

Press Release

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A new research and development project begins: MIX-ENABLE - sustainable organic mixed livestock farming

On April 4th-6th, the kick-off meeting of the MIX-ENABLE project took place in Toulouse, France. Twenty-five researchers from 7 countries met to plan the first stages of this project. The CORE Organic Cofund project MIX-ENABLE aims to deepen our understanding of organic mixed livestock farming (i.e. integrating two or more animal species) in Europe, to find sustainable and robust forms of the production, and to propose improved models and strategies.



Issues

Integrating two or more animal species with crop production or agroforestry on a farm potentially provides various benefits, including more efficient pasture use and parasite management. However, most organic livestock farms are specialized and the few organic mixed livestock farms tend to display limited integration between farm components (crops, pastures and animals), i.e. limited interactions over space and time between these components. This limited integration may reduce the potential benefits of having more than one animal species. Therefore, the MIX-ENABLE project will

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explore the conditions of sustainability and robustness of organic mixed livestock farms in Europe, especially the influence of integration between farm components on the aforementioned factors.

Methods

In this project, 20 farms per country will be surveyed to assess the level of integration between farm components. An indicator system for integrated assessment will be developed and applied to associate the sustainability and robustness of the surveyed farms with their level of integration among farm components. In parallel, farm-level experiments comparing specialized and mixed livestock production will be conducted for the comparison of specific aspects of animal husbandry (e.g. pasture use or animal health). The obtained knowledge will be integrated into models that can simulate organic mixed livestock farm performances against climatic and economic variability. Using these models, more sustainable and robust organic mixed livestock farms will be created through co-design workshops with farmers.

The results will be communicated to practice and policy-makers to shed light on the potential of organic mixed livestock farms, and more specifically on the ways to manage these farms sustainably, as well as how to convert from a specialized farm.

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Partners:

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