



# MS29 Final conference organised

WP6



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An EU-wide farm network demonstrating and promoting cost-effective IPM strategies

Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

01 October 2020 – 31 March 2025 (54 months)

# Milestone MS29

## Final conference organised

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**Work package:** WP6 – Dissemination, Communication and Training

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### Dissemination Level

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- PU** Public
- CO** Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)
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# 1. Summary

The IPM Conference 2024 was organised jointly by IPMWORKS and IPM Decisions, and took place on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Brussels, i.e. a few months after the SUR proposal had been rejected by the European Parliament, and a few weeks after the protests of European farmers that drove the European Commission to withdraw the targets of halving the use and risk of chemical pesticides and halving the use of more hazardous pesticides.

The Conference was the opportunity to showcase the main outcomes of the projects, including testimonies of farmers reducing pesticide use thanks to a holistic approach to IPM, testimonies of IPMWORKS hub coaches about their role in facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and IPM adoption, and tools resources (IPM Decisions platform providing an easy access to a bunch of Decision Support Systems dedicated to IPM, the IPM resource Tool box, the IPMWORKS e-learning modules, etc.).

## 2. Highlights of the IPM Conference 2024

- The IPM Conference 2024 was organised jointly by IPMWORKS and IPM Decisions, two projects funded by the European Research and Innovation programme H2020. A Task force including partners of the two projects met regularly online from March 2023 to May 2024, to prepare the Conference (agenda, invitation to speakers and officials, preparation and selection of posters, preparation of workshops, Conference booklet, catering and practical issues).
- The Conference took place on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, a few months after the SUR proposal had been rejected by the European Parliament, and a few weeks after the protests of European farmers. It was the opportunity to clarify and discuss visions of the future of European agriculture, especially regarding the hot topic of its reliance on pesticides, and the potential to reduce this reliance through the implementation of holistic Integrated Pest Management. The Conference was attended by about 150 participants from 25 countries, including quite a number of representatives of the European Commission interested by the achievements of our projects, that suggest avenues for promoting more sustainable pest management in European farms.
- The Conference was supported and introduced by the European Commission, through the introductory speech of M. Diego Canga Fano (DG AGRI), who delivered messages from the Commission regarding the sustainable use of pesticides in the EU. The Farm to Fork Strategy remains in force, with the two non-legally binding pesticide reduction targets, namely a 50% reduction in the use and risk of chemical pesticides and a 50% reduction in the use of more hazardous pesticides. The Commission will continue to publish each year updates on progress at EU level towards these Farm to Fork pesticide reduction targets.

- The Conference session ‘IPM in action’ showed an excellent overview of holistic IPM as implemented by IPMWORKS farmers, thanks to the testimony of farmers (either present on stage, or showcasing their motivations and technical IPM options through videos), Hub Coaches, and IPMWORKS experts. Several Hub Coaches explained the specific IPMWORKS methodology based on peer-to-peer learning, and the daily work of Hub Coaches with farmers, to help them find IPM solutions adapted to the farm specificities, and demonstrate to a wider audience that it is indeed efficient and cost-effective.
- Parallel interactive workshops gave the opportunity to showcase some outcomes of the projects, including the IPM Resource Toolbox, the IPM Decisions platform, and the IPMWORKS e-learning modules, and to go deeper into some major aspects of IPM development. One workshop was organised to collect views and thoughts about how to engage agri-food chains and consumers in the support of European farmers who drastically decrease their pesticide use thanks to a holistic implementation of IPM, and how to make this change in agricultural practices an economic opportunity for farmers.

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### Main messages of the Conference

- **Some pioneer farmers**, including some engaged in the IPMWORKS network, **are implementing holistic IPM, growing healthy crops with a limited reliance on pesticides** (as compared to most European farms), with good profitability at the farm level.
  - **IPM allows to reduce drastically the reliance on pesticides**, and is **cost-effective**, provided that it is implemented with a holistic approach, **considering all five pillars of holistic IPM**, namely (i) landscape designed to reduce pest pressure, (ii) cropping systems designed to reduce pest pressure, (iii) the preferential use of non-chemical pest control solutions whenever possible, (iv) the optimisation of decision making to avoid unnecessary treatments, and (v) the use of technologies allowing the maximization of the efficiency of treatments that are deemed necessary.
  - **IPMWORKS demonstrated an approach to promote the development of holistic IPM**, based on peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and hubs of 10-15 demo farms facilitated by a ‘hub coach’. This approach proved to be efficient to promote IPM, and should be extended after the end of the H2020 project, with much more hubs of demo farms in all regions of EU. **Funding should be saved for supporting (i) the coordination of the network at the EU scale, and (ii) the functioning of each hub engaged locally under the IPMWORKS banner.**
  - **The European Union should adopt policies** ensuring that IPM (and the target of reducing the reliance on pesticides) is not perceived any more by farmers as a constraint, but **rather as an economic opportunity and a solution to protect European agriculture from the ‘unfair’ competition** of non-European countries with lower environmental standards. These policies should strengthen the market of products from farmers implementing holistic IPM, based on the full transparency regarding pesticide use, and labels engaging agri-food chains and consumers.
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The Conference material (slides, posters) are available on the project website (<https://ipmworks.net/>)



Sights of the IPM Conference 2024. The awesome venue at the Herman Teirlinck building. The introductory speech by Mr. Diego Canga Fano, Director of Quality Policy at DG AGRI. The panel session on the shared vision of Sustainable Agriculture & IPM in EU.

## 3. Deviations or delays

### 3.1. Description of and reason for deviations or delays

None.

### 3.2. Impact on other tasks

None.

### 3.3. Corrective actions taken to come back to schedule

None required.