



Bringing Organisations & Network Development
to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe

A series of study tours to visit collective food and farming projects in six European countries commenced in Spain in late February as the first phase of a three-year EU-sponsored project.

Over the next two months a diverse group of 60 farmers, land managers and rural facilitators from 22 European countries will each participate in one of six study tours investigating farmer-led collective organisation in Spain, France, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Tour participants will learn about challenges and success stories in cooperation and networking in the countries that they visit, as well as sharing their own experiences. Tour visits will include cooperatives, networks and federations that are, in some instances, already powerful players in different sectors of their national economies.

The focus of each tour will be to examine local variants of positive collective responses to common challenges to sustainable farming, market access, and environmental sustainability. Each tour will visit at least three projects – such as dairy cooperatives, farm shops, land banks and rural development networks – which demonstrate these positive responses.

The study tours are taking place under the European Commission funded project *Bringing Organisations & Network Development to higher levels in the farming sector in Europe* (BOND). The goals of this project, supported as part of the EC's Horizon 2020 scheme, are to create strong networks for farmers and land managers, and to develop strong and meaningful ties with policy-makers at local, national and EU levels.

BOND project coordinator Dr Angela Hilmi of Coventry University says, “The study tours are an important first step in our project to develop strong networks of farmers and land managers within the 34 countries covered by the project. The tours will enable a wide base of experts to share their experience, their problems and their needs looking forward. Our hope is that they can bring their experiences from the tours back to strengthen and develop local and regional networks and organisations in the farming sector.”

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BOND STUDY TOURS

Spain, February 26th - March 2nd

The *Coordinadora de Agricultores y Ganaderos de la Comunidad Valenciana* (COAG) is inviting participants to visit collective projects near Valencia, including: a land bank run by the municipality of La Pobla de Vallbona; a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) developed by SPG-Ecollaures; short supply chain initiatives such as the Alzira farmers' market; and the Food Sovereignty Platform, which is a political space for reflection, debate and action bringing together producers, consumers, initiatives, organizations and collectives that work for achieving Food Sovereignty in the Valencian Country.

France, March 5th - 9th

The *Fédération Nationale des Coopératives d'Utilisation du Matériel Agricole* (CUMA) is hosting visits near Arras, northern France, to *Le Gerموir*, a collective project that offers a trial period for aspiring and new farmers; a collective onion packaging and marketing initiative run by CUMA; a local farm shop *Au Panier Vert*; and *Terres d'Opale/Les Anges gardiens*, an association that markets local organic products in combination with supporting people to return to work.

Italy, March 12th – 16th

Legacoop Agroalimentare is hosting the Italian Study Tour and presenting different cases of cooperation which seek to add value to local products. The tour will bring participants to three different regions, Lazio, Toscana and Emilia-Romagna, where delegates will visit markets of local organic farmers and cooperatives producing olive oil and wine, honey, local cereals and local vegetables. Quality, organic production and care for local, rural communities are shared aspects of these initiatives.

Netherlands, March 19th – 23rd

Wageningen University (WU) is organising visits to: a farmers' collective that manages an old polder landscape north of Amsterdam; the Friesian Woodlands where farmers collectively developed their own agroecological model of farming, thus maintaining a small-scale landscape; and a cooperation among small-scale farmers, processors and shops that, based on artisanal regional products, is developing a network economy in the Wadden region.

Norway, April 9th – 13th

Norwegian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAC) is hosting visits to organizations and cooperatives in the eastern part of Norway. The visits will include: an established dairy cooperative with strong member governance; breeding cooperatives based on active participation of farmers; and a "green care" cooperative serving members who are offering green care based on the farm's facilities. Local food production and marketing will also be showcased.

United Kingdom, April 23rd – 29th

The *Landworkers' Alliance* (LWA) will be introducing participants to projects in the South West of England working toward agricultural sustainability from local to national levels from a variety of perspectives and settings. These will include urban growing, community supported agriculture, farmers' and seed savers' cooperatives, an association for pasture-fed livestock, and the LWA itself.