Thematic 1

How to reduce the use of inputs to increase the autonomy of farms?

Workshops under this theme will focus on the establishment of farming systems and practices that reduce or even eliminate the use of various external inputs, which can be harmful both for the environment and for health and costly for producers. Moving to such farming systems and practices allow farms and forestry businesses to improve their autonomy, reduce their negative impacts on the environment and increase their resilience to various shocks (economic, climatic, etc.).

Three workshops will address this theme:

- the first one will deal with livestock systems;
- the second one will look at cropping systems from the point of view of plant health;
- the third one will be devoted to plant nutrition, including the links between crop and livestock production.

- **Feed self-sufficiency and animal health.**

These two subjects are combined in order to look at livestock production systems with the threefold objective of (i) reducing input supplies; (ii) optimising farm labour, and (iii) improving animal health and welfare. Reducing feed costs reduces the impact on farms of fluctuations in cereals and soya prices. The selected projects will showcase systems that enhance autonomy, contribute to developments in livestock rearing methods and encourage integrated crop and livestock production and the introduction of new crops, including protein-rich crops. The evolution in livestock production methods aims to improve animal health, thereby decreasing the consumption of veterinary medicines, reducing losses (mortality) and ensuring greater feed efficiency, all resulting in lower costs for farmers.

- **Plant health.**

This workshop will move beyond the discussion on the need to reduce pesticide use. It will explore the impacts on plant health of the structuring of farming systems through diversification, soil tillage, extended rotations, developing new crops, including cover crops, and optimising alternatives to chemical treatments, including biological control and new farm machinery. The role of the environment surrounding plots and the establishment of agro-ecological infrastructures (hedges, grass buffer strips, etc.) as tools to regulate pest cycles and to encourage the development of pests' natural predators, will be brought forward. More productive or more resilient perennial crop systems will also be highlighted.

- **Plant nutrition.**

Alongside the subject of plant health, this workshop will focus on the various approaches to both annual and perennial crop nutrition. This will notably include the efforts being made to reduce the use of fertilisers through improved soil fertility management, in particular through the development of organic fertilisers. The importance of introducing new crops and service crops will be highlighted. The workshop will take into account mixed farming systems and the circular economy from the perspective of animal waste recovery.