Seeing is believing!

FARM DEMO CONFERENCE

Sharing innovation for sustainable agriculture

May 11th, 2022

Brussels, Belgium

Jointly organised by:

NEFERTITI FARMDEMO

IPM works

IPM DECISIONS

The 3 projects have received funding from the Horizon 2020 Research and innovation programme

FARM DEMO CONFERENCE

Sharing innovation for sustainable agriculture

The three H2020 projects NEFERTITI, IPMWORKS and IPM Decisions jointly organized a Conference on 'Farm Demo – Sharing Innovation for sustainable agriculture' in Brussels on May 11th, 2022. This conference was open to farmers, advisory services, retailers, agro-industries, researcher and policy makers involved in the dissemination of more sustainable agricultural practices. The objectives of the conference was to showcase the networks of demo farms, the associated tools supporting the improvement of farming practices, and the specific approach to promote peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and experiences. More than 100 participants joined the Conference.

The Conference was introduced by both Mario Milouchev, Director in DG AGRI at the European Commission, and Clara Aguilera, MEP. Both of them highlighted the huge challenge for a drastic change in European agriculture to reach targets of reducing pesticide use, restoring landscape biodiversity and mitigating climate change, while supporting the economic profitability for farmers and ensuring the European food security and self-sufficiency. Mario Milouchev specifically emphasized the significance of demonstration at farm level for the new CAP, and mentioned that all member states are currently preparing their strategic plan for demonstration activities. He stressed the significance of linking explicitly demonstration activities with the Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS). Clara Aguilera MEP focused on the humanitarian crisis, the importance of securing food supply and the growing impact on farmers during these challenging times related to the war in Ukraine. She also praised the demo projects IPMWORKS and NEFERTITI for making an important contribution to the Green Deal.

Panel discussions

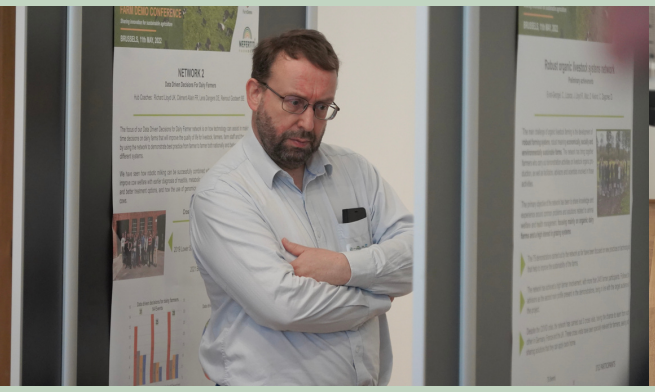
The first part of the Conference was organized as successive panels. The first one gave the opportunity to present the main features of the three connected projects NEFERTITI, IPMWORKS and IPM Decisions. NEFERTITI and IPMWORKS are organizing farm demo networks and farm demo events, and are developing methodologies and resources aiming at maximizing peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and at facilitating the adoption of sustainable farming practices with the highest possible impact. IPM Decisions provides a supporting platform giving an easy access to Decision Support Systems for IPM implementation.

The second and third panels were for testimonies of “hub coaches” and farmers, respectively. The three farmers showed their great motivation and commitment for sharing knowledge and innovation with other farmers, highlighting how much it is easier to look for solutions with the help and support of other farmers sharing the same objectives and concerns. The main message from Hub coaches was about the specific skills and methods for guiding farmers towards a holistic vision of farming systems, helping them to re-design the farming strategy to avoid problems rather than advising for emergency solutions to solve problems once they occurred. This requires both technical skills and specific facilitation skills that are important to disseminate within the community of advisory services. Hub coaching also requires time to get the full trust from the involved farmers.

Finally, the fourth panel of Policy Makers illustrated the engagement of supporting policies providing funding resources at EU, national and regional levels to support farm demonstration.

Poster session

A poster session during the lunchtime gave the opportunity for attendees to discuss and network. Posters presented the three projects and the EU FarmBook developed by the EURAKNOS/EUREKA project, supporting knowledge exchange between all AKIS actors in the European Union, the five national networks of IPM demo farms affiliated to IPMWORKS (namely DEPHY, LEAF, GROEN-AoZ, DIPS and PESTIRED), and resources and output of the NEFERTITI project, that is ending in 2022 (the Farm Demo training kit, how farm demo connects with AKIS, guidelines for virtual demonstrations, NEFERTITI practice abstracts, an overview of NEFERTITI past demo events, and detailed results from the various NEFERTITI thematic networks).



Workshops

The afternoon of the conference was organized with three successive workshops, chosen by participants among six possible options:

- Detailed results of the French DEPHY network of IPM demo farms, where participants could learn both about the cost efficiency of pest management strategies with limited pesticide input, and about developed tools to coordinate and facilitate groups of demo farmers, and disseminate results.

- Pan-European decision support platform for IPM, provided and presented by the IPM Decisions project. A live demonstration and discussion of the IPM Decisions Platform (due to be launched in the autumn) showed how farmers, advisers and researchers can find and run IPM decision support systems.

- The “Farm Demo Training Kit” was presented to make clear its potential to support organizers of farm demonstrations. During the workshop some tools for preparing, delivering and evaluating were highlighted and explained to give the audience a glimpse of the tools available in the training kit.

- Lessons learned on Farm Demonstrations and recommendations for AKIS. The central challenge in this interactive session was ‘how farm demos can activate and create bridges in the local AKIS system’. The participants explored potential contributions and take-aways for farmers, advisors, industry, policymakers and researchers during a well-organized demo. Conditions for exchange and recommendations were discussed.

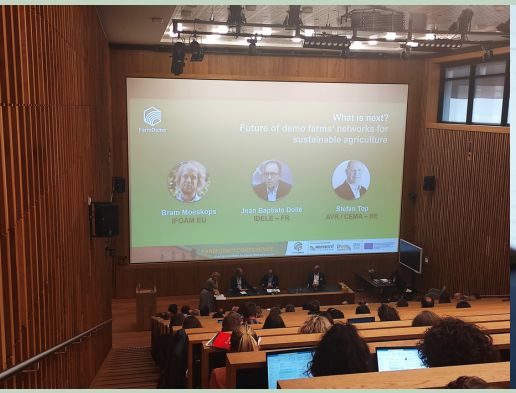
Workshops

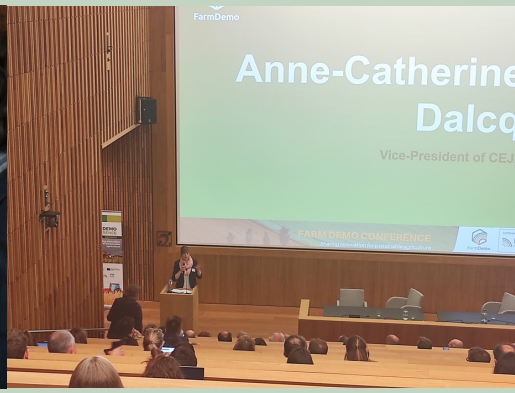
- Farm Demo platform and Youtube channel: when digital boosts learning. The session was organized to grasp the main positive and negative experiences with digital peer-2-peer learning and knowledge exchange. Participants commented on differences among target groups and used online channel(s), tool(s) and method(s) for proper targeting and securing that the message is adequately received and understood.

- Virtual Demonstration Events: a learning solution in time of sanitary crisis. This workshop provided an overview of the lessons learned about virtual and hybrid demos. The virtual demo booklet was designed in the framework of the Nefertiti project and presents highlights of virtual and hybrid demos and some inspiring testimonials of hub coaches.

The workshops were designed and facilitated to let participants actively engage in the discussions and have a concrete vision of the methods and resources produced by the three projects. The NEFERTITI guide for farm demonstration was available for taking home and further dissemination.

The Conference ended with a last panel about the future of sustainable farming. Bram Moeskops (IFOAM EU) and Stefan Top (AVR / CEMA) debated about the needs for both technologies and ecology-based processes to progress further towards sustainable agriculture. Jean-Baptiste Dollé (IDELE) introduced the issue of climate change mitigation as a major challenge for the future, that will be the focus of the project Climate Farm Demo, recently selected by Horizon Europe, and that will build on previous Farm Demo projects to develop farm demonstration. Anne-Catherine Dalcq, from CEJA (European Council of Young Farmers) gave the closing words. She underlined the huge challenge for young farmers to commit and make farming practices evolve and meet the expectations of the European society. She pointed out that it is also important to invest to raise the attractiveness of the farming sector for young people. She stressed the significance of connecting the diversity of involved actors, farmers, research, advisory services, food market chains and policy makers in this perspective. She stressed the need to bring knowledge to farmers in a form that is suitable, and peer-to-peer exchange facilitated by networks is fully relevant. She also stressed the significance of finding solutions for long-term funding of farm demo networks, as the challenges faced by the farming community will not be solved after the few years of the projects funded by the European Commission.





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Useful resources

Project websites:

- https://nefertiti-h2020.eu/
- https://ipmworks.net/
- https://www.ipmdecisions.net/

The Farm Demo portal

- https://nefertiti-h2020.eu/NefertitiPortal/#!/app-h/networks

The Farm Demo training kit

- https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/

Youtube Channels:

- Farm Demo : https://www.youtube.com/c/FarmDemo
- IPMWORKS : https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK5N5H7gew9rrRlTo-kB8lg

NEFERTITI Practice Abstracts

https://nefertiti-h2020.eu/practical-abstracts/

Video reportage of the Farm Demo Brussels events, 10-11 May 2022:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3DhEU9VOp0

WATCH VIDEO