



ERIAFF NEWS

European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry



Catalonia Hosts the 11th ERIAFF Annual Conference: Driving Bioeconomy Forward

Míriam González

From April 7–9, 2025, Catalonia, Spain, will host the 11th ERIAFF Annual Conference, bringing together policy makers, researchers, and industry leaders for an inspiring exchange on the future of Europe's bioeconomy.

This year's theme, "Transformative Innovation: Circular Bioeconomy for Rural Development and Resilient Landscapes," highlights the power of innovation in implementing a locally-based circular bioeconomy. By making the most of local bioresources, regions can boost rural development, strengthen agroforestry landscapes, and lead the way in Europe's transition to sustainable bioproducts and bioservices.

More than just a conference, this is a chance to connect, collaborate, and create lasting impact. Through engaging discussions, knowledge sharing, and networking opportunities, we will explore how regional policies, research, and collaboration can contribute to the 2025 update of the European Bioeconomy Strategy.

Join us to drive a resilient, sustainable and innovative bioeconomy forward! Read more at <https://www.congresbit.cat/en/eriaff-2025/> and join us on line at <https://youtube.com/live/DVJn5ha3Nms?feature=share>.

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The European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry is an informal network of regional authorities, founded in 2012 in Florence. Currently, it includes 53 member regions and 39 observers from 21 European countries.

Tuscany Region provides the secretariat as concrete support to the network's activities.

Be part of Eriaaff as a member and active in its working groups is open and voluntary, no financial obligations are required. Additionally, it's also possible to participate as observers for regional or non-regional entities.

Eriaaff is led by a Coordination Committee, which defines the overall strategy, establishes new working groups, organizes meetings and the calendar of Annual Conference. Furthermore, the network develops policy documents on key strategic issues, including the position paper on "EU's Future Forests" and the position paper as a contribution for the "New European Bioeconomy Strategy".

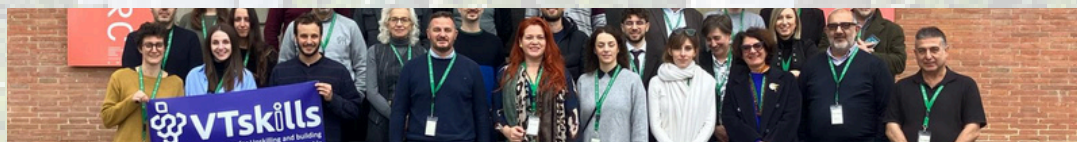
We welcome to join the network at: <https://www.eriaff.com/>



VTSkills: Advancing Sustainable Viticulture through Precision Agriculture in the Mediterranean

Alessandra Gemmiti

The "VTskills" project is an innovative initiative focused on promoting sustainability in Mediterranean viticulture. Coordinated by the University of Seville, it involves 13 partners from five EU member states, primarily from the ERIAFF network. The project aims to develop Sustainable Precision Agriculture practices in the wine sector, combining Precision Agriculture with organic practices to improve efficiency and sustainability. Running from January 2024 for three years, it will focus on training, innovation, and knowledge transfer, creating a transnational curriculum for sustainable viticulture. The project seeks to address challenges faced by small businesses, support the transition to more sustainable farming practices, and align with European environmental policies like the Green Deal and the CAP. An "e-demofarm" will also be created to raise awareness and promote best practices.



JOIN US

ERIAFF remains open to new adhesions and welcomes you to the 2025 edition of the E-News.

We are pleased to cooperate with those organizations and projects that are sharing the same values and objectives of our network.

More information about ERIAFF:

<http://www.eriaff.com/>

ERIAFF Secretariat:

info@eriaff.com

Sustainable Proteins Working Group at the ERIAFF Annual Conference

Sustainable Proteins and Plants Working Group

The new EU Vision of Agriculture and Food highlights the Union's heavy reliance on imported proteins, making its food system vulnerable to market fluctuations and sustainability risks. To address this, European regions play a crucial role in promoting sustainable protein diversification.

The former Plant-Based Proteins Working Group has been renamed the Sustainable Proteins Working Group, broadening its scope to include alternative proteins and sustainable diets.



This group unites European regions and R&I actors to enhance protein diversification, production, and awareness. Activities include knowledge exchange, project development and EU policy advocacy.

At the ERIAFF Annual Conference, the group will co-host a session with the Agroecology, Food Systems, and Plants Working Groups on 9 April (8:45–11:00 CET) to foster networking and collaboration.

Shaping Sustainable Food Systems Together FOODPathS Festival

Food Systems Working Group

You are warmly invited to participate in the "FOODPathS Festival – Building Tomorrow's Sustainable Food Systems Together", taking place from May 20–22, 2025, in Brussels. The event will gather policy makers, researchers, funders, NGOs, civil society representatives and industry stakeholders to collaboratively discuss and develop a prototype partnership aimed to achieve sustainable food systems both within Europe and globally.



The festival will offer opportunities for insightful discussions, interactive sessions, and networking. Regional perspectives are particularly welcomed and valued to help shape inclusive and practical partnerships. As part of the program, ERIAFF Secretariat representative Samuele Pii will join an expert panel in the session "Inclusive Partnerships in Real-Life: A Major Challenge," scheduled for May 21.

The FOODPathS Festival is a valuable opportunity to engage with stakeholders from the FutureFoodS partnership, explore inspiring case studies, and contribute to defining pathways toward sustainable food systems.

You can register and find additional information here: [Register here](#)

European Forest Innovation Workshop

Forested Regions Working Group

The 6th European Forest Innovation Workshop, held on February 11-12, 2025, in Brussels, focused on the role of innovation in sustainable forestry across Europe. Co-organized by the FOREST4EU Horizon Europe Project, the European Forest Institute (EFI), the ERIAFF Network, the Tuscany Region, and other key partners, the event brought together over 210 participants, including 55 distinguished speakers and representatives from the European Commission's DG Agri.



The workshop addressed critical themes, such as Sustainable Forest Management, emphasizing strategies to enhance biodiversity, improve carbon sequestration, and develop climate-adaptive practices. Discussions also highlighted the role of Bioeconomy and Value Chains, focusing on small forest ownership and agroforestry systems. Experts explored Digitalization in Forestry, discussing the integration of digital tools to optimize forest management. Social Innovation emerged as a key theme, with a focus on community engagement and supporting forest-dependent communities. The event emphasized the need for continued collaboration to ensure sustainable forestry practices across Europe.

Tuscany at the Helm of ERIAFF Communication

Communication Working Group

Drawing on the experience gained from Extremadura, Tuscany is preparing to assume a key role, coordinating ERIAFF's communication for innovation in agriculture. The proposal will be officially presented during the Annual Conference in Vic, scheduled from April 7th to 9th, 2025. The ambitious goal is to significantly amplify the visibility and impact of the initiatives promoted by ERIAFF. A primary focus will be placed on strengthening the ties between members through the implementation of targeted and effective communication strategies.



Central elements of this strategy will be the dynamic evolution of the website and an active presence on social media, capable of generating continuous added value for the entire network. An interactive survey, conducted during the conference, will gather valuable insights for the definition of an incisive communication plan. This plan will subsequently be developed by a dedicated working group, with the ambition of transforming eriaff.com into a reference platform for rural development in Europe.



Alvaro Picardo Nieto

The SMURF project, funded by Horizon Europe, aims to enhance knowledge and functionality within European forest value chains, focusing on Small Forest Holdings (SFHs) and owners, to support sustainable and multifunctional forest management. Running from 2024 to 2027 with a €5.4M budget and led by the CESEFOR foundation, the project allocates €1M through cascade funding to over 40 forest owner organizations across 27 EU countries. SMURF addresses challenges like forest fragmentation, low profitability, and global risks while seizing opportunities in digitalization, bioproduct markets, and the Circular Bioeconomy.



Activities include legal framework and support systems' analysis, new Close to Nature Silviculture models, networking initiatives, and developing payment systems for ecosystem services. SMURF fosters stakeholder collaboration and promotes improved forestry management through tools like a European carbon credits standard and blockchain-based platforms. Anchored in Horizon Europe goals, SMURF seeks to revitalize small forest holdings for greater ecological, social, and economic impact across the EU.

More info at: <https://www.smurfproject.eu/the-project/>



**ERIAFF, YOUR NETWORK FOR
COLLABORATION**

contact us at
info@eriaff.com