



Farm
4SD



Farm4SD

Recommendations and Good
Practice Booklet

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Contents

Executive summary	4
The Farm4SD project: Objectives and deliverables.....	4
Best Practices and Lessons Learnt.....	6
Sources	6
Mainstreaming sustainability	7
Better knowledge retention	7
Blended learning.....	8
Versatility.....	8
Simplicity	8
Diversity.....	9
Policy recommendations	10
Sources	10
Topics.....	10
Sustainability trainer	11
Training of farmers	12
Funding	12
Food security	13
Networking.....	14
Conclusions.....	14



Recommendations and Good Practice Booklet

Executive summary

The presented document is a booklet for the Farm4SD project focused on providing policy recommendations and disseminating good practices. The Farm4SD project aims to support farmers and CVET educators in acquiring important sustainability-related competencies.

This document provides an overview of the Farm4SD project's progress, objectives, and current achievements. It highlights the two main target groups reached out by the project: medium and small farm holders as well as VET providers. The two major training programmes developed by the Farm4SD project are tailored to the need of farm holders and VET trainers respectively.

The Farm4SD Recommendations and Good Practice Booklet then gives an overview of good practices identified for the upskilling of medium and small farm holders and VET educators, and concludes with policy recommendations vis-à-vis the topics of the project.

The Farm4SD project: Objectives and deliverables

The main objective of the Farm4SD project is to develop a holistic, innovative and inclusive approach to farmers' and especially to medium and small farm holders' training on the following EU policies directly relating to sustainable agriculture:

- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
- European Green Deal
- From Farm to Fork Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy
- New CAP

The project's training focuses on those strategies and complements them with thorough training on entrepreneurial skills and soft skills. The ultimate goal of the Farm4SD project is to upskill and reskill farmers and C-VET trainers and render them true factors and multipliers of change.

The training's objectives were met through the development of a concise methodology that encompassed the following activities:



- Develop a culture of sustainability and innovation among EU farmers;
- Empower EU farmers through cutting-edge training resources;
- Foster the capacity building of C-VET educators in sustainable agriculture to be able to meet the needs of the agricultural labour market;
- Support the development of micro-learning, digital based VET resources aligned to working methods and key competences;
- Enable the green and digital transformation of agricultural sector and C-VET through policy recommendations;
- Support inclusion and accessibility in VET by reaching farmers in rural areas and C-VET educators facing geographical and socio-economic barriers;
- Utilize the EQF, the updated ECVET, ECTS and micro-credential approaches;
- Increase the capacity of participating organisations to collaborate at transnational level and adopt new methods and best practices.

The Farm4SD project developed a series of innovative deliverables to attain its objectives.

First, the Consortium updated its needs analysis and reached out to stakeholders in every country. As a result, the **Farm4SD Methodological Framework on the Pillars of Sustainable Agriculture Development (R1)** was produced, a pedagogical framework guiding the development of the next deliverables.

The partners then proceeded to develop the **Farm4SD Modular Training Course (R2)** a needs-oriented blended-learning curriculum and training modular package for farmers, especially small and medium farm holders. The training includes 25 hours of face-to-face format to 10 farmers, and 15 hours of self-directed learning online. The Modular Course covers the following topics:

- i. The pillars of the Sustainable Agriculture (Module 1)
- ii. Entrepreneurial Skills for the Sustainable Farmer (Module 2)
- iii. Getting EU Funding for the Green Transformation of the Agricultural Sector (Module 3)
- iv. Essential Soft Skills for the Sustainable Farmer (Module 4)

The next deliverable to be developed was the **Farm4SD Train-the-Trainers Programme for VET Educators (R3)**. This programme empowers C-VET educators and allows them to harness



the potential of the Farm4SD resources from R2 to support farmers to build key hard and transversal high-value skills sets on the pillars of sustainable agriculture. This programme includes a total of 40 hours of blended-learning: a 5-hour introductory workshop in each partner country, 20-hour of face-to-face training, and 15 hours of self-directed learning. The Programme for VET Educators covers the following topics:

- i. The sustainability pillars of the agricultural sector (Module 1)
- ii. Entrepreneurship and funding opportunities for the agricultural (Module 2) sector
- iii. How to be a good C-VET educator for the “Sustainable Farmer” (Module 3)
- iv. Advanced C-VET and qualification validation methods (Module 4)

The two courses developed were offered to the wider public through the **Farm4SD Multifunctional and Interactive Platform (R4)**, that had the form of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The Farm4SD Platform supports and supplements the activities pursued, including the implementation of the Farm4SD Modular Training Course (R2) and the Farm4SD Train-the-Trainers Programme (R3), and facilitates the exchange of knowledge between members of the platform and the broader target audience. The Platform and all its contents are available in the project languages: English, French, German, Greek, Polish, and Slovenian.

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

Sources

In order to identify the lessons learnt and best practices, the Farm4SD utilised input from the following sources:

1. **Project progress:** By monitoring the progress of the project, partners could identify what went well and where improvements were needed. By regularly evaluating the development of the project, valuable conclusions could be extracted that served as input for the best practices.
2. **Interactions with Consortium and stakeholders during the results development:** While developing the results, partners received various feedback from within their organisations as well as from stakeholders. The experience of working together on developing those very impactful results stimulated fruitful conversations and helped identify best practices and lessons learnt.
3. **Piloting reports:** A more structured way of collecting best practices was the reports summarising the piloting sessions of Results 2 and 3. Through piloting, partners could formulate lessons learnt and identify the strengths of the Farm4SD project curriculum.



Mainstreaming sustainability

Learners background

Given that the learners had diverse backgrounds and various degrees of understanding, Farm4SD was viewed as a best practice thanks to the attention it dedicated to mainstreaming the topic of sustainability.

Even in the case that a person feels familiar with sustainability, remaining in touch with the topic is important for updating existing knowledge and life-long learning.

Sustainability as a necessary element of education

As a result, sustainability was characterised a necessary element in every aspect of adult education. Mainstreaming sustainability in adult education constitutes another best practice identified by the Farm4SD project.

Better knowledge retention

Interactive activities

The interactive activities included in the Farm4SD project helps learners to better understand the course's topic and retain newly acquired knowledge.

Case studies as game changers

By combining theoretical knowledge with a variety of non-formal learning methods, the Farm4SD Curriculum helps learners to acquire situational and practical awareness. Learners can then apply those skills in certain cases.

Blended learning

Farm4SD identified another best practice through the implementation of its training methodology that included the “blended learning” principle.

Mixing in situ guided training with an innovative e-learning platform for self-paced learning enabled participants to maximise their learning experience.

The methodology ensured that the training is executed correctly by engaging trainers.

It also gave learners the autonomy to study by themselves and master the topics.

Versatility

Bringing together a structured curriculum consisting of diverse topic was another milestone of the Farm4SD project.

The Farm4SD Curriculum combines hard skills (e.g. sustainability knowledge and financial literacy) with soft skills (e.g. empathy and advocacy skills).

As a result, the Curriculum incorporates much needed skills from various topics and creates a dynamic training material that captures the learners’ attention.

Simplicity

The Consortium set clear learning objectives and selected simple ways of transmitting knowledge during the training.

The combination of concise learning objectives and simple methods constitute another best practice identified by the Farm4SD project.

Diversity

Partners' diversity

Project partners come from diverse backgrounds. Engaging VET providers, farmers consultants and advisors, technical experts, and other civil society organisations has ensured that the Curriculum reflects the diverse expertise of the partners, thus maximising the quality of project deliverables.

Stakeholders' diversity

Before releasing major deliverables, the Farm4SD Consortium consulted with diverse stakeholders, ranging from farmers to C-VET educators and policymakers and policy consultants.

Stakeholders provided valuable input for the improvement of the deliverables, and supported their widest dissemination possible, thus maximising the impact of project deliverables.



Policy recommendations

Sources

In order to develop its policy recommendations, the Farm4SD Consortium took the following steps:

1. **Mobilisation of Local Working Groups:** Farm4SD Consortium partners reached out to their Local Working Groups and received valuable input on policy-related questions.
2. **Internal discussions:** The Consortium held internal discussions on policy topics.
3. **Project experience:** Implementing the Farm4SD project provided partners with insights and input that was used to formulate policy-related conclusions.

Topics

The Farm4SD policy recommendations touch upon the following topics:

- Sustainability trainers
- Training of farmers
- Food security
- Funding strategies
- Consumer-producers alliances
- Public procurement
- Outreach
- Network

Sustainability trainer

Local and regional levels

The profile of sustainability trainers should be strengthened as a professional qualification.

National and EU level

The qualifications of sustainability trainers should be regulated by law.

Curricula

Sustainability topics ought to be included in school curricula.

Curricula need to be aligned with EU sustainability policies and objectives.

Outreach

Build upon outreach programs, workshops, and exemplary farms that showcase successful sustainable agricultural techniques and provide farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement them effectively.

National VET strategies

Revamp national VET strategies to ensure VET trainers receive frequent upskilling on various topics focusing on sustainability.

Training of farmers

Providing incentives

Incentivise farmers attending sustainability training and upskilling activities.
E.g. by subsidising training courses to reduce the cost for farmers.

Funding

Funding provision

Positively link sustainable farming with more funding and subsidies.

Grants and loans

Provide grants or low-interest loans for small-scale infrastructure projects

Consumer-producers alliances

Market access

Support market access of sustainable producers

Market connections

Connect consumers with sustainable farmers.

Fair trade

Promote fair trade practices.

Food security

Local level

Food security needs to be addressed on a local level by providing educational programmes for local communities.

Regional level

On a regional level, joint research programmes on reducing food waste and maximising food security ought to be encouraged.

National level

Countries need to invest into innovative agricultural equipment in order to reduce food loss.

EU level

Food security policies should be promoted on EU level. The aim is to increase sustainable food and fertiliser production and prevent food contamination.

Promote green public procurement

The procurement of products, services, and works with a reduced environmental impact ought to be promoted.

Environmental considerations should be incorporated to the procurement processes of authorities.

Public campaigns

Run campaigns on the importance of sustainability skills for farmers and on why sustainable agriculture is the future. Raise awareness within the communities.



Networking

Knowledge exchange

Promote cross-border exchange of knowledge, practices, and ideas.

Partnerships

Foster partnerships between educational institutions, research organizations, and farmers to streamline delivery of up-to-date sustainable farming knowledge and practices.

Conclusions

The Farm4SD project, at its current finalised stage, represents an innovative initiative in upskilling farmers and rendering them agents of sustainable change in the agricultural society.

The project has successfully developed two cutting-edge courses with a total learning duration of 80 hours aimed at building the capacity of farmers and of C-VET educators. Both courses are hosted on an advanced digital platform in the form of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and are freely accessible in six languages: English, French, German, Greek, Polish, and Slovenian.

As a final step towards the completion of the project, the Farm4SD Consortium developed the present Recommendations and Good Practice Booklet summarising the best practices identified during the project's lifetime and providing policy-related recommendations on a spectrum of topics ranging from education curricula to public procurement.

