Living Labs: a chance for practitioners to work with researchers

Problem

Organic farming and agricultural research remain disconnected; knowledge gaps persist, leaving practitioners without solutions tailored to real farm conditions.

Applicability box

Theme

Environment and society

Keywords

Environment; Society; Living Lab

Solution

Living Labs (Figure 1) link organic farmers and researchers to co-create knowledge. They test innovation on farms, adapting to local soil, climate, and management conditions.

Benefits

Joint learning improves practices, builds trust, strengthens resilience, sustainability, and innovation. Farmers act as **co-creators**, ensuring **results are useful.**

Practical recommendations

For Farmers

- Plan time for coordination — treat meetings as part of the learning process, not as extra work.
- Agree early on roles, data-sharing rules, and expected outcomes.
- Start small: test new practices on limited plots before scaling up.
- Build trust through transparency — share both successes and failures.
- Use advisors or facilitators to translate between research and practice.
- Include no-treatment plots and document experiences, so benefits become visible to all partners.

Good practices for farmers, advisors and researchers:

- Engage actively from the start: co-define goals and on-farm experiments.
- Keep transparent records and share practical results, even when outcomes are mixed.
- Dedicate time for reflection with peers and researchers.
- View Living Labs as long-term learning, not just short projects.

Living Labs are rooted directly on farms and must always be adapted to the site-specific context of each farm.

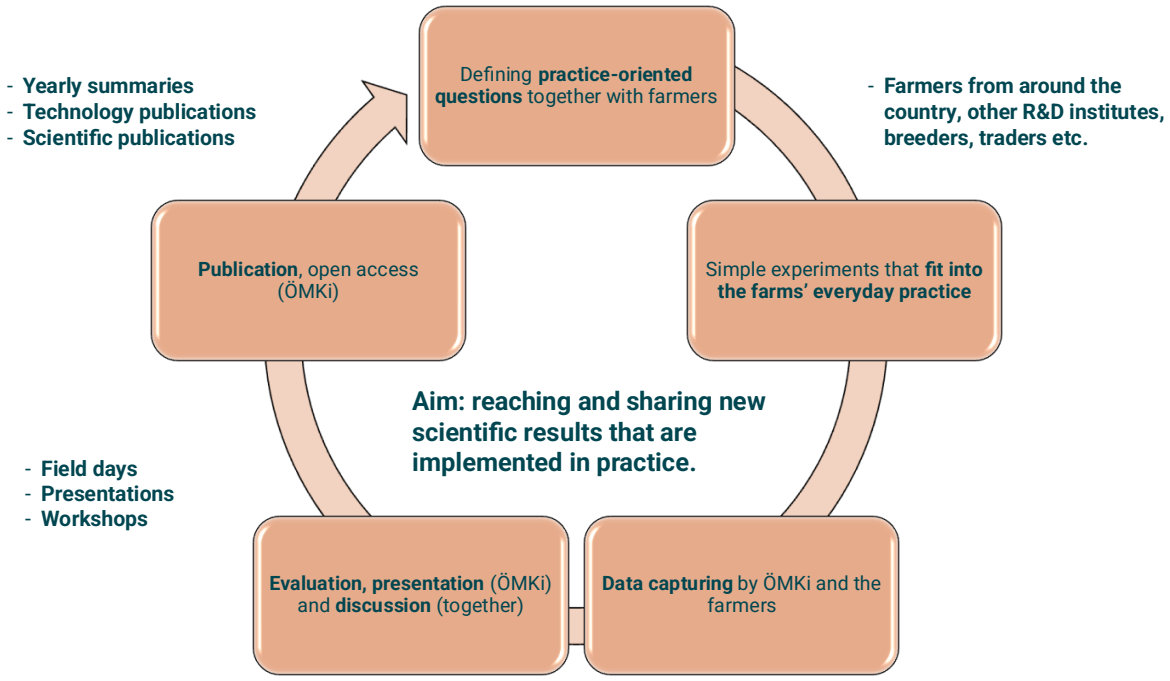

Figure 1: Example of an organic Living Lab (Source: Dóra Drexler, ÖMKi)

Further information

Further reading

- Organic living labs and lighthouse farms in Europe, 2022, Jonasz, G. & Varga, K., TP Organics
- Farmers Guide to conducting On-farm Research, Orozco, J., P., Hathaway, M., Velez, T., Estrada, H, & Tobey, E. Organic Farming Research Foundation
- Participatory Research in Organic Farming: Insights from an Agroecology Living Lab in a Mediterranean Area, 2024, Colombo, L., Ciaccia, C., Ritunnano, V., Fiore, A., Diacono, M., & Canali, S., Journal of Innovation Management.
- Harnessing the Potential of Living Labs in European Research Projects on Agriculture. The Case of Promoting Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in Livestock. 2024, Oehen, B., Spaans, A., Bonnet-Beaugrand, F., Fortané, N., Kongsted, H., & Vaarst, M., EuroChoices

Videos

- PERILBIO: Living labs, research and innovation in poultry and aquaculture

Weblinks

- European Network of Living Labs
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.

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PRACTICE ABSTRACT

About this practice abstract and the OrganicTargets4EU project

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