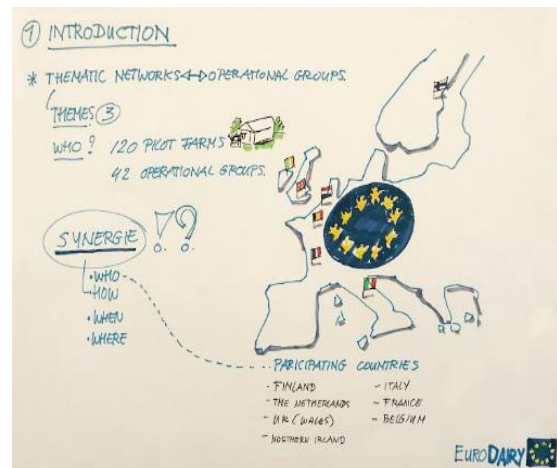


Connecting EIP-AGRI Operational Groups linked with the EuroDairy Thematic Network

Thursday 29th of November 2018

Danone Actimel Factory/ De Drie Linden Café, Rotselaar Belgium

Workshop report



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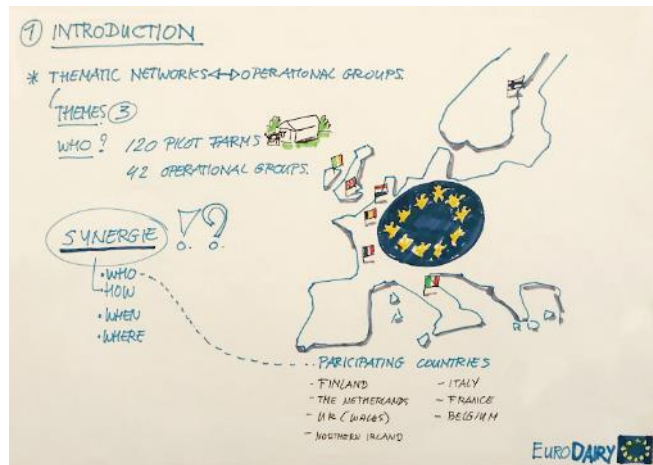
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1. Introduction

The EuroDairy project

EuroDairy is a network to increase the economic, social and environmental sustainability of dairy farming in Europe, at a time of unprecedented challenge for the sector. The purpose of the EuroDairy network is to improve the viability and sustainability of milk production in Europe. Funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme, EuroDairy supports the development and communication of practice-based innovation in dairy farming. It focusses on four key issues: socio economic resilience, resource efficiency, animal care, and the integration of

milk production with biodiversity objectives. The project adopts the interactive approach of the European Innovation Partnership, putting farmers at the centre of practice-based innovation, adapting and developing new and existing scientific knowledge to produce implementable solutions, which can then be shared across the network. Twenty partners span 14 countries, from Ireland to Poland and from Sweden to Italy, bringing EuroDairy to life via a total of 120 innovating Pilot Farmers participating in the network. Within the network, farmer-driven 'Operational Groups' (OG's) came together to target specific problems or cross-border opportunities for the dairy sector.



Workshop objectives

Over 40 dairy-related Operational Groups across Europe are associated with the EuroDairy network. The objective of this workshop was to bring together the coordinators of several of these groups to:

- 1) connect these dairy-related groups across Europe,
- 2) share what these groups are doing practically on the ground, and
- 3) using the EuroDairy TN as a worked example, reflect on and explore the relationship between OGs and Thematic Networks and its opportunities and constraints.

2. Format and methodology

Attending the workshop were 14 co-ordinators representing 15 OG's, plus a Dutch coordinator who oversaw a further 35 diverse OGs in the Netherlands.

The timetable and detailed structure for the day are given in Annex 1 and 2. The workshop began at 9.00 hrs with a visit (arranged by ZLTO) to the Danone Actimel Factory in Rotselaar, designed to foster a positive group dynamic, within an interesting and stimulating environment, highly relevant to dairy farming.

During the workshop sessions which followed, two key methodologies were used to enhance sharing, reflection and learning amongst the workshop participants.

*Share Fair*¹: An interactive and collaborative workspace, to encourage lively discussions, sharing and networking. A share fair is not a goal in itself, but the beginning of a process. It is a facilitated approach which allows people to connect and link ideas, as well as exchanging opinions in a natural way and in a relaxed setting. It sets out to create new partnerships; new exchanges between people that would like to work together in a different way. Eight pre-selected OG coordinators were requested to initiate the sharing and 'present' the innovative work of their Group.



*World Café*²: An easy-to-use method for creating collaborative dialogue around questions that matter. Based on seven design principles and a simple method, the World Café can be a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations.

The world café sought discussion and feedback on three key questions.

Question 1. Based on your experience in coordinating OGs what are the characteristics and attributes of a well-functioning OG, tangibly benefitting the participating actors?

Question 2. What is the value to an OG of connecting with other OG's, what role can Thematic Networks play to help facilitate this connection, how to achieve win-win?

Question 3. What will be the legacy of your OG? Do you plan further 'phases'? Would you seek out to interact /collaborate with TN in the future? (Are there/have you seen any similar initiatives with their OG's across Europe and could you link with these?).

In addition, a graphic artist was engaged for the workshop to capture projects and concepts in an engaging way.

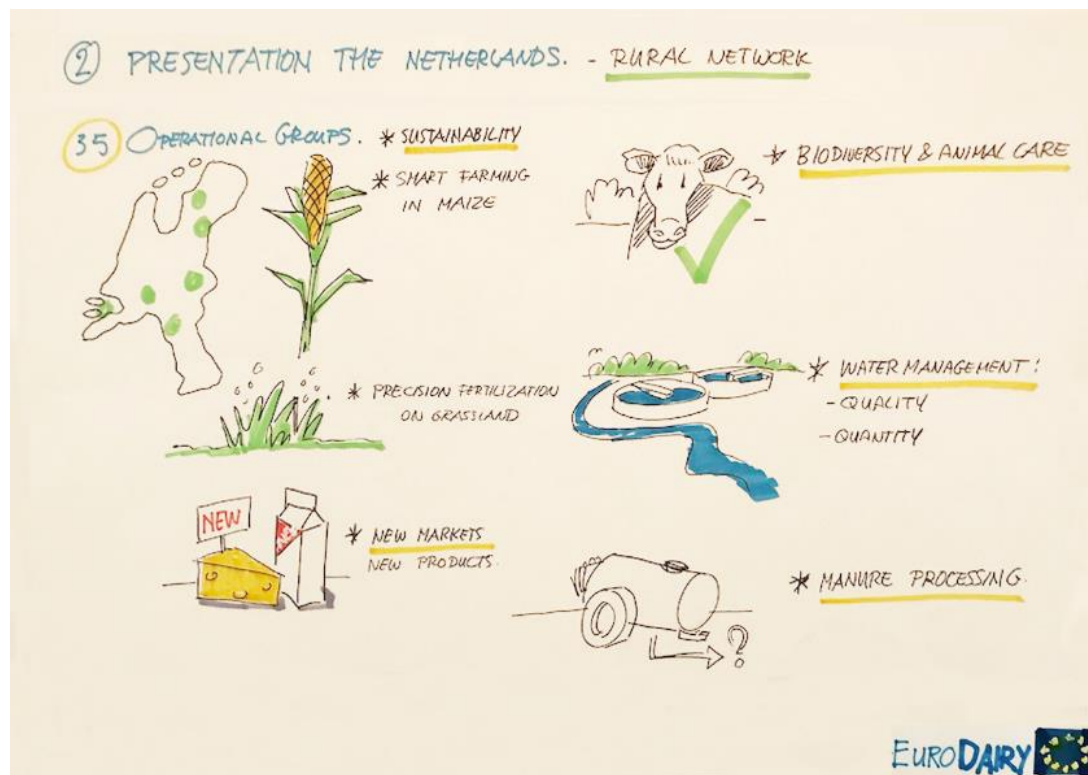
¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-aq228e.pdf>

² <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

3. Workshop outputs

Innovation Share Fair

The Share Fair began with a presentation from Kees Anker who was involved in over 35 OG's in the Netherlands. Some of the OG concepts were captured by the artist attending in the graphic below.

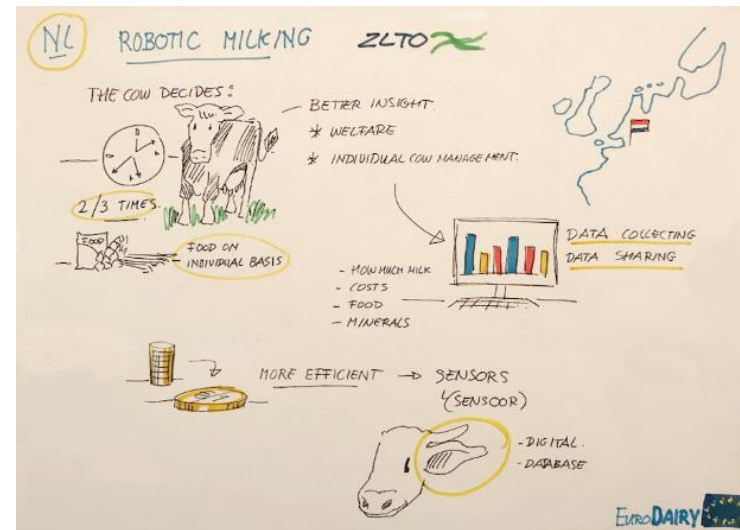
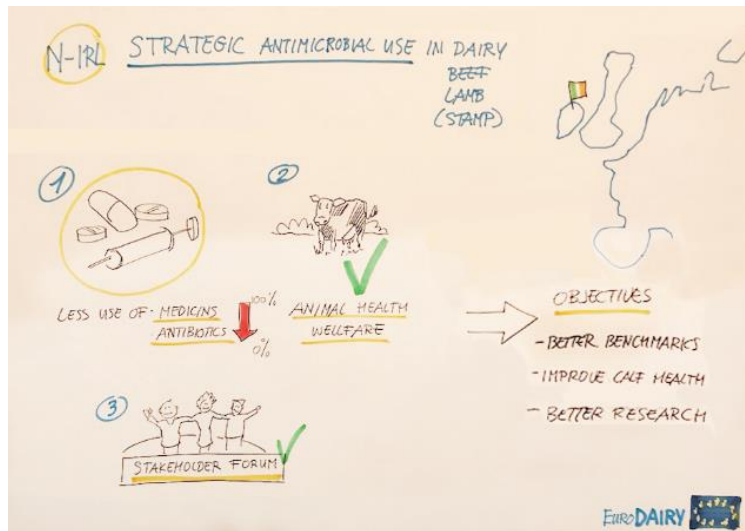
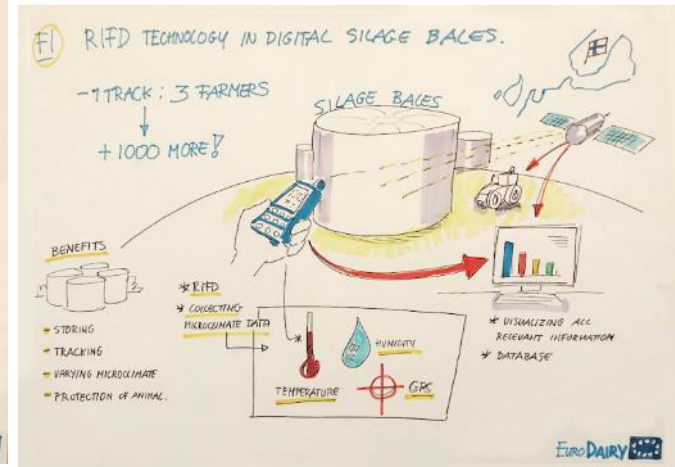
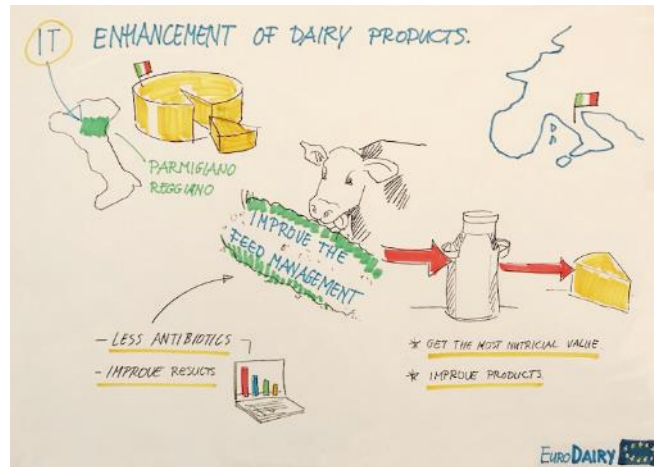
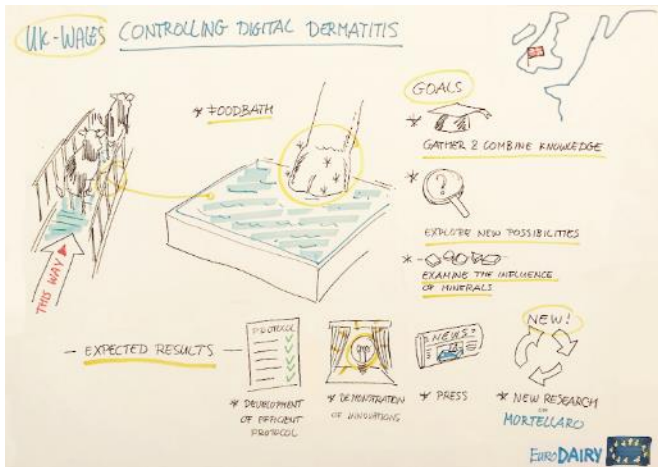


Eight pre-selected operational groups (Table 1) set up 'stations' where they could present the objectives and approach being used within their group, thereby enabling more personal interaction and discussion between workshop participants.

Table 1: Selected OGs for Innovation Share Fair rounds

EuroDairy priority themes	Round 1 – 40 min	Round 2 -40 min
RESOURCE EFFICIENCY	Digital silage bales (Ilpo Pollonen)	N Balance (Hanne Leirs)
BIODIVERSITY	Biodiversity Emilia Romagna autonome breeds (Elena Bortolazzo)	STAMP project benchmarking animal care (Sam Strain)
ANIMAL CARE	Antimicrobial Farmer Action Groups (Lisa Morgans)	Hoof disease (Evi Canniere)
SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESILIENCE	Robot milking (Yvonne Daandels)	OG Hauts de France (Roland Favory)

Concepts behind some of these operational groups were captured graphically below.



World Café

Comments and feedback from the World Café session are captured below.

Question 1. Based on your experience in coordinating OGs what are the characteristics and attributes of a well-functioning OG, tangibly benefitting the participating actors?

Leader

- Should have good social skills
- Be a good listener
- Should know all farmers
- Good administrator (for EIP and for the group)
- Not content-oriented with only a narrow special interest

Attitude

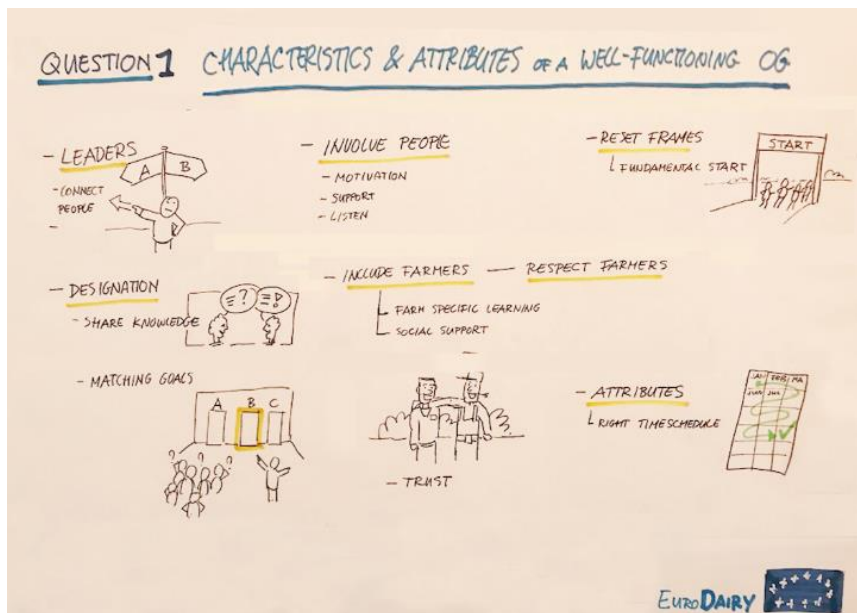
- Respect farmers
- Trust between group members

Other participants

- Involve people with the right skills and/or knowledge (also from other sectors, to inspire)
- Not too commercial

Motivation

- Give farmers feedback they can work with
- Short travel time
- Social aspect
- Farm visits & testimonials



Include farmers

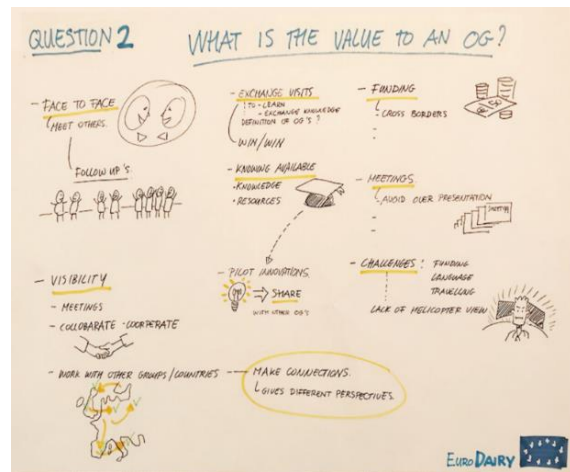
- More than one
- Farmers who are active, curious, exploring
- With matching goals (keeps the discussion going)
- Can be diverse on other characteristics (age, system etc.)
- Should feel responsible to share knowledge (dissemination)

Attributes

- € (improvements on EIP needed?)
- Network! Do not invent the wheel over and over again
- Good communication
- Measuring tools; what is the progress on the topic
- Right time schedule (seasons)
- Test through feedback (helps opening up to ...)

Question 2. What is the value to an OG of connecting with other OG's, what role can Thematic Networks play to help facilitate this connection, how to achieve win-win?

- Participants felt there was significant benefit to OG's connecting with each other, as was becoming evident on this occasion – 'its' good to connect'.
- Apart from the event in Rotselaar, it was felt there had been limited experience or opportunity for this kind of connection.
- There is a constant challenge of knowing what is going on, and what is being undertaken by OG's across Europe. It was felt that there was still not a good 'helicopter view' of OG's. This is a key constraint to dissemination, which ought to be a core objective.
- Face to face interaction was thought to be the best approach, but recognising the logistic and financial challenges to achieving this. However, face to face could be the starting point, from which other communication channels could develop.
- The use of databases to identify projects and coordinator contact points was useful, but had limitations in terms of user friendliness, timeliness of updating, and comprehensiveness in coverage. It was felt that improvements were still required to the EIP Service Point database. Matching contacts via current projects has the potential to miss out on previous experience or other relevant expertise, which could also be highly relevant, outside of the immediate project.
- There would be value in organising more interactive workshops with OG co-ordinators. These could be organised according to theme (e.g. resource efficiency, animal care, biodiversity etc.), or could be on more generalised topics, such as changing behaviour.
- These events and connections could be organised as part of Thematic Networks. The earlier this could be achieved in the Thematic Network activity, the greater the likely benefit. These early connections should then be strengthened by regular communication via the network.
- Funding mechanisms should be made available to facilitate cross-border, meetings and face to face interactions for OG's. Most national programmes do not facilitate this.
- However, in at least one example, that of Estonia, cross border cooperation was made obligatory for a successful application. Three Estonian projects are linked to Finnish groups, and one to an Italian project. This allows the opportunity to exchange information and to pilot innovations in collaborating countries.
- To facilitate this kind of linkage between OG's across borders, then greater synchronisation of programme calls are required, in respect of timing and encouragement for cross border cooperation.
- It was suggested that cross border cooperation would be easier to achieve between partners sharing the same language or farming conditions. The downside would be potential to miss out on opportunities further afield.
- Farmer exchanges were thought to be a valuable part of OG's activity. This was challenging for OG's to achieve cross border, or even within a country where distances were large, for example in France.
- Depending on the exchange, there was a balance to be struck between having too broad a topic for discussion, which risked not getting sufficiently into the subject, and too narrow a discussion which constrained the scope and interest of the visit.

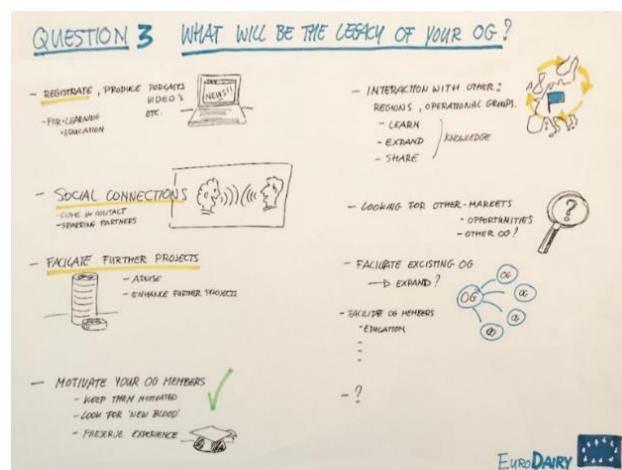


- Peer-to-peer learning and demonstration were key actions to engender motivation to change. Operational groups should be places where farmers could ‘open up’, and get their views and feelings and experiences across to fellow farmers. Cross border meetings of EuroDairy farmers to discuss their Cost of Production and Resource Efficiency data, collected by EDF, were thought to be very useful in opening up conversations.
- Visibility and promotion of the OG model varies between countries and regions, as does the approach, definition and *modus operandi* for OG funding.
- The support and encouragement given to coordinators varies between organisations and institutions. Internal communications around capability, expertise and current areas of activity, was also a challenge within the same organisation. While this challenge is not new, it can affect the value add for Operational Groups.
- Challenges to greater connection include – the availability of funding, language barriers, time and opportunity to get away from the day job, particularly in the case of farmers.
- The win:wins possible through greater connectivity include, better dissemination of outputs, wider exposure for tools and approaches, avoidance of duplication to reduce risks of repeating the same mistake, or to ensure complementary activity is recognised, pre-empting issues apparent in one country but not yet evident in another, broadening perspectives on a particular issue or challenge.
- The overwhelming conclusion was that there was a need for more networking.

Question 3. What will be the legacy of your OG? Do you plan further ‘phases’? Would you seek out to interact /collaborate with TN in the future? (Are there/have you seen any similar initiatives with their OGs across Europe and could you link with these?)

What will be the legacy of your Operational Group?

- Decision Support Tools, Databases
- K.E. Material (e.g. videos)
- Benchmarking applications
- Stakeholder forum
- Social / Business Connections
- Farm groups continue after OG finishes, but picking up other topics
- A hunger for progress created amongst farmers
- Capacity building
- Input for future research (identification of knowledge gaps)
- OGs are meant to build projects for H2020 applications, but with their national scope this is not likely – more likely to influence national research priorities
- Technical innovation, sometimes leading to a subsidy to buy an innovative item of machinery
- Establishment of new services for farmers
- Linkages with other initiatives
- Experience, inspiration – which can be applied to other challenges



Do you plan further phases?

- Sometimes there is no need to continue, but mostly yes, potentially scaling up and out
- OG's are a good way of engaging with farmers as they are increasingly "stuck" on the farm
- Funding could be a constraint. Future phases might need to be largely independent of government funding. In some instances, farmers are paying entirely for the next phase (self-sustaining)
- Some would like to proceed to H2020 application, but need networks

Will you seek to interact / collaborate with Thematic Networks in the future?

- Yes in principle - but who are they?
- Real need to network OG's
- Already engaging with circular farming, which is a Dutch network (not EU funded)
- Some already connecting with Smart AKIS, EUPig, D4F

Are there / have you seen any similar initiatives with other OG's across Europe and could you link with these?

- Very little in this regard
- Annual meetings of Europe-wide organisations might be an option (e.g. EDF, EAAP)
- EU cost actions could be another option
- There is some networking in Italy, but it's topic limited
- OG's are often limited by budget, especially in relation to transport costs

4. Workshop Evaluation

At the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to reflect on the workshop and fill in the workshop evaluation form, see Annex 4. The evaluation revolved around four simple questions:

Something you would tell others?

- A lot of knowledge has been developed: what about the dissemination?
- Loads going on across Europe to improve and support farming.
- That there is a great opportunity to share information.
- Digi-bale technology, self-sustainable OGs.
- Let's keep in touch, thank you for sharing your experiences.
- Good viewpoint to see each other's activities; good learning experience to work with OGs; OG is a big thing in Europe.
- Projects on OGs from other groups.
- A lot going on in the dairy sector driven by industry. By connecting and working together farmers can improve their practices.
- Connect across the EU; search for OG abroad and work together.
- EIP-OGs and TNs complement each other.
- OG's - what they are and the range of OG's.
- Explore the networks.

Something you have learned?

- Operational groups of ZLTO not funded by RDP. Long way to go for sustainability and economic dairy farming.
- OG's happen at many levels, not just farmer-centric, facilitation hugely varies.
- About OG's in other countries.
- Different approaches to manage OG's.
- Every bodies work, innovations and many other things.
- Should activate OG farmer members more.
- Exchanges because of EuroDairy.
- New people with good ideas.
- Keep connecting the OG projects to prevent double work.
- EIP has more potential than we use today.
- OGs are different (by funding/regulations) in different countries.
- Diversity of OGs.
- The benefits of World Café and Share Fair useful.

Something you will take home?

- Database is useful in English also for OG's in Flanders.
- Enrichment! Contacts across Europe. Criteria for successful OG's
- The experience, the new people.
- Farmer workshop approaches.
- List of contacts and new ideas
- Active and bigger groups; activate farmers.
- European experience.
- Opportunities to go on with our OGs.

- Resilience tool and the importance of social interaction.
- A lot of knowledge
- Some ideas can be simple.
- Tips of farmer engagement.
- This form ;-) (i.e. the evaluation form)

Something you would bin?

- Too short, evening and day would be better.
- Traffic traveling to here
- Excessive administration.

Of the 13 participants who responded to the question: *How useful would you rate the workshop overall* (with a five level Likert score 1=low & 5 = high), **69%** scored **4** and **31%** scored **5**.

Further comments:

- Would be good to see/know how the thematic network outputs will benefit farming explicitly.
- Great day!
- Available to develop resilience tool.
- Thank you for the nice and good organised workshop!
- Nice to visit Danone.
- More co-operation and follow-ups.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The most striking feedback from the coordinators present was the sense of latent, collective potential sitting within the current, and likely future, OG's. This manifested in a desire for more intensive networking between Groups. The overwhelmingly positive reaction suggests that more opportunities should be created for face to face interaction. This is a richer and more informative type of engagement than relying, for example, on database listings. The value is not only in the content of specific OG's, but in the wider learning opportunity that could be realised through this depth of connection. Critically, this lack of connection was felt to limit the scope of dissemination, and long-term exploitation of results.

At the time of the workshop, there was significant lack of knowledge amongst participants about what Thematic Networks existed. Consequently, it was likely that there was little appreciation amongst OG coordinators more broadly, of how both measures could complement each other. This had always been an ambition of the EU, but may not have permeated so strongly within the regions.

Some regions and member states already bring together OG's within their own rural development programmes – leeway should be considered how to open this to cross border exchange. Thematic Networks could have a more proactive role, particularly in facilitating farmer exchange.

It's clear that there quite a lot of variation in how the OG model is being managed across the regions. As the model continues to expand and mature, there are valuable lessons to share as to what has worked well, and what less so. If more cross-border activity is desired calls will need greater synchronisation and direction towards the outcome required.

Challenges to greater connection include – the availability of funding, language barriers, time and opportunity to get away from the day job, particularly in the case of farmers. The win:wins possible through greater connectivity include, better dissemination of outputs, wider exposure for tools and approaches, avoidance of duplication to reduce risks of repeating the same mistake, or to ensure complementary activity is recognised, pre-empting issues apparent in one country but not yet evident in another, and broadening perspectives on a particular issue or challenge.

Importantly, many OG coordinators felt there could be a legacy after the original Rural Development Programme funding ran out. This varied from tangible assets such as decision support tools and KE materials, to softer benefits such as strengthened social/business connections or capacity building.

Finally, the format and methodology used in the workshop was well appreciated, as was the opportunity to provide structured feedback. It was generally felt the event could usefully be extended to a full day or day and a half.

Annex 1 Workshop agenda and timetable

Location: Danone Actimel factory, Rotselaar	
9.00-9.30	Welcome and introduction
9.30-10.00	Strategic talk (Danone Milk Team)
10.00-11.00	Guided factory tour Danone Actimel
11.00-11.30	<i>A little stroll</i>
Location: Bar De Drie Linden, Rotselaar	
11.30-12.00	Operational Groups connected to EuroDairy - who is here?
12.00-13.30	Innovation Fair with specific examples of innovations and best practice per Euro Dairy theme
13.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.30	World Café about the knowledge exchange process and synergies between groups on international level and with EuroDairy
15.30-16.00	Workshop summary and conclusions
>16.00 Bus coach to Leuven CS and Brussels Zaventem Airport	

Annex 2 Detailed programme outline

Time	Activity	Content and Method
9.00-9.30	Welcome and introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming by Ray • Participants intro: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are you?, 2. What is your role related to the dairy industry?, and 3. What challenges are you working on in your OG(s)? 4. (on a sticky note: what is your main exptation for today) • Workshop objectives and programme for the day • Introduction to the European Innovation Partnership Agri & EuroDairy Thematic Network (Ray) (15 min)
9.30-10.00	Strategic talk (Danone Milk Team)	Including discussion on the future societal challenges and the supply chain (Marion Bloemendal)
10.00-11.00	Guided factory tour Danone Actimel	(Marion Bloemendal)
11.00–11.30	<i>A little stroll</i>	Walk to Bar de Drie Linden across the street
11.30–12.00	OGs connected to EuroDairy - who is here?	<p>Purpose: <i>each coordinator to provide a short (1 min) intro to their OG(s) to initiate the sharing process.</i></p> <p>Method: OG ‘mapping’: on a large A0 map of Europe each coordinator drops a pins for each OG he/she coordinates and provides a brief overview, 1 min, of their work in the OGs(refrence to the OG overview leaflets recived in into pack)</p>
12.00–13.30	Innovation Fair	<p>Purpose: <i>to share what these groups are doing practically on the ground</i></p> <p>Method: Share Fair process: 2 rounds, 4 stands per round, 40 min per round and 10 min consolidation.</p> <p>Eight OGs will be asked to present, in 2 rounds (40 min each), per round four groups. At the end we will have a 10 min consolidation. In each round one group will present on four priority themes: resource efficiency, biodiversity, animal care and socio-economic resilience.</p> <p>Consolidation question: Anything particularly interesting and usefull, similarilties or difference , are you surprised about etc?</p>
13.30–14.00	Lunch	
14.00–15.30	World Café	<p>Purpose: <i>using the EuroDairy TN as a worked examples, reflect on and explore the relationship between OGs and Thematic networks and its opportunities and constraints.</i></p> <p>Method: Based on the expected number of participants we will work with 3 tables with 5 to 6 participant per table to discuss one question agreed upon for about 20 min and each table will have a different question. After 20 min the participants move to the next table and built upon what was discussed in previous group. On each table there is a ‘host’ (Ray, Martine and Jason) who write down the discussion on a flipchart paper and also informs the next group of what was discussed in previous round. At the</p>

		<p>end the table hosts presents what in plenary the results of the discussion). Lisa will brief the hosts on the process and questions during lunch break.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Question 1. Based on you experience in coordinating OGs what are the characteristics and attributes of a well-functioning OG, tangibly benefitting the participating actors?</p> <p>Question 2. What is value to an OG of connecting with other OG's, what role can TN's play to help facilitate this connection, how to achieve win-win?</p> <p>Question 3. What will be the legacy of your OG. Do you plan further 'phases' ? Would you seek out to interact /collaborate with TN in the future ? (Are there/have you seen any similar initiatives with other OGs across Europe and could you link with these)</p>
15.30–16.00	Workshop summary and conclusions	<p>Workshop consolidation (Ray)</p> <p>Workshop expectations and Evaluation</p>

Annex 3: Participants list

No.	Name	Country	Operational Group
1	Simon Traulle	France	OG Haut de France
2	Roland Favory	France	OG Haut de France
3	Sam Strain	Northern Ireland	OG STAMP project
4	Jason Rankin	Northern Ireland	(Agrisearch - OG STAMP project)
5	Marija Klopčič		OG Free walk farm OG Entrepreneur with vision OG Genomic selection OG Young stock management
6	Elena Bortolazzo	Italy	OG Convenient Emilia Romagna autoctone breeds
7	Ilpo Polonen	Finland	OG Digital silage bales
8	Tuija Kallio	Finland	OG Digital silage bales
9	Kees Anker	Netherlands	OG Netwerk Platteland (35 OG's in NL)
10	Yvonne Daandels	Netherlands	OG Robot milking
11	Fauve Henst	Netherlands	OG Animal care young farmer techniques
12	Lisa Morgans	United Kingdom	OG Reducing reliance on antimicrobials
13	Hanne Leirs	Belgium	OG N Balance
14	Stijn Bossin	Belgium	OG Pocket farm(er)
15	Evi Canniere	Belgium	OG Hoof disease(s)

Annex 4: Workshop Evaluation form

Something you would tell others

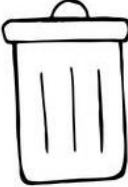
Something you have learned



**EuroDairy OG Workshop
29th November 2018**

Something you will take home

Something you would bin



How useful would you rate the workshop overall (1=low & 5 = high):

(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)

Any further comments: _____

Thank you for your feedback!