

# Farm4SD

Small and Medium Farm Holders as Agents of Sustainable Change in Agriculture



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## Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. The agricultural sector is acknowledged as one of the most important sectors in the EU economic and social transformation towards a long-term **sustainable future**.

In consequence, sustainable agriculture is at the heart of the **Agenda 2030** and the **EU Green Deal**. Along with the **Farm to Fork Strategy** and the **New CAP**, the EU is laying a foundation for a change in agriculture. Certainly, there is a strong need to redesign the food systems as we know them today.

Contributing to this transformation, Germany has been working to become more sustainable. Several laws and initiatives have been implemented to achieve it. Most aligned to the scope of resilient agriculture are the SDGs 2 (no hunger), 12 (responsible consumption and production) and 15 (life on land):

**2**  
ZERO HUNGER

Related to Goal 2, the government adopted the National Bioeconomy Strategy in 2020, the Climate Protection Program 2030 and the initiative "Sustainable Consumption for biodiversity in agriculture and food", which focuses on the cultivation and marketing of old regional fruit and vegetable varieties and endangered breeds of livestock in Germany.

**12**  
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Related to goal 12, the new due diligence law in supply chains that was passed in June 2021 and the implementation of the National Strategy for reduction of food waste in 2019 are worth mentioning.

**15**  
LIFE ON LAND

For goal 15, Germany is implementing, inter alia, an Agrobiodiversity Strategy, a strategy for the future of organic farming and a National Bioeconomy Strategy, which aims to boost the growth of the organic farming and food sector.

**Where can you find us?**

@farm4sd  
 @farm4sdproject  
 @farm4sd-project.eu

On the other hand, farmers are faced with several challenges, as they continue to supply food and non-food products and, at the same time, are asked to contribute to the transition towards a sustainable future implementing those regulations and changes. In order to help them, Germany offers different funding options implemented within the above-mentioned policies and strategies.

They are organized on the level of the federal states, so depending on where a farm is located, differences in accessibility and criteria occur (Deutsche Fördermittelberatung, n.d.). Farmers may apply for funding for more efficient machinery, resource-saving software, research and development of new processes and technologies, measures for protection against various weather conditions or the creation of overnight accommodation for tourists (e.g. Farm cafes, guest rooms, camping sites) (Deutsche Fördermittelberatung, n.d.).

Most EU countries offer a large number of subsidies, policies, and opportunities to encourage sustainable agriculture. Nevertheless, EU farmers show a lack of knowledge about these new policies, sustainable best practices, entrepreneurial skills, and the right funding benefits. In order to boost this knowledge and skills, the Farm4SD project was created.

## Project Background

Farm4SD, “Small and Medium Farm Holders as Agents of Sustainable Change in Agriculture and Society”, is a two-year project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

This project’s overarching objective is to educate European farmers on the **pillars of sustainable agriculture** and to help them gain **entrepreneurial, fund raising, digital, and soft skills** through trainings, in order to comply with new EU regulations, strategies on sustainable agriculture and to stay relevant for the market, to contribute to a sustainable future.

The Farm4SD project wants to offer a holistic approach, containing all kinds of knowledge fields that are relevant for farmers. In total, four educational models are being designed:

**1 The pillars of Sustainable Agriculture**

**2 Entrepreneurial Skills for Sustainable Farmers**

**3 Funding for Green Transformation**

**4 Essential Soft Skills for Sustainable Farmers**




## Project Objectives and Results

### Objectives

The project aims to:

-  **Close the skills gap** in sustainable agriculture education and equip farmers with knowledge and competences related to sustainability through two future-oriented interdisciplinary curricula (R2-Farm4SD Modular Training Course and R3-Farm4SD Train-the-Trainers Program).
-  **Upscale farmers’ vocational skills** through flexible and learner-centered training programs, based on their individual learning needs, provided in a blended-learning and MOOC format via the R4-Farm4SD Multifunctional and Interactive Platform and by utilizing innovative training methodologies appropriate for farmers’ education and their digital transition, identified, and presented in the R1-Farm4SD Methodological Framework.
-  **Adapt to labor market needs**, by securing the recognition of their newly acquired skills based on the updated ECVET, ECTS and Micro-credentials approach, analyzed in the Methodological Framework and incorporated in two training resources (R2, R3).



 Translate the project's lessons-learned and good practices into **policy recommendations** (R5-Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet).

“ **The Farm4SD project will empower farmers to become agents of sustainable change!** ”

## Results

The Farm4SD project's core outputs have been divided into 5 Results in order to achieve our objectives. Each output builds on its predecessor. The following results are included in the project:

**R1** Farm4SD Methodological Framework on the Pillars of Sustainable Agriculture

**R2** Farm4SD Modular Training Course

**R3** Farm4SD Train-the-Trainers Program for VET Educators

**R4** Farm4SD Multifunctional and Interactive Platform and Delivery of the Farm4SD Modular Training Course (MOOC-Massive Open Online Course)

**R5** Farm4SD Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet

## Our News

As a first step, a quantitative research survey was implemented in each partner country, targeting 70 farmers per country, to get an overview of farmers' knowledge regarding the sustainable agriculture's pillars: The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, European Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the new CAP, soft skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, best practices in farmers' C-VET provision, as well as the skills' recognition paths based on established European VET tools and approaches, such as EQF, updated ECTS or/and ECTS, Micro-credential, were gathered through qualitative research methodologies.

At the 2nd Transnational Project Meeting of the Farm4SD Project, which was held by BIOTEHNIŠKI CENTER NAKLO in hybrid (online and face-to-face) in Naklo, Slovenia, consortium partners had the opportunity to discuss the results of the developed reports. In addition, they made decisions on the progress of the first project deliverable - R1-Farm4SD Methodological Framework on the Pillars of Sustainable Agriculture.



The Methodological Framework (R1) is the basis to develop an interactive E-book, about the sustainable agriculture's pillars teaching and farmers' skills upgrade in order to help VET institutions and VET trainers to better understand farmers' needs and improve their capacity in advanced training methodologies and skill recognition, so they can better serve European farmers and the European sustainable agriculture labour market.

It will set the foundation for the learning resources and guidelines which will be used for Farm4SD project and will:

- Offer a clear conceptual training framework
- Deliver a literature review and data on the current state of farmers' VET on the pillars of sustainable agriculture across Europe
- Develop preliminary training scenarios, competences recognition procedures and guidelines to undertake during the implementation of the framework.

## Farm4SD Consortium Partners- Who are we?



**CEFE International (CI)** is a German training and consulting company, implementing projects in various fields of development cooperation together with and for different public and private donors, stakeholders, and ministries. CI's expertise in the field as well as its experience in delivering international projects makes it a qualified project coordinator, guaranteeing smooth management processes and high-quality output delivery.



**Post-Innovation for Sustainable Development (PI4SD)** is a Greece-based independent, non-profit organisation, committed to develop services for public authorities, private organizations, civil society, large enterprises and SMEs, in the fields of life-long learning, vocational education and training, adult education, Human Resources, Health and Safety at workplace, consultation and techno-economic support, entrepreneurship, research, development and post-innovation, environment, sustainability, agriculture and agri-food, information and communication technology and in digital transformation.



**The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre** is a private non-profit company, dedicated to providing farm advisory services, increasing activeness in rural areas, and fostering rural development in general. The company's main goal is to improve the livelihoods of rural inhabitants, by offering them advice in the field of agriculture and training courses in the topic areas of environment protection, sustainability, food safety, green growth, permaculture, social farming, and precision agriculture.



The **RESEARCH INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT LAB PRIVATE COMPANY** is a Greece-based research institution that aims to generate positive social and sustainable impact through innovation. ReadLab works with Higher Education Institutions, VET provides and non-profit organizations, in numerous national and EU projects, focused on supporting students, staff, and academics to develop their capacities, methodologies and strategies, particularly regarding the use of technology and e-learning.



The **Biotehniski center Naklo** is a public educational institution with a 114-year tradition, working in agriculture, rural development, nature preservation, food processing, horticulture, floristic, and renewable energy. They are active on the Secondary School Level, the Vocational College, and Research Level, and in their Inter-Enterprise Educational Centre.



**CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL** provides consulting and technical assistance to public and private entities on a wide spectrum of fields, aiming at achieving economic and social growth and measurable impact. The company's main mission is to offer high-quality services to institutional and private clients around the globe, effectively supporting their efforts to enhance their reform processes, structural change, internationalisation, and growth.



**Hof und Leben GmbH (HuL)** was founded in 2009 and is doing business consulting in Germany for family farms. They focus on production, processing as well as selling and logistics of agricultural produce in the fields of food, feed, fiber, and energy. With a special focus on social and ecological aspects besides the pure economy in the planning, HuL assures sustainability of conceptualization and implementation.