

# Kick-off of the Knowledge Exchange Network on Agro-ecosystems

**Date:** 29–30 September 2026

**Venue:** Herman Teirlinck Building, Havenlaan 88, Brussels

## Background

The Horizon-project **BioAgora** is building a Science Service for Biodiversity (**SSBD**) in support of the European Commission's Knowledge Centre for Biodiversity (**KCBD**) of the European Commission Joint Research Center (JRC). The SSBD will operate through Knowledge Exchange Networks (KENS), which in turn are meant to provide a shared knowledge base, scientific evidence and a forum for dialogue in support of the implementation of EU policies. The **Agro-ecosystems KEN** will bring knowledge holders together in support of EU governance of agro-ecosystems (e.g. the Common Agriculture Policy and the Nature Restoration Regulation as it pertains to agriculture and the EU's soil strategy). This vision reflects an aspiration to ensure food security without compromising the environment at a time when the global food system is considered the primary driver of the biodiversity crisis.

## Event Objective

This 2-day event will mark the kick-off of the Agro-ecosystems KEN. Together, participants will shape the Network's structure and outlook in preparation for a long-lasting collaboration in addressing knowledge requests from the European Commission.

## Approach

A strong emphasis will be placed on impartial facilitation, creating a safe space for open exchange and ensuring active engagement from all participants. This is meant to enable the establishment of long-lasting bridges between science, policy and society.

# AGENDA

## DAY 1 KEN Agro-ecosystems: Improving impact through a Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN) on agro-ecosystems

09:00 | Welcome Coffee

09:30 | **Introduction:** *Hilde Eggermont* (INBO), *Susanna Gionfra* (European Commission, DG RTD) and *Jiska van Dijk* (BioAgora)

**Background and Objectives:** *Myriam Dumortier* (BioAgora)

**Programme and Principles of work:** *Estelle Balian* (Lead Facilitator)

09:55 | Ice breaker

### “WHY” a KEN on Agro-ecosystems: Building a common vision

10:10 | **Introduction to the SSBD, the role of the KENs:** *Lisa Norton* and *Jiska van Dijk* (BioAgora)

10:45 | **Specific Intro to the Function “Answering Requests” of the SSBD:** *Paris Vasilakopoulos* (European Commission, KCBD) and *Juliette Young* (BioAgora)

11:00 | **Coffee break** (with intro on Belcatering – *Nena Cornelis*)

11:15 | **Mapping the knowledge 1:** Getting to know projects and initiatives

**Agroecology Partnership:** *Gerald Schwarz*

**Network Nature:** *Nora Hiller*

**Speed-meeting:** Short pitches of scientific projects and networks

12:15 | **Keynote: Framing the current landscape and gaps/needs:** *Joost Dessein* (Ghent University) and *Airi Külvet* (Farmer in Estonia)

12:45 | **Generative dialogue:** What is the possible “role” of a KEN on agro-ecosystems?

13:10 | Lunch break

### Further exploring “WHAT” a KEN on Agro-ecosystems could be? And “WHAT FOR”?

14:25 | **Group work in 3 Groups:** 3 rounds of 20 minutes

**Group 1:** Building on the outcome of the generative dialogue: What are the important elements/principles for this KEN?

**Group 2:** What are the main levers and the main risks/threats to overcome for the KEN to be effective?

○ justice/pluralism ○ other types of knowledge ○ governance and funding

**Group 3:** From your perspective (research & other knowledge holders), which new challenges on agro-ecosystems need to be tackled? What are the important knowledge gaps to address?

16:00 | **Field visit to the farm Perkuus**, reflections with farmers *Charlotte Vandendriessche* and *Hilde De Boeck* and with *An Jamart* from farmer organisation Bioforum (departure bus at 15:30)

18:30 | **Dinner on the farm Ferme du Chaudron**, prepared by **Les Gastrosophes** (with intro by *Hadrien Kagan*)

20:45 | **Return by bus** (arrival at INBO at 21:00)

## DAY 2

# SPI Dialogue workshop: How can a diversity of knowledge holders in the Agro-ecosystems KEN contribute to supporting the implementation of EU policies?

08:30 | Arrival & registration

09:00 | Opening session

**Welcome:** *Hilde Eggermont* (INBO), *Susanna Gionfra* (European Commission) and *Jiska van Dijk* (BioAgora)

**Recap of Day 1:** *Myriam Dumortier* (BioAgora)

**Objectives of Day 2:** *Lisa Norton* (BioAgora)

**Programme and principles of work:** *Estelle Balian* (Lead facilitator)

## Digging into the “WHAT FOR”: Better understanding cross-sectoral challenges for agro-ecosystems

09:20 | **Keynote:** A transformative Science-Society-Policy Interface: *Sander Jacobs* (IPBES)

09:45 | **Panel & discussion:** Current policies and cross-sectoral challenges: *name tbc* (European Commission – DG ENV), *Vincent Tchedry* (European Commission – DG AGRI), *Marilda Dhaskali* (Birdlife) and *Airi Külvet* (Farmer in Estonia)

10:30 | Coffee break

## How can the Agro-ecosystems KEN help overcome implementation barriers for policies supporting agro-ecosystems?

10:50 | **Keynote on implementation barriers for policies supporting the transformation to sustainable and just food systems and possible ways to overcome them**

*Nicolas Dendoncker* (University of Namur)

Reflecting on the morning challenges and barriers to implementing EU policies on agro-ecosystems, some insights on possible ways to overcome them

11:15 | **Fishbowl discussion:** “How can the KEN help overcome the identified challenges/barriers? What are the lessons learned or best practices?”

12:00 | Lunch Break

## Co-creation lab: Breakout groups on developing recommendations for the Agro-ecosystems KEN

13:30 | Introduction to the group work and reminder about “developing requests” in the SSBD

13:50 | **Group work on:**

- following up on the challenges identified in previous sessions and the possible role of the KEN: What would be some first actions/recommendations for the new Network?
- science and policy perspectives on current knowledge needs to inspire future requests

15:00 | Coffee break

15:20 | Reporting from the groups and plenary discussion

16:20 | Reflection on the recommendations

16:50 | Reflecting on the SPI processes during the workshop

17:10 | **Conclusions and next steps:** Evaluation of the day

17:30 | Farewell cocktail (end by 18:30)