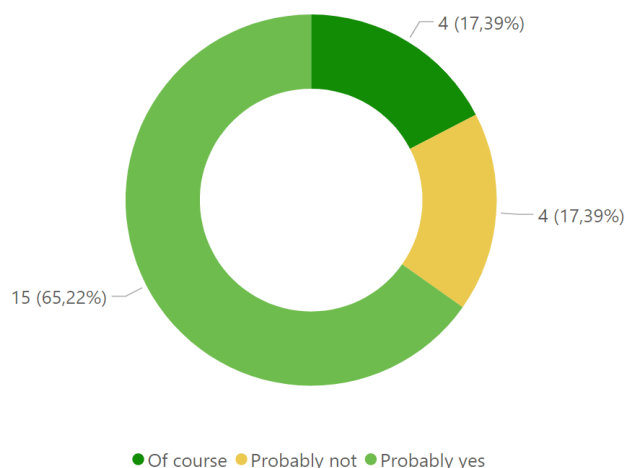
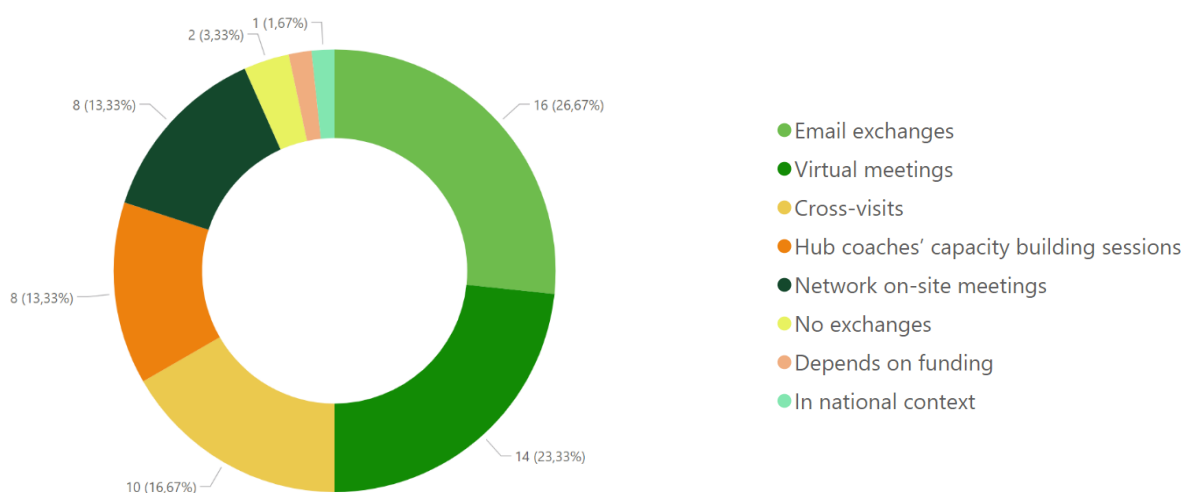


Figure 15 The Hub Coaches' answers to the question, "Will you keep in contact with other hubs of the IPMWORKS network after the end of the project?"

No hub coach replied that they would not keep in touch with other hubs in the IPMWORKS network after the project has finished, and 16 Hub Coaches (65%) replied that they would probably keep in touch. This again shows that it will be very important to maintain the networking activities at EU level. Without a EU level initiative, it is very likely that the network will tend to disappear.

Figure 16 shows the hubs' answers to the question, "By what means do you expect to keep exchanges with other hubs?"



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Email exchanges (27%) and virtual meetings (23%) were the most chosen means of contact. However, cross-visits (17%), building sessions (13%), and on-site meetings (13%) also had a considerable percentage of choice. Only two Hub Coaches replied that they would not adopt any means of communicating with other hubs. As before, this shows that Hub Coaches are willing to continue the interaction with other hubs, which corroborates the importance of the EU network.



5.14. What is the likelihood, at this moment, of assuring financing to maintain the Hub and the hub activities after the end of the IPMWORKS project?

The question analysed in this section had response options on a scale of 1 to 5, where the rating 1 corresponded to "not likely at all" and 5 to "extremely likely." Figure 17 shows the Hub Coaches' answers.

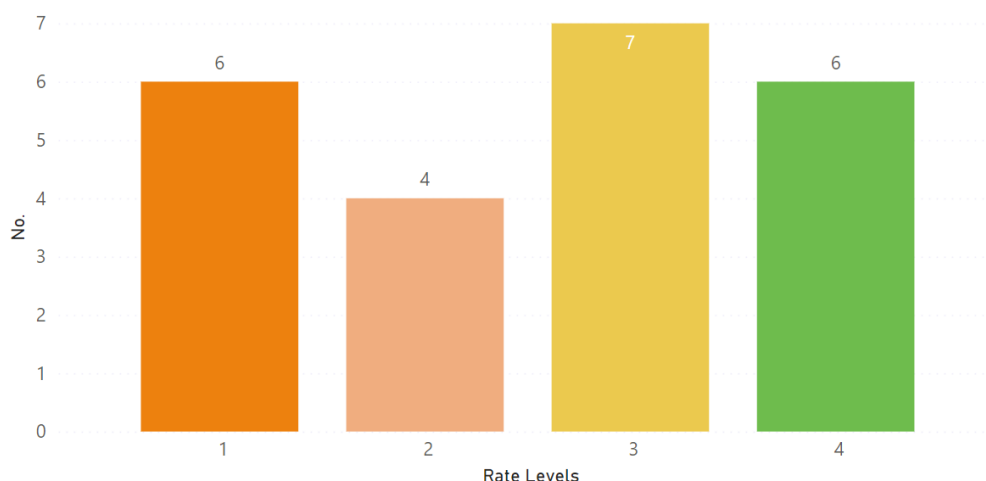


Figure 17 The Hub Coaches' answers to the question, "What is the likelihood, at this moment, of assuring financing to maintain the hub and the hub activities after the end of the IPMWORKS project?"

No hub coach (even in public financed hubs) considers it extremely likely (level 5) that financial support for hub activities will be secured after the project is completed. In contrast, 43% of Hub Coaches consider securing financial support improbable (rating level 1 and 2).

The hubs of the Hub Coaches who consider it very unlikely to secure funding for hub activities after the project is completed are both hubs that were created for the project and hubs that already existed before the project and which integrate Chambers of Agriculture or public services. There is no specific pattern.

This seems to be the major challenge to assure the sustainability of the network, which is not surprising. And the major concern is not to secure funding for the overall EU network. In the long-term, it is important to have a EU network to allow the interaction and knowledge exchange activities among the hubs, but in the short-term what is really necessary is to assure that the hubs find a way to finance their own activities.

6. Summary of the analysis

This chapter reinforces some of the issues discussed above, and presents the main conclusions that have been reached regarding each of the topics addressed in the questionnaire. The aim is to prepare the ground to develop a solid proposal for the sustainability of the network.

Demo Events Organised

- By November 2023, four hubs (17% of hubs) had reached the minimum number of demo events stipulated for IPMWORKS (10 demo events).



- 60% of the hubs that already existed before the project exceeded or reached the minimum number of demonstration events. This suggests that it can be easier for this type of hub to organize demonstration events. Most of these hubs are public or public funded.
- 74% of Hub Coaches expect to be able to organize 10 demo events by the end of the project.

This shows a high level of commitment from most hubs, and strongly suggests that, with adequate financing, the activities will continue after the end of the project.

Adherence to Demo Events, Interaction, and Involvement

- 56.5% of Hub Coaches considered hub members' adherence to demo events to be good or very good.
- There is no direct relationship between the type of hub and the hub member's adherence, with lower and very high adherence responses for all types of hubs.
- 65% of Hub Coaches considered the interaction and involvement of hub members to be good or very good.
- There is no direct relationship between the type of hub and the hub member's interaction/involvement, and there were lower and very high adherence responses for all types of hubs.

All in all, this shows that the local networks are working and have develop a positive dynamic, and that farmers are connected to the hubs, which is an important component to assure the sustainability of the hubs and the overall network.

Main Achievements

Most Hub Coaches rated their hub's performance highly or very highly. The main achievements of the Hubs during the IPMWORKS project were the following:

- An overall good compliance with required demo events.
- They found interested farmers to be part of the hubs.
- It was possible to overcome language barriers during cross-visits.
- There was an effective promotion of knowledge transfer.

As before, these achievements were obtained across all hub types (not necessarily all hubs).

Main Challenges

The main challenges faced by the hubs during the IPMWORKS project were the following:

- In a few cases (not many), to comply with the required number of demo events.
- To assure a continuous adherence of farmers to demo events along the project.
- In some cases, to overcome language barriers in cross-visits.

These challenges were faced mainly by hubs created for the project and integrated into private services.

Despite these challenges, complying with the required number of demo events and overcoming language barriers in cross-visits were also considered as the hubs' main achievements, which means that most hubs have successfully overcome these obstacles.

Importance of Hub Sustainability / Organization's Motivation / Hub Coaches Motivation



- Most Hub Coaches emphasized the importance of maintaining hubs in the post-project stage.
- 48% of organizations are motivated to maintain hub activities after project completion.
- Most Hub Coaches (61%) are motivated to maintain hub activities after completing the project.
- Project-created hubs showed higher ratings in all these regards.

This clearly shows the motivation of private hubs to continue with the activities (which will obviously depend on funding). But it also shows that, if funding is assured, most hubs will continue the activities and the network, because public hubs / Chambers of Agriculture will not cease their activities.

Needed Support for Sustainability / Importance of European Network

- Most Hub Coaches (82%) expressed willingness to stay in touch with other hubs post-project.
- Financial support was deemed crucial for long-term hub sustainability, specifically for project-created hubs but also for hubs integrated into Chambers of Agriculture/Public Services.
- Organizational and policy support were also recognized as important.

The questionnaire answers reveal a consensus among Hub Coaches on the importance of a European network to continue project activities.

Likelihood of Financing

- 43% of Hub Coaches consider it improbable to secure financial support to maintain the hub and the hub activities after the end of the project.
- These answers were given by both hubs created for IPMWORKS and hubs integrated into existing structures (Chambers of Agriculture/public services).

This is clearly the main challenge for the continuation of the activities and long-term sustainability of the network. It is also important to note that, at the time of the survey, there was not a clear alternative to develop and fund the coordination activities at the EU level after the project. Since then, there is at least one Horizon Europe project (AdvisoryNetPest) that has been approved and supports some of the activities and the hubs that were initiated by IPMWORKS, and more will certainly be developed in the future.

7. National meetings on sustainability

As defined in the methodology chapter, National Focal Points were asked to organize regional/national AKIS meetings alongside Hub Coaches, in which one of the aims was to present and discuss the strategy for long term sustainability of the network, and to discuss about funding solutions for supporting IPMWORKS hubs after the end of the project. In addition, National Focal Points were also encouraged to invite a broad range of national stakeholders to visit an IPMWORKS demo farm before the end of the summer 2024, especially if this type of visit had not yet taken place at the national level.

In the context of the AKIS meetings, National Focal Points were asked to facilitate a discussion on national/regional funding opportunities for the hubs and the national networks after September 2024. National Focal Points were also asked to understand if there were already some similar initiatives at national/regional level, and if these initiatives could run alongside the IPM hubs (or even help to finance them).



These meetings were organized jointly with the Hub Coaches in each country, to allow them to share experiences and network with policy makers and, more broadly, with the local AKIS. Whenever possible, National Focal Points also used these meetings to influence national/regional policy makers to develop new policies to support the hubs and assure funding for the continuation of their activities.

After these meetings, National Focal Points were asked to report back the potential opportunities to CONSULAI, as well as to their national hubs, supporting them in their efforts to find funding, so that they could prepare their own sustainability strategies. Of the sixteen National Focal Points that integrate the IMPWORKS project, CONSULAI has received the report of the national meetings from nine National Focal Points. The main results of these reports are presented in this chapter.

7.1. National meeting's results

Belgium. The discussions in Belgium did not reach a specific conclusion on how to fund the hubs after the end of the project. Nevertheless, a few options were discussed. For some crops, it already happens that farmers pay a local cooperative to organize advisory services for its members. There could also be the option to put a label on IPM products, to increase the funds available with this aim. The hubs could also fit in the operational program of the local producers' organization. On the other side, there are sectors that are not organized, and will miss these opportunities (for example arable crops, which is one of the most important agricultural sector in Belgium).

Research centers could also partner with the hubs to help on their basic functioning, and to translate their scientific outcomes into advice. This already happens partially. For example, Inagro has a board of growers who co-define the research needs from the farmers point of view, and then helps to disseminate results. In the Netherlands, it is common that growers co-fund research and define the agenda, but still not in Belgium.

Denmark. The two Danish hubs appreciate the opportunities for knowledge exchange during the demo events and other project activities, where researchers, advisors, and farmers were invited to discuss IPM together. The hubs believe that there is too much workload for Hub Coaches, as well as the challenges of dealing with different starting points and a diversity of agricultural landscapes, impacting the effectiveness of data reporting and time commitment for Hub Coaches. There is also a need for better organization within sectors, enhanced cross-country collaboration, and streamlined data collection processes. For these reasons, the Danish hubs did not show much interest in continuing the hub work after the end of the IMPWORKS project.

France. The French stakeholders understand the added value of belonging to a European network on IPM, particularly considering the diverse agricultural landscapes and emerging plant health challenges across the continent. This network would facilitate comparison of soil and climatic contexts, anticipating issues such as emerging pests and climate change impacts. Additionally, it could serve as a platform for benchmarking technical solutions, notably biocontrol options, across Member States.

New European projects like AdvisoryNetPest and RATION further contribute to this objective, aiming to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation in reducing pesticides use and risks. An EU wide hub network would enable the dissemination of facilitation methods and best practices, fostering collective validation of innovative solutions through farm demo networks.

French stakeholders emphasized the potential of such networks in inspiring sustainable practices adoption and mitigating competition distortions among EU member states. However, they highlighted the importance of reinforcing data collection efforts, despite challenges such as farmer and advisor reluctance, to maximize



the impact of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) initiatives. With national funding secured for the DEPHY network, France remains committed to its involvement in these collaborative efforts.

Netherlands. The Dutch stakeholders consider IPMWORKS sometimes duplicative of existing initiatives in the Netherlands, particularly farmer study groups and provincial innovation policy groups for agriculture, funded by both CAP and national budgets. These initiatives focus on innovation projects, small groups collaborations, and knowledge sharing, encompassing topics beyond IPM, such as soil management and precision farming. Funding suggestions included CAP, national/regional budgets, and sector contributions, focusing on resilient cropping systems to reduce pesticide dependency.

In the Netherlands there is not a specific national support program for IPM. The discussion emphasized the saturation of sustainability projects, making it challenging to recruit new farmers and attract participation in demonstrations. The consensus was that while IPMWORKS aligns with existing practices, it lacks distinctiveness, which results on a low support for IPMWORKS hubs. Currently, there is a vast abundance of projects and programs in the country, such as the “Sustainable Practice Network Arable farming”, with similarities to IPMWORKS, but not always exclusively focused on IPM. Continuation of the IPMWORKS hubs will therefore be challenging, due to the existence of similar initiatives and farmer fatigue from repeated project invitations.

This apparent pessimist view also shows that, in some countries, funding the hubs and the hubs activities is not an issue, because there are already sufficient alternatives. In any case, these countries would also benefit from an EU initiative that promotes knowledge exchange at a higher level.

Portugal. The Portuguese hubs were both created for the project, meaning that they do not have funding to keep their activities on their own. Nevertheless, the Portuguese stakeholders consider it essential to continue the work developed in IPMWORKS. In Portugal, there are many projects and initiatives that aim to disseminate sustainable agricultural practices to farmers, including the sustainable use of pesticides. For this reason, the exclusive finance of the IPMWORKS hubs is not considered a viable solution for the Portuguese case in the long term.

Portuguese stakeholders consider that the most adequate solution would be to integrate the IPMWORKS hubs into existing demonstration networks and projects, with guaranteed financing and similar objectives and methodology. This would be the most strategic and effective solution.

As CONSULAI (the hub coach for both IPMWORKS hubs) has been leading the AdvisoryNetPEST project since the beginning of 2024, the most successful strategy for the Portuguese stakeholders would be for these hubs to be integrated into the new project and added to the AdvisoryNetPEST network.

Serbia. During the meeting, it was recognized that involving National Focal Points and decision-makers in regional associations and connecting them with European funds is crucial for establishing a sustainable agricultural strategy in Serbia and the region. Continuing such initiatives beyond the project cycle would be essential for achieving long-term goals, especially considering the current level of awareness among agricultural producers.

The meeting explored various concepts for continuing the initiated actions, emphasizing calls to action at national, regional, and European levels. Strategies discussed include education and training programs, establishing demonstration farms, ensuring access to resources, investing in research and development, implementing supportive policies, and fostering collaboration and communication among stakeholders.



Spain. Spain is a very regionalized country, and there is a strong inequality of resources available in the different regions. For example, in regions where public-private advice is provided, producers are not inclined to finance this type of hubs for knowledge exchange through their own contributions. A good alternative would be to provide this funding through producer organizations, so that they can manage the advisory activities. In regions where public advice is provided through agricultural extension services, and they are rare, it is relatively easy to ensure that the hubs are maintained. This will be much more difficult in regions where advice is largely private.

A good opportunity for financing hubs could be using regional and supra-regional funding sources such as operational groups. Regarding local and regional funding sources, it can also be possible to finance the hubs through operational funds allocated to producer organizations (EU funding).

Switzerland. In Switzerland, in addition to IPMWORKS, five other networks are working to reduce the use of pesticides in agriculture. The Swiss stakeholders consider it viable to integrate IPMWORKS into one of these networks to guarantee the continuity of the work and the hubs developed during IPMWORKS four years of operation.

PestiRed, a strategic choice for integration, is one of these networks, financed by the Federal Office for Agriculture and the cantonal offices. The network is already involved in the IPMWORKS project. The financing was initiated in 2020 and is guaranteed until 2028. The integration of the Swiss hub into this network further solidifies the assurance of continuity of the hub activities.

United Kingdom. The UK stakeholders identified a series of funding sources and initiatives to support knowledge exchange activities in the agricultural sector, and the future activities of the hubs. The Scottish government is considering a facilitation fund to support coordination of farmer knowledge exchange groups, while the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board (AHDB) is utilizing levy fees to finance full-time staff for knowledge exchange. Private funding from suppliers is also an option, although it requires demonstrating clear benefits to businesses. Additionally, national, and regional initiatives such as the IPM NET project and Farm Advisory Service offer opportunities for farmers to engage in knowledge exchange activities and tackle common challenges. Moving forward, discussions will continue with the AHDB knowledge exchange coordinator, who volunteered to be a hub coach. Plans are also underway to explore the potential integration of the Farm Advisory Service into future hub facilitation efforts.

7.2. National meeting's conclusions

The discussions across various European countries regarding the continuation of the network and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) hubs after the end of the H2020 IPMWORKS project has shown a diversity of backgrounds and alternatives for the future, but also revealed several common themes and challenges.

One prominent issue is the sustainability of funding for the hubs. While some countries, like Belgium and Denmark, have clear options for the future, such as integrating hubs into existing cooperative structures or research centers, others, like Portugal, emphasize the need for integration into broader networks with guaranteed financing. Another challenge is the workload and the different starting points faced by Hub Coaches, which affects data reporting and overall effectiveness.

There is a consensus on the necessity for better organization within sectors, enhanced cross-country collaboration, and streamlined data collection processes to optimize outcomes. This claims for the need of a high-level network, which can be able to provide international exchanges and develop what is lacking at



national/ regional level. Even France, for example, which is possibly the country with the most developed public advisory services on IPM, highlights the value of a European network for sharing knowledge and addressing emerging challenges in diverse agricultural landscapes. Reinforcing data collection efforts also remains crucial, despite challenges like farmer and advisor reluctance.

Some countries, like The Netherlands, see IPMWORKS and the hubs as a redundancy of national existing initiatives, emphasizing the need for distinctiveness and regional funding. Nevertheless, the need for a EU level initiative is still relevant. In Spain, the regionalized nature of agricultural resources calls for tailored funding strategies to sustain the hubs. In other countries, like in Switzerland, integration into existing networks like PestiRed will ensure the continuation of hub activities, leveraging established funding mechanisms. The UK also identifies various funding sources, including government facilitation funds, levy fees, and private sector contributions, demonstrating a multi-pronged approach to sustain knowledge exchange efforts.

Overall, the discussions underscore the importance of EU level collaborative efforts, innovative funding strategies (at EU level and, in many cases, at national level), and integration into existing networks to ensure the long-term success of IPM initiatives across Europe. Such approaches can enhance knowledge sharing, mitigate challenges, and inspire sustainable practices adoption in agriculture.

8. Pathways for sustainability of the network

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Over the next few years, IPM and the reduction of pesticides will remain a crucial topic in European agriculture. During the four years of the H2020 project, IPMWORKS have made a convincing proof-of-concept of a specific methodology, based on (i) hubs of demo farms facilitated by a hub coach, (ii) the promotion of ‘holistic’ IPM through peer-to-peer learning within hubs and towards other farmers through demo events, and (iii) the collection of data at the farm level to convince the farming community (and policy makers) that IPM is efficient to reduce the reliance on pesticides, IPM is cost-effective, and IPM does not impair food security in Europe. However, there is still a long way to go to bring all the European agriculture in this virtuous approach to crop and pest management.

To continue the promotion of ‘holistic’ IPM, and to impact significantly on the decrease in pesticide use in European agriculture, the network of IPMWORKS demo farms will have to continue pursuing its demonstration activities and to extend both geographically and in terms of number of IPMWORKS hubs. The objective would be to deploy the network (and its specific methodology) in all EU member states (and all motivated associated countries). A target of 300 hubs representing about 4.000 engaged farmers would be necessary to hit all farming communities throughout the EU.

There will be different ways for the current IPMWORKS hubs to continue with their work, whether it is by integrating the hubs in new projects, such as AdvisoryNetPest, or other national/regional initiatives that will include them and/or their activities in national/regional advisory services. The resources developed by IPM Decisions and IPMWORKS will surpass the timing of both projects in many different ways, including the projects knowledge base and databases, which will be integrated into the EU-FarmBook platform.



The work that has been undertaken during this year to help develop a strategy for the sustainability of the network provided a good basis in building potential pathways for the future. The results of the questionnaire showed that most Hub Coaches and many of the organizations to which they belong are motivated and willing to continue working after the end of the project. At the same time, there was almost a consensus among Hub Coaches on the importance of belonging to a European network that promotes knowledge sharing between countries and provides the resources and networking that are not possible to have at national/regional level.

Financial support was considered essential to ensure the continuity of the hubs activities after the project's end, and possibly the most important challenge on sustainability. When the questionnaire was done, no hub had fully guaranteed funding to ensure its sustainability after the project, and 43% of the Hub Coaches considered it unlikely to obtain this kind of support after the project's end. This is necessarily something that the partners of the project have to build on. In this context, the potential pathways to sustainability of the IPMWORKS hubs should provide the Hub Coaches with the means to obtain funding for hub activities, namely in the countries where this is not available from local sources (public or private).

The proposed pathways for the sustainability of the network and the hubs are therefore the following:

1. Integration of the hubs into national demonstration networks that have funding for their activities (public or private)
2. Integration of the hubs into new European (or multi country) projects that aim to contribute to the reduction of pesticides use and risks in the EU agricultural sector.
3. The search for financing to maintain the coordination team of the IPMWORKS network, in charge of organising the network at the EU level, and of scaling up the existing consortium.

The first proposal presupposes that Hub Coaches identify these networks, and these networks have the resources to fund their activities (which in some countries is already the case). Besides having funds for their activities, the criteria for identifying and selecting these national (or regional) networks should be:

- To have similar aims and objectives to the IPMWORKS network
- To have a methodology that includes or allows for demonstration activities of IPM and holistic IPM practices aimed at farmers and advisors.

These criteria would contribute to the integration of the hubs into national networks that not only have guaranteed financing but are also capable of continuing, on the long-term, the work developed during the IPMWORKS project.

The second proposal, the integration of hubs into new European projects, ensures the financing of hubs and hub activities during the lifetime of these new projects. AdvisoryNetPEST is a good example of a new project aiming to reduce the use and risks of pesticides by enhancing EU advisory services and fostering knowledge exchange. The project specific objectives include the development of a European network of advisors specialized in the reduction of the use and risks of pesticides, the organization of demonstration and training actions to promote knowledge sharing between advisors, and, consequently, the adoption of sustainable practices by farmers. The integration of the IPMWORKS hubs in the AdvisoryNetPEST network will not only ensure the financing of the hubs, but also the continuation of the work carried out during the IPMWORKS project, as it stands for the same principles and has identical objectives.

The third and last proposal for the sustainability of the hubs is to search and find funding to support a coordination team in charge of representing the network, contacting potential candidates wishing to launch new IPMWORKS hubs, defining the working plan for the network, training the Hub Coaches, and facilitating



interactions among them to maintain a community of IPMWORKS Hub Coaches, collecting and processing data for a quantitative demonstration that "IPM works", and ensuring a wide communication with a wide number of relevant channels.

The primary expenses for a hub encompass the hub coach's salary, travel expenses for annual network meetings, and operational costs (such as meetings, communication, demonstrations, cross-visits to other IPMWORKS hubs, or incentives for farmers supporting demonstrations). Institutions aiming to establish an IPMWORKS hub or maintain an existing hub are urged to explore avenues for securing necessary funding from self-funding, private backing, or public support. In EU Member States, exploring and attracting CAP funding designated for farm demonstrations in sustainable agriculture is highly recommended. Partner institutions should collaborate with the National Focal Points to initiate discussions promptly with local AKIS and pertinent public authorities overseeing CAP funding.

Effectively coordinating such a European endeavor entails personnel responsible for network administration, organizing and monitoring demonstration events, fostering adviser capacity building, develop sector-specific knowledge dissemination activities, promote data gathering and analysis, and develop communication efforts (including website management, IPM Resource Toolbox maintenance, social media presence, and participation in conferences). An adequate budget will be needed for these coordination responsibilities, as well as for the travel and operational costs for meetings and communication and the IT services to sustain the whole system.

The coordinators of IPMWORKS, together with some of the partners, do intend to develop a proposal to a suitable EU funding program, adapted to support the continuation of the EU-wide initiatives, with the aim of funding the coordination of the EU IPMWORKS network. This way the European network would be maintained, using the same guidelines that IPMWORKS hubs have been using so far, providing room for the development of new hubs, and creating an opportunity for other countries to join the network and enlarge the adoption of IPM throughout Europe.

Since data collection in IPMWORKS proved to be both (i) an essential part of the methodology to produce quantitative results demonstrating that holistic IPM reduces pesticide use, reduces pesticide impact, is cost-effective, and does not impair food security, but (ii) very challenging and time consuming for Hub Coaches, the IPMWORKS coordination should also explore technological solutions for automatic remote data collection directly from the fields, feeding automatically the network database. Providing all engaged farmers with such a technical solution for data collection could enhance the motivation of Hub Coaches, by alleviating significantly the workload.

Every partner involved in the H2020 IPMWORKS project who wishes to continue post-2024 with their IPMWORKS hubs, as well as any institution from an EU Member state or associated countries desiring to join the IPMWORKS network to foster its expansion throughout Europe, should make a strong effort to identify potential funding sources to support future activities. Funding is already ensured by many IPMWORKS hubs. The ambitious target of extending the network to 4.000 engaged farmers facilitated by 300 engaged Hub Coaches will only be possible if solutions are found to fund both the coordination of the network at EU level and each individual hub.



9. Conclusions

The sustainability of the hubs beyond the IPMWORKS project is essential for ensuring the continued dissemination of IPM and IPM holistic practices across Europe. This report consolidates the results obtained from various activities undertaken to develop a comprehensive strategy for the self-sustainability of the project's network of hubs. Several key conclusions have been drawn through a specific methodological process involving considerable stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and strategic planning. This final chapter provides a summary of the main conclusions.

1. Analysis of IPMWORKS Hub Performance

The evaluation of hub performance revealed significant achievements in organizing demo events, fostering member adherence, and promoting interaction and involvement among hub members. Despite facing challenges such as language barriers and meeting demo events initially proposed numbers, most of the hubs demonstrated resilience and adaptability.

2. Stakeholder Motivation and Importance of Sustainability

Most Hub Coaches and organizations expressed motivation to sustain hub activities post-project completion, recognizing the importance of maintaining a European network for knowledge sharing and collaboration in IPM.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges such as securing financial support, workload management for Hub Coaches, and regional disparities in resource allocation were identified across different EU countries. Nevertheless, opportunities for integration into existing networks, participation in new European projects, and leveraging regional funding sources were highlighted as potential pathways for sustainability, with some new initiatives already in place, both at national and EU level.

4. National Meetings Insights

Insights from national meetings revealed diverse perspectives and funding strategies across European countries. While some countries explored options like integrating hubs into existing structures or securing national funding, others emphasized the need for broader collaboration and innovative funding mechanisms. All in all, this demonstrated the need to develop multiple pathways for sustainability, and a common aim to maintain a EU-level coordinating structure that supports the European network.

5. Pathways for Sustainability

The proposed pathways for hub sustainability are diverse, including the integration into national demonstration networks, participation in new European projects, and the search for funding to support a coordination team at the EU level in charge of maintaining and expanding the IPMWORKS network. These pathways aim to provide Hub Coaches with access to funding and resources necessary for continued operation, both at national and EU level, which is clearly the main challenge hindering the sustainability of the IPMWORKS network.

The sustainability of the IPMWORKS project hinges on collaborative efforts, innovative funding strategies, and integration into broader networks. The project will ensure the long-term dissemination and impact of



IPM and IPM holistic practices across Europe by addressing these challenges, leveraging opportunities, and fostering stakeholder engagement.

This comprehensive strategy for self-sustainability serves as a roadmap for guiding the hubs' future beyond the H2020 IPMWORKS project, facilitating ongoing knowledge sharing, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices across the EU.



Annex I. Draft Action Plan

Summary

This is a preliminary strategy document outlining the roadmap for ensuring the self sustainability of the hub network beyond the project's completion.

The Sustainability Strategy Plan will be developed with a set of initial activities to be executed and closely monitored throughout the project's final year. The valuable insights and data derived from other work packages will serve as the foundation for formulating a comprehensive and robust sustainability strategy.

Our approach to sustainability will encompass various facets, encompassing governance, partnerships, and financing, both from the public and private sectors. At the regional and national levels, National Focal Points will actively engage in constructive dialogues with public and private stakeholders, fostering collaboration and exploring potential financial partnerships.

Methodology

In this chapter, we will outline the methodology that will guide us in crafting the sustainability strategy. We will provide a detailed explanation of the step-by-step process that will be followed to ensure a comprehensive and effective strategy for long-term sustainability. The methodology will encompass key components such as data gathering, stakeholder engagement, analysis, and decision-making. By following this methodology, we aim to develop a robust and actionable sustainability strategy that addresses the unique needs and challenges of our project.

Phase 1 (M36): In this initial phase, a draft strategy plan for ensuring long-term sustainability will be developed, focusing on outlining the key elements and tasks of the Hubs, with the invaluable support of WP2. Two documents will be produced to support Hub Coaches and National Focal Points in their follow-up tasks, outlining what's needed for the AKIS meeting, communicating the clear intentions, and seeking collaboration, as well as a document detailing what's a hub and an IPM demo event.

Phase 2 (M36): To foster collaboration and knowledge exchange, an online workshop will be organized with the Hub Coaches and National Focal Points. This workshop will provide a platform for sharing insights, best practices, and strategies for sustainability.

Phase 3 (M36): To gather valuable input from Hub Coaches, a comprehensive questionnaire is being prepared. The questionnaire will give an insight on the thoughts, perspectives, challenges, and suggestions of Hub Coaches, supporting the development of the future sustainability strategy.

Phase 4 (M36-M40): National Focal Points will take the lead in organizing national AKIS meetings. These meetings will serve as a vital platform for engaging stakeholders, fostering dialogue, and strengthening national or regional partnerships for sustainability.

Phase 5 (M38): During the 3rd Annual Meeting, a workshop will be organized between Hub Coaches and National Focal Points, focusing on the topic of sustainability. This interactive session will provide an



opportunity to exchange ideas, address concerns, and collectively work towards developing a robust and inclusive sustainability strategy.

Phase 6 (M41): Building upon the insights and feedback received, the sustainability strategy will be revised and refined. This phase will ensure that the strategy aligns with the evolving needs and aspirations of the Hub network.

Phase 7 (M42): As a milestone achievement, deliver D7.3, the IPMWORKS self sustainability strategy will be produced and achieved. This comprehensive document will serve as a guiding framework for the continued growth and resilience of the project.

Phase 8 (Spring 2024 ~ M42): In case Hub coaches are not able to secure national or regional funding, the project might investigate EU funding to maintain the network alive. To enhance coordination and further collaboration, a LIFE project might be organized, bringing together stakeholders from various domains. This initiative will facilitate knowledge sharing, promote synergies, and foster a united approach towards sustainability.

Phase 9 (2024): Recognizing the importance of financial support, if needed, a meeting with the European Commission might also be arranged, to discuss budgetary considerations for coordination efforts. This meeting will play a crucial role in securing the necessary resources for sustained success.

Phase 10 (Final Annual meeting): During the Final Annual Meeting, the task leader will organize a comprehensive discussion on the implementation of the final sustainability strategy, presenting the preliminary sustainability results. This meeting will mark a significant milestone in the journey, as partners collectively work towards achieving a sustainable and thriving future for the hub network.



Annex II. Support documents

IPMWORKS strategy for Long Term Sustainability - September 2023

Since the IPMWORKS' methodology proved to be very convincing for fostering IPM adoption, most partners of the H2020 project are motivated to continue with the network, both in their hub management/coaching role and for coordinating activities. Many non-partner farming organisations and advisory services also expressed their interest for launching a hub and joining the IPMWORKS network, in many cases because they already organize demo activities, and would like to join a more structured EU network.

The willingness to maintain and grow the network, and continue the development of IPM demo activities, is the basis for the sustainability of the project, but not sufficient to assure that this will happen. In fact, the long-term sustainability of the network, and its expansion, both depend on available funding, and the capacity of the partners to seek and assure financial support for the network in the future.

The strategy for funding the network after the end of the H2020 support will be based on two components:

- Component 1: hub (self-)funding

The main cost of a hub is the salary of the hub coach + traveling costs for one network meeting every year + operating costs (e.g. meetings, communication, demos, cross-visits to other IPMWORKS hubs, or rewards to farmers supporting demos). Institutions desiring to launch an IPMWORKS hub, or to continue with an existing one, are asked to investigate to find the required funding, from any relevant source: self-funding, private support, public support. In EU Member States, it is recommended to investigate and try to attract CAP funding dedicated to Farm Demo for sustainable agriculture. Discussion with the local AKIS and the public authorities in charge of CAP funding should also be engaged as soon as possible.

- Component 2: EU coordination

The coordination of such a European initiative requires staff dealing with the network administration, monitoring of demo events, capacity building of advisers, knowledge sharing within sectors, data collection and analysis, communication (website, IPM Resource Toolbox, social media, conferences...). The required budget is estimated at 50-80 Person-Months/year + travelling costs + operating costs (meetings, communication). Some budget is also to be planned for IT development to maintain the AGROSYST system used to collect details of crop and pest management in IPMWORKS farms. The IPMWORKS consortium is actively looking at different alternatives to maintain and further develop the network.

H2020-funded hubs re-engagement and engagement of new IPMWORKS hubs

Each partner of the H2020 IPMWORKS project wishing to continue after 2024 with its IPMWORKS hub, or any institution from an EU Member state or associated countries that wishes to join the IPMWORKS network, contributing to the expansion of IPMWORKS throughout Europe, should start to identify potential sources of funding to develop the required activities in the future. The future of the network shall not depend on a



single EU project like IPMWORKS. As far as possible, participating organizations should look for different sources of funding, at the EU, regional and national level.

Partner institutions should identify sources for the required funding from any relevant source: self-funding, private support, or public support. In EU Member States, it is recommended to investigate and try to attract CAP funding dedicated to Farm Demo for sustainable agriculture. Partner institutions should coordinate with the National Focal Point to engage discussions as soon as possible with the local AKIS and the public authorities in charge of CAP funding.

An example of an invitation letter for a meeting to present the IPMWORKS strategy is available in Annex I. In countries where IPMWORKS has no partner so far, the IPMWORKS coordinating team is ready to help.

