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Transfarm4.0

FOCUS GROUPS WITH FARM ASSOCIATIONS & EIP OPERATIONAL GROUPS - ITALY

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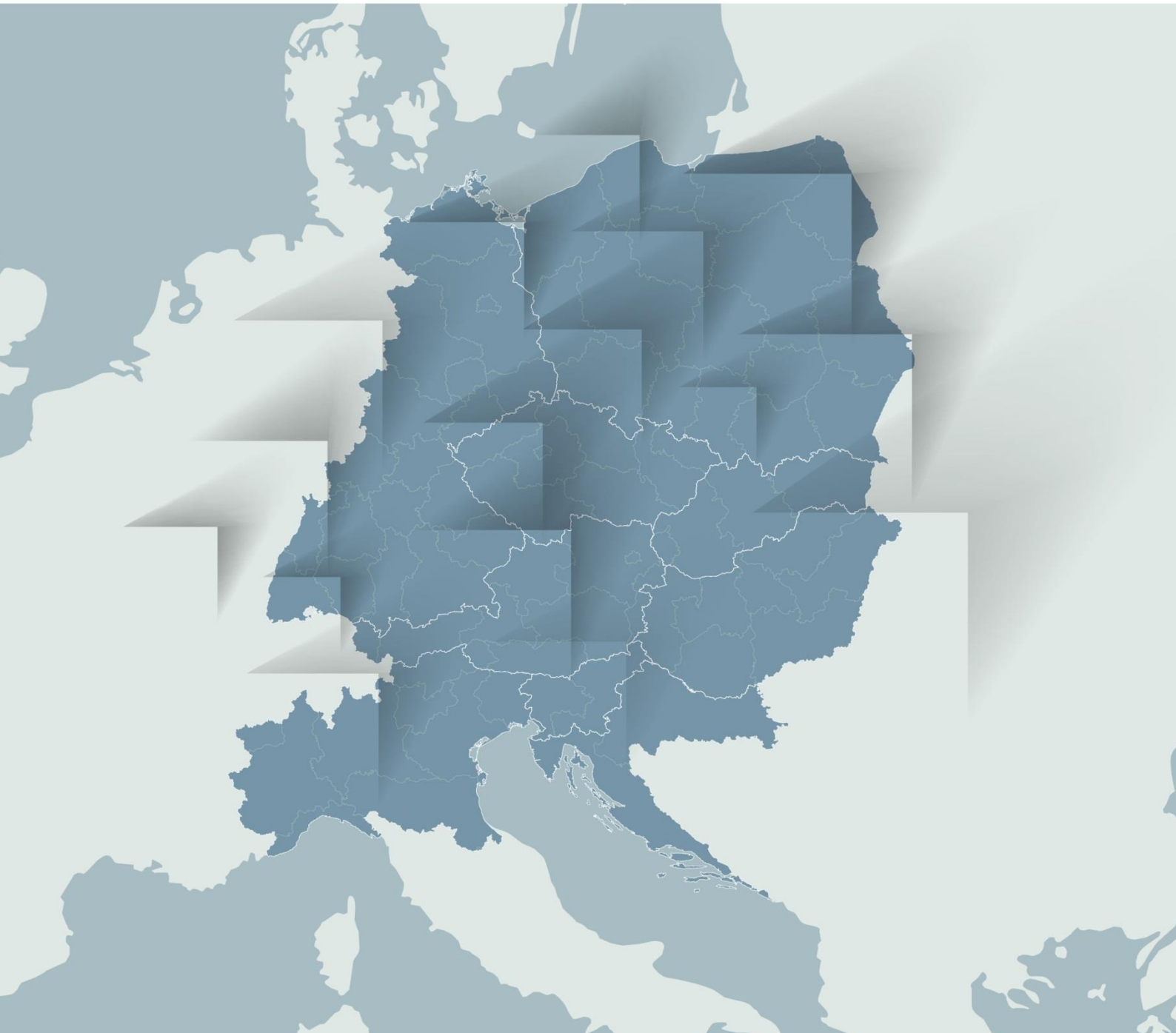

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A. Introduction

The aim of this task is to interview representatives of farms associations and EIP operational groups and learn how tech trajectories of PF are influencing them and how they could be led to catch the farmers needing.

B. Organisations

Farmers Associations to be contacted and Relevant EIP-Agri Operational Groups

We interviewed some representatives of trade associations in the provinces of Rovigo and Verona. In particular

Dr. Gabriele Panziera, Green Company in Verona, a company that deals with training for Coldiretti Verona. Coldiretti is the main organization of agricultural entrepreneurs in Italy and in Europe. A social force that values agriculture as an economic, human and environmental resource. Coldiretti is the reference of the absolute majority of agricultural enterprises in the province of Verona. A social force present throughout the territory with 15 offices in the area and more than 60 contact details.

Dr.ssa Ilaria Paparella, representative of the female entrepreneurs group of Coldiretti Rovigo, a trade union organization representing people and companies operating in agriculture, related activities and agri-food. Coldiretti Rovigo competes and is part, despite its clear legal and patrimonial autonomy, of the Coldiretti National Confederation to which it adheres with the commitment to the confederal unity. It coordinates and pays political and organizational observance to the statute of the National Confederation and to the directives deriving from it.

Dr. Andrea Ruzzante, representative of Campagna Amica, Promoted by Coldiretti, the Campagna Amica Foundation was founded in 2008 to carry out initiatives aimed at fully expressing the value and dignity of Italian agriculture, highlighting its key role in protecting the environment, of the territory, traditions and culture, health, food safety, equity, access to food at a fair price, social aggregation and work.

Dr. Stefano Casalini, president of Confagricoltura Rovigo, Confagricoltura Rovigo is the only agricultural union organization with a general vocation existing in the province and that is the one that, through the unions that constitute it, represents employers such as owners and renters in economy, self-employed workers such as direct farm owners and tenants, as well as owners of leased land. Furthermore - in the context of employers - it has a significant importance since the hiring of labour, in the vast majority of cases, is carried out by our associated companies.

Dr. Claudio Previatello, president of ANGA Confagricoltura (Association for young entrepreneurs in agricultura)

C. Results

Existing initiatives organized

Are there any initiatives organized by farmers' organizations / trade associations / groups on the topic of precision farming?

Being of national importance Coldiretti and Confagricoltura look very carefully at the issues of innovation and in particular the development of precision agriculture, which can also be achieved with significant economic investments and updating human capital. It is no coincidence that Dr. Panziera, who coordinates the training area, notes that the occasion of the pandemic has also brought farmers 'in the classroom' who would hardly have moved into a traditional training room. The positive change therefore makes it possible to reach a greater audience even with themes that are no longer niche. The farmer is also reached with ad hoc awareness events and with a differentiated involvement strategy. Online training helps to provide skills that are greatly appreciated on these issues.

The associations also involve related movements, eg. Women-enterprise and Young-enterprise.

Currently, there are various educational initiatives organized by trade associations that provide for the presentation of new technologies available to agriculture 4.0 and promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge also through the presentation of companies that already use this technology.

Are you involved in them or do you organize them? We are involved as associates and directly in the field through the use of certain technologies such as drones and weather stations.

How do you involve farmers? Currently, honestly speaking, it is difficult to involve farmers, let's say "old-fashioned" but there is fertile ground with young farmers (ANGA, to name an association) and above all with subcontractors. The best method to involve these categories remains that of the field test in order to show the potential of these technologies.

How do you think a farmer wants to get involved? We think that we must leverage above all the sustainability and profitability of precision agriculture, insisting on growth and earnings prospects and best practices "

Need for innovation for precision agriculture

What are the major technological needs identified?

One above all, the infrastructure. It is necessary to create a real network of data, information accessible and usable. Then the technological skills of the operators, availability of stable electricity supply, intuitive software.

The most sensitive companies ask to be on the crest of the wave and super updated: there is a great need for information and involvement in updating initiatives on the latest news.

For example, he tells of experiences for irrigation rolls, which are controlled by the mobile phone.

We know start-ups that carry out the management of precision farming, eg. On precision irrigation through the app.

In the next period, Dr. Panziera notes that the association carries out various activities on biodiversity issues and expects it to be significantly increased in the near future.

Other needs identified are the development of organic farming techniques with a decisive reduction in the chemical impact, with a marked enhancement of environmental sustainability.

In his opinion, the issue of sustainability, biodiversity and at the same time also the aspects relating to the market will be a driving force for the developments that are on the way.

What horizons are we going to intercept in the coming years?

Precision agriculture in its essence serves above all to optimize resources and reduce waste. We will face a reduction of natural resources in the face of a continuous increase in demand linked to a constantly growing population, climate changes that veer towards drought years and European policies to reduce the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. With this premise, it is clear that a savings-oriented approach is the only strategy: precision agriculture provides an answer to this need. Then there will be problems of energy supply, the need to optimize resources, safety at work.

What needs have changed in the world of agriculture and in particular at the technological level?

Need for speed and precision, agricultural vehicles must be powerful and accurate in their movements and facilitate the operator who is less and less "in the field". Another problem is the water resource which must be managed in an exact and economical way

What technological improvements are farmers looking for?

Work facilitation: then we look at the robotization of the sector with electric tractors managed by software and instruments that tell the farmer when to intervene with irrigation and fertilizers

Digitalization and agriculture

What is the state of the art today?

There are many innovations but few farmers capable of embracing them. The situation of Italian agriculture is mostly based on direct farmers, perhaps not very young, who have little aptitude for technology. The situation changes for large groups or for large landowners who do not constitute the majority of farmers at a numerical level. I think dividing into these two meager groups is significant for a technology development discourse. Currently the diffusion, use and awareness about precision agriculture is very scarce (we are around 1-2% of the total farms in the area) and patchy with some, rare, realities that stand out and make from open track. The reality of precision agriculture impacts above all with a mentality that struggles to open up to change. Agriculture is still in the hands of the "old" and unfortunately this limits the spread of technological innovation. We could talk about it for hours, but until a young and passionate layer is built it will be difficult to change that fact. For example, it makes you smile, if you think about it, that people up to 40 years of age are considered young farmers (ANGA)

What level of digitization do farms need today?

Depends on the size of the farm. If for the small ones, digitalization is used for direct sales, perhaps through the use of social networks or for home delivery services, for the large ones, digitalization serves to increase the efficiency of work and the speed with which to make decisions in the field (when to irrigate, when to fertilize, which pathogens attacked the crop.

How to access these innovations?

The category associations and European tenders are crucial. Access to innovations requires training and investment. For training, it is necessary to turn to experienced, young and passionate people who have studied the subject and can direct individual companies according to specific needs. As far as investments are concerned, there are specific calls for tenders, contributions, start-ups, but above all, the commitment and targeted investment of individual companies must be worth. It is necessary to invest and take risks to get benefits. First, Dr. Panziera in particular believes that as far as digitization is concerned, the pandemic has given a significant boost that has also favored the transition to the use of technology for remote activities not only for events and training, but also forced farmers to approach whether nothing else is the theme for their own activities 'in the field'. Coldiretti constantly monitors the good practices that are highlighted in our territory. A first example: with satellite systems or with the more painstaking use of drones, you have control systems without waste, for example for irrigation. For example: the hillside vineyard. The farmer once moved in conditions of extreme discomfort and danger with the atomizer. Now, with a first drone you can do an analysis and later with another drone of greater power you can make a precision spraying.

However, within the association there is a debate such as: is the use of a satellite or a drone more effective?

Dr. Panziera embraces the second hypothesis, so much so that he has proposed a specific course on the use of the drone, however a unanimous decision on the matter has not yet been reached internally.

To give other examples. The corn borer is a larva that does considerable damage. The GMO modified plant had the toxin to fight the borer, however, being the Association against the use of GMOs by vocation and for a careful analysis also of economic return, the focus was on biodiversity.

Coldiretti's vision is in fact that of biodiversity. Thanks to the use of the drone, the natural parasite is introduced, where previously another drone has identified an area of attention.

The real strength of these as well as other examples is that a homogeneous, indiscriminate treatment is not done, but you can create a bio-advanced treatment, in fact the most advanced companies are already investing and working on it. Another strong point is that with these methodologies it is possible to consequently aim at greater labor productivity.