

BBioNets and CAP Network Ireland: How to boost Irish bio-based EIP-AGRI OGs *Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2025*

14th October 2025 / Teagasc, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland

In a recent event for Bioeconomy Ireland Week, 2025, the [Irish Forest and Agriculture Network](#) (primary producers, industry and government representatives), and others interested in the topic, joined forces with CAP Network Ireland to address the question “How to boost Irish bio-based EIP-AGRI Operational Groups?”.

Event day

Primary producers, government and industry representatives gathered the 14th of October in Johnstown castle, Co. Wexford, to start a discussion about how to increase the number of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups focused on bio-based practices and technologies. The motivation for this event held during Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2025 began with the identification by both the BBioNets project and CAP Network Ireland of the same fact: **few bio-based EIP-AGRI Operational Group proposals are submitted and funded in Ireland compared to other EU countries**. As this call brings together farmers, foresters, and other stakeholders to co-create practical, innovative solutions for their sector using a bottom-up approach, putting research results into practice on farms, it was crucial to assess the root cause of this situation with these stakeholders to ensure the future sustainability of the Irish circular bioeconomy.

With 24 attendees, 4 main guest speakers kick-started the event, followed by a workshop to gather stakeholder’s opinions on how to improve this aspect in the Irish CAP. **Anne Maguire from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine** laid the groundwork by discussing European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs), bio-based OGs in Ireland, and two co-funded Irish EIPs with larger budgets than typical EIPs, were introduced. **Carmen Girón Domínguez, from MTU**, talked about the BBioNets project, its [outputs](#) from the engagement with Irish Forest and Agriculture Network (FAN) and the [dynamic BBT Assessment tool](#). **Vita Maria Cristiana Moliterni from CREA, Italy**, shared her success story with a bio-based technology in the Hemp sector (SCARABEO), as their research started locally, funded by EIP-AGRI in the beginning, and allowing them to further develop their research to reach international collaborations. Finally, **Jim McAdam from the Irish Agroforestry Forum** highlighted bio-based practices like agroforestry, biochar, and wool for sustainable agriculture and forestry.



Figure 1. Pictures from the day

A workshop followed the presentations allowing attendees to work on potential Points of Attention to highlight during the CAP post-2027 to increase bio-based practices and technologies, as well as transversal measures. **The key takeaways from the workshop are presented in the following sections.**

Key takeaways for Irish bio-based EIP-AGRI OGs

A Mentimeter activity took place to prioritise preliminary Points of Attention identified within the BBioNets project selected for policy recommendations to strengthen Irish EIP-AGRI circular bioeconomy post-2027 (**Table 1**). In the first place, it was prioritised the need to focus on the **economic performance and modernisation of farms in Ireland** as structural weaknesses prevent farms from improving productivity and resilience, followed by the **integration of primary producers (farmers and foresters) into agri-food chains** as small farmers and foresters struggle to integrate into value chains, limiting competitiveness. Then, in third place was to **increase the number of bio-based activities in agriculture through EIP-AGRI calls**, followed by a general **need of guidelines towards deciding the type of funding mechanism for different types of bio-based projects**. Finally, the points of attention of focusing on increasing the number of projects about high-value bio-based materials and of forestry bio-based projects for the EIP-AGRI OGs were prioritised the lasts.

Table 1. Prioritised Points of Attention for Policy recommendations

Rank	Point of Attention
1	The economic performance and modernisation of farms
2	The integration of primary producers into agri-food chain
3	The number of agriculture bio-based activities funded through EIP-AGRI
4	The guidelines for funding bio-based projects
5	The number of EIP-AGRI funded projects focused on high-value bio-based materials
6	The number of forestry bio-based activities funded through EIP-AGRI

Additionally, **suggestions of points of attention** for policy recommendations were also requested during the workshop, as well as **stakeholder's opinions on familiarity with the call, barriers and support needed during the submission process**, and **future themes to fund within the EIP-AGRI calls** to encourage future bio-based EIP-AGRI OGs. **These are summarized in the following sections.**

Familiarity with EIP-AGRI calls in Ireland and channels for dissemination	
Points of Attention	Recommendations
General lack of awareness of these calls outside academia with a limited knowledge of the	Increase awareness of primary producers and industry through the CAP Network and to implement an array of dissemination activities to key organisations and people , such as, unsuccessful applicants, agroforestry networks, cooperatives, advisors, county councils, etc.,

application process among key stakeholders (farmers).	as well as disseminating through AGRI-media to primary producers, and increase the number of brokerage events . CAP Network and DAFM to take actions to increase the identification of drivers/areas most likely to be adopted by farmers (recurring consultations and ability to change and adapt these with time).
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EIP-AGRI calls in Ireland: barriers to submission and support required	
Points of Attention	Recommendations
Short timeframe for application , causing stress to first-time applicants , who usually make up a large share of applicants in EIP-AGRI OGs.	<p>CAP Network Ireland and DAFM could implement a schedule for calls opening to increase its dissemination, awareness and preparation of projects.</p> <p>Planned topics/themes to fund could also speed up the process and schedule for the publication of EIP-AGRI calls.</p> <p>A project pitch as part of the application process was also suggested to ease up the application process.</p> <p>Increase the awareness of Support costs for consultations to assist applicant's prepare Phase 2 application at proposal submission (€7000–9,000).</p> <p>Prepare for Innovation Brokers event to enhance EIP applications</p> <p>Simplify Phase 2 application.</p> <p>EIP-AGRI OGs should be minimum of 2 years and ideally 3-5 years, instead of 1 year, to deal with the burden involved with project setup (logistic/admin). Longer projects will also account for ensured communication activities, larger scale projects, increase TRL and drive innovation.</p>
Recruiting farmers and identifying/searching for partners is time consuming and hard.	<p>CAP Network Ireland already supports applicants to build consortiums, increase dissemination of this support for its awareness was recommended, which can help speed up the application process.</p> <p>Match making events for EIP-AGRI Ogs before proposal submission.</p> <p>It was suggested to raise awareness that OGs should be farmer-led and include farmers and/or foresters</p> <p>Farm bodies could be used to promote EIP calls.</p>

	Improve communication with Teagasc advisors and other farmer advisors about EIP calls.
Regulations / requirements for applicants are restricting	<p>Making the application process for EIP AGRI as straightforward as possible for end users to lead on.</p> <p>Reduce and simplify Phase 2 application.</p> <p>Specific advisory help for applications to EIP for farmers.</p> <p>Equipment ownership must be considered — Not for Capital Investment.</p> <p>Need to clarify more the beneficiary of the bio-based activity, distinguish between public goods or commercial application.</p> <p>In Ireland, forestry is not funded under the CAP, creating a disconnect between agriculture and forestry, unlike in other European countries where the two sectors are more integrated. Greater integration of the two sectors could facilitate greater innovation for both.</p>

Themes for future EIP-AGRI calls to enhance bio-based OGs

When participants were asked which themes could be considered for the calls in the CAP post-2027, a general suggestion of themes was to **include the forestry sector** in the Irish CAP, as it is in other countries.

Moreover, broaden and mixed calls were suggested with examples such as **climate resilience** encompassing storage and sequestration of carbon or **climate adaptation on farms** covering agroforestry practices, hemp and flax-focused projects, and **regenerative agriculture** which can be the umbrella for specific topics such as biomass sourcing and nutrient return¹. Specific themes were also highlighted such as **soil health** to maintain soil organic matter over time and prevent erosion loss, or bio-based soil quality enhancers such as biochar. Others focused on **innovation of farms** to increase the number of small-scale processing activities, including agroforestry and nutrient recovery, or **mobile processing/refinery solutions**, for forestry and/or agriculture. Topics focusing on cross-cutting themes with different sectors were also raised as beneficial for circular bioeconomy, such as grass and blue economy, as shared feedstocks from both worlds could create valuable bio-based materials and outputs.

Transversally, it was also mentioned that, regardless of the theme, a strong focus on the impact or benefits of the projects is needed, however, **economic viability** should be critical to fund EIP-AGRI OGs.

¹ Stathatou, P. M., Corbin, L., Meredith, J. C., & Garmulewicz, A. (2023). Biomaterials and Regenerative Agriculture: A Methodological Framework to Enable Circular Transitions. *Sustainability*, 15(19), 14306. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151914306>

Finally, it was raised that, specifically for EIP AGRI funding to consider **Bioeconomy innovation & solutions**, these should be encouraged for opportunities advocating for **farm cooperation** which allows **farmers to pool local bio-based resources**. These innovative solutions should be considered as part of a wider range of solutions to address on farm challenges, therefore, **identification of co-benefits** within the bioeconomy-related topics should also be included.

General Takeaways for Future EIP-AGRI Calls

A number of suggestions made on the day were a general observation on EIP-AGRI calls to date, regardless of the typology of the EIP-AGRI OG, and interesting to note for the future CAP post-2027.

It should be noted that **farms are complex systems** and EIP-AGRI OGs face an important challenge as change is usually developed slowly than in controlled environments (lab, pilot plants or demo plants). Longer and bigger projects would offer the EIP-AGRI OGs the opportunity to account for the complexity in farming. Additionally, farms run by families are not as big as commercial farms, however, could be as complex. With the aging agricultural sector and low generational renewal, targeting family farms to **enhance rural development and youth attraction** to farming activities should also be considered², specifically for activities that will support economic viability as well as sustainability.

Scale for these projects was also raised as an outstanding issue. For EIP-AGRI OGs to achieve scalability, it is imperative that they are **conceptualized with scalability considerations from the initial stages** and mentioned in the proposals. However, this suggestion was made clarifying that scalability should not stop projects from having a regional focus, if so, they must incorporate a well-defined strategy for expansion beyond the initial project scope.

A final highlight to the Irish EIP-AGRI OGs co-fund between the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the national government in general (**Figure 2**). Currently, Ireland is leading two large EIP-AGRI OGs able to target multiple farms and implement longer projects to drive innovation. This co-fund model for EIP-AGRI OGs could be an interesting model if industry co-fund is considered for Irish farms to implement bio-based technologies and practice, giving farmers stewardship and including them in the early stages of the food and bio-based value chains.



Figure 2. Slide from Anne Maguire presentation illustrating two large co-funded EIP-AGRI OGs.

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2433

Conclusions

After the fruitful day of work, it was concluded that **the circular bioeconomy sector for Ireland's EIP-AGRI has great potential** but also some room for improvement. Increasing awareness of calls and supports during the application process as well as reducing administrative complexity were some of the highlights of the day to enhance participation. **Strengthening communication and capacity building**—particularly among primary producers, advisors, and cooperatives—along with continued strategic support from the CAP Network Ireland and DAFM, will be key to unlocking this potential.

Many suggestions for the future CAP post-2027 in Ireland were made, emphasizing the need for more effective **dissemination of calls, longer project durations, simpler application process** and expansion of **themes**. For instance, inclusion of **forestry** under the umbrella of Irish CAP Network as well as **broaden and cross-cutting themes**, considering both **circular bioeconomy** and **farm complexity** as key additions.

Special attention was given to the opportunities offered by co-funded EIP-AGRI OG models involving both industry and government, which could help boost the number of bio-based OGs. The outcomes of this dialogue **will inform policy recommendations under the BBioNets project** to ensure that future CAP frameworks more effectively support Ireland's transition towards a sustainable circular bioeconomy.

Stay connected for more updates and opportunities to collaborate on building resilient forestry networks across Europe!

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N.B.: feedback from the attendees on key takeaways were collected for improvement.