

PRESS RELEASE



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Twenty Years of Joint Efforts for Sustainable Development in Agriculture in the EU

EISA and its predecessor EIF started to promote Integrated Farming (IF) two decades ago / The Integrated Farming Framework as European guideline is one of the key achievements / EISA Farm Visits: new service on offer to demonstrate and communicate IF benefits to farmers and society at large

EISA (Brussels): The successful seminar “*Integrated Farming, Sustainable and Competitive Agriculture for the Next Millennium*” in Strasbourg in 1995 marked the first official appearance of EIF, the European Initiative for Integrated Farming. As predecessor to EISA, EIF brought together national organisations from France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom for the promotion and further development of Integrated Farming (IF).

Increasing research in and the implementation of IF in agricultural practice as well as improving societal acceptance for modern agriculture in Europe, were two of the key recommendations of the participants of this first EIF seminar. “In order to strengthen the organisation’s voice in Europe, members then founded the European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture e. V. (EISA) as a registered association in 2001”, says Patrick Wrixon, a farmer from the UK and current EISA President. “Since those early days, the purpose of EIF and EISA was and is to establish and promote dialogue on sustainable agriculture, to support and develop sustainable agriculture in the EU through the implementation of IF, and to bring together a broad range of organisations to support and develop sustainable agriculture as well as practical, progressive and modern farming methods”, he says.

EISA’s Integrated Farming Framework, originally launched in 2003 as a European definition and detailed characterisation of IF, has since been revised and amended. “We know that the EISA Framework is not a static document: Following the principles of IF, action must be taken according to a given site and situation, and on-farm practices must be continuously evaluated and improved. The EISA Framework therefore needs regular updates and improvements, thus leading to the current version, which was published in 2012”, Wrixon explains.

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“Even though it will never be a final version, our IF Framework gives clear starting points and detailed advice for farmers to achieve more sustainability in their everyday practice. This is true for example for on-farm efforts to promote biodiversity, to optimise the use of nutrients and enhance soil fertility, or to use pesticides in a targeted and responsible manner when no other strategies are available or feasible.”

Integrated Farming must be understood as a knowledge-based and highly flexible management concept. “Taking a holistic approach to farm management – instead of looking at tillage, fertilisation, crop protection or animal husbandry in separate steps for instance – is one of the key requirements to achieve both the responsible use and the effective conservation of natural resources. However, such a management approach depends on the availability of a toolbox which leaves sufficient choice to the farmers which tool to use in a given situation”, highlights Patrick Wrixon.

“That is why we developed the EISA Farm Visits as a service particularly designed for representatives of the EU’s administration and journalists. Bringing these people out to the farms where farmers explain why they act as they do – and to which effect – is the most efficient and authentic way to demonstrate what modern, responsible agriculture is all about”, says Wrixon. “We have worked hard in the past twenty years to bring sustainable development in agriculture forward through the promotion and further development of Integrated Farming – but it seems there is still plenty of reason for EISA members to continue these efforts in the decades to come”, he concludes.

About EISA:

The European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture (EISA), founded in 2001, is a European association representing national organisations from seven EU Member States as full members: FARRE (Forum des Agriculteurs Responsables Respectueux de l’Environnement), FILL (Fördergemeinschaft Integrierte Landbewirtschaftung, Luxemburg), FML (Forum Moderne Landwirtschaft, Germany), GOSZ (Grain Producers’ Organisation, Hungary), LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming, United Kingdom), OiB (Odling i Balans, Sweden), and Skylark Foundation (The Netherlands). EISA is supported by six associations in the up- and downstream-sectors of agriculture as associate members.

EISA promotes Integrated Farming as a holistic approach to sustainable development in agriculture in Europe. EISA is open for new full members from further EU member states as well as additional associate members from the up- and downstream sectors of agriculture in Europe.

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