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MEMBER

VivAgriLab

Living Lab VivAgriLab | France



VivAgriLab is a Living Lab (LL) that covers a territory including 79 municipalities and 20,000 hectares of agricultural land in the southwest urban-rural fringe of Paris. Since 2013, the LL and its precursors have brought together researchers, farmers, NGOs, and local authorities focused on co-designing solutions for

sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and climate change issues.

Aim

The aim of the LL is to serve as a collaborative platform that strengthens the links between research, farmers, civil society, and local governance in the south-west outskirts of the Paris region. It seeks to co-design practical, science-based solutions to ecological, agroecological, and food system challenges specific to agri-urban territories. By grounding scientific research in real-world local needs, the LL promotes the co-construction of knowledge and fosters sustainable transitions that are socially inclusive and territorially anchored. It encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and mutual learning between academic and non-academic stakeholders, empowering each actor to contribute to shaping resilient and sustainable futures for their territory.

Background information

For several decades, the south-western periurban area of the Paris region has hosted a high concentration of renowned research and higher education institutions, particularly known for their expertise in life sciences, including training and research focusing on agriculture, biodiversity, climate, agroecology, and corporate social responsibility. This dense and expanding academic landscape offers numerous opportunities for applied and collaborative research that addresses real-world challenges faced by local stakeholders, while fostering new synergies between urban, agricultural, and natural environments.

In 2011, the LabEx BASC (Laboratory of Excellence for Biodiversity, Agroecosystems, Society, and Climate) was launched, bringing together 14 laboratories from AgroParisTech, INRA, CNRS, CEA, the Universities of Paris-Sud and Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, IRD, and IRSTEA. This initiative laid the foundation for several territorial collaborations. In 2021, it evolved into a broader interdisciplinary programme named C-BASC (Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies on Biodiversity, Agroecology, Society and Climate), embedded within Paris-Saclay University. Since 2026, C-BASC has been integrated into the Graduate School Biosphera, also hosted by Paris-Saclay University and gathering several laboratories of national institutions and universities. Since 2007, more than 30 collaborative research projects have been initiated across the areas covered by three large confederations of municipalities: Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Paris-Saclay, Versailles Grand Parc. These projects emerged through strong and lasting partnerships between researchers and local actors facilitated by Terre et Cité

partnerships between researchers and local actors, facilitated by Terre et Cité through regular dialogue and coordination efforts. Key milestones include the first stakeholders' meeting in 2013, the Saclay workshops in 2016, co-construction workshops in 2022 and 2023, and the development of a Living Lab mapping in 2019. The first project funded under the VivAgriLab initiative was launched in 2021. Since 2024, the LL has formalized its collaborative approach by signing a partnership agreement with a wide range of key local stakeholders, including:

- Terre et Cité (coordinating association).
- APPVPA (Heritage Association of the Plaine de Versailles and the Plateau des Alluets).
- Triangle Vert (a network of farmers from the Hurepoix area).
- Paris-Saclay Urban Community.
- Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Urban Community.
- Versailles Grand Parc Urban Community.
- Université Paris-Saclay (with Graduate School Biosphera, coordinator of the research community).
- INRAE (French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment).
- AgroParisTech (Institute of Life and Environmental Sciences and Industries).
- Île-de-France Regional Chamber of Agriculture.
- Paris-Saclay Public Development Authority (EPAPS).

This partnership formalizes the commitment of these actors to foster territorial innovation and co-create research projects addressing the challenges of urban-agricultural transitions.

Funding structure

Funds to support the LL activities come from a very wide variety of sources. The three founding NGOs receive funding from European (e.g., LEADER for Terre et Cité), national (e.g., "ADEME 'Agence de la transition écologique'", Fonds Vert) and local sources (e.g., towns and three large confederations of municipalities: Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Paris-Saclay, Versailles Grand Parc). The Graduate School Biosphera research consortium is funded by the Paris-Saclay University, and researchers within this consortium receive funding for projects through a variety of competitive research grants. The LL has also received funding as a consortium from the Fondation de France for reinforcing local fluxes in agricultural systems.

Activities

- Organisation of regular interdisciplinary workshops and annual meetings (“Journées de rencontre du VivAgriLab”) bringing together researchers, farmers, local authorities and civil society actors. The most recent meeting in January 2026 focused on co-constructed projects and solutions to adapt to climate change.
- Co-design and facilitation of applied research projects rooted in local agricultural and environmental challenges.
- Hosting of technical field visits and on-farm experiments to test innovations and support knowledge transfer.
- Creation of thematic working groups based on stakeholders’ needs (e.g. organic matter and circularity).
- Development and diffusion of educational materials (flyers, reports, posters, presentations) to raise awareness of the challenges and outcomes.
- Contribution to strategic regional projects such as the Local Food Plan (Projet Alimentaire Territorial).
- Engagement with universities and research institutions to encourage student involvement and research anchored in the territory.
- Regular mapping and documentation of the stakeholders, projects and research needs of the territory (e.g. 2019 mapping of Living Lab stakeholders).
- Participation in national and European networks related to Living Labs, agroecology, and territorial innovation.

Methods, stakeholder engagements and tools

The LL was initiated through the collaboration of two key founding organizations: Terre et Cité and C-BASC (Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies on Biodiversity, Agroecology, Society and Climate). VivAgriLab is now under new leadership, with the scientific community C-BASC being integrated into a broader consortium, the Graduate School Biosphera:

- Terre et Cité is a local multi-stakeholder association dedicated to fostering dialogue and collaboration between farmers, researchers, citizens, and local authorities across the Plateau de Saclay and the Plaine de Versailles. As the coordinating body of the LL, Terre et Cité ensures strong territorial anchoring and continuous engagement with local actors.
- The Graduate School Biosphera, hosted by Paris-Saclay University, brings together 31 laboratories from several national institutions (INRAE, CNRS, CEA) and universities (AgroParisTech, Paris-Saclay University, Evry Val d’Essonne

University, Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines University). It offers fundamental and applied research as well as training programmes dedicated to the interactions between living organisms and their environments, in order to respond to the challenges linked to the future of the biosphere and our societies.

Together, these two structures ensure that the LL is both deeply rooted in local needs and connected to high-level academic research.

The LL's methodology is based on the living lab approach, combining research and innovation with active participation from territorial stakeholders.

Its action is structured around three core pillars:

- Co-construction of projects, shaped with and by local actors: farmers, researchers, associations, local governments, and civil society organizations.
- Dialogue as a driver for action, through recurring participatory workshops, interterritorial forums, and thematic working groups.
- A dynamic interface between research and territory, bridging academic excellence and practical implementation.

The governance model is multi-stakeholder and participatory:

- All partner institutions are involved in steering and technical committees, where decisions are made collectively.
- This inclusive model strengthens local ownership and ensures that research outcomes remain relevant and impactful.

Main engagement tools and formats include:

- Participatory workshops (e.g., Saclay 2016, co-construction workshops in 2022–2023).
- Annual cross-actor forums and inter-territorial networking events.
- A living territorial cartography of projects and actors (first version in 2019).
- Thematic research and innovation groups (e.g., agroforestry, carbon, territorial ecology, nutrient cycles).

Achievements

- **Atelier de Saclay** (2016): A major interdisciplinary event that brought together over 100 stakeholders to co-design research questions and collaborative projects related to territorial ecology in the agri-urban context.
- **Reuse of Human Urine in Agriculture** (PLUVALUH Project): Pilot project on circular nutrient cycles, co-designed with local stakeholders to assess feasibility, risks and social acceptability.
- **Carbon Project** (2023–2025): Applied research on soil carbon sequestration and agricultural practices for climate mitigation, in collaboration with local farmers and researchers.
- **Drain'Act**: Experimentation and shared monitoring of agricultural drainage systems to co-develop strategies that reduce water stress while maintaining productivity.
- **Agroforestry and Hedgerows**: Initiatives to co-design, implement and evaluate hedgerow restoration and agroforestry projects in peri-urban farming systems, combining ecological and agronomic goals. The association plants several kilometres of hedgerows each year to support biodiversity, soil quality, and landscape resilience.

Publications

Videos INRAE Flux Local:



- Compost, urine humaine...ces matières organiques seront-elles les fertilisants de demain ?
- Attente et canaux de distribution : comment connecter l'offre et la demande alimentaire locale ?
- Encourager la diversification et aider à l'installation pour augmenter la production agricole locale

Articles

- Flux Local:
 - <https://epa-paris-saclay.fr/actualites-et-decryptages/toutes-nos-publications/des-nouvelles-du-vivagrilab/>
 - <https://www.versaillesgrandparc.fr/25-246/actualites/fiche/le-projet-flux-local-pilote-par-terre-et-cite-partage-son-bilan-en-images.htm>
 - <https://www.lafranceagricole.fr/engrais-azotes/article/864538/fertiliser-le-mais-avec-des-urines-humaines>
 - <https://www.uvsq.fr/semaines-de-sensibilisation-a-leconomie-circulaire->



du-21-mars-au-8-avril

- <https://www.perspectives-agricoles.com/conduite-de-cultures/fertilisation-base-durine-possible-agronomiquement-complexe-socialment>
- <https://www.agromatin.com/reference-agro/projets-territoriaux/flux-local-des-resultats-franciliens-sur-lagriculture-urbaine.html>
- <https://www.leparisien.fr/environnement/a-saclay-votre-urine-fait-pousser-du-ble-28-04-2024-XZYPE7QPUNFCXKIBJ6EDVNSONE.php#:~:text=Une%20exp%C3%A9rimentation%>
- L'Edition: <https://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/luniversite/media-et-communication/ledition-de-luniversite-paris-saclay-26>
- EPAPS: <https://epa-paris-saclay.fr/actualites-et-decryptages/toutes-nos-publications/retour-sur-ledition-2025-de-vivagrilab/>

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