

ELN-FAB NEWSLETTER

No. 6, May 2012

ELN-FAB European Seminar in 2012

Join us in Avignon for the ELN-FAB European Seminar - 14 & 15 June 2012

There is still time to register for the ELN-FAB European seminar, to be held in Avignon, France, on 14 & 15 June. The seminar features presentations on applying functional agrobiodiversity in the Mediterranean, includes a field trip to see FAB in action, and a special FAB marketplace. Don't miss this opportunity to interact with others interested in FAB and create new partnerships for the future.

The seminar is organized by ECNC in cooperation with DIVERSITAS and the Groupe de Recherche en Agriculture Biologique (GRAB), and hosted by INRA.

For more information see the [invitation](#), [programme](#), [travel and hotel information](#), and [brochure about the concept of FAB](#). If you would like to participate in the seminar, please **don't**

forget to register before 5 June via this link: <http://goo.gl/7dsAR>

We look forward to seeing you there!



Is there profit in agrobiodiversity?

In the Farmers and Agrobiodiversity project over a hundred farmers in Brabant have started to work with measures that contribute to the improvement of biodiversity. This means adapting or changing farming methods. However, the necessary factual underpinning for this was not available. Important questions can now be answered; a study of the economic and environmental effects of the biodiversity measures has been completed. In short, is there profit in agrobiodiversity?

The research was conducted on behalf of the Farmers and Agrobiodiversity project by DLV Dier together with DLV Plant, LBI and WUR. The topics were put forward by the project participants. Calculations were carried out for ten biodiversity measures (for dairy cattle and arable farms). The gains for the environment, the financial benefits for the farmer, and the extra work involved were determined. Concrete information, and a realistic picture. One of the study's strengths is that the provisional results were shared with the project participants during

a network meeting. There is support among the participating farmers.



An example of the measures is cooperation between dairy farmers and arable farmers in crop growing. The study shows that both could earn money from this and it is also favourable for biodiversity. So, double the profit. Other measures covered by the calculations include the prevention of soil compaction, less grassland renewal, sowing grass/clover, mowing grass mixtures, increasing cow lifetime, growing substitutes for concentrate feeds, fertilizer application and efficient irrigation.

The information obtained is needed to make strategic and operational choices on the farms. The study results enable further scaling-up and

dissemination of agrobiodiversity. The full report 'Is there profit in biodiversity?' can be consulted via www.spade.nl.

A farm biodiversity scan has been developed under the project. This is a relatively simple measure of the level of biodiversity achieved.

For more information on the Farmers and Agrobiodiversity project, contact the project leader: Bart Bardoel (ZLTO), telephone +31(0)6-21212438 or email bart.bardoel@zlto.nl.

Flemish farmers effectively support farmland biodiversity through field margins

Almost 11% of Flemish farmers have an agri-environmental measure (AEM) with the Flemish Land Agency, and invest in this way in biodiversity in the Flemish countryside. Until now, the efficiency of AEM and its results for biodiversity in Flanders were not scientifically proven, leading to criticism about the use of governmental budgets for nature and biodiversity. With financing from the European SOLABIO project, the Flemish Land Agency can now show that the farmers' efforts lead to a clear, positive result for agrobiodiversity. Furthermore, entomologists found several rare and protected species living in field margins. Additionally, it has been proven that a new AEM, consisting of functional flower strips, can deliver a win-win situation for farmers and nature.



In the framework of the European INTERREG IVA project SOLABIO (Species and landscapes as carriers of biodiversity), the Flemish Land Agency coordinated research on the presence, distribution and function of useful insects living in field margins and spreading into adjacent fields. Grassy field margins, flower strips and field margins protect against erosion, but their function for useful insects has rarely been explored. The research was carried out during the period 2009-2011 on a dozen farms in the provinces of East and West Flanders, Limburg and Flemish Brabant. The Flemish Land Agency collaborated in this study

with Carabidae expert Eugène Stassen, Inagro vzw, the Catholic College of Higher Education of the Kempen (KHK), and the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (KBIN).

The study conducted by Inagro vzw has shown that flower strips composed of specific flower species increase the numbers of natural enemies, and therefore natural pest control, in the field. When present in sufficient numbers, these predators are able to overcome aphids in wheat, making the use of pesticides unnecessary. Flower strips have the potential to reduce the use of pesticides in agriculture, and to evolve towards integrated pest management. However, investments in knowledge and systematic examination of the crop are essential.

References

Dekoninck, W., Stassen, E., Hendrickx, F. & Liberloo, M. 2012. *De loopkeverfauna van enkele akkers en akkerranden in Brabant en Limburg*. - Rapport Entomo, KBIN.2012.01.

Temmerman, F., France, P., Delanote, L. & Liberloo, M. 2012. *Onderzoek naar het effect van akkerranden op functionele biodiversiteit en natuurlijke plaagbeheersing*. - Inagro vzw. Afdeling Biologische Productie, Beitem.

Liberloo, M. et al. 2012. *Beheerovereenkomsten nieuwe sporen voor het beleid. Kennis en ervaringen uit het SOLABIO project*.

For more information see:

<http://www.solabio.org/solabio/>

[http://www.vlm.be/algemeen/Mediatheek/folder/brochures/Folders en brochures per categorie/Pages/default.aspx?cat=Beheerovereenkomsten](http://www.vlm.be/algemeen/Mediatheek/folder/brochures/Folders%20en%20brochures%20per%20categorie/Pages/default.aspx?cat=Beheerovereenkomsten) (in Dutch)

Landscape features can help to predict natural pest control

Natural predators of agricultural pests are influenced by the type and range of habitats within a farming landscape. A new study has developed an approach which predicts the risk of pest infestation and natural predation according to landscape features, to help land managers structure landscapes that encourage natural pest control.



There are two ways to promote natural pest control in agriculture: crop management practices at the field scale, such as increasing within-field diversity or reducing soil tillage, and landscape management measures, which include

finding the best way to set up crop and semi-natural habitats next to each other.

Although there is growing evidence that the landscape can influence pest species' population dynamics and their interacting food webs (trophic interactions), there is a lack of practical guidelines to help landscape planners determine the best way of designing land use in order to reduce pest numbers.

To help meet this challenge, the study measured and compared the accuracy of individual landscape indicators to predict pest infestations and successful biological pest control in oilseed rape fields located in northwestern France. Landscape indicators, such as neighbouring woodland or grassland, can be used to try and predict which fields are likely to be at risk of pest infestation or the fields in which natural pest control will be more successful.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/282na3.pdf>

Source: Science for Environment Policy, European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service

Weeds important for restoring biodiversity in farmland environments

The way in which agricultural land is managed can cause environmental changes that affect biodiversity and the services provided by ecosystems. A new study suggests agri-environmental schemes that focus on restoring common weeds, such as thistles, buttercups and clover, could have wide-ranging benefits as these plants appear to help stabilize the supportive links between different species found in farmlands.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/284na1.pdf>

Source: Science for Environment Policy, European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service



More than economic incentives needed to reduce pesticide use

A new study from Denmark has indicated that a substantial proportion of farmers may place professional values above cost savings when making decisions about how much pesticide to

use. This implies that agricultural policy should consider a broad array of policy instruments to reduce pesticide usage.

Previous research has found that agricultural policy instruments that depend on economic drivers do not produce the predicted results. For example, taxes on pesticides and subsidy schemes to reduce pesticide use in Denmark have not been as effective as expected. These policies tend to be based on economic theory, which assume that agents such as firms or farmers are interested only in maximizing profit

when, in reality, many farmers are likely to be motivated by non-economic incentives as well.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/284na3.pdf>

Source: Science for Environment Policy, European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service

Farmers evaluate measures to reduce soil erosion and water pollution

Farmers have collaborated with scientists in France to evaluate agri-environmental measures that reduce soil erosion and surface water pollution at a catchment level. The exercise helped the farmers understand the benefits of the measures and provides an example of how policymakers could engage with stakeholders under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/281na5.pdf>

Source: Science for Environment Policy, European Commission DG Environment News Alert Service



Upcoming events

International Conference on "Biodiversity, a culture to share" (5 & 6 June 2012, Brussels, Belgium)

The Bees Biodiversity Network, the United Nations Environment Programme and Gaston Franco, MEP, will be holding the International Conference on "Biodiversity, a culture to share" in the European Parliament in Brussels on 5 & 6 June 2012.



The conference aims to answer the questions:

- What is happening to bees?

- How to combine agriculture, territorial management and biodiversity?

For more information visit the website or contact:

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The Annual European Agrobiodiversity Day (EAD) - 29 September 2012

This year the subject chosen by the SAVE Foundation is the economic value of

Agrobiodiversity, under the title "Economic value of local breeds and seeds".

Public awareness is important! There is still very little awareness of the enormous diversity of

breeds and varieties found in European agriculture or the need for conservation – public

awareness of our subject helps on all levels: it helps producers of traditional produce find a market for their products, or it reminds our politicians about their international obligations to

create strategies to protect the national agrobiodiversity.

Don't forget to promote the date 29 September – European Agrobiodiversity Day!

The ELN-FAB project is currently financially supported by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (previously Ministry of VROM), the Netherlands; Flemish Land Agency (VLM), Belgium; Ministry of Agriculture, Estonia; and the European Environment Agency (EEA). The European Landowners Organization (ELO) provides in-kind support. Fundraising continues in order to expand the Network in the long term.

This newsletter aims to inform the partners, intermediaries and interested stakeholders of the ELN-FAB initiative. For more information visit: www.eln-fab.eu, or contact the ELN-FAB Secretariat:

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