

# THE REVIEW

of the French Rural network

n°17 1<sup>st</sup> semestre 2020

## THE INTERVIEW PHILIPPE BERTRAND



## THE DOSSIER DIALOGUE ON THE TERRITORIES: ISSUES AND PRACTICES

The mission of the National Rural Network (NRN) is to promote dialogue and cooperation between local actors. There are still marked disparities in Metropolitan France and the Overseas Territories; some regions are subject to urban influences whereas others are more strongly rooted in rural life. In this context, cooperation and dialogue provide a solution which is both long-awaited and sustainable. In this respect, the European National Rural Networks, the European Network in the European Innovation Partnership (EIP), the Local Action groups (LAG) and also the Collective Mobilisation for Rural Development (MCDR) can contribute to re-energising our territories.

Therefore, the NRN works on creating links, (even electronic links through web conferences, for instance) between the regional actors during the Covid-19 health crisis. This singular and unprecedented situation also saw the emergence of solidarity-based initiatives in the rural areas in order to promote local produce sold locally. The supply chain has been adapted and transformed by linking the producers directly with their outlets, thus creating a promising regional dynamic.

The NRN initiatives are expanding within an evolving regulatory framework in the form of the new European Union Multiannual Financial Framework and the structural reform of the CAP with the construction in each Member State of a National Strategic Plan (NSP), which provides for the creation of a CAP Network intended to cover future, first and second pillars in their entirety. The NSP will set out the nine objectives of the future CAP, as well as a cross-cutting objective. The National Rural Network's current initiatives are concerned in particular with the general objective, which consists in "strengthening and consolidating the socio-economic fabric of rural areas".

More generally, the LEADER strategy has made it possible to support projects for the regions managed by the actors themselves. Other aid helps support the farms in moving their produce upmarket or in the diversification of income thanks to the processing workshops on the farms and better integration of the farms into short food chains.

The development period for the future CAP, which began since the start of the discussions on the proposals from the European Commission, is an opportunity, which the NRN must seize in order to reflect upon its own development.

## **Valérie METRICH-HECQUET**

Director General for economic  
and environmental performance  
of enterprises (DGPE)

## **YVES LE BRETON**

Director General of the National Agency  
for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT)

## **JULES NYSSSEN**

Director General  
of Régions de France





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# THE INTERVIEW

## "With the health crisis, experimentation and cooperation have become even more important"

For some fifteen years, Philippe Bertrand has been giving a voice to the actors in the rural world in his programme, "Carnets de campagne", broadcast every day on France Inter. In the context of the health crisis linked with COVID-19, he focuses on the initiatives developed in the rural areas, especially in the field of the social and solidarity-based economy (ESS) and to the links between rural and urban areas.

**In the context of the current crisis, how should relations between the regions, in particular rural and urban areas be organised?**

They are developed on different scales. The City of Paris, for example, has developed food resource distribution networks in the inner and outer suburbs. During the lockdown in Bordeaux, a professor at the Law Faculty organised the distribution to of fruit and vegetables donated by market gardeners to disadvantaged students. In Vendée, almost one hundred people came together in fab labs to manufacture visors by means of 3D printing. Thus it was possible to distribute 3,000 visors to care workers, cashiers, police officers and funeral parlour employees throughout the department. Solidarity-based initiatives of this type saw the light of day in various regions.

Similarly, some tools, which have been in existence since before the crisis, have adopted a cross-sectional approach covering all the regions, such as the Transiscope web portal, which collates French citizens' initiatives regarding food, education, mobility, culture, etc. The idea is to contribute to bringing local and regional actors together.

The Territoires Audacieux platform, which shines a light on initiatives of general interest implemented by local authorities in the different regions of France, is also worthy of mention. This approach is also that of the National Council of the Regional Chambers of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy (CNCRESS), which promotes the pooling of resources and the networking of a large number of regional initiatives in a variety of fields: popular education, cooperative banks, social innovation, etc.



*Promoting the pooling of resources and networking a large number of regional initiatives*



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**What can you tell us about the rural ESS actors in the current crisis?**

Today, more than ever, they represent an astounding spawning ground in areas as varied as personal care, local services, culture, food supply and tourism. I am reminded of a remark made by one of my first listeners to "Carnets de campagne", who lived in a rural area. When it was put to him: "You are lost out there, far from everything!" he replied, "No, we are not lost, we simply have space..." I still find this reply the most pertinent. In areas where there is low population density, there is space to try things out, to experiment, to undertake projects and the social and solidarity-based economy is capable of capitalising on this opportunity.

Unfortunately, we have reason to fear that the health and economic crisis challenges the survival of a large number of actors involved in this process, the associations for a start. Even although they depend to a large extent on voluntary work, they also employ 1.8 million persons (2017 figures). There is a risk that some initiatives, which are in their infancy and are implemented by these structures, will be weakened, with, in parallel, a massive return to the traditional economy.



## What could be the positive effects from this crisis in the rural areas?

With the lockdown some persons have had more time at their disposal and have discovered voluntary work through specific local initiatives, frequently based on the principle of free-of-charge. Moreover, the temporary disruption to supplies in the supermarkets has more acutely raised the question of food autonomy. To respond to this issue, from the start of the lockdown, the CIVAM in the Gard prepared an interactive, participatory map of the short food chains in the department, listing the local producers, collection points, etc. This procedure offered outlets to market gardeners while the food markets were closed. It may inspire other regions and, most importantly, the inhabitants developed new consumption habits, which ought to last... The lockdown will have allowed for an awakening of conscience over the issue of locally available resources.

Generally speaking, I think that what we need now is better coordination between initiatives at the local, regional and national levels, in order to combine the skills which are developed around joint objectives. For example, this is the goal of the Shared Energy movement, which brings together citizens, elected representatives and technicians, who want to promote the production of renewable energies in their regions. This type of initiative may remain local, but it may also spread at all the regional levels.

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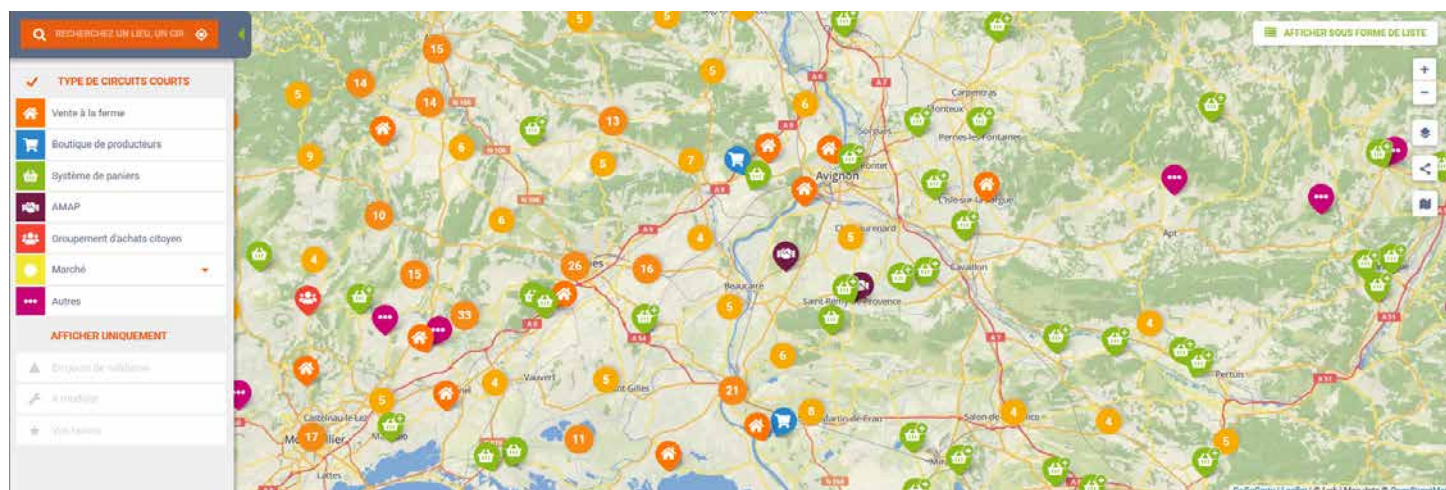
*We need better coordination of local and national initiatives in order to combine our skills*

## In your opinion, what will be the main challenges for rural areas after this crisis?

Just as everywhere in France, there is an urgent need to reform democracy on a wider scale and to anticipate the future. Experimentation and sharing will become even more important than before in order to act collectively, by developing cooperation and working in networks.

The new generations are already playing a central role in the necessary developments. Graduates under thirty years of age are moving in increasingly large numbers to rural areas with the intention of developing personal care services and also working in the tourist accommodation sector, the food sector, etc. We are watching the appearance of a new demographic and sociological landscape. It is vital that new populations relocate, in particular for the regions described as remote or extremely rural, which currently represent 24% of France's territory, but only 5% of the national population. These regions ask for nothing better than to welcome new inhabitants and their initiatives!

View of the participatory map of short food chains introduced by the Fédération Départementale des CIVAM du Gard from the very start of the lockdown.







## DIALOGUE ON THE TERRITORIES: ISSUES AND PRACTICES

A fundamental lever of rural development and agro-ecological transition, dialogue takes a wide variety of forms within the projects supported by the National Rural Network. Led by committed actors in the MCDR, the Local Action Groups and the EIP projects, it contributes to promoting cooperation between urban and rural areas, producers and consumers, scientists and farmers, elected representatives and citizens, etc. Different perspectives of the players on the ground and examples of implementation.

## The subject seen by...

### Hanane Allali, responsible for LEADER and local development strategies at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food

"Dialogue is the very essence of LEADER. As a tool for regional organisation and facilitation, this process relies on a consultation with the driving local forces, in particular in the context of steering committees, those joint decision-making bodies comprising public and private actors. Nothing is done unilaterally, without consulting all the stakeholders. From the conception of a local development strategy (LDS) to its implementation, through the selection of the operational projects, LEADER represents a complete chain of dialogue. This is what gives it its strength and makes it successful.

A partnership, organised from the bottom upwards, participatory... The LEADER process has been percolating for some fifteen years, providing a way of conducting local and national public policy. Thanks to the know-how of the Local Action Groups, to their detailed knowledge of the regions and the local issues and to their skill in organisation and local consultation, they promote the development of regional projects as well as the development and appropriation of regulatory tools such as Territorial Cohesion Plans (SCot) in an atmosphere of dialogue and mediation."



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*Nothing is done  
unilaterally*



### Régis Piechowiak, MCDR Project Manager at the National Rural Network

"Accustomed to managing a variety of partners on different levels, the leading MCDR project structures are able to initiate a dialogue as an incentive for collaboration. Regional organisational cross-sector projects, the MCDR are forums for discussion par excellence. Their success relies on the ability of the different partners to take a step back, to respect the time and contribution of the other party, the sharing of decisions, etc. They work at listening in order to go forward together. This means organising meetings, study trips, webinars, technical open days, training courses, etc.

By way of example, the RENFORT Project represents an unprecedented collaboration between APCA, the Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture and Fncofor, the French National Federation of Forest Communities. In the Conservation of extensive livestock-rearing, management of wetlands project, the partners bring together around the table livestock breeders and local authorities, in order to try to implement collective Agro-environmental and Climatic Measures (MAEC). Other MCDRs favor brainstorming on climate transition, short food chains, agro-forestry, territorial food projects (PAT), etc. All these initiatives meet a global demand for bottom-up procedures, joint structuring and a voice given to the actors in the territories. The Développement rural par la coopération [Rural development through cooperation] project shows, inter alia, these types of dialogue in a documentary film."

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*Listening in order  
to go forward  
together*



### Exchange and solidarity: initiatives from the rural areas in the face of Covid-19

On 7 May, in full lockdown, the Rural Network organised a webinar on "The Rural Areas in action in the face of Covid-19". Different platforms and solidarity-based initiatives were presented, especially those introduced in the Greater East, a region particularly affected by the health crisis.

*"In the rural regions, this is a period which has been complicated because of geographical isolation, public services based at a distance and/or poor Internet connection, which has made working remotely from home more complex. Certain economic and associative sectors have been very much affected in rural areas: inter alia, wine-growing, tourism, catering and culture,"* reveal Louise Blum and Clémentine Laurent, joint organisers of the Greater East Rural Network. This region, particularly hit hard by the Corona virus crisis, has thus encouraged dialogue and exchanges via digital platforms and local solidarity-based initiatives.



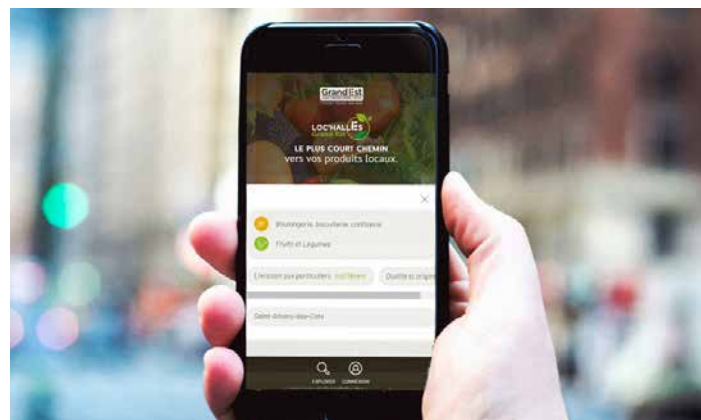
Notably, the Region has set up the My Region tomorrow platform. Launched on 5 May, *"it collects initiatives, feelings and suggestions from the citizens, in order to gain a better understanding of their expectations and to work together on the priorities for future action,"* explains Clémentine Laurent. Different issues such as the environment, culture and health are touched on in the approximately 200 proposals already registered online. They include 'support conversion to organic production', 'develop sustainable tourism' and 'develop local e-commerce'. *"All these*

*suggestions will then be studied and will be the object of feedback in September. Those, whose suggestions have received the largest number of votes, will be invited to discuss with the regional elected representatives."*

A few weeks earlier it was the Plus forts Grand Est platform, which was put online in partnership with the regional innovation agency, Grand E-nov. Its objective is *"to list innovative regional solutions for overcoming the Covid-19 crisis together"*. These solutions include, for example, the Loc'Halles Grand Est Region app, which puts producers, agricultural processors and purchasers in touch with each other in order to facilitate local food supply. In development for a year now, this tool has taken on a new magnitude with the crisis. It makes it possible to geolocate more than three hundred professionals in short food chains by geographic proximity. *"The app makes producers visible, promotes their products and delivery services and makes it possible to identify their distribution and marketing circuits,"* explained Louise Blum.

For its part, the Baguette Box app, which in normal times offers delivery of bread and pastries in the Lower Rhine area, has supported asparagus producers. Between mid-April and mid-May the start-up put its vans and delivery persons at the disposal of five producers during the Solidarity Asparagus operation. It made possible the delivery of more than three tonnes of asparagus.

A large number of other solidarity-based chains have also seen the light of day in the Greater East: textile firms come together to manufacture masks, vocational schools are mobilised to create protective visors by 3D printing, wine-makers or agri-food companies donate their products to produce hydro alcoholic solution. *"All these initiative were made possible thanks to a very dynamic web of associations and certain industrial sectors, which are particularly present in the rural environment and who have achieved these feats,"* conclude the organisers.





## "Taking the time to listen and to understand one another"

**Marc Nielsen**, Director of the Terres en villes association and RnPAT Project Manager



"Dialogue between the actors in the same territory is key. Without dialogue, it is impossible to develop projects. The issue at stake is to succeed in managing one's area with all the parties involved and ensuring that everyone comes together around a common project. We see

this particularly with Terres en villes, when it is a question of food policies: urban, suburban and rural areas must talk and mutually acknowledge their roles and values if the success of the projects is to be guaranteed. The most important thing is not to leave anyone out. Dialogue is alive and well in the regions and sometimes this

has been going on for a long time: dialogue on food has been in existence for 40 years. Projects do not emerge from nowhere. They are the legacy of relationships of trust. For example, the Nantes Metropolis Territorial Food Project (PAT) has made great progress because, very early on in collaboration with farmers, the territory introduced policies for the recovery of barren agricultural land.

Therefore, there is dialogue but it is often not enough to bring everyone around the table to iron out the discrepancies. It must be recognised that not all the actors have the same objectives and interests and this must not become a sticking point. There is no secret: to create room for dialogue, you have to take the time to listen, to understand one another and to get to know each other. I am convinced that the moment the actors enter into discussion, a solution can be found for every problem."

### Three questions to Raymond Vall, President of the ANPP

Senator of Gers, President of the ANPP, the National Association of the Territorial and Rural and Local Areas Balance Hubs (PETR), Raymond Vall is also the co-author of the *Local Authorities committed to the service of our rural areas* report, submitted in January 2020.



#### How does the ANPP promote dialogue between territories?

An association of approximately 280 local areas (pays) and the Territorial and Rural Balance Hubs (PETR) with 80,000 to 120,000 inhabitants, the ANPP promotes cooperation between project territories. The latter provides a framework of contractualisation with the Metropolises, the Departments and the Regions. Without bothering about administrative borderlines, the project territories unite and energise the local actors around a shared territorial project: a real reflection of the assets and resources to be shared in a process of cooperation and alliance. Finding a territorial project helps to instigate a dialogue, especially between metropolises, which drive growth, and their neighbouring territories.

#### How is this dialogue between metropolises and rural territories translated?

In particular by reciprocity agreements. Initiated in 2015, these agreements promote the development of interactions and

cohesion between rural, suburban and urban areas on territorial features, which justify a reciprocal exchange. A specific example is Toulouse Metropolis and the PETR Pays Portes de Gascogne. Together they are developing a shared territorial food project promoting the consumption of local products in canteens, company restaurants, health-care establishments, etc. Their reciprocal agreement promotes a relationship of proximity and solidarity between the Gers producers and the consumers in Toulouse. Mobility, co-working spaces in rural areas, economic, cultural and tourism development, etc., are also under consideration.

#### What is the place of European funding in the success of these cooperation projects?

Funding plays an essential role, but improvement in its accessibility and management is essential for the future of our territories. The major issue for the local authorities is to attract and manage the many funds needed to carry out their projects. This requires the acquisition of new capacities and skills in territorial engineering in order to design a strategy, define actions, work on the networking of public services, agricultural production, etc. There must be more support, notably from the State, for allowing local structures to develop a territorial project, in particular in a context in which the rural areas become attractive again. The trend is no longer towards rural exodus, but to the re-population of territories, which have real assets and wealth. Our territories are there to support these transitions.

### For a co-constructed agro-ecological transition

The aim of the MCDR ECLAT project is to accompany five pilot sites in an agro-ecological transition. With a mix of bilateral meetings, study voyages or seminars, farmers' groups are initiating an essential territorial dialogue for the successful achievement of their project.

The reason five partner networks (FNCUMA, TRAME, CIVAM, FADEAR and FRCIVAM Pays de la Loire) have set up ECLAT is to support the farmers' groups from five pilot sites, who are developing territorial agro-ecological transition projects in co-construction. *"What the groups are trying to do is to work with other actors: local authorities, local environmental associations, companies, regional natural parks and mechanisms in the world of agriculture, such as milk quality assurance testing,"* states Agnès Le Foulgoc, FNCUMA Operations Manager. In order to develop this collaboration, the pilot groups opt for different forms of territorial dialogue: bilateral meetings in the first instance and then multi-partner meetings or local discussions for the more experienced. Every year they also participate in study visits, both in France and abroad, and in two national seminars in Paris. *"This is the opportunity for them to carry out work on common themes, to find networks and to share their problems and solutions. We also invite guest speakers, in order to bring new ideas into these exchanges and to suggest new paths."*

To make this joint agro-ecological transition a success, the farmers' groups benefit from support, notably by means of regular interviews with the correspondents of the pilot sites provided



by partner networks. A necessary support for adapting to the increased numbers of actors: *"Designing multi-actor procedures takes time, time to understand and to share practices, skills and the realities of working life,"* confirms Agnès Le Foulgoc.

More information...

[www.cuma.fr](http://www.cuma.fr)

### "Developing the dialogue between public organisations, companies and civil society"

**Yannick Blanc**, former High Commissioner for Civic Engagement, President of the Futuribles Association, Vice-President of la Fonda



"Dialogue allows the territorial actors to head towards a common goal and to identify their complementary assets for getting there. There are many circumstances in which it is necessary. In 2015 for example, when I was Prefect of Val-d'Oise we successfully accommodated 200 refugees within 48 hours. This was possible because

of the commitment of associations and the diversity of their skills: psychological, social, medical, linguistic skills, etc. The associative actors have an expertise, knowledge of society and

an ability to act, which an administration on its own does not have. The relationships of interdependence between the public organisations, the companies and civil society must be seen as an opportunity for dialogue and cooperation. There is a huge amount of dialogue at the local level, no-one acts on their own. At the national level, the institutions are less inclined to enter into dialogue. The whole purpose of what the NRN does, in supporting local cooperation initiatives with LEADER, is to pass on to the institutions this capacity for dialogue observed in the territories. Today, there is plenty of room for dialogue and many types of cooperation: clusters, development councils, economic cooperation territorial poles, etc. This shows that we are in a period of experimentation and that the need to create room to exchange ideas is felt everywhere. Now we have to capitalise on these experiments."



## Terricoop: successful cooperation outside Europe



More than 1,000 kilometres separate the archipelago of Kerkennah in Tunisia from the Occitanie region. However, the dialogue between these two regions in the Mediterranean is very enriching. In fact, since October 2019, a cooperation project has been under way between these two territories. Its name: Terricoop. Organised by the Montpellier CIHEAM (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies) it brings together three LAGs/LAFAGs in Occitanie and the territory of Kerkennah. A product of the DevLok project, Terricoop took off following the visit of a delegation from Occitanie made up of fishermen, farmers, entrepreneurs, elected representatives, technicians, researchers, teachers, local authority representatives, etc. With their Tunisian counterparts, they identified four issues of interest to both parties: fishing and the exploitation of the blue crab, an invasive

species; the struggle against plastic pollution; permaculture and agro-ecology; the quality certification and marketing of fish products. *"The success of Terricoop comes from the win-win relationship between our two territories. The reciprocity of the issues has guaranteed the success of this dialogue,"* confirms Zied Ahmed, the Development Cooperation Administrator at the CIHEAM. Antoine André, the President of the Pays Pyrénées-Méditerranée LAG also confirms: *"The Tunisians have taught us a lot about the blue crab, which is arriving on our shores. For our part, we invited, for example, the well-known farmer, André Trives, to introduce the Tunisian market gardeners to the techniques of permaculture."*

With support at the institutional level - in particular from Anis Oueslati, the Governor of Sfax, the Terricoop initiative also contributes to the emergence of an economic zone on the archipelago. *"For instance, this makes it possible to set up a plastic shredding workshop or a blue crab processing plant,"* Antoine André points out. Terricoop has also made it possible for us to build relationships which reach far beyond technical cooperation. This dialogue is going to continue. In fact, on Kerkennah we are participating in a process of local participative democracy similar to how a LAG operates. The objective is for the local actors to propose their own territorial development projects and for the projects to be supported as they emerge.

## Aronia: when producers and processors get organised

**They have one aim in common: that of innovating. Food producers and processors from the Centre-Val de Loire have come together in an EIP project: Aronia and other organic super-fruits in the Centre-Val de Loire region. The aim of this project is to create a new small fruits production and development sector.**

*"There is a major element of risk, because these species are scarcely cultivated at all in France. To make something of it, it is important to be able to exchange ideas across two worlds: the world of production and the world of processing,"* explains Jean-Marc Delacour, an expert in horticultural consultancy at the regional horticultural development centre, the CDHR Centre and leader of Aronia. Launched in 2017, this EIP project is the product of brainstorming by producers, horticulturists and nursery owners in the Centre-Val de Loire region. They were all on the look-out for ways to diversify their activities and decided to launch their business into the organic growing of five small fruits with a high food value: aronia, blue honeysuckle, black chokeberry, elderberry and saskatoon berry. Their objective: to process them into pastries, jams and fruit juices.

Today, three producers and three processors are working in cooperation. The project has allowed them to set up experimental plots of land to evaluate the different species on the local agronomic and techno-economic plan. The producers all planted aronia, which will begin to produce in 2021. *"In the meantime this allows them to acquire technical information, to set up an*

*organisation and to structure the sector. The producers are in the process of setting themselves up as a company for joint management of production and development. And the processors are working on exploiting the fruits by perfecting recipes in their respective fields."*



Selection of species, growing practices, harvesting methods, recipes, etc. The partners are studying various practices and opportunities, particularly during study trips in the countries where these small fruits are traditionally cultivated, such as Canada and Germany. The next destination on the agenda: Poland, in order to pick up hints on mechanising the harvest.

More information...

<https://bio-centre.org>

## LEADER cooperation at the heart of issues in Europe



The Second National LEADER Cooperation Meetings were held from 10th to 12th February in Tours. More than a hundred participants debated and shared feedback on their experience of cooperation: setting it up, issues, perspectives, etc. Extracts.

It is in the Centre-Val de Loire Region, and more precisely in Tours (37) that Europe met at the Second National LEADER Cooperation Meetings. Organisers and presidents of the LAGs, LEADER administrators, Regional Rural network organisers, representatives of municipality federations, etc. attended. More than a hundred French actors, together with European, Tunisian and Cameroonian guests met during three days in order to exchange ideas on cooperation within the LEADER framework, to share their experiences and to generate new cooperation projects at the national and European level or with third countries. The event's programmes included: round tables, workshops, field visits, cooperation grants, etc.

Debates and feedback on experience were the hallmark of the first day. "LEADER is a very important tool for implementing local public policy in France. It promotes experimentation, international exchanges and cooperations at many levels. Furthermore, it is the only measure in the European development programme to place so much emphasis on promoting cooperation," reiterated Yves Auffret, Assistant Director for the management of aid from the CAP at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, at the opening conference. "Cooperation, in particular transnational cooperation, is at the heart of LEADER," confirmed Alexandra Catalão, Operations Manager at

the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). "It is a very rewarding tool, which makes it possible to innovate across different territories, regions and countries and to recover added value contributed by the partners." The discussion continued with Yannick Blanc taking the floor. President of the Futuribles think-tank and Vice President of Fonda, this former High Commissioner for Civic Engagement shared a wish: "That cooperation will impregnate the DNA of the administrations and large corporations as it impregnates the territories. During a period when institutions are weakening and we are seeing crises in ecology and in society, the development of cooperative strategies and collective intelligence is a real challenge."

An initial round table devoted to LEADER cooperation as a vector of dialogue, mutual awareness and progression for the territories then gave the floor in particular to Thibaut Guignard, President of Leader France and to Gérard Peltre, President of the R.E.D. (Countryside - Environment - Development) association and of the European Countryside Movement. Promotion of regional produce, structuring of local sectors, development of initiatives promoting biodiversity, accessibility for disabled persons and sustainable agriculture: the benefits of the LEADER cooperation have launched exchanges with the presentation of three projects managed by the Loire Touraine Local Action Group. "Cooperation is a tool for accelerating the development of the territories," insisted Gérard Peltre. "It is also through it that we build Europe," reiterated Thibaut Guignard.

After the presentation of the Terricoop project (see p. 11) another round table focused on the place of the citizen in cooperation. "Their cooperation is indispensable to meet the ecological and social challenges, and it is therefore necessary to revisit our democracy and to create new processes for contribution. The Local Action Groups are places where this is possible," assured Charles Fournier, Vice President of the Centre-Val de Loire Region delegated to ecological and citizen transition and to cooperation. "In order to cooperate with the citizens, we have to rethink our accustomed way of doing things. We must stop talking about techniques or tools, but instead talk about ideas and show them that we are working with them and for them," stressed, for her part, Isabelle Auricoste, ANPP Administrator and President of the Pays Ruffécois Local Action Group. The discussions continued throughout numerous workshops and visits on the ground offered during the next two days in order to discover how projects are being specifically implemented by the Loire Nature and Loire Touraine Local Action Groups.

More information...

[www.reseaurural.fr](http://www.reseaurural.fr)

"Although we are effectively the French Region which has made the most use of the LEADER envelope devoted to cooperation, this represents only a dozen projects. We hope to go farther by developing transnational projects in particular. Cooperation makes it possible to implement more robust projects with more social, environmental and tourist economic power and economic sense."



**Michelle Rivet, Vice President of the Centre-Val de Loire Region, delegate for the Environment and Rural Development**

### On video

Discover a large number of testimonies from participants on the [NRN YouTube channel](#).





## Smart Villages : 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ENRD working party

On 1<sup>st</sup> April some fifty European actors in rural development participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ENRD working party on Smart Villages. Feedback on this meeting organised online.



How can Smart Villages be integrated into the National Strategic Plans (NSP)? What place and what role should they be given? These questions set the tone for the discussions at the 11th meeting of the ENRD working party on Smart Villages. As a consequence of the health crisis, the meeting, which was initially to have been held in Poland, was finally held remotely in the form of a webinar. Members of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), the European Committee of the Regions, the ENRD, representatives of National Rural Networks and European Ministers of Agriculture... nearly fifty persons, from eleven countries participated in this online meeting. *"In particular, it was a reminder that the digital dimension is only one aspect of Smart Villages,"* noted Patricia Andriot, managing authority for the French Rural Network. *"The concepts of human relations, public services, social innovation, cooperation within communities and the social economy were extensively debated and presented as major issues. This is why I personally translate the concept of Smart Villages as 'agile' villages or communities."*

The webinar focused on initiatives in Poland and started with a contribution from Ryszard Kamiński. As Under-Secretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, he commented on the situation of rural life in his country and on the issues for the territories: access to Internet, water management, equality of opportunity in education, etc. In particular, he stressed that Smart Villages represent an opportunity to create fresh possibilities for

rural areas by attracting new inhabitants and by developing new services. The meeting was followed by the presentation of an example of a Smart Village: Piaseczna Górka. Located between Krakow and Warsaw, this village of 330 inhabitants has developed a large number of projects since 2015: outdoor self-service library, solar energy powered public lighting, rain garden to deal with flooding and to promote biodiversity, etc. Piaseczna Górka is one of the ten prize-winning villages in the first edition of *"My Smart Village"*. This Polish competition, organised by the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development and the Academy of Sciences, was also presented during the webinar. Its objective is *"to identify social and digital innovations and to promote the concept of Smart Villages"*.

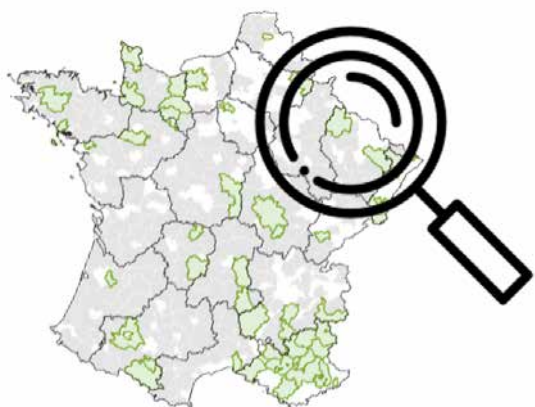
“  
*An opportunity to create  
fresh possibilities  
for rural areas*

The discussions then focused on the concept of Smart Villages in the NSP. After the presentation of the Polish strategy, the floor was given to participants from Estonia, Spain, Ireland, Belgium and Greece. *"Rules on eligibility support in detecting the emergence and implementation of projects, links with LEADER and the EIP, scale of intervention, and so forth. Many countries have tackled the subject head-on,"* notes

Patricia Andriot. *"The concept of Smart Villages is an interesting one; in particular it can promote dialogue between the farming and rural worlds."*

## Study on LEADER Measure 19: lessons learned and key figures

How does the selection of LEADER territories operate according to the regions? To which strategies are the Local Action Groups giving priority in their local development strategy? What have been the impacts of the NOTRe (territorial administration) and the MAPTAM (modernisation of territorial public policy and affirmation for the metropolises) laws? The responses and the questions and much more can be consulted in the [National Rural Network study on LEADER Measure 19](#) on the Regional Rural Development Programmes



(RRDP) 2014 - 2020. The fruition of a year's work entrusted to the Extracité, Ytes and Auxilia offices, this study is based in particular on the analysis of the tripartite AG-ASP-GAL agreements (including all the initiative information sheets) and of the 27 RRDP, on interviews with management authorities and on surveys undertaken directly with the Local Action Groups (192 respondents, 30 interviews). "Intended for the LEADER technicians, Local Action Group organisers and the Regional Rural Networks or experts in land management, the

study makes it possible to gain a better understanding of LEADER's implementation and appropriation at different levels: national, regional and territorial," comments, Pierre Lézier, consultant in territorial development at the Extracité cooperative. "It highlights especially the diversity, richness and adaptability of local development strategies and the dynamics of the Local Action Groups."

Exhaustive overview of the Local Action Groups, selection procedures for LEADER territories, impacts of the territorial reform and diversity of local development strategies: four major themes link this document of more than 200 pages, which offers an analysis, a cartographic atlas and focus on territories "in order to share inspiring examples and good practice for existing or emerging Local Action Groups". Furthermore, a wealth of key figures illustrates the results. For example, with a steadily increasing number of Local Action Groups (339 in 2014 compared to 223 in 2007), LEADER covers about 80% of the national territory, or almost 27,000 communities and 28 million inhabitants. The results also emphasise the diversity of the legal forms of Local Action Groups. "The PETR/Pays in the form of mixed syndicates remain the main type of structure for project providers. Nevertheless, as a result of the territorial reform, we have seen major growth in the number of public establishments for cooperation between local authorities (EPCI). Some Local Action Groups are now managed by urban centres or a Departmental Council," explains the consultant. "While taking account of the initial difficulties of implementing the system, we have discovered that the Local Action Groups and their Local Development Strategies (LDS) are very adaptable in dealing with topics, mobilising joint funding or organising territorial leadership as well."

**More information...**

[www.reseaurural.fr](http://www.reseaurural.fr)

## Health crisis: the emergency responses of the Commission

Five months after the appearance of the first suspected corona virus cases in China, the epidemic spread all over the world and Europe is still severely affected with lasting consequences, even if the lockdown measures are being progressively eased. Although the Member States are still in the front line in dealing with the pandemic and notably with its economic consequences, the European Commission has developed a range of responses, some of which concern the Common Agricultural Policy. These responses allow for more flexibility in the use of financial instruments for rural development.

### New EAFRD measure

The Commission has introduced Article 39b into the Rural Development Regulation. This allows EAFRD to fund support measures in certain sectors in response to the Covid-19 crisis in the form of lump-sum payments: a limit of €5,000 per farmer and €50,000 per SME. This aid must be paid before the 31st of December 2020, with an upper limit fixed at 1% of the EAFRD allocation to the Member State, which has a wide margin of flexibility in implementing the aid.

### CAP exemptions

- Deferral of the deadline for declaration of CAP applications to 15 June 2020;
- Increase in the rate of advances for the 2020 campaign, to an amount of 70% for direct aid and 85% for payments for rural development. In both cases the advances may be paid prior to on-site inspections, but subsequent to administrative inspections;
- Easing of rules relating to on-site inspections;
- The Member States are permitted to revise their decisions on transferring between the 1st and 2nd pillar.

### State Aid exemptions

The Commission has adopted a temporary framework in order to allow Member States to set up systems to grant up to 8000,000 euros to companies to assist them in dealing with their urgent liquidity requirements.



## SIMRA promotes social innovation in marginalised rural areas

Thanks in particular to case studies and to guidance in innovative initiatives, SIMRA has made it possible to gain a better understanding of the issues and the conditions in which social innovations in marginalised rural areas emerge. Zoom in on the main lessons learned and results of this European project, which finished last February.

What is the common feature between the creation of childcare services and elderly people's homes in the Italian South Tyrol and the integration of immigrants in the Gudbrandsdalen valley in Norway through hiking and rambling and outdoor activities? The answer is that they are social innovations organised in marginalised rural areas as part of SIMRA (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas). Coordinated by the James Hutton Institute and provided by a consortium of 26 actors from 14 countries, the aim of this Horizon 2020 project is to *"advance understanding of social innovation and innovative governance in agriculture, forestry and rural development and how to boost them, particularly in marginalised rural areas across Europe"*.

Frequently isolated (mountainous areas, islands, etc.) with limited access to infrastructures (internet, road networks, electricity, etc.) and a greater risk of social exclusion, the marginalised rural areas are faced with many economic, agricultural and environmental challenges as well as an ageing population and a decline in public services. *"Social innovation makes it possible to overcome the challenges by reinventing the actors' roles, their interactions and their capacity for innovation,"* states Marie Clotteau, Director of Euromontana (European association of mountain areas), in charge of communication and dissemination at SIMRA.

The flagship initiatives include: carrying out 23 case studies, creating an interactive map showing more than 300 examples of social innovation and the emergence of seven innovative

initiatives, including a women's food production cooperative in the village of Deir el-Ahmar in Lebanon, training for entrepreneurs in the counties of Lancashire and Cumbria in the United Kingdom, implementing sustainable agro-forestry in Guadeloupe. *"These initiatives have been implemented on the basis of a close partnership between researchers and local organisations,"* explains Marie Clotteau. *"This multi-actor approach has been one of the most rewarding aspects of SIMRA."*

The main lessons learned and results of the project were presented at SIMRA's final conference on the 19th and 20th of February in Brussels. *"In particular, we circulate a collection of seven brochures about good practice on examples of social innovation in mountainous areas, in concert with the Green Deal, the rural or forest services; a practical guide for designing, developing and implementing social innovation projects as well as a policy report intended to promote the implementation of social innovation projects in the rural areas."* Furthermore, the partners are also proposing a MOOC designed to show the possible applications of social innovation in rural areas and best practice in managing projects. This provides the opportunity to develop a critical understanding of the concept of social innovation, of assessing the initiatives and of comparing the political contexts and their role in the development of social innovation in rural areas.

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*This multi-actor approach has been one of the most rewarding aspects of SIMRA*

More information...

[www.simra-h2020.eu](http://www.simra-h2020.eu)

Hike organised by an Eritrean refugee in Norway, one of many initiatives implemented under the aegis of SIMRA.



## The European aims of the hemp industry in the Greater East

50% of French production and more than one third of European production. Considered as a sector of excellence, hemp is enjoying robust development in the Greater East. Organised as a task group, a whole ecosystem of actors is structured around a common project: the creation of the European Hemp Pole. Its declared aim: to become the reference territory in Europe in the field of hemp bio-economy.

Hemp can be found everywhere - in the automotive industry, the construction industry, textiles, food, cosmetics... While the cultivation of hemp had almost disappeared in France in the 1950s, this plant now represents a resource for the future. In fact, it has technical and economic assets, which respond to current industrial and environmental needs. Aware of this potential, the farmers in Eastern France have developed its cultivation and since 1973, they have created the Chanvrière de l'Aube, a hemp cooperative. Today, this cooperative brings together 450 members who, in

2020, are growing more than 9,400 hectares of hemp. *"With hemp nothing is wasted, from the seed to the pulp and not forgetting the fibre,"* explains Benoît Savourat, President of the cooperative and of the 3CGE (Construction Chanvre Grand Est) collective. *"We have not limited hemp to the building industry, but have tried to develop other applications for the materials, textile, food, healthcare and cosmetics sectors."*

**“**  
*To create an ecosystem from field to finished product*

Driven by this desire to innovate, La Chanvrière has invested heavily in R & D and has developed numerous solutions for exploiting hemp in composite materials, textiles, the building and food industries. The latest project in which it is participating is the European pole for hemp territorial bio-refinery. The objective is to bring together the

entire value chain in the sector (from upstream to downstream) in order to respond to the challenges of development of 'plant fibre' in Europe and world-wide in a fertile spirit of cooperation amongst all the actors. *"Our hope is to diversify the markets for hemp and to increase the added value of the outlets, in order to reward the farmers better,"* explains Benoît Savourat. *"This aim is embodied in the European pole project,"* continues Annick Gonthier, Project Manager for Troyes Champagne Métropole. *"What we wanted was to disseminate a strategy for the sector and the territory and to bring together the actors of many different markets to create an eco-system from field to finished product. To do this, we turned to the EIP."*

*"We had to reflect and jointly construct this multi-actor, multi-market eco-system,"* explains the Project Manager. Having examined various existing types of groupings of actors (clusters, districts, etc.) the Collectif 3C Grand Est and its partners decided to create their own organisational model thanks to the work of seven technical working parties. These included 'Tools of innovation and transfer', 'Farming processes and production', 'Plastics processing and composites' and 'Textiles'. Their aim is to develop consolidated pre-projects, which translate into initiatives. Final goal of the operational group: to launch, within three years, this European hemp pole as part of the future bio-economic park in the Troyes agglomeration.

**More information...**

[www.pole-europeen-chanvre.eu](http://www.pole-europeen-chanvre.eu)  
<http://lanchanvriere.com>

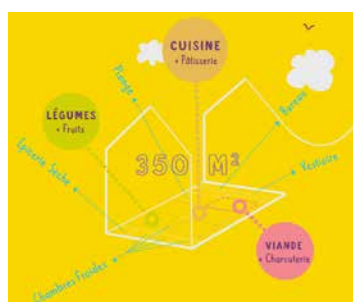




## Melting Popote, a shared agri-food laboratory

To process local products, serve as central kitchen, combat food wastage... These are the reasons why the Melting Popote operational group has been conducting a shared agri-food processing laboratory project for the last four years. Intended to receive farmers and food trade professionals, its opening in Saône-et-Loire is scheduled soon.

"We are safeguarding at the same time jobs, production and an economy," says a delighted François Bonnetain, Vice-President of the Clunisois federation of municipalities. This authority is the main partner of Melting Popote, the association providing the EIP project of the same name initiated in 2016. "To start with, we wanted to create a central canteen for Cluny, but there were also food storage needs for the food aid charities and the project providers were seeking premises where they could develop their activities," recalls Marie Fauvet, Melting Popote Project Manager



Located at Salornay-sur-Guye, a laboratory more than 330 m<sup>2</sup> in size is currently under construction. Farmers, pastry chefs, butchers, caterers and communities can process local products there in compliance with hygiene standards and also develop joint projects. The building will offer them



a variety of management, storage and production areas: meat, cakes and pastries, snails, vegetable processing, dry goods, cold storage. This shared tool is above all the fruit of a collective history shared by a large number of actors in the territory. "The elected representatives bring together experts and the professionals concerned and each person contributes with his (or her) skills, knowledge and network... This is our key strength today," believes Marie Fauvet. In the face of this successful cooperation, the Melting Popote association envisages evolving as a Scic (cooperative community enterprise) before the inauguration of its laboratory, scheduled for this autumn.

More information...

[www.enclunisois.com/laboratoire-agroalimentaire](http://www.enclunisois.com/laboratoire-agroalimentaire)

## Video of agro-ecological practices in the Overseas Territories



Five minutes to understand the interest in propagating and developing the yam, this "potato from across the seas" with the testimonies of Caribbean engineers and producers. This is the subject of "Igname, du tube à essai à l'assiette (The yam, from test tube to plate)", a video produced by the Institut technique tropical (IT2), which was an award-winner in the competition organised as part of the MCDR TransAgriDom project. Intended for technicians, researchers, engineers and managers of producers' networks or organisations, this competition invited the actors in research and development in the Overseas Territories, including the EIP operational groups, to share their know-how and

agro-ecological practice through films taken with a Smartphone. The twenty or so three- to five-minute videos produced in the French Overseas Departments were shown at the Agricultural Trade Fair. They can now be viewed [online on the RITA site](http://online.on.rita.site). These reports with their teaching message deal with subjects as varied as the farmers' struggle against the cattle tick, service plants for managing cover planting in orchards, raising pigs outdoors and the health of bees.

What should you use? How do you frame a shot and edit the video? How do you prepare a scenario? Before taking part, the participants in the competition benefited from training on "Producing a video with your Smartphone", delivered at the TransAgriDom meeting at the end of October in Guiana in order to promote the transfer of farming initiatives. This popular training course is soon to be offered in Metropolitan France in order to encourage the operational groups to produce new videos to show the worth of a project, a practice or an agro-ecological innovation to an audience of farmers or financiers.

More information...

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/les-rita-font-leur-cinema-un-concours-video-pour-partager-les-pratiques-agroecologiques-en-outre-mer>

## SIA 2020: a time for meeting, exchanging ideas and visibility

During the International Agricultural Trade Fair from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February to the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, the NRN stand allowed MCDR project providers more visibility for their initiatives. The event was also a privileged time for exchanging ideas for the members of the network, the actors from the European Commission and all those interested in rural issues.

A major event for the NRN, the Agricultural Trade Fair offers a window to the members of the network to show off their products and to meet potential partners. Therefore, the providers of the



MCDR JARA, Port@il and ECLAT projects and the EIP operational groups were able to offer visitors oral presentations on their initiatives and to disseminate their communication materials. Apart from a public already aware of rural issues, the stand welcomed visitors with varying expectations and profiles. *"We met a student of political science who was seeking an internship in the rural environment and a former pupil of the CEZ (Zoological Training Centre) at Rambouillet, who was interested in the possibilities opened up by Leader France,"* recounted Régis Piechowiak, responsible for the MCDR project at the National Rural Network.

Many important persons also came to the stand, including the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Director General of the ANCT, regional elected representatives, the Assistant Director-General of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), a Member of Parliament, journalists, etc. *"But the largest number of visitors were made up of those who are considering or developing very diverse projects in the rural environment,"* stressed Patricia Andriot, responsible for the managing authority for the Rural Network. *"They showed great interest in the resources and contacts which the Rural Network can offer them."*

### "Allowing young people to take ownership of the issues in farming and rural life"

**Cédric Letourneur, National Secretary for Agriculture at MRJC, involved in the JARA (Young actors in rural life and farming)**



*"The aim of our project, which will be implemented until 2021, is to allow the maximum number of young people to take ownership of the issues in farming and rural life. In 2018 we proposed a training programme for farming issues during the Rendez-Vous, an international festival organised in collaboration with German organisations. We have also organised Oser le rural (Take up the challenge of rural life), a seminar, which brought together one hundred participants to discuss the issues of a better life, work and citizenship in rural areas. This dynamic has launched many local events, during the course of which ideas for initiatives have been collected, resulting in our 90 proposals for the rural world. These proposals aim at having public policies take better into account the challenges for young people in rural areas. We would like them to spread into new networks: agricultural education structures dedicated to allowing young people, individually or in groups, to move into the rural environment, etc. Finally, we are launching a survey among young people, who move into rural areas, in order to evaluate how their actions are facilitated by belonging to local associations or networks."*

### "An excellent opportunity to meet the actors on the ground in the rural environment"

**Mihail Dumitru, Assistant Director-General at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), responsible for direct payment, rural development and the sustainability of the CAP, European Commission**



*"Visiting the NRN stand is an excellent opportunity to meet the actors on the ground in the rural environment and farming, as well as the providers of innovative projects. The French National Rural Network is an essential interlocutor in the achievement of the CAP. I am always impressed by the quality of the projects developed by the members of this network and by the results they obtain. These initiatives, organised by very committed persons, are interesting and have a real impact on the territories. They respond specifically to local issues, especially in terms of education, equal opportunity and for other objectives decided at the European level."*



## RÉUNIR-AF: mouthpiece of agro-forestry

Co-piloted by the Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture (APCA) and Afac-Agroforesterie, RÉUNIR-AF aims to promote agro-forestry and encourage its integration into public policies. This MCDR project relies on a national partner network, which promotes its initiatives, including the organisation of national competitions on agro-forestry practices.

*"How should we improve the integration and awareness of agro-forestry systems in public policies and specifically in the CAP? The idea of RÉUNIR-AF is to get together to reflect and make proposals,"* explains Léa Lemoine, Project Manager at the Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture (APCA). RÉUNIR-AF is a MCDR project launched in 2018 in collaboration with Afac-Agroforesterie, an association convinced that the trees of the countryside are a catalyst for ecological and energy transition. *"What we mean by agro-forestry is all the trees in the fields or on farms: the hedges, the trees scattered across the meadows, the avenues of trees, the copses, the patches of forest,"* she explains.

The twenty five structures, which are partners associated under the RÉUNIR-AF umbrella, are conducting different initiatives. They meet at seminars twice a year in order to make progress on questions of public policy and agro-forestry systems. A wide-ranging survey has also been conducted among farmers and advisers on the brakes and levers in the CAP for the development of agro-forestry systems. Written on the basis of some two hundred responses, an advisory note is currently being prepared destined for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Starting in

the very first year, APCA and Afac-Agroforesterie also launched the national competition on agro-forestry practices. After a first edition conducted in four regions, this competition is now a separate section in the General Agricultural Competition in the Agro-ecological category.

Why promote agro-forestry?

Because this practice offers a number of advantages for the environment, farming and the countryside. *"Trees attract beneficial crops for the control of pests. Their root system allows them to maintain the soil structure, retain water, prevent landslides and bring nutrients to the surface,"* continues Léa Lemoine. *"On the farm, agro-forestry also makes it possible to diversify crops, to use the wood (wood fuel, litter, etc.) and to improve animal welfare."*

More than a year from the end of the project the RÉUNIR-AF pilot schemes are refining their work. *"Management policies, legal statutes, regulation ... We are going to work in groups on very specific subjects in order to produce data sheets explaining the agro-forestry system."*

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*Agroforestry makes it possible to diversify crops, to use the wood and to improve animal welfare*

More information...

<https://afac-agroforesteries.fr/reunir-af-reseau-national-pour-lagroforesterie>

Award ceremony for the Agro-forestry Practices Competition in Paris the 28th of February 2019



## For a sustainable alliance between livestock rearing and wetlands

As part of the Conservation of extensive livestock-rearing, management of wetlands project, three pilot sites are testing new territorial sustainable development projects. At the heart of this reflection: the activity of livestock rearing. Its purpose is to promote this activity in wetlands and to protect this endangered natural habitat.

Identifying and validating the solutions for maintaining livestock rearing in wetlands - marshland, humid grasslands – and to conserve these fragile environments: this is the aim of the MCDR Conservation of extensive livestock-rearing, management of wetlands project. *"The challenges for the project are twofold: on one hand, an economic sector in crisis and on the other, the artificialisation of wetlands with a major impact on biodiversity and also on the services rendered by the environment (water purification, carbon sequestration, flood regulation, etc.),"* explains the MCDR Project Manager and coordinator of the agro-ecological pole at the Forum des Marais Atlantiques. *"An alliance would be beneficial*

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*To promote the products, to adapt practices, develop systems of public aid, etc.*

*to both sides because it may be more difficult to maintain these wet areas if they are not used for economic activity."*

The project originated from the publication at the end of 2017 of a report from the General Council for Environment and Sustainable Development (CGEDD) and the Council on Food, Agriculture and Rural

Areas (CGAER), entitled *"Conservation of extensive livestock rearing, manager of the wetlands"*. In this 100-page document the authors recommend the implementation of territorial sustainable development projects between breeders and local authorities with wetlands in their area, *"with the aim of developing extensive livestock rearing and reclaiming biodiversity"*. To test this procedure, three pilot sites have been identified: the marshes of the Cotentin peninsula and Bessin (Manche and Calvados), the Brouage marshes (Charente-Maritime) and the maritime plain of the Bay of the Somme. *"It was from there that the project was launched,"* confirms

Florence Thinzilal. *"The Forum des Marais Atlantiques takes care of the organisation and coordination of the project."*

Managed by a partnership between Chambers of Agriculture and local authorities, each of the test trials on the pilot sites brings together some twenty committed breeders and concerns many subjects: adaptation and promotion of breeding practices in wetlands, promotion of the products, settling in new breeders, improvement of land management, development of systems of public aid (joint agro-environmental measures (AEM) and payments for environmental services (PES)), etc. *"For example, the Brouage marsh area, involved in a territorial food project with the Rochefort Océan agglomeration authority, has launched the first wetlands pastoral land association and is collaborating with the National Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Research (Inrae) on the use value of grasslands. Other examples are the breeders on the maritime plain in Picardy, who are developing a meat sector under the aegis of the "Baie de Somme Saveurs" trademark and the Cotentin and Bessin marsh areas where they are studying the agro-ecological value of grasslands with the University of Caen,"* says Florence Thinzilal by way of illustration.

Furthermore, all the pilot sites are involved in considering how to implement MAEC (Agro-environmental and Climatic Measures) cooperatives for the maintenance of the ditches, well thought-out management of parasitism and hay harvesting. *"MAEC cooperatives already exist in France, but they are not applicable to the trial territories. The objective is to propose to the Ministry of Agriculture a new form of MAEC cooperative by creating or modifying measures."* The initial results of the trials will be published this summer in the form of information sheets. *"One procedure sheet is used to create a pastoral land association outside mountainous areas and one summary sheet shows the value of grasslands for fodder crops."*

More information...

[www.forum-zones-humides.org/elevage.aspx](http://www.forum-zones-humides.org/elevage.aspx)





## "Sharing, mutual awareness, de-compartmentalisation and motivation must remain the key words"



© Emmanuel Pain / Région Bretagne

Interview with Laurence Fortin, President of the Commission for the development of Regions in France, Vice-president for the territorial development of the Region of Brittany.

### What is your view of the future of the NRN and the regional rural networks in the context of the future programme?

We fall within the framework of work done by the European Commission to continue to provide for the networks between actors in local development: a cohesion network for ERDF, a network for actors in rural life (known as the CAP or Rural Network) for EAFRD. It is still necessary to put actors into a network; the sharing of expertise and experiences is indispensable because solutions, which work for some, may be useful in resolving the difficulties of others and are the source of inspiration. Sharing, mutual awareness, de-compartmentalisation and motivation must remain the key words and the foundation for any future approach.

Although we have known for several years now that this is a point on which we should all improve as a community, we will no doubt have to research and promote putting much more into community approaches and linking them with those of the networks in our territories. The National Rural Network must, in this respect, allow the regional networks to affirm this link, like a transmission belt. The

Regional Networks act locally. Although they promote exchanges between actors in rural development taken as a whole on the scale of a regional territory, or even adjacent regions, they are bound to benefit from taking on board national and international expertise and experience.

### What position will Régions De France occupy in this future context of territorial development?

By reason of their competences, the Regions are major actors in territorial development taken as a whole, and they are local. Their missions in matters of management and the equality of the territories, economic development, transport and management of European funds positions them as indispensable actors, together with the infra-regional communities, to facilitate the development of the rural areas and to ensure a balance between rural life and farming. Very often, in their plans for regional management, sustainable development and the equality of the territories (SRADDET), the Regions have put the conservation of the land and farming activities at the heart of regional development. The last few weeks have given us confidence in that approach. Régions de France takes the concerns of the Regions to the national level.



## *A diversified approach for rural development is crucial*

### How do you see the management and the missions of the future CAP Network?

My idea of networks is that all those who are interested and wish to become involved in this shared culture, are members of them. Also, it is not for the Regions to manage these measures on their own; they must link in all the interested actors. In the field of rural development and notably with the role it will play in the weeks and months to come as regards EAFRD, the State remains a key actor in the organisation of the future network, even if we are convinced that rural development cannot be managed from Paris and that a diversified approach is absolutely crucial.

### What new perspectives could open up at the regional level?

The Regions are best placed to promote, pragmatically and with differentiation, the emergence of solutions adapted to the future of the rural areas and more generally to the cohesion of the territories of which they are made up of and the actors, who work towards their development.

# NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL RURAL NETWORKS

## Europe

Organised on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of March, the 16th meeting of the National Rural Networks took place in Calatayud in Spain. Some forty participants attended these days of exchanges, which gave the opportunity, in particular, to prolong the discussions on the future CAP Network begun in Ireland and in Poitiers.

After Poitiers in September 2019, it was under the skies of Saragossa, and more precisely in Calatayud that the 16th meeting of the National Rural Networks took place. Organised from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of March by the Spanish Rural Network and ENRD, the event brought together some forty members of National Rural Networks from eighteen European countries. On the first day the discussions focussed on the future of the Rural Networks and the implementation of the future CAP Network and then, on the next day, concentrated on the involvement of the actors in rural development and the techniques for organising working parties. The last day was devoted to the discovery of three projects steered by the ADRI Calatayud Local Action Group, the Niño Jesús cooperative and the Lifara rural complex. It gave the chance to stress once more the "job opportunities, economic viability and cooperation between the actors on the ground" generated by LEADER.

Inaugurated by Carolina Gutierrez Ansotegui, representing the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the first day was devoted to continuing the discussions on the future CAP Network, outlined in Ireland during the 14th meeting and clarified in Poitiers. "This 16th meeting allowed us to get to the heart of the matter," confirms Patricia Andriot from the management authority for the French Rural Network. In fact, the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) clarified the expectations of the European Commission as regards the role of the Rural Networks in the context of the next programme in 2021-2027 and the merger of the first and second pillars of the CAP. Therefore they will be expected, in addition to their current missions of setting

## Meeting of the National Rural Networks: what is the programme for the future CAP Network?

up networks and detecting good practice, to be a real support in implementing the CAP National Strategic Plans (NSP). Their future role will comprise, in particular, increasing the involvement of actors in rural development and the public authorities in the design and implementation of the NSP. "The CAP Networks will not simply be a communications tool for the European agricultural and rural funds but will play the role of a sounding board for these funds. This indeed brings a new cultural scope to that, which is expected of the Networks," notes Patricia Andriot. With this increased scope for the first and second pillars, the future CAP Network will also have the mission of supporting the implementation and dissemination of the AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems), intended to contribute to modernising farming by stimulating the sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation and, against this background, dealing with the issues of transition in order to respond to the European Green Deal.

"The challenges are many, as are the anxieties, especially as regards the place allocated to rural development," comments Patricia Andriot. The issue will be to instil confidence in the actors, to involve them and to ensure a balance of forces. The central question will therefore be that of organisation. Subjects of importance for all the Networks, the mobilisation of the actors and the organisation of the working parties, were at the heart of the technical day on the 4th of March. That day was marked by feedback from Ireland and Finland, the discovery of interactive organisational techniques (Fish bowl, Word café, escape room, citizen participation, etc.) and the different aspects to be considered in order to succeed in conducting a meeting: controlling the time, being sensitive to the atmosphere in the room, encouraging brevity from the participants, making sure that every one has the opportunity to express themselves, etc. Packed full with recommendations and examples, this day helped to enrich the organisational tools created during the Citizens' Conferences on Europe.

More information... [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/16th-nrn-meeting\\_fr](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/16th-nrn-meeting_fr)



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# NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL RURAL NETWORKS

## Greater East



Since January Clémentine Laurent and Louise Blum have been the new organisers of the Greater East Rural Network. Here they clarify their missions and the major projects for the year over a region, which is 94% rural.

In January 2020, the Greater East Rural Network welcomed two new organisers. Clémentine Laurent, based in Châlons-en-Champagne, came to this post after experience as a project manager in territorial management. Within the region she now works in partnership with Louise Blum, formerly a cartographer and manager of the environment service for the Basse-Zorn federation of municipalities, north of Strasbourg. Together, the organisers

## Two new organisers at the service of rural areas

coordinate the actors in the rural areas, mobilise them and keep them informed. They also monitor the MCDR and EIP projects. *"Involved as we are with the Local Action Groups, we have a large number of fields of action,"* says Clémentine Laurent appreciatively. *"We monitor everything going on in the region at the level of rural life, whether this be innovation, training needs, support or help,"* adds her counterpart.

This year the duo will work on several major projects. *"We have a major project for developing communication in the network,"* confides Clémentine Laurent. The organisers also want to extend the meeting organised under the umbrella of the LEADER Tour, an initiative launched in May 2019 for the purpose of promoting the Local Action Group projects with the public at large and the actors in rural development. *"We want to give the Network a real place in our region and also at the national and even European level and to show that rural life in the Greater East is alive and well,"* she continues. *"Another major project will be guiding the Local Action Groups, because we have arrived at the end of the programme,"* concludes Louise Blum. Both also intend *"to develop synergies and cooperation projects in the context of the Pact for the rural areas."* Managed by the region since 2016, the aim of this project is to *"support, develop and promote all the rural territories in their diversity"*.

More information...

[www.reseaurural.fr/region/grand-est](http://www.reseaurural.fr/region/grand-est)

## Nouvelle-Aquitaine

## Céline Karasinski, the experience of organising and guiding

*"We are working on topics like mobility in the rural environment, access to digital technology, social tourism and the hosting and accommodation of seasonal workers,"* clarifies Céline Karasinski. Europe Operations Manager at the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Chamber of Agriculture. This agricultural engineer by training is the new organiser for the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Rural Network, alongside Cécile Bonnefoy-Claudet, coordinator of the Network at the Region. A specialist in agriculture and local development, Céline has in particular been a consultant in setting up in farming outside the family circle, and advisor for agri-tourism projects and short food chains: the "Welcome to the farm" network, local producers' markets, etc. Organiser for the Poitou-Charentes Rural Network from 2012 to 2014, she subsequently integrated the English-speaking organisational team from the EIP-AGRI, a mission, which she continues to today. As an organiser of the Regional Rural Network, Céline organises in particular themed meetings. For example, a meeting dedicated to mobility; co-organised with the Landes Nature Côte d'Argent Local Action Group brought together managers in mobility and territorial development, elected representatives, officials from the CAF, the State funded family benefits scheme, services of the State and of the Region, etc. Her main objectives are: *"to inform, share experiences and work between territories sharing the same problems."*

Céline Karasinski also responds to questions from the LEADER territories wanting to set up inter-territorial or trans-national

cooperation. How do you put together a file? How do you find a partner? She helps them draft their partnership agreements with their cooperating partners and directs them to the project regulatory authorities. In addition, she produces a methodological assessment guide for the LEADER programme, in which she compiles testimonies of experience to aid the territories to fulfil their obligation to assess the current programme and to encourage them to use this tool in view of their candidature for the future European programme. Finally, she writes the citizens' summaries for the public at large, a summary of the strategies and initiatives implemented by the fifty-two Local Action Groups in Nouvelle-Aquitaine. *"They provide us with information sheets about their experience and of capitalisation on innovative examples and initiatives, which emerge from ordinary life, in order to transfer them to other territories."*



More information...

[www.reseaurural.fr/region/nouvelle-aquitaine](http://www.reseaurural.fr/region/nouvelle-aquitaine)

The French Rural Network brings together all the stakeholders in the rural world at the national and regional level to enable them to exchange and work together. The objective is to facilitate the implementation of projects linking agriculture, forestry, trade and commerce, tourism, the environment, services, etc. In the course of its work, the Rural Network offers tools, methods, analyses and recommendations.

## #MaRuralité and #MonConfinementRural your most beautiful photos

For more than three months, including during the lockdown, the Rural Network invited web surfers to share photographs of their rural area on its Facebook and Twitter accounts, initially with the hashtag #MaRuralité launched in February at the International Agricultural Trade Fair and then with #MonConfinementRural as from 17<sup>th</sup> March.

As promised, we share with you here our selection of the finest snapshots in this competition. Thank you to everyone who took part!



@ Roman LRoscoët

@ Jean-Charles Pied



@ Ph Varenne

@ A Philibert



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