

INSPIA project: European Index for Sustainable and Productive Agriculture

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The concept of sustainable development has evolved from a mere perception for the protection of the environment, to a holistic approach, seeking to preserve not only the environment, but also to achieve sustainability in economics and social wellbeing. Globally, there is a major challenge to face in the agricultural sector: to produce more food, feed and other raw materials to satisfy the increasing demand of a growing population, whilst also contributing to economic prosperity, climate change mitigation / adaptation, social wellbeing and preserving natural capital such as soil, water, biodiversity and other ecosystem services. Nowadays, conventional approaches to agriculture are under threat. A more productive and resource efficient agriculture that integrates natural resource protection into its approach will help to meet all these challenges, enabling us to have more of everything – more food, more feed, more non-food crops, more biodiversity and natural habitats – while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In this context, INSPIA is an innovative approach that has worked since 2013 towards demonstration that sustainable productive agriculture is possible thanks to the implementation of a host of best management practices (BMPs) capable of delivering the above achievements. The purpose on INSPIA is to make visible with European decision makers that a sustainable and productive agricultural model exists in a small scale in Europe and that wider dissemination is possible with enabling legislation.

INSPIA is demonstrating sustainable agriculture through the implementation of BMPs and the measurement and monitoring of a set of defined indicators (economic, social and environmental ones). INSPIA promotes sustainable practices that protect biodiversity, soils and water and contribute towards maintaining ecosystems services. This holistic sustainable system of productive agriculture is based on the combination of Conservation Agriculture (CA) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Therefore, the optimised use of agricultural technologies is considered to the extent they help farmers achieve their objectives, particularly their competitiveness. The principal BMPs flagged by CA that ensure biodiversity and environmental protection for a productive agriculture are based on minimum soil disturbance, permanent soil cover, and crop rotations.

The project covers over 50 farms in Belgium, Denmark, France and Spain. INSPIA is promoting the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices throughout Europe by:

- Raising awareness among EU policy stakeholders, technicians and farmers in favour of sustainable agriculture.
- Recognition of farmers needs for helping dissemination of sustainable agriculture
- Demonstrating that BMPs help to achieve sustainability in European agriculture. Provide a sustainable output graph based on a set of verifiable indicators; comparatives, evolution in time among others.
- Consolidating a farm network in Belgium, Denmark, France and Spain to enable the validation, demonstration and communication of BMPs (first step), and extend this farm network to other countries (second step).

Whereas the final objectives are:

- Obtain adapted environmental and agricultural policies
- Obtain recognition by farmers, decision makers and private sector of Sustainable Agriculture (Conservation Agriculture / ecological intensification with optimization across crop protection solutions) and of their operators (farmers in this system and their organizations / companies supportive)