



CREDIBLE
EU carbon farming



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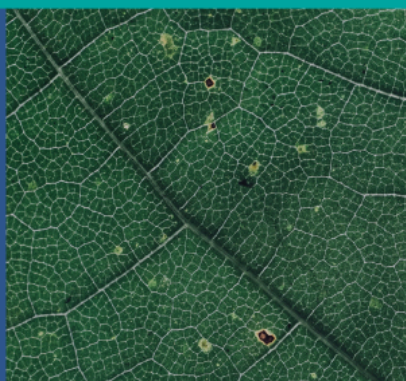
Developing fit-for-region carbon farming approaches

Project CREDIBLE: “Building momentum and trust to achieve credible soil carbon farming in the EU”.

Funded by the European Union under the Grant Agreement n° 101112951.

www.project-credible.eu

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Executive summary

This document is part of the EU-funded project CREDIBLE, Grant Agreement 101112951, and it captures the main outputs of the first round of conversations had within the Focus Group 1.5.

The main goal of this Focus Group is to generate recommendations/opinions that could be used in the development/deployment of relevant policies around carbon farming, and particularly in the definition of the Carbon Removal Certification Framework. These informed opinions have emerged through the active participation of experts (details provided in Tables 1 and 2) in a number of activities (with the main ones listed in Table 3).

In order to convey the recommendations to the broader possible audience, the following sections have been included in the document: i) an introduction, which helps clarifying the problem and why addressing this topic was considered important by the CREDIBLE consortium; ii) a short process report, which summarises the conversations held by the Focus Group, highlighting the key points and tensions that emerged and; iii) a summary of recommendations, listing in a concise way the opinion of the Focus Group on how to best solve some of these tensions.

1. Focus Group participation and activities

Table 1 - Partners of CREDIBLE who participated in the Focus Group.

Name of the expert	Affiliation	Role*	Country
Ján Hegyi ^a	Bioeconomy Cluster - BEC	Chair	SK
Kaj Granholm ^a	Baltic Sea Action Group	co-chair	FI
Ana Mota	SAE	member	ES
Andrea Ferrarini ^a	UCSC	“	IT



Clara Diebolt ^a	AC3A	“	FR
+ FG members not attending the first meeting:			
John Couwenberg	University of Greifswald	“	
Iryna Raiskaya	University of Greifswald	substitute	DE
Gerald Jurasinski	University of Greifswald	substitute	DE
Tristano Bacchetti	SAE	observer	ES
Daniel Acs	Bioeconomy Cluster - BEC	co-chair	SK

* Lead (of the Focus Group); Member; Rapporteur; Observer...

Table 2 - Members of the Focus Group external to CREDIBLE.

Name of the expert	Affiliation	Role*	Country
Alexandra Obdržálková	Comenius University Bratislava	member	SK
Ondrej Mišák ^a	Agricultural Cooperative Vajnory	“	SK
Michael Löbmann ^a	Svensk Kolinlagring	“	SE
Nicola Dall'olio	Emilia Romagna region	substitute	IT
Antonio Totaro	Emilia Romagna region	“	IT
George Papapostolou ^a	Foodscale Hub	member	GR
Tomasz Kowalczewski ^a	AGREENA	“	PL
Chiara Ferronato	Region Emilia-Romagna	substitute	IT
Giampaolo Sarno ^a	Region Emilia-Romagna	member	IT
Patrizia Alberti	Region Emilia-Romagna	substitute	IT



Siobhan Ward ^a	Ward Agricultural Consultants	member	IE
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*) Lead (of the Focus Group); Member; Rapporteur; Observer...

^a) attended the first FG meeting

Table 3 - List of main activities carried out to steer the conversations.

General description of the activity	Date of execution
1 st meeting of the Focus Group	6 February 2024
Breakout session (#4) at the first Carbon Farming Summit	6 March 2024
Exchange on this milestone report	3-5 April 2024

2. Introduction

Sustainable carbon farming integrated in productive agriculture and forestry requires regional and site-specific adaptation and supportive structures (including advisory and other services, monitoring, value chain development). For certified carbon removals, the Q.U.A.L.I.T.Y criteria proposed by the Commission imply demands on the application, monitoring and safeguarding the practices and schemes, the full implications of which can only be understood through testing in regional pilots, also subject to the policy environment in the given region. The regional clusters involved in the CREDIBLE project serve as an inspiration for developing guidelines that could be used by regional carbon scheme developers. Through engagement of key stakeholders, the regional clusters can develop into operational Carbon Farming Living Labs, supporting the Horizon Europe Soil Mission, applied research and European policy development.



The Focus Group's role is to support the regional clusters in developing carbon farming solutions. The Focus Group should in particular contribute with expert knowledge and best practice examples on the various elements of the implementing framework to advance sustainable carbon farming in agriculture and forestry.

3. Discussions

First meeting

In the first meeting, the group got introduced to each other and the main elements of the four clusters involved in the CREDIBLE consortium BEC (Slovakia), Carbon Action (Finland) as well as the regions of Emilia Romagna (Italy) and Murcia (Spain). The tour-de-table discussion dealt with the local and farm level adaptation of any carbon farming scheme, the importance of agricultural advisory and ensuring agronomic benefit for the farmer. The group also discussed the need for standards and considerations for blended investment schemes which need to meet investor, public and farmer expectations.

As an outcome of the meeting, some common messages were raised:

- Carbon farming is ultimately practised at farm level, but farmers are frustrated with policy rules, uncertain about the applicability and effects of the prescribed measures and discontent about the financial compensation for the measures and ecosystem services provided.
- Schemes must be region-fitted, consider regional objectives, cropping systems and policies.
- Measures should be multi-objective and support sustainability transformation of food production.
- Implementation must be supported by qualified, personal agricultural advisory, experimentation and peer support.
- Standards and certificates are needed at European scale to connect the value chain and investors.



Session at the first Carbon Farming Summit

A breakout session dedicated to the topic of FG 1.5 was included in the Carbon Farming Summit 2024. The session titled **Developing fit-for-region carbon farming** attracted 75 registered participants, with appr. 60 persons attending. The session featured altogether 8 presentations and pitches and two rounds of discussions in groups. The group topics were 1. Establishing regional need and vision, 2. Building regional CFS through Living labs, 3. Gearing up regional initiatives for EU policy development and 4. Public-private partnerships for economic and ecosystem goods.

The following provides a snapshot of the presentations and pitches and a summary of the group discussions.

- **BEC:** Building and operationalizing a Living Lab on Regenerative farming and certification.
- **FMI/Carbon Action:** Multiple layers and methods need to be integrated in the MRV system in order to serve the diverse context of carbon farming schemes, farm data mining and quality a challenge.
- **FoodScaleHub/CARBONICA:** Local and regional small-scale pilots can be very interactive between parties, develop smart specialization strategies and help develop tailored carbon farming protocols.
- **Murcia Region/LIFE AMDRY4C:** Emerging living labs to develop solutions for rainfed dryland farming. Potential for development bank investment, carbon certification in process.
- **Flanders Region/ILVO:** Regional roadmap developed with the ministry, need to streamline ecosystem, policy and regulation to support a local vision, scheme and MRV.
- **Swedish Carbon Sequestration (SK):** Aiming for a methodology with an education programme to support transition holistically and reward for ecosystem service, regional level pilots needed to establish carbon farming approaches, thresholds and baselines.
- **ETIFOR/LIFE Climate Positive:** 5 case studies and pilot areas to develop and test viable carbon farming schemes, forest management organization and business models for ecosystem services.



- **Carboneg:** Carbon farming methodology with aim to scale globally.

1. Strong central (EU/national) public sector role with complementary local/regional adaptation and dimension is key to success. Public bodies are responsible for allocating resources for standardised baseline setting for each region, and ensure harmonised certification schemes and methodologies. Public administration must also retain overall responsibility and sufficient resourcing for agricultural advisory services needed to guide farmers in the transition. Public seed grants are a good way to support farmers in early transition, or as springboards for larger long-term partnerships.

2. Several national or global carbon farming schemes are already in place but some are not mature enough or they lack interest of farmers/stakeholders. All of the carbon farming schemes of course need to consider regional aspects which are very specific for each region. This could be solvable via building regional carbon farming schemes through Living Labs because they could engage all of the stakeholders. There is still a lack of awareness about Living Labs and their potential role in the future.

3. The main purpose of carbon farming schemes should be to complement the public funding to support carbon farming transition and create value added for all stakeholders, through e.g. increasing sustainability at farm level and paying for ecosystem services that are not recognized or valued today. In addition to credibility, trust and harmonised MRV, the main challenges are fairness (inclusiveness of front runners and small-scale farmers), securing long term interest of both investors and farmers, fit with regulatory systems as well as resources, quality and availability for agricultural advisory services.

4. Due to high degree of diversity between regions and the strong linkages to regional context (climate, environment, economy, socio-cultural context), regional pilot projects implemented with a strong public coordination in partnership with the private sector can increase understanding on viable governance mechanisms, help build local governance capacity, increase trust and attract private sector interest. Attention to data quality and management are keys to viable and scalable schemes.



Overall, the session supported the working topics of FG 1.5, emphasising the utilisation and benefits of regional pilots and local and international collaboration to develop carbon farming standards, schemes and business models. It also very much supported holistic sustainability and multiple benefits as the objective of carbon farming.

4. Outcome and plans going forward

The EU Carbon Farming Summit strengthened the common interests and objectives of the FG, supporting also the CREDIBLE project work plan tasks regarding inter-task/inter-WP and inter-regional collaboration. Through the summit, contacts with further regional actors and projects were established for expanding collaboration. Strong shared views about the roles of public-private sectors and regional vs national/EU levels help mutual understanding and alignment.

Following the summit, there is interest to develop collaboration in lessons, assessment, testing, piloting and CFS development with projects, clusters and emerging Living Labs in CF practices, farm adaptation, advisory and management, impacts, MRV and governance arrangements.

Expanding the CREDIBLE network, the FG will seek to strengthen regional administration collaboration and CREDIBLE contribution to regional climate strategies and European collaboration, also exploring pathways for better farmer representation for regional and EU level discussions.





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