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FIELDS: Addressing the current and Future skIll needs for sustainabilty, digitalization, and the bio-Economy in AgricuLture: European skills agenDa

Newsletter #7

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FIELDS final conference

The FIELDS project was carried out with the active participation of the 31 partners from 12 different countries, that worked on the problems that the EU agricultural sector faces nowadays, identifying necessary skills to face those problems.

The results of the project were presented at the **Final Conference** at FoodDrinkEurope in Brussels on 11 April 2024. The main objective of the event was to present the results accomplished during the project and the lessons learned, including a session for reflection and discussion on the Agrifood Pact for Skills and other related EU projects.

Remigio Berruto, from the University of Turin, and Lorenza Lirosi, from FoodDrinkEurope, opened the conference and welcomed all the participants.

Jonas Lazaro, from DG GROW and Bertrand Collignon, from DG AGRI, made a presentation of the Pact for Skills, a skills partnership for the Agri-Food Ecosystem launched by the European Commission.

The ambition of this Pact is to upskill and reskill the current workforce and make the agri-food ecosystem more attractive to young people, while providing a career and life-long learning perspective to both, employers, and workers.

The FIELDS project takes part in this Pact, among other companies, associations, EU organizations, universities, federations, or training centers, supporting the EU to develop this plan. The current members were presented, and they stated that the community of stakeholders is growing.

Remigio Berruto, UNITO and Lorenza Lirosi, FDE presented the Pact for Skills website, where all the information you need to know can be found: How to join the Pact, the members, the projects involved, and some News and Events related to the Pact for Skills. End-users may also find a data base with public documents or results of the FIELDS project. A picture of the Homepage can be found below, and the page can be visited at the following link: www.agrifood-pact4skills.eu.

Partners had the chance to talk about different country Pact for Skills experiences with the new training policies from the FIELDS project. Daniele Rossi, CONFAGRICOLTURA, presented the Italian experience. They tested the new training intervention model involving different phases:

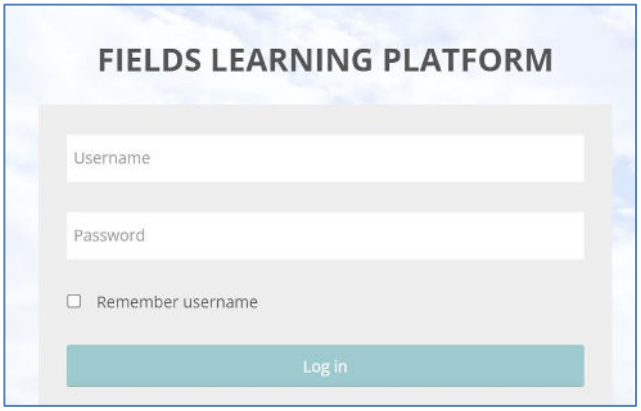
(I) Data collection, (II) Processes mapping and identification of activities, (III) Process analysis, (IV) Skills assessment, (V) Development of training interventions, and (VI) Experimentation in groups of companies.

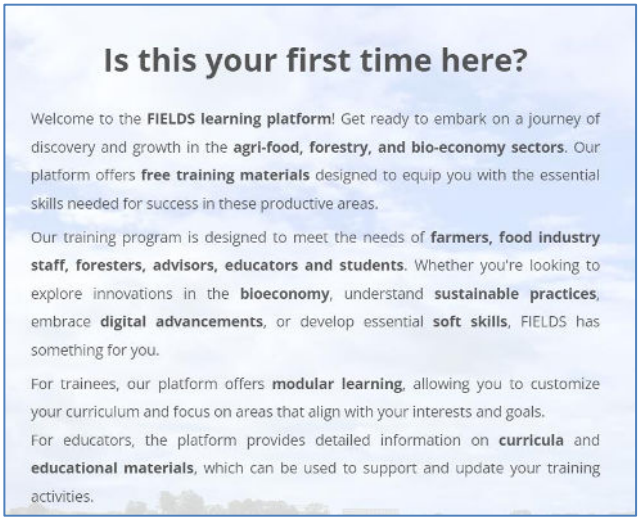
Jacques Trienekens, Wageningen University, presented the experience from The Netherlands. They had a two-phases training with 2 survey questionnaires where 48 experts participated. Those answers were analyzed and research reports and policy documents were elaborated.

Billy Goodburn, ICOS, gave the Ireland and Latvia perspectives, showing the active members from each country (113 Ireland; 93 Latvia) and giving some numbers about the member companies and their involvement on the trainings. He also highlighted the *Skillnet Ireland*, that is recognized as the best practice model for its impact on businesses and contribution to the economy.

Domingos Godinho, CONFAGRI - PORTUGAL, finished with Portuguese experience, with a total number of 160 members. CONFAGRI has been member of the core agrifood group of the Pact for Skills, and thus its strongly involved in different activities, like organizing events to discuss the Portuguese agrifood sector.

During the conference, the main outcomes of the project were presented, such as **the FIELDS website**, the Curricula database to complement the information on educational providers, the Best Practices database with information of successes in the project areas, or the launching of its innovative **Learning Management System (LMS)** and **FIELDS Training Platform**, which represent a significant step towards enhancing skills and fostering sustainability in the agricultural sector.





One of the highlights presented is the **Train the Trainer session**. This event marked a key step in addressing the skills needs in sustainability, digitalization, and the bio-economy within agriculture, food industry and forestry across Europe. Trainers had the opportunity to engage directly with experts.

Training the trainers is a critical aspect of the project, as they will serve as the catalysts for change in the agricultural sector. They will be responsible for passing on their knowledge and expertise to the next generation of agricultural professionals.

The attendees to the Final Conference also had the opportunity to learn about other EU projects. Rui Costa, ESAC, Portugal, presented the outcomes from the **EQVegan project** (https://eqvegan.eu/), focused on training and certification for the food industry; Paola Pittia, UNITE, Italy, presented the outcomes from the **ASKFOOD project** (https://www.askfood.eu/), which represent an Alliance for skills and knowledge to widen food sector-related open innovation, optimization and development; and attendees also learnt about the **SD4S project** (Social Dialogue for Skills project), explained by Sergi Querald, GEOPA.

Finally, the priorities for collaborating with the Pact for Skills and the European Commission's perspective were considered and the event concluded with the closing speeches from COPA-COGECA and FoodDrinkEurope.

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