EU-NESA
Network for Evidence Synthesis in the Agri-food Sector

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

About the Action

Founded in October 2024, the Network for Evidence Synthesis in the Agri-food Sector (EU-NESA) is an international, Europe-based network dedicated to supporting and promoting the use of evidence synthesis to inform decision-making across agri-food systems.

Scientific Programme

The scientific programme of EU-NESA is organised into five interdisciplinary Working Groups, each addressing a specific component of the Action's research agenda over the four-year duration of the project.

Past Events



Evidence Synthesis Conference and Stakeholder Workshop

EU-NESA successfully hosted its inaugural International Scientific Conference 2026, held in Čačak, Serbia, brought together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders from across Europe and beyond to advance evidence synthesis in agri-food systems.

The conference featured oral, short, and poster presentations, alongside sessions on evidence synthesis methods, artificial intelligence, research infrastructure, and the translation of evidence into policy for sustainable and climate-resilient food systems. Participants also engaged in interactive workshops on evidence-informed decision-making, the use of 3ie's Development Evidence Portal, building the evidence synthesis ecosystem for agri-food systems, and practical meta-analysis in R.

The event concluded with a field visit to Podrum Želja in Mionica, providing an opportunity for continued networking and discussion while showcasing local agricultural production, tradition, and hospitality. The conference highlighted the strength of collaboration across the EU-NESA network and helped shape future priorities for evidence synthesis in the agri-food sector.

Stakeholder Engagement

Cacak, Serbia



On 24 April 2024, EU-NESA hosted its first Stakeholder Roundtable on Evidence Synthesis in Agri-Food, bringing together farmers, Serbian Chamber of Commerce, local government, NGOs, and evidence synthesis experts to explore how evidence can better support decision-making across the agri-food sector. Held alongside the EU-NESA International Scientific Conference in Čačak, Serbia, the roundtable featured discussions on evidence needs, barriers to evidence uptake, and opportunities to strengthen evidence-informed policy and practice. The event marked an important first step in EU-NESA's efforts to build stronger evidence-to-decision pathways and develop a model for future stakeholder engagement across the network, and was even featured on Serbian television.

Introductory training School Vienna - Austria



Held on 2-3 July 2026 in Vienna, the EU-NESA Introductory Training School on Evidence Synthesis provided participants with practical skills and methodological training while fostering collaboration between early-career and established researchers. Over the two-day programme, participants explored what makes a systematic review transparent, reproducible, and focused and policy-relevant research questions, develop transparent search and screening strategies, systematically extract and critically appraise evidence, and select appropriate evidence synthesis and evidence mapping approaches. The training combined methodological instruction with interactive learning and discussion, strengthening participants' capacity to conduct high-quality evidence syntheses for evidence-informed decision-making in the agri-food sector

Advanced Training School
Malaga, Spain



From 27-29 September, the EU-NESA Training School on Evidence Synthesis in Agri-Food was held at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Málaga, bringing together researchers for two days of intensive learning and collaboration. Opened by Nicola Randall, Chair of EU-NESA COST Action CA23107, and hosted by Alfonso Expósito García, the training was delivered by Rafael José Vieira, Gavin Stewart, and Manuel Marques da Cruz. Over the two days, participants explored meta-analysis methods, effect sizes, heterogeneity, publication bias, and the application of artificial intelligence in evidence synthesis, while gaining hands-on experience using R and the metafor package with practical agri-food case studies. The event also provided valuable opportunities for networking, peer learning, and knowledge exchange, helping to strengthen capacity for transparent and evidence-informed decision-making in agri-food systems.

Event Participation Statistics

Event	Face-to-Face Participants	Online Participants
Conference & Stakeholder Workshop, Čačak	57	23
Training School, Vienna	33	N/A
Training School, Malaga	41	N/A

Grants and Awards

Grant Period 2 (October 2025 to October 2026)

EU-NESA continued to support collaboration and capacity building through several grant schemes:

- Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM): 3 awards
- Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants: 13 awards
- ITC Conference Grants: 1 award

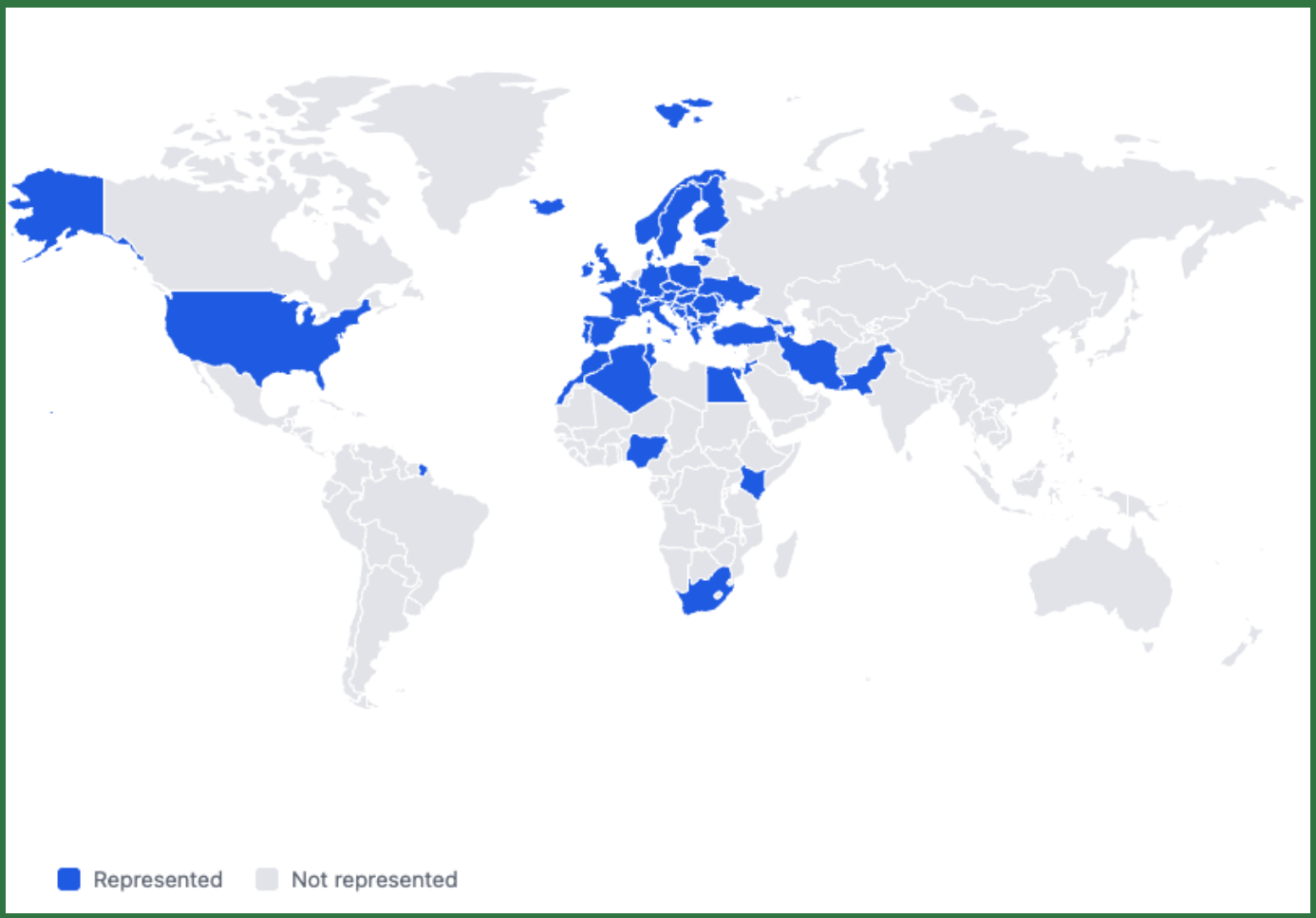
Hackathon Participation

Eight researchers representing six countries received EU-NESA funding to participate in a Hackathon in Trondheim, providing valuable opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and networking.

EU-NESA Membership Snapshot

The network continues to grow and strengthen its international reach.

- Total Members: 334
- Countries Represented: 51
- Members from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs): 215
- Young Researchers and Innovators: 166



Upcoming Events and Calls

1. STSM and Virtual Mobility Calls

Details of the next open grant call, eligibility criteria, deadlines, and application procedures will be available on the EU-NESA website.

2. Webinar Series

A series of webinars will be launched in January to provide members with opportunities to learn from experts, exchange experiences, and stay informed about developments in evidence synthesis and evidence-informed policymaking.

Evidence Synthesis and Evidence-to-Policy Events to Watch

For those interested in evidence synthesis, evidence-informed policymaking, knowledge mobilisation, and research impact, the following events may be of interest:

Cochrane Colloquium 2026 – Kraków, Poland

8–10 December 2026

Cochrane Evidence: Living, Trusted, Transformed

A major international gathering for the evidence-synthesis community, with themes including living evidence, responsible AI in evidence synthesis, equity and inclusion, methodological innovation and trust in evidence.

European Evaluation Society (EES) Biennial Conference 2026 – Lille, France

26–30 October 2026

Evaluation for Vibrant Democracies

The flagship event of the European Evaluation Society, bringing together researchers, evaluators, policymakers and practitioners to discuss developments in evaluation theory, methodology and practice.

Tools4CAP Final Conference – Brussels, Belgium

17–18 November 2026

Evidence-informed policymaking and strategic choices for the future CAP

Particularly relevant to researchers working at the intersection of agriculture, evidence and policy. The conference will explore how evidence, tools and governance can support strategic choices for the future Common Agricultural Policy.

London Evidence Syntheses and Research Use Seminars – UK

Every other month | London & online

Hosted jointly by the EPPI Centre and the Centre for Evaluation at LSHTM. These free hybrid seminars focus specifically on innovations and challenges in evidence-synthesis methods and the use of research evidence.

Networks Worth Following

Campbell Collaboration

An international social-science research network focused on producing and promoting high-quality, policy-relevant evidence syntheses. Its work spans social policy, education, international development and other areas particularly relevant to evidence-informed decision-making.

EPPI Centre – UCL

A leading UK centre for systematic reviews, evidence synthesis and research use. Its work explicitly connects evidence synthesis with policy and practice, making it particularly relevant for researchers interested in evidence-to-impact.

European Community of Practice on Evidence-Informed Policymaking

A European Commission initiative connecting people and organisations interested in strengthening the use of evidence in policymaking.

Collaboration for Environmental Evidence An open community of stakeholders working towards a sustainable global environment and the conservation of biodiversity. Seeks to promote and deliver evidence syntheses on issues of greatest concern to environmental policy and practice.

Member Spotlight

Share Your Story:
Have you benefited from joining EU-NESA? We would love to feature your experience in a future newsletter. Whether through training schools, grants, leadership opportunities, publications, conference participation, or collaborations, your story can inspire other members and showcase the impact of the network. If you would like to be featured. Contact the WG5 Communication Team at m.umar@greenwich.ac.uk

How EU-NESA Helped Shape My Career Journey



Ife Abulude, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Cambridge.

After reviewing the objectives of the Working Groups and the broader goals of the Action, I joined EU-NESA in 2024. One of my earliest opportunities was receiving funding to attend the Training School at Harper Adams University. During the Training School, I learned about the open position for Co-Leader of Working Group 4.

Recognising the opportunity to contribute to the network while developing professionally, I applied and was successfully appointed.

As WG4 Co-Leader, I became actively involved in recruiting members, supporting the organisation of training schools across Europe, and helping to coordinate annual activities, including the inaugural EU-NESA conference in Čačak. These experiences strengthened my expertise in evidence synthesis while also developing my leadership, project management, coordination, and stakeholder engagement skills.

The knowledge and experience gained through EU-NESA significantly strengthened my professional profile. These experiences contributed to securing my current role at the University of Cambridge and positioned me to contribute to a government-funded project focused on synthesising evidence for the UK agri-food sector and supporting evidence-informed policy development.

My involvement in EU-NESA expanded both my professional network and research capabilities while providing invaluable leadership experience. I strongly encourage researchers, particularly early-career researchers interested in evidence synthesis, to engage with the network and take advantage of the many opportunities it offers for learning, collaboration, leadership, and career development.

Member Success Stories

We are keen to celebrate the achievements of our members. Possible success stories may include:

- Successful completion of an STSM or Virtual Mobility Grant
- Publications resulting from EU-NESA collaborations
- Conference presentations and awards
- New research partnerships
- Career progression linked to EU-NESA activities
- Grant funding secured through network collaborations

Members are encouraged to share their achievements with the WG5 Communication Team.

If you are interested, kindly email:

marko.mancic@masfak.niac.rs

Appointments

Meet Dr Umar, New Working Group 5 Leader.



We are delighted to welcome Dr Umar as the new Working Group 5 (Community Building, Dissemination and Communication) Leader for EU-NESA.

An interdisciplinary researcher and agri-food systems resilience expert based at the UK Met Office and the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), University of Greenwich, Dr Umar brings extensive experience in connecting research with policy, practice, industry, and society. His work focuses on strengthening food systems resilience, climate change adaptation, governance, and sustainable development.

As WG5 Leader, Dr Umar will help drive EU-NESA's communication and engagement activities, supporting knowledge dissemination, stakeholder engagement, website development, social media outreach, newsletter production, and the organisation of Action conferences. His experience in leadership, education, and community building positions him well to strengthen connections across the network and enhance the visibility and impact of EU-NESA's outputs.

Please join us in welcoming Dr Umar to this important leadership role. We look forward to working together to expand EU-NESA's reach and foster a vibrant evidence synthesis community across the agri-food sector.

Core Leadership Team

Action Leadership

- **Action Chair and Grant Holder Scientific Representative:** Nicola Randall, Harper Adams University, United Kingdom
- **Action Vice-Chair:** Ranka Junge, Ecotechnology Consulting GmbH, Switzerland
- **Science Communication Coordinator:** Marko Mancic, Masinski Fakultet, University of Niš, Serbia
- **Co-Science Communication Coordinator:** Georgia Mitrousia, Rothamsted Research, United Kingdom
- **Grant Awarding Coordinator:** Sarah Milliken, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom

Working Group Leaders

- **WG1 Leader:** Radmila Ilic, Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak, University of Kragujevac, Serbia
- **WG1 Co-Leader:** Alfonso Exposito, University of Malaga, Spain
- **WG2 Leader:** Rafael José Vieira, Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Portugal
- **WG3 Leader:** Claudia Di Bene, CREA-AA, Italy
- **WG3 Co-**Leader Univerzitet Milena Rajic, U Nisu, Serbia
- **WG4 Leader:** Serena unCaucci, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany
- **WG4 Co-Leader:** Ifeoluwa Abulude, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany
- **WG5 Leader:** Mohammed Umar, UK Met Office & Natural Resources Institute (NRI), University of Greenwich, United Kingdom
- **WG5 Co-Leader:** Magdalena Raftowicz, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland

To join and become a member, click here.

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Funded by the European Union