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MEMBER

Living Lab Agroecology and Organic Agriculture

Living Lab LLAEBIO | Belgium



The Living Lab Agroecology and Organic Agriculture (LLAEBIO) supports agroecological innovation as a lever in the transition to more sustainable food and agricultural systems in the region of Flanders (BE). This living lab brings together stakeholders from across the agri-food system with a shared interest in agroecology and organic farming, facilitating innovative research and promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The LLAEBIO's overarching goal is to foster connection between people, organizations, policy, science and practice.

Aim

- Disseminate information, knowledge and expertise on agroecology and organic farming;
- Bring people together to facilitate mutual exchange of expertise and knowledge about agroecology and organic farming;
- Support and promote research and experiments on agroecology and organic farming.

Background information

The origin of the initiative:

- 2017: a bottom up request from the organic sector for more participatory research
- 2018: a top down request from the Flemish government to the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO) in Melle (BE) to set up a living lab on organic farming
- increasing societal demand for agroecological principles to guide agricultural practices
- agroecology is added to organic farming to broaden the focus of the living lab

Establishing the initiative

- 2019: broad consultation of potential stakeholders
- late 2019: a joint vision and mission statement was developed in consultation with interested stakeholders

Official launch of the initiative: February 2020

2020 onwards:

- participatory working groups start planning activities
- late 2020: first activities were launched
- Participative working groups continue to plan and execute various activities;

Funding structure

ILVO coordinates and facilitates the living lab and elaborates activities together with stakeholders. Resources committed are primarily (many) working hours. Funding for activities is sourced through external projects and ad hoc contributions from stakeholders involved in the living lab.

Activities

- Organization of interactive and educational knowledge-sharing activities in order to
- strengthen connection between stakeholders,
- enhance farmers' knowledge about agroecological practices and opportunities (preferentially via peer-to-peer exchange)
- raise all other actors' awareness of the potential of agroecology
- bring scientific knowledge with practical field experiences and vice versa
- Identification of knowledge and research gaps within agroecology and organic farming;
- Supporting and developing project proposals focused on agroecology and/or organic farming practices, in line with the 5 operational principles of living labs as defined by ENOLL (multi-method approach, multi-actor participation, real life context, involvement of end-users, co-creation and openness) and a transdisciplinary system thinking approach;
- Deepening of our understanding of systems research.

Methods, stakeholder engagements and tools





From the beginning, LLAEBIO has used the basic ENOLL principles and components for living labs. These principles provide a steady compass for the members and their discussions and practical activities. System thinking, the aim to join scientific and tacit knowledge, and strong stakeholder engagement and involvement are seen as being indispensable to innovation.

Priorities on the living lab agenda are determined collaboratively with key stakeholders of the living lab through interactive workshop. Temporary participatory working groups, composed of volunteers who participate based on their interests, are established to define and develop activities and actions on these themes. Depending on the working group's objectives and the target group, the most appropriate tools and working methods (field visits, webinars, round tables, etc.) are explored and selected. The activities are open for all stakeholders in the agri-food system e.g., farmers (conventional and organic/agroecological), farm suppliers and buyers, food processors, consumers, researchers in different disciplines, extension workers, (farm) advisors, teachers, policy makers, NGO members, and the like).

Beyond the interactive meeting and the working groups, the living lab is always open for ad hoc questions via the LLAEBIO website and e-mail.



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