

Policy recommendations
for scaling IPM adoption



IPM demo networks





CONTEXT

Pesticide use remains high in Europe. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) has been shown to effectively contribute to reducing pesticide use. However, decades after it was introduced and 15 years after the Sustainable Use Directive (2009/128/EC) came into force, IPM adoption still remains limited. Reasons can be found in the **challenges farmers still encounter to move from IPM in theory to IPM in practice**, including:

- Farmers tend to cherry-pick IPM practices to solve acute problems, without embracing IPM as an integrated systems approach to crop health.
- Preventive options at the cropping and landscape level are often undervalued.
- IPM implementation is context-specific. The integrated system of principles and practices differs by region, crop, and individual farm features, making it hard for farmers to find the appropriate approach specific to their farm.
- IPM is often perceived to be complex.
- Advisory support, opportunities for farmers to network, farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange and learning activities related to IPM, are still underdeveloped in many regions.

IPMWORKS addressed these challenges by (1) promoting a holistic approach to IPM, and (2) setting up an EU-wide network of farmer demo hubs, in which farmers both take their own steps in IPM practice and demonstrate to others that **holistic IPM indeed WORKS**. This brief presents policy recommendations on promoting IPM adoption through demo networks.



DEMO HUB APPROACH

Demo hubs are groups of farmers, coordinated by 'hub coaches', with specific activities to share knowledge, exchange experiences and demonstrate innovative practices. The **IPMWORKS** project and previously existing networks, such as **Déphy** (FR), **PestiRed** (CH) or **LEAF** (UK), showed the effectiveness of demo hubs to foster collaboration and scale IPM practice on farms.

In demo hubs IPM practices are tested, adapted, and demonstrated in real-life settings, thereby enhancing their credibility and uptake among farmers. The hubs provide practical, hands-on demonstrations and foster peer-to-peer learning among farmers.

The approach involves four key elements:

1. Groups of 10-15 **motivated farmers**, who test IPM practices and share their experiences, pesticide use data and alternative methods;
2. **Hub coaches**, advisors who facilitate the hubs and help farmers 'think holistically';
3. **Demonstration events** for other farmers;
4. **An EU wide network of demo hubs**, allowing peer-to-peer learning between advisors.

Leveraging the demo hub model, is an opportunity to bridge the gap between IPM theory and practice.





RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING IN IPM DEMO HUBS WORKS

1. Learning is an essential process within the transition to holistic IPM. Moreover, IPM is not a one-shot change, but requires constant adaptations and innovations. It thus requires constant farmer learning. Farmers are willing to make changes to reduce their pesticide use, but often lack knowledge and support to do so.

IPM demo hubs are an **effective way for farmers to find the actionable and locally adapted knowledge** and the **peer support** they need to enable transitions in their crop protection. The hubs help them to create interpretations of IPM that are local, applied, adapted to their farming context, and more meaningful to their lifeworlds. Moreover, demo hubs build farmers' confidence and **empower** them to debate in group, to dare to experiment, to open up to their peers about the results of those experiments and to spread the message themselves to others.

→ **Promote and create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and fund demo hubs**

- Use the possibilities already foreseen by the CAP for funding training and on-farm demonstrations, to fund IPM demo hubs (Regulation 2021/2115 CAP, Art.15, Art.78).
- Create incentives for farmers to actively take part in IPM hubs. e.g. by making active participation valid as part of the required mandatory training activities to maintain the training certificate (for pesticides).



RECOMMENDATIONS

2. HUB COACHES MAKE DEMO HUBS WORK

Hub coaches are knowledge brokers within the hubs. Their role is fivefold:

1. Provide individual advice, tailored to the hub members' farms;
2. Provide collective advice to the hub and facilitate dialogue within the hub to enable learning;
3. Organise demo events, to disseminate knowledge to the wider farming community;
4. Collect and process data on the hub's IPM experiments;
5. Engage with (inter)national stakeholders and in advisor-to-advisor learning.

The hub coach is critical for the successful operation of the hub, responsible for identifying key actors, analysing the group's needs, facilitating actions and exchanges within the hub, and ensuring farmers' engagement and motivation. A hub coach must possess both technical knowledge on holistic IPM and soft skills, such as communication abilities and group management capabilities.

→ **Invest in hub coaches**

- Provide funding mechanisms that cover hub coaches' salaries and operating cost.
- Support hub coaches' capacity building, in formal education and beyond. Provide them with continuous training and resources, both in technical IPM knowledge and in social, organisational and facilitation skills; and with opportunities for mutual networking.





RECOMMENDATIONS

SEEING HOW IPM WORKS IN A REAL-LIFE SETTING WORKS

3 Practical demonstrations, in settings that they can relate to, enhance farmers' learning. New experiences and comparing options foster different modes of thinking in experiential learning. Experimental stations with systemic comparisons between trials and innovative farmers who experiment with new practices on their own fields are pivotal in the network.

Field demonstrations and on-farm events that show real-world applications of IPM practices, facilitate easier understanding and stimulate positive choices by farmers. Farm visits and demonstrations are the essential platforms to share experiential knowledge among farmers.

→ **Support real-life experimenting and demonstration**

Provide rewarding mechanisms to support farmers who set up on-farm experiments and demonstration activities with different crop protection practices and share their results with others, covering their time investment and potential loss.



RECOMMENDATIONS

EU-level exchange is crucial, both for a common understanding of / approach to holistic IPM and hub management, and for an accelerated cross-country spread of knowledge about IPM practices.

- Cross-country events (cross-visits) have been found to be highly enriching for farmers and coaches, as it facilitates knowledge exchange between countries/regions. They help to collect more visions on how to solve common problems and adapt practices to the hub's own case.
- An EU-wide, coordinated network also is crucial for hub coaches' capacity building, offering train-the-trainer programs and advisor-to-advisor learning. The [AdvisoryNetPEST](#) project creates opportunities for advisors' networking. However, to include farmers' networking, the [IPMWORKS](#) network should be continued and expanded after the end of the H2020 project. [EUFRAS](#), the European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services, could play an important role in maintaining such a network.
- Finally, an EU-wide network is the ideal way to collect uniform crop protection data from local hubs, data that can demonstrate that IPM effectively WORKS.

4. INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ON IPM WORKS

→ **Fund the coordination of national and EU-wide networks of IPM demo hubs**

- Enable cross-visits between hubs for hub coaches and farmers.
- Support hub coaches' capacity building.
- Ensure centralised data management of IPM success stories.

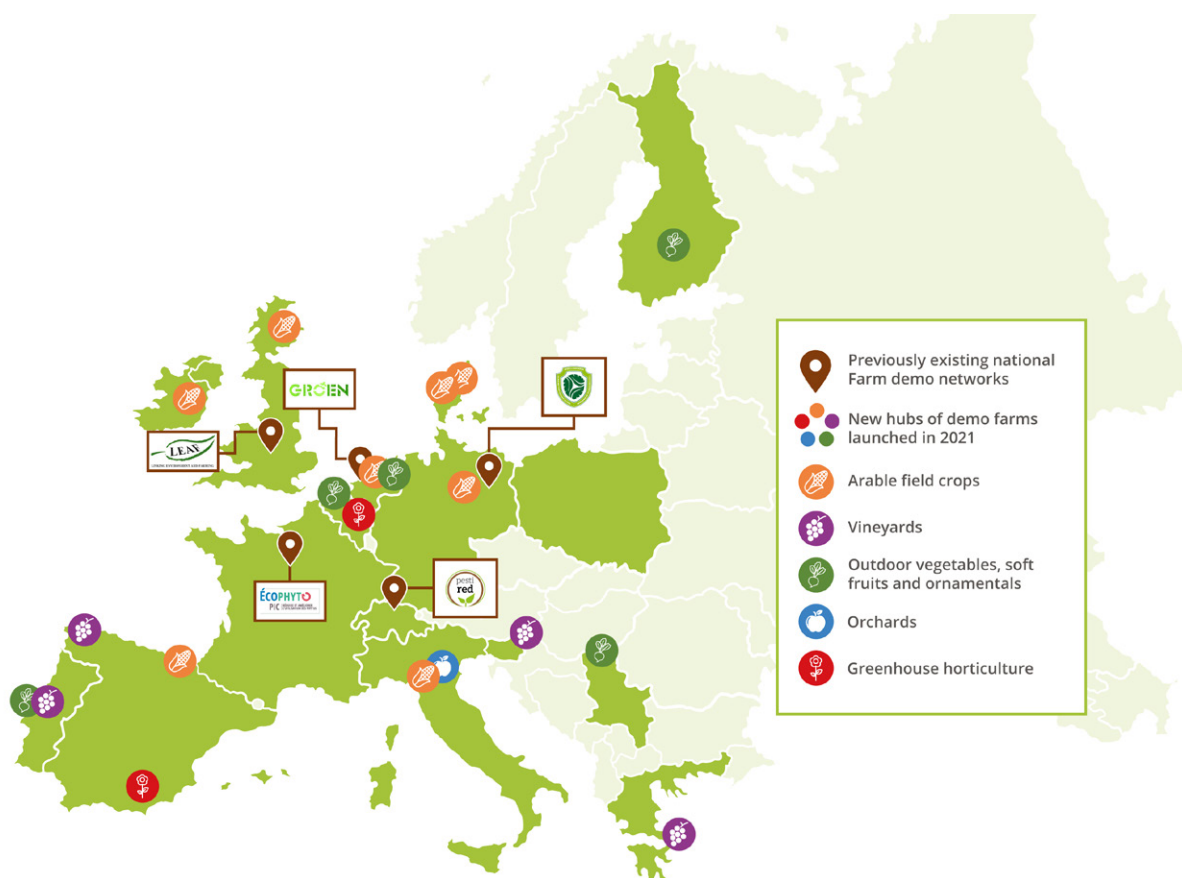
5. IPM DEMO HUBS CAN MAKE POLICY WORK

5 IPM demo hubs and their coaches make ideal partners for policy makers who want to find out about new developments in crop protection or what new policy measures would mean for farming practice.

→ **Create more opportunities for practice-informed policy making**

- Actively engage with hubs and/or hub coaches in IPM policy development.
- Participate in IPM demo events, thus bridging the gap between policy and practice.

AN EU-WIDE FARM NETWORK DEMONSTRATING AND PROMOTING COST-EFFECTIVE IPM STRATEGIES



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ipmworks.net

[IPMWORKS resources toolbox](#)

[IPMWORKS D1.4](#) *

[IPMWORKS D1.5](#) *

[IPMWORKS D3.7](#) *

[IPMWORKS D7.3](#) *

ecophytopic.fr/dephy

pestired.ch

leaf.eco

advisorynetpest.eu

eufra.eu

* **IPMWORKS D1.4** Educational material for social skills in IPM demo hubs. / **IPMWORKS D1.5** Recommendations for successful exploitation of IPM networks to scale IPM adoption. / **IPMWORKS D3.7** Report on the implementation of in field comparisons of IPM strategies. / **IPMWORKS D7.3** A network self-sustainability strategy and other deliverables from IPMWORKS.



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