

Agri-food: Cluster activities for a sustainable and resilient ecosystem

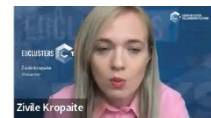
Watch online [HERE](#)

The commentator of the EU Cluster Talks is **Zivile Kropaite**.

Today, we will discuss the critical challenges for the green transition in agri-food, the role of clusters in supporting the transition and improving resilience, and cluster projects and activities that can serve as examples of future development.

Just a reminder, agri-food systems consume about 30% of the world's energy and a third of agri-food systems' emissions of greenhouse gases stem from energy use. It is no secret that the Russian aggression in Ukraine is impacting the EU agri-food value chain. The shift towards renewable energy is even more urgent in this industrial ecosystem.

Agenda



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Video introduction to the topic
3. Perspectives from the European Commission
Blaga Valentinova Popova, Team Leader, DG GROW, European Commission
Veronika Madner, Policy Officer, DG AGRI, European Commission
4. Panel debate: What are the ecosystem's most urgent challenges for the twin transition and increase resilience?
Claudia De Oliveira Ramos, International Project and Network Manager, VEGEPOLYS VALLEY
Pauline Bodin, European Innovation Projects Officer, VEGEPOLYS VALLEY
Gawel Walczak, International Affairs Manager, secpho
Paola Giavedoni, Director of Innovation, EIT Food
Yuan Chai, International Affairs Officer, Wagralim
5. Funding opportunities



The session starts with News from the ECCP.

Join the Agri-food Matchmaking Event on 5 December



- **Online** via B2Match
- Register until **2 December**
- For EU enterprises, cluster organisations, EEN, other business support organisations, and EU, national/regional research, development and innovation agencies





Clusters meet Regions in Spain, 14-16/12

- Register to attend the next “Clusters meet Regions” workshop in Barcelona
- Three main topics: **food, energy, and mobility**
- 14th December: site visits
- 15th December: matchmaking and Clusters meet Regions
- 16th December: celebration of the 30th anniversary of cluster policy in Catalonia



Consultation on de minimis regulation



- Public consultation on a draft de minimis regulation open until **10 January 2023**
- Current de minimis State aid rules allow exemptions from State aid control for small aid amounts – up to EUR 200 000 – as they are deemed to have no impact on competition and trade in the single market.
- These rules are set to expire on 31 December 2023.
- Participate via the **“Have your say” portal**



Support to Ukraine



If your company or association can help, please **contact the Energy Community Secretariat's Ukraine Support Task Force** at

UkraineEmergencySupport@energy-community.org

for the most up-to-date list of emergency energy needs and assistance in the donation process.

UKRAINE'S MOST URGENT ENERGY NEEDS

TOP 5

Power transformers and generators
Heaters
Fuels and oil
Cars/trucks for repair brigades
Tools

Electricity

Insulators
Cables, wires, cable connectors
Cable couplings
Disconnectors
Isolation valves
Traverses
Welding machines
Vacuum & air switches
Microcontrollers

Liquids

Fuels and oil
Transformer/motor oils
Chemicals

Gas

Pressure regulator
Pipes for gas & water conveyances
Plasma cutters

Other

Pressure repair equipment
Rubber products
Trucks for repair brigades
Equipment for district heating systems

Contact Energy Community Secretariat
Ukraine Support Task Force



Fostering sustainable cooperation between Baltic Sea Region and Ukraine



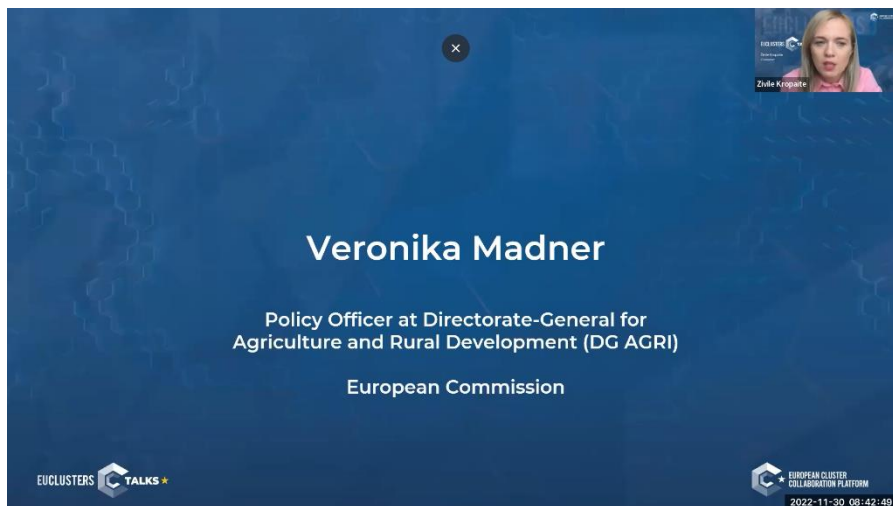
How can macro-regional strategies foster new sustainable cooperation for Ukrainian stakeholders?

On **8 December 2022**, the Swedish Prime Minister's Office, in its capacity as the current President of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), in cooperation with the Swedish Institute invites you to an **online conference**.

Register until 6 December.



Follows video invitation for the Agr-food Matchmaking Event



We will now hear the perspective from the **EU Commission Policy Officer at DG Agri – Veronika Madner**.

She starts with the funding opportunities:

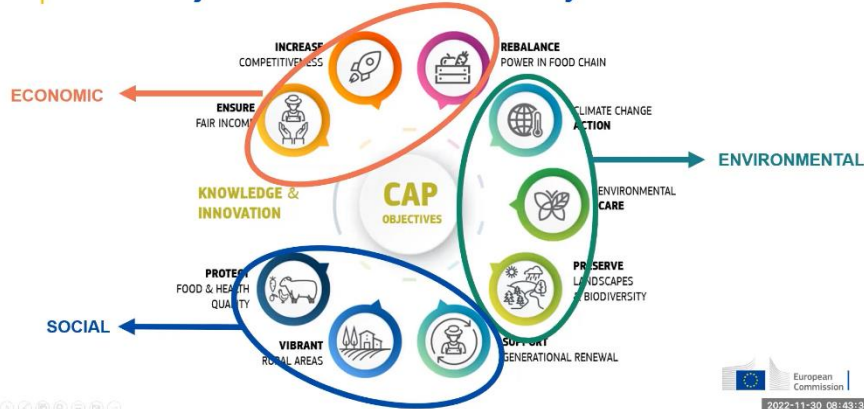



European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD)

Opportunities for rural businesses in the field of resource efficiency, renewable energy and circular economy

Veronika Madner, DG AGRI, Unit B.2

CAP Objectives & sustainability dimensions



What are the funding instruments?

Rural Development support instruments

Investments	Rural business start-up	Cooperation	Knowledge exchange and dissemination of information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments in the production and processing of agricultural and non-agricultural products and materials, plastics, electricity, energy, gas etc. Investments in the production of renewable energy (on-farm/off-farm) and inter-linked activities Investments in improving energy efficiency Investments in infrastructure in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> start-up of rural businesses linked to agriculture or forestry business start-up of non-agricultural activities in rural areas related to LEADER strategies lump sum payment, business plan has to be provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation costs to promote new forms of cooperation between different actors LEADER projects based on local development strategies European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for knowledge transfer Support for advisory services

Support in the form of grants (up to 100% support possible) or financial instruments

100% support is more linked to cooperation and knowledge activities. 20%-40% support is for investments.

CAP Strategic Plans – shared management

- **Single CAP plan** for all interventions with a common monitoring system
- **Strategic approach** based on needs assessment
- **Structured dialogue** with Member States
- **MS draws up** and submits the CAP Plan
- CAP Plan is **approved by the Commission**
- **Implementation** of the CAP Plans starts in 2023

INFO → https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans_en



Examples of funded projects:

Examples from the current RD programme



PL furniture company: EAFRD support for the transition into a sustainable business model based on technology that reduces waste, increases renewable energy supplies, boosts profits and provides its staff with improved job satisfaction. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLxif1z9o8>

EL Production of biofuel (PELLET): A biofuel production and packaging line was established using EAFRD funding in an olivegrove farming region of Greece. The waste residues are utilised to produce biofuel pellets offering considerable economic and environmental benefits. https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/gp_gr_solid_biofuel_unit_web.pdf



EE Woola: Replacing plastic bubble wrap by producing packaging out of waste wool: EAFRD support for a company in rural Estonia which develops system and products to replace plastic bubble wrap packaging with packing materials made from waste wool. https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/woola-replacing-plastic-bubble-wrap-producing-packaging-out-of-waste-wool_en



Next is Blaga Valentinova Popova – team leader in DG GROW

Ms Popova starts with the [EU Code of Conduct for Sustainable Food Businesses and marketing practices](#). The conduct is one of the actions under [the Farm to Fork Strategy](#). It is specifically targeted at the actors between the farm and the fork, and it is a framework with eight aspirational objectives covering all areas of food sustainability, from healthy and sustainable diets and reducing food waste to resource efficiency, carbon neutrality, and social aspects such as decent work and sustainable sourcing. The code of conduct was launched in July 2021.

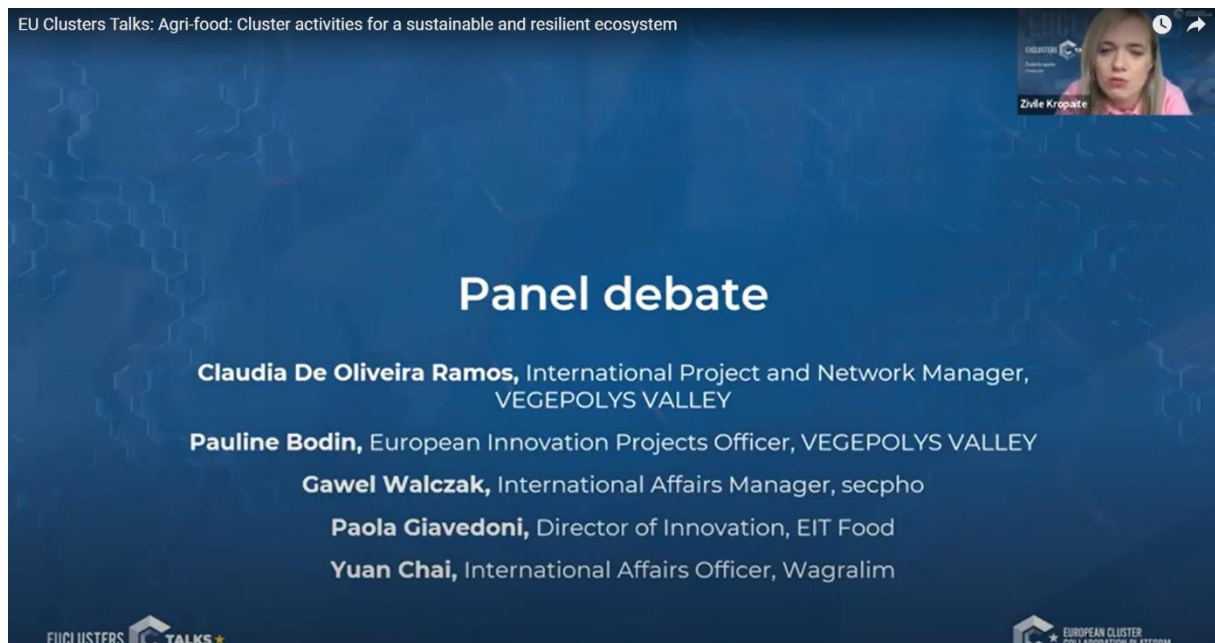
There was an annual Conduct Signatories meeting, a collaborative platform where the signatories are open to other stakeholders within the agri-food ecosystem, civil society policymakers, and international organisations. They took stock of the progress of this initiative. There are more than 130 signatories to the code of conduct. These companies and associations signed up the code, internalised and adhered to that sustainability objectives. They also made a concrete commitment to the different objectives and reported on their actions last year to meet them. Most of the 130 signatories are large food and drink companies, and retailers, which is excellent, but there are much fewer small companies involved. All signatories also meet and discuss different topics, exchange good practices, and create opportunities for collaboration. One of the objectives under the code is value creation within the food supply chain, which is an essential element.

It is expected to have a specific SME tool linked to the code of conduct by the end of January or February. This tool is to be hosted by the ECCP. It will allow smaller companies to sign up for a simplified The Code by just filling in a form. It will enable companies to evaluate their activities, decide where they stand, and in which area of The Code they could commit and link that to existing best practices within the ERIC database.

Ms Popova also mentioned an online matchmaking event which is coming up:



Follows panel debate



Ms Kropate starts with the question about Euroclusters. This question is for **Ms Claudia De Oliveira Ramos, International Project and Network Manager, VEGEPOLYS VALLEY.**

Ms Kropate: How would you define Euroclusters, and how can they help accelerate growth, innovation and competitiveness?

Ms Ramos says that Euroclusters helps European SMEs with innovations and questions that organisations face. She positively sees this. Their organisation VEGEPOLYS VALLEY has a Euroclusters project that is about Urban agriculture.

Ms Ramos invites **Ms Pauline Bodin** into this question. She is asked what the main challenges they are facing are. She says that it is the water and energy management of production. There is also a challenge to make an agri-food ecosystem resilient.

Mr Gawel Walczek, International Affairs manager, secpho, is asked about secpho, a technology agri-food cluster. Secpho is a deep tech ecosystem from Spain. What are deep tech technologies? For example, sensors, lasers, robotics, automated vehicles, AI, and big data. Agri-food is one of the sectors on which secpho focuses.

Mr Walczek is asked what is the main challenge currently. He says that from the technology provider's perspective, it is reaching out the partners from the agri-food sectors. His main challenge is reaching out to the right stakeholders and entities, the right people in the agri-food sector. He believes this is a challenge for other deep tech or technology ecosystems.

Ms Kropaite asks if this means that the agri-food sector is unwilling to cooperate or to be digitalised as any other sector. **Mr Walczek** believes this isn't a question of will but more about knowledge. The organisations don't know about the possibilities or the deep tech; they don't know what it is. **A lack of information and knowledge causes it.**

Ms Kropaite mentions that this is an exciting and vital point. She asks the next panellist what innovative solutions are currently being developed if we talk about EIT Food. **Paola Giavedoni, Director of innovation, EIT Food**, starts with the EIT Food introduction. EIT means European Institute of Innovation and Technology. They are the leading initiative in innovation in Europe, and the EU co-founds them. They are a family of eight EITs or knowledge innovation communities. They focus their attention and programs on delivering products to the market. Their principles are based on the knowledge triangle integration. Innovation is a long process.

At the moment, EIT Food works on three big missions. One is the **net and net zero food system, the healthier life through food – nutrition and health through nutrition, and the last one is a fully transparent, resilient and fair food system.** They focus on protein diversification (they work on alternative proteins and try to increase proteins from alternative sources) and sustainable agriculture through different programmes.

Ms Yuan Chai, International Affairs Officer, Wagralim, is also asked about Euroclusters and what it is like to bring innovation to the system. They are currently working on the Be resident Euroclusters project, granted under the agri-food trend. This project focuses on reducing gas emissions. They help SMEs be more productive and efficient in production, have better knowledge and help them with the green transition.

Ms Kropaite also asks **Ms Chai** if she can agree with others regarding the lack of knowledge and, in some cases, lack of internet to adopt novelties and energy management issues. Ms Chai says that SMEs must face several issues this year, such as salary indexations and high energy prices. The main challenge is more about surviving, which is a priority, rather than investing in a green transition. This means that SMEs postponed these activities.

Funding opportunities

Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument: New call in December



- New “Capacity Building - Strand 2b” call will be published by December 2022
- The objective of the call is to test new approaches in order to increase the capacity of regional innovation ecosystems in less developed regions participating in EU value chains.
- Actions under this call shall facilitate the cooperation between regions which want to develop and increase their capacity to participate in the Interregional Innovation Investments programme.
- Stay tuned and check the news:
https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/interregional-innovation-investments-i3-instrument_en



Maritime clusters as an innovative enabler for a Sustainable Economy in the Mediterranean



- The overall objective of this topic is to foster an effective network of maritime clusters across the Mediterranean in order to support medium, small and micro enterprises in the blue economy.
- Activities that can be funded include:
 - Benchmark against best practices and/or use cases to assess maritime clusters' needs
 - Establish new national maritime cluster organisations
 - Formulate recommendations to relevant public authorities
 - Promote cooperation between key actors of maritime clusters
 - Promote capacity-building and knowledge transfer activities
- Deadline: 31 January 2023
- European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF);
TOPIC ID: EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-4-MED
- Published on [Funding & Tenders Portal](#)



Regenerative ocean farming in the Baltic Sea Region



- This topic will support fishers and other interested stakeholders, to assess the interest and feasibility to set up new regenerative ocean farms or restore coastal marine ecosystems
- Proposals should focus on the job maintenance and job creation for local communities, on reskilling needs and development of future business opportunities that will both create added value while regenerating marine ecosystems
- Deadline: 31 January 2023
- European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF);
TOPIC ID: EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-6-BALTIC
- Published on [Funding & Tenders Portal](#)



F2F Health Matters: support to internationalisation for Ja



- SMEs can apply to benefit from three types of internationalisation support:
 - **Commercial Lead Support** covers the consultancy services of commercial prospection on Japanese market
 - **Travel Aid** to support their participation in a collective internationalisation mission to Japan organised within this project
 - **Elite Programme**, which consists of tailor-made training and coaching on technical, innovation and market-oriented topics
- Deadline: 30 November 2022
- Offered by the cluster partnership F2F Health Matters
- Info and online application: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/community-event/f2f-health-matters-launches-it-second-call-smes-apply-now-support>



Register for the next Talks!



14 December

Expert Group on Clusters: National Cluster Policies and Networks

After a Christmas break, we will return on 11 January!

