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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE OF THE 2014-2022 REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME OF THE LIGURIA REGION

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Thematic Report 2025 – Non-Technical Summary

Cooperating to Innovate: Implementation Evaluation of Measure 16 and the Role of the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

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LATTANZIO KIBS

MONITORING & EVALUATION

INDEX

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGEA: Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura

AIAB: Associazione Italiana per l'Agricoltura Biologica

AIR: Annual Implementation Report

AKIS: Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy

CeRSAA: Centro di Sperimentazione e Assistenza Agricola

CIA: Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori

CIPAT: Centro Istruzione Professionale e Assistenza Tecnica

CREA: Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria

CREA-OF: Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria – Orticoltura e Florovivaismo

CRPA: Centro Ricerche Produzioni Animali

CSP: CAP Strategic Plan

DIFAR: Dipartimento di Farmacia

DIME: Dipartimento di Ingegneria Meccanica, Energetica, Gestionale e dei Trasporti

EIP: European Innovation Partnership

EIP-AGRI: European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

FIRAB: Fondazione Italiana per la Ricerca in Agricoltura Biologica e Biodinamica

GPS: Global Positioning System

GVO: Gross Value of Output

IE: Independent Evaluator

IRF: Istituto Regionale per la Floricoltura

LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale

LHA: Local Health Authority

M: Measure

MA: Managing Authority

MM: Measure Manager

OG: Operational Group

PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

PGI: Protected Geographical Indication

PFIT: Piani Forestali di Indirizzo Territoriale — Territorial Forest Management Plans

RDC: Rural Development Complement

RDP: Rural Development Programme

SIAN: Sistema Informativo Agricolo Nazionale — National Agricultural Information System

SIAR: Sistema Informativo Agricolo Regionale — Regional Agricultural Information System

SM: Sub-measure

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TAP: Temporary Association of Purpose

TSA: Territorial Service Agreement

Introduction

This document summarizes the findings of the Thematic Report prepared within the framework of the independent evaluation service of the 2014–2022 Rural Development Programme (RDP) of the Liguria Region, focusing on **Measure** (M) **16 "Cooperation"** and, in particular, **Sub-measure** (SM) **16.1** dedicated to the **Operational Groups** (OGs) **of the European Innovation Partnership** for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI).

The evaluation was carried out during the final phase of the 2014–2022 programming period with the aim of capitalizing on the experience gained and translating it into **concrete operational recommendations for the current 2023–2027 programming period**. The analysis is particularly relevant within the context of the new strategic framework defined by the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) and the Rural Development Complement (RDC), which assign a central role to the **Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System** (AKIS) as a tool to accelerate the transition towards more sustainable and competitive production models.

The evaluation aimed to assess the **consistency of Measure 16 with the Programme's needs**, analyze the **effectiveness of the OGs** model in fostering cooperation between research and businesses, evaluate the capacity for dissemination of the innovations developed, and identify **obstacles, success factors, and lessons learned** to guide future programming and strengthen the Ligurian AKIS system.

1. Methodological Approach, Sources, and Techniques Used

The methodological approach adopted in this Thematic Report was developed by linking the **evaluation criteria** (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results, lessons learned, and areas for improvement) with the **evaluation questions** formulated jointly with the Programme's Managing Authority (MA), the **relevant indicators**, and the **data collection tools**. The **resulting matrix**, presented below in its simplified version, constitutes the **methodological framework for the entire evaluation process**, guiding in an integrated manner the collection of information and the analysis of data in order to provide structured and coherent answers to the evaluation questions.

Table 1 - Simplified Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation Question
Relevance	To what extent are the sub-measures (SMs) under Measure 16 consistent with the needs identified in the RDP and do they adequately translate the Programme's objectives?
	To what extent are the projects funded under SM 16.1 consistent with the objectives of the sub-measures and with the needs of the agricultural sector?
Effectiveness	To what extent have the sub-measures achieved their intended objectives?
	To what extent have the projects funded under SM 16.1 achieved their objectives?
Efficiency	To what extent has the implementation of the sub-measures under Measure 16 been efficient?
Results	What results have been generated by the sub-measures under Measure 16?
	What effects have the projects funded under SM 16.1 generated in terms of cooperation, innovation, and the territory's capacity to address the identified needs?
Lessons Learned and Areas for Improvement	What lessons emerge from the implementation of Measure 16 and, in particular, SM 16.1 with regard to success factors, critical issues, and the mechanisms that facilitated or hindered implementation and the quality of results?

1.1. Data from Secondary and Primary Sources, Data Collection Techniques and Tools

To answer the evaluation questions, an **approach based on the triangulation of information sources** was adopted, integrating secondary data, primary sources, and in-depth qualitative analysis.

The analysis was based primarily on **secondary sources**, including RDP monitoring data updated as of 30 September 2025, programming and implementation documentation (RDP, calls for proposals, resolutions), data from the Innovarurale portal, and thematic reports produced within the framework of RDP evaluations conducted in other regions.

Primary sources made it possible to further explore the qualitative aspects through an **in-depth interview with the Measure Managers** (MMs) of the four activated sub-measures and the development of **three case studies** on EIP OGs funded under SM 16.1. The projects were selected in close coordination with the MA, prioritising experiences capable of representing the diversity of production sectors, types of innovation, and partnership configurations present in the Ligurian territory. For each case study, an **in-depth interview was conducted with the OG lead partner**, complemented by a documentary analysis of the projects, which made it possible to reconstruct the

characteristics of the partnership, innovation objectives, results achieved, cooperation dynamics, dissemination activities, and the main success factors and critical issues encountered.

2. Strategic Framework of Measure 16 "Cooperation"

2.1. The RDP Strategy for Innovating through Cooperation

The SWOT analysis carried out during the initial phase of the programming period highlighted **significant structural needs** within the Ligurian agricultural and forestry system, while also identifying positive regional experiences already present in the territory, as well as organisational constraints that had hindered their full development.

Box 1 - SWOT Analysis of the 2014–2022 RDP of the Liguria Region

The regional context is characterised by a strong specialisation in the **floriculture and nursery sector**, which accounts for approximately 70% of the regional Gross Value of Output (GVO), but which suffers from a lack of production coordination—particularly evident in the potted plant segment—and increasing competitive pressure in international markets, especially from African and South American countries supported by the Dutch logistics and commercial system. The **horticultural sector** faces rising production costs due to the low energy efficiency of production facilities and fluctuations in fossil fuel prices, while the overall low technological intensity of the sector makes a shift towards alternative solutions necessary. **Organic farming**, concentrated mainly in the Apennine areas, struggles to adequately enhance the value of its production due to insufficient infrastructure and weak organisation of local supply chains. **Olive growing** represents an important sector with development prospects primarily linked to the recovery of abandoned olive groves, but it also requires interventions in terms of technological innovation, wastewater management, and phytosanitary monitoring. Although **viticulture** is characterised by modest production volumes and difficulties in penetrating foreign markets, it has recorded significant qualitative improvements and a gradual shift towards certified production. **Livestock farming** plays an irreplaceable role in maintaining territorial presence in mountain areas, despite being characterised by structurally weak farms, high production costs, and limited valorisation of local products. The **forestry sector**, despite having substantial potential supply and approximately 900 active enterprises, suffers from significant underutilisation of resources and fragmented ownership, which hinders efficient management. Finally, **social farming** represents an emerging field, regulated by Regional Law No. 36/2013, with widespread interest among farmers and third-sector organisations, but still lacking adequate support and monitoring tools.

In order to address the contextual needs relating to cooperation identified in the SWOT analysis, **Measure 16 "Cooperation"** was activated under the 2014–2022 RDP, conceived as a cross-cutting instrument capable of fostering cooperation and collective action to introduce, develop, and disseminate innovation in the agricultural, forestry, and rural sectors, as well as to promote short supply chains, local markets, and social farming.

The Measure was initially implemented through **six Sub-measures**. During the programming period, **SM 16.5 and SM 16.8 were de-funded**. SM 16.8, intended to support forestry planning, was de-funded because the objective of the Sub-measure was pursued through a national instrument—Territorial Forest Management Plans (PFITs)—supported by dedicated national funding, making it appropriate to reallocate resources to other RDP Sub-measures. SM 16.5, on the other hand, was designed to support collective interventions for the maintenance and protection of agricultural land against climate change. However, these objectives were already being effectively pursued through Measures M.4.4 and M.10. The strong implementation performance of these measures suggested prioritising direct territorial interventions over pilot cooperation projects, resulting in the transfer of resources to Measure M.10.

Taken together, these Sub-measures contribute to the achievement of five of the six RDP Priorities, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2 - Sub-measures, Focus Areas, and Priorities of Measure 16 of the 2014–2022 RDP of the Liguria Region

Measure	Sub-measure	Priority	Focus Area
M 16	SM 16.1 “Support for the establishment and operation of EIP Operational Groups”	1,2	1A, 1B, 2A
	SM 16.2 “Support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes, and technologies”	1,2	1A, 1B, 2A
	SM 16.4 “Supply chain cooperation, both horizontal and vertical, for the creation and development of short supply chains and local markets”	1, 3	1A, 3A
	SM 16.5 “Support for joint actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation”*	1, 4	1A, 1B, 4C
	SM 16.8 “Support for the preparation of second-level forest management plans”**	5	5E
	SM 16.9 “Support for the diversification of agricultural activities into healthcare, social inclusion, community-supported agriculture, and environmental and food education activities”	1, 2	1A, 1B, 2A

Source: Liguria Region RDP 2014–2022, version 18
** Fully de-funded in RDP version 16*
*** Fully de-funded in RDP version 14*

From a financial perspective, the resources available in terms of **total public expenditure** allocated to support cooperation initiatives through Measure 16 amount to **EUR 7,015,556.17**, representing approximately **1.8% of the total RDP budget**.

2.2. The New Strategic Framework of the CSP and the RDC

In the **2023–2027 programming period**, cooperation continues to be implemented through the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP), the single national programming document established for the implementation of the CAP in Italy.

The new programming framework introduces important **innovations** compared with the 2014–2022 period **in the field of cooperation**. Among the main innovations are **the inclusion of local rural development interventions**, such as LEADER initiatives, and the **introduction of new**

instruments such as the preparation and implementation of strategies for "Smart Small Municipalities."

The areas of cooperation promoted range from collective environmental and climate initiatives to the development of short supply chains and local markets, from the implementation of pilot projects to social farming.

The **2023–2027 Rural Development Complement (RDC) of the Liguria Region**, the regional implementation document of the CSP, has activated **five of the nine interventions** provided for at national level, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3 - Interventions, Specific Objectives, and General Objectives of Cooperation Promotion Measures under the 2023–2027 RDC of the Liguria Region

Macro Intervention	Intervention	General Objectives	Specific Objectives
COOP (77)	SRG01 "Support for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups"	Cross-cutting	Cross-cutting
	SRG05 "Preparatory Support for LEADER"	3	8
	SRG06 "LEADER – Implementation of Local Development Strategies"	1, 2, 3	3, 5, 8
	SRG07 "Cooperation for Rural Development"	3	8
	SRG10 "Promotion of Quality Products"	1, 3	3, 9

Source: Liguria Region RDC 2023–2027, version 2

Overall, the activated interventions contribute to the achievement of all three General Objectives and four of the nine Specific Objectives established by the CSP, as well as the cross-cutting objective of "Training, knowledge exchange, innovation, and digitalisation."

From a financial perspective, the total allocation foreseen for cooperation interventions amounts to EUR 17,316,780.89, corresponding to 8.4% of the total RDC budget. Excluding LEADER interventions, the allocation decreases to EUR 4,552,852.34 (2.2% of total resources), an amount lower in absolute terms than in the 2014–2022 programming period. However, considering the reduction of the programming period from nine to five years, the annual financial allocation dedicated to cooperation in the strict sense shows a 17% increase compared with the previous period.

3. Implementation Framework of Measure 16 "Cooperation"

The objective of Measure 16 is to **encourage cooperation relationships between at least two different entities** for the establishment and management of **EIP Operational Groups** and for the implementation of projects, approaches, or joint activities through the **creation of specific partnerships**.

The four Sub-measures activated through calls for proposals were designed not only to **promote innovation, cooperation, and knowledge development** (Focus Area 1A) and to **strengthen**

collaboration between the agricultural sector and the research community (Focus Area 1B), but also to **improve the economic performance** of agricultural holdings (Focus Area 2A) and to increase the **competitiveness of primary producers** through better integration into the agri-food supply chain (Focus Area 3A).

As regards the results achieved as of 31 December 2025, the **output indicator requiring the establishment of at least 18 Operational Groups was fully achieved**, while **the output indicator relating to the funding of at least 150 agricultural holdings involved in local supply chain promotion initiatives was significantly exceeded**.

With regard to the other indicators, the results achieved show a **level close to the established targets**, although not fully reached. The indicator relating to the funding of **at least 49 cooperation operations** (across the entire Measure 16) reached **96% of the target**, while the indicator concerning the **funding of at least 31 other cooperation interventions** (under SM 16.2, 16.4, and 16.9) reached **94% of the target**.

From a financial perspective, **the output indicator** for the entire Measure 16 reached **99% of the total planned expenditure**.

Table 4 – Result and Output Indicators for Measure 16 of the 2014–2022 RDP of the Liguria Region

Indicator Type	Indicator Description	Measure / Sub-measure	Focus Area	Achieved Value	Target Value
Target indicator (T2)	Funding of at least 49 cooperation operations	16	1A	47	49
Output indicator (O.1)	Expenditure of at least EUR 7,015,556.17 for the promotion of cooperation	16	1A	6,980,321	7,015,556
Output indicator (O.16)	Funding of at least 18 EIP Operational Groups	16.1	1B	18	18
Output indicator (O.9)	Funding of at least 150 agricultural holdings participating in local supply chain promotion initiatives	16.4	3A	445	150
Output indicator (O.17)	Funding of at least 31 other cooperation interventions	16.2, 16.4, 16.9	1B	29	31

Source: Liguria Region RDP 2014–2022, version 18 (target data); regional monitoring data processed by the Independent Evaluator and provided by the Liguria Region (financial and physical data); Annual Implementation Report (AIR) data as of 31/12/2025 (achieved value for indicator O.9)

3.1. SM 16.1 "Support for the Establishment and Operation of EIP Operational Groups"

SM 16.1 supports the **establishment of EIP OGs in order to promote innovation** in agricultural and forestry enterprises, improving production and the efficient use of natural resources. An OG is a **partnership between different actors** (farmers, foresters, advisors, researchers, associations, consumers, etc.) who collaborate to develop innovative solutions to specific problems or to seize particular opportunities. Innovation may derive from the application of research results, the development of new ideas, or the adaptation of existing techniques.

The Sub-measure addresses Need **F03** (dissemination of innovation to improve business competitiveness and sustainability) and Need **F04** (strengthening the connection between research

and the agricultural sector) and contributes to Focus Areas **1A, 1B**, and **2A**. The specific output indicator—the establishment of at least **18 EIP GOs** —was **fully achieved**.

The implementation of the Sub-measure was structured in **two consecutive phases**: the first dedicated to the **establishment of the OG** and the preparation of the final cooperation project, the second to **project implementation**. For each phase, separate calls for proposals were published for the **agricultural sector** and the forestry sector, for a total of **four calls**. Support was provided in the form of a **100% non-repayable grant** covering eligible costs, with a maximum contribution of **EUR 20,000** for the first phase and **EUR 100,000** for the second. Projects in the first phase had a **maximum duration of three months**, while those in the second phase had a duration of **eighteen months**.

From the perspective of physical and financial progress, for the **agricultural sector** in the first phase, all **18 submitted projects** were found to be eligible and fundable; of these, **15 actually completed the planned activities**, and **95% of the eligible contribution was disbursed**. For the **forestry sector** in the first phase, all **10 submitted projects** were found to be eligible; of these, **7 were approved for funding** and all completed the planned activities, with **actual expenditure amounting to 79%** of the resources allocated through the call. For the **second phase in the agricultural sector**, **19 projects** were submitted, of which **15 were approved for funding** and all were completed, with **actual expenditure amounting to 96%** of available resources. For the **second phase in the forestry sector**, **7 projects** were submitted, all of which were eligible, of which **6 were approved for funding** and **3 have been completed**, with **actual expenditure amounting to 46%** of available resources.

Table 5 - Projects and Eligible Contributions by Calls under Sub-measure 16.1

Call	Call Reference	Submitted Projects	Eligible Projects	Fundable Projects	Completed Projects	Financial Allocation (€)	Eligible Contribution (€)	Disbursed Contribution (€)
Phase 1 – Agriculture	Regional Executive Decision No. 1338 of 30 December 2016	18	18	18	15	300,000.00	276,544.83	213,514.35
Phase 1 – Forestry	Regional Executive Decision No. 390 of 1 June 2018	10	10	7	7	100,000.00	100,000.00	78,940.03
Phase 2 – Agriculture	Regional Executive Decision No. 727 of 6 September 2019	19	17	15 (of which one partially funded)	15	1,410,000.00	1,410,000.00	1,351,431.78
Phase 2 – Forestry	Regional Executive Decision No. 822 of 5 August 2020	7	7	6 (of which one partially funded)	3	499,100.00	499,100.00	231,006.32

Source: Monitoring data provided by the Liguria Region.

3.2. SM 16.2 "Support for Pilot Projects and for the Development of New Products, Practices, Processes and Technologies"

SM 16.2 supports the implementation of **cooperation projects** aimed at introducing innovations to reduce production costs and energy and water consumption, improve environmental sustainability, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and enhance the economic and environmental sustainability of the supply chain. Specifically, two types of intervention are envisaged: **pilot actions** to test, validate, and demonstrate an innovation, and **pre-competitive development actions** for new processes, practices, technologies, or services prior to market introduction. Projects are implemented by **Cooperation Groups** established in the form of Temporary Purpose Associations (TPAs), business networks, etc.

The Sub-measure addresses the same needs **F03** and **F04** as SM 16.1 and contributes to Focus Areas **1A**, **1B,** and **2A**. No specific indicators were defined, but the funded activities contribute to the aggregated indicators of several Sub-measures.

A **single call** for proposals was launched with a financial allocation of **EUR 2.3 million**. The partnership was required to include at least **one agricultural enterprise and one research-sector entity**. Support was provided in the form of a **100% non-repayable grant** covering eligible costs, with a minimum eligible expenditure of **EUR 50,000** and a maximum of **EUR 400,000**. The maximum duration of projects was **twenty-four months** for pilot projects and thirty-six months for pre-competitive development actions.

From the perspective of physical and financial progress, out of **29 applications submitted** (28 eligible), **only 8 projects** were funded, highlighting a **significant discrepancy between expressed demand and available resources**. All funded projects completed the planned activities, with disbursed resources amounting to **95% of committed funds**. The average commitment per project amounted to **EUR 287,500**, a figure significantly lower than the maximum eligible expenditure of EUR 400,000.

Table 6 - Projects and Eligible Contributions by Calls under Sub-measure 16.2

Call Reference	Submitted Projects	Eligible Projects	Fundable Projects	Completed Projects	Financial Allocation (€)	Eligible Contribution (€)	Disbursed Contribution (€)
Regional Executive Decision No. 668 of 26 July 2019	29	28	8 (of which one partially funded)	8	2,300,000	2,300,000	2,189,027

Source: Monitoring data provided by the Liguria Region

3.3. SM 16.4 "Supply Chain Cooperation, Both Horizontal and Vertical, for the Creation and Development of Short Supply Chains and Local Markets"

SM 16.4 supports the implemen**tation of cooperation projects between agricultural enterprises and/or between agricultural enterprises and supply chain operators** for the **creation and development of short supply chains and local markets, as well as for the implementation of related promotional activities**. Projects are implemented by **Cooperation Groups** established in the form of Temporary Purpose Associations (TPAs), business networks, etc.

The Sub-measure addresses Needs **F04, F08, F24,** and **F25** and contributes to Focus Areas **1A** and **3A**. The specific output indicator—the funding of at least **150 agricultural enterprises** involved in

the promotion of local supply chains—was significantly exceeded, with **445 enterprises** actually involved.

A **single call** for proposals was launched with a financial allocation of **EUR 1.8 million**, of which EUR 1.2 million was allocated to short supply chain projects and **EUR 600,000** to **local market projects**. Projects were required to produce a **commercial agreement**, a **supply chain agreement**, and a **Project Communication Plan**. Support was provided in the form of a **100% non-repayable grant** covering eligible costs incurred, with a maximum contribution of **EUR 200,000 for short** supply chain projects and EUR 150,000 for local market projects. The maximum duration of projects was **twenty-four months**.

From the perspective of physical and financial progress, out of **16 applications submitted**, **13 projects** were funded, all of which were completed. Actual expenditure reached **91% of committed resources**, with an average disbursed amount per project of approximately **EUR 111,500**.

Table 7 - Projects and Eligible Contributions by Calls under Sub-measure 16.4

Call Reference	Project Type	Submitted Projects	Eligible Projects	Fundable Projects	Completed Projects	Financial Allocation (€)	Eligible Contribution (€)	Disbursed Contribution (€)
Regional Executive Decision No. 485 of 29 June 2018	Total	16	13	13	13	1,800,000	1,598,485	1,449,412

Source: processing by the Independent Evaluator based on regional ranking lists for submitted and fundable projects and eligible contributions, and on regional monitoring data for completed projects and disbursed contributions

3.4. SM 16.9 "Support for the Diversification of Agricultural Activities into Healthcare, Social Inclusion, Community-Supported Agriculture, and Environmental and Food Education Activities"

SM 16.9 supports **territorial cooperation projects between the agricultural and social sectors** in order to promote social farming as one of the most innovative aspects of the multifunctionality of agricultural activities. Social farming is an organised activity that promotes social inclusion through employment integration, socio-educational activities, support for the reintegration of people in vulnerable conditions, hospitality, and any other services recognised by the Liguria Region pursuant to Regional Law No. 36/2013.

The Sub-measure addresses Needs **F04**, **F15**, and **F20** and contributes to Focus Areas **1A**, **1B**, and **2A**. No specific indicators were defined, but the funded activities contribute to the aggregated indicators of several Sub-measures.

A **single call** for proposals was launched with a financial allocation of **EUR 1.72 million**. Projects were required to be developed within four macro-areas: **education, training, and work inclusion; social inclusion and reception pathways; assisted activities and therapies; socially managed green areas**. The target beneficiaries were **disadvantaged individuals** supported by social and socio-health services. Among the mandatory project outputs were the **Territorial Service Agreement (TSA)**, intended to ensure continuity of services for at least one year after the conclusion of the project, and the **Project Communication Plan**. Support was granted under the de minimis regime in the form of a **100% non-repayable grant** covering eligible costs, with a maximum contribution of **EUR 200,000** and a maximum project duration of **twenty-four months**.

From the perspective of physical and financial progress, out of **17 applications submitted**, **8 projects** were funded, all of which were completed. Actual expenditure amounted to **77% of allocated resources**, with an average disbursed amount per project of approximately **EUR 164,700**.

Table 8 - Projects and Eligible Contributions by Calls under Sub-measure 16.9

Call Reference	Submitted Projects	Eligible Projects	Fundable Projects	Completed Projects	Financial Allocation (€)	Eligible Contribution (€)	Disbursed Contribution (€)
Regional Executive Decision No. 465 of 11 June 2019	17	10	8	8	1,720,000	1,720,000	1,317,916

Source: Processing by the Independent Evaluator based on regional ranking lists for submitted and fundable projects and eligible contributions, and on regional monitoring data for completed projects and disbursed contributions

4. Main Results of the Direct Surveys

4.1. Interview with the Measure Managers

The results of the interview conducted on 30 October 2025 with the **Measure Managers (MMs)** of the four activated Sub-measures were reorganised according to the criteria of the evaluation matrix.

Relevance

The interview highlighted a regional context favourable to the definition of a programming framework consistent with the needs of the territory. The implementation of the 2014–2022 RDP built upon a well-established regional tradition of research and innovation in agriculture, characterised by the presence of a **dedicated regulatory framework**, a structured network of territorial research bodies, and university collaborations. The element of greatest programmatic consistency is represented by the **experience of Measure 124 of the 2007–2013 RDP**, which had already tested in practice mechanisms for supporting cooperation for the development of innovation.

The decision to clearly distinguish between SM 16.1 and SM 16.2—unlike the approach adopted in other regions—reflects a strategy oriented towards the **segmentation of needs**. SM 16.1 addresses the need for rapid technology transfer, whereas SM 16.2 is intended to respond to the need for pre-competitive development. For SM 16.1, however, the two-phase structure proved to be of **more limited relevance** in territorial contexts where qualified actors were already operating and capable of identifying innovation needs.

Although SM 16.4 and SM 16.9 represented innovations in the 2014–2022 programming period, they were able to build on favourable contextual elements. SM 16.4 found a point of reference in the **cooperative experience of Measure 124** and in regional initiatives already underway. SM 16.9 responded to a **concrete regulatory gap**: the approval of the regional law on social farming had established a clear framework, but one still lacking operational instruments, and the Sub-measure represented the **concrete tool for implementing the law**.

The **operational translation of the programming objectives** is reflected in the architecture of the partnerships: for SM 16.1 and SM 16.2, the calls required the mandatory participation of agricultural enterprises, while encouraging the involvement of universities, research bodies, and service providers, thereby shaping a **theory of change based on the integration of competencies**. The **strong presence of agricultural enterprises in the role of lead partner** encouraged solutions that responded to real needs rather than to purely academic approaches. However, critical elements emerged regarding the **coordination capacity of the lead partner**: partnerships with weaker performance were characterised by coordinating entities with lower managerial and leadership capacity—factors that are difficult to codify within formal selection criteria but decisive for the quality of the results.

Effectiveness

The interview provides an **overall positive picture** regarding the quality of the innovation produced and the formal achievement of the objectives. However, **significant gaps** emerged that limit the substantive effectiveness of the Measure. In several cases, collabo**ration among partners remained more formal than substantive**, with a limited actual exercise of the coordination role.

Excessively large partnerships, generated by the award criterion favouring a higher number of participating enterprises under SM 16.4 and SM 16.9, resulted in **cumbersome and not very effective structures**.

A further critical issue emerged in the **case of Local Health Authorities acting as lead partners** under SM 16.9: although they were fundamental to the substance of the projects and to ensuring the institutional sustainability of the results, LHAs **showed difficulties in administrative management** and operational coordination, being complex and relatively inflexible organisations.

Another area of weakness concerns the **transfer and dissemination of innovation**: participation in the accompanying support services (SM 1.1 and 1.2) was limited, and many projects prioritised study activities over dissemination activities. The **lack of systematic monitoring** during the post-completion phase of projects also made it difficult to assess the actual medium- to long-term impacts on the territory.

The technical documentation produced by lead partners, although primarily intended for administrative and reporting purposes, could in future provide useful insights to strengthen the interpretation of results and the dissemination activities relating to the innovations developed.

Efficiency

The implementation efficiency framework is characterised by **significant critical issues** attributable to extended timelines, burdensome administrative requirements, and procedural rigidities. However, the context must be assessed taking into account exogenous factors (the COVID-19 emergency), the intrinsic complexity of multi-actor projects, and the presence of beneficiaries participating in the RDP for the first time.

For **SM 16.1**, the timeframes between the first phase and the operational phase proved to be longer than initially estimated, with delays largely attributable to **predominantly routine procedural timelines**. It should, however, be noted that these critical issues have **been addressed in the new programming period**, where the first phase has been eliminated for the implementation of SRG01. The COVID-19 emergency had a cross-cutting impact on the entire Measure 16, making **regulatory intervention necessary to remove project completion time constraints**, along with intensive support work by the Region, particularly for SM 16.4 and SM 16.9. A further element of flexibility emerged in the management of the calls under **SM 1.1** and **1.2**, which were made more flexible precisely to allow activities to be carried out during the final phase of the projects or even after their formal closure.

In terms of administrative burden, the actual-cost reporting system represented a **very significant burden**, with **70–80% of resources subject to reporting requirements**, despite the introduction of a progressively expanded flat-rate scheme. This was compounded by **the operational complexity associated with the obligation to obtain at least three quotations** for each expenditure item. The difficulties were particularly significant under SM 16.4 and SM 16.9, where many beneficiaries had no prior experience with the RDP. Finally, the **transition from the SIAR system to AGEA's SIAN system** resulted in a management discontinuity, with the loss of important functionalities for monitoring partnerships.

Conversely, the **intensive support work** carried out by the Region partially compensated for procedural inefficiencies, demonstrating that the human factor can mitigate systemic rigidities.

Results

SM 16.1 and SM 16.2 enabled the Liguria Region to consolidate and expand its action in promoting innovation in agriculture. A particularly significant result was the **expansion of collaborations with the university and research sectors**. Alongside already established relationships with institutions such as CREA, IRF, CeRSAA, and the Universities of Pisa and Torino, the Sub-measures fostered, for the first time, the **establishment of a structured collaboration with the University of Genova**, marking an important step in the integration of the regional academic system into the agricultural sector. SM 16.4 led to the creation of several supply chain projects across the regional territory, with **appreciable results both in the livestock sector and in niche areas**.

SM 16.9 represents **the most significant case** in terms of innovation and territorial impact. The funded projects created **operational connections** between agricultural enterprises and services aimed at people in vulnerable conditions, an area that had until then remained substantially unexplored in Liguria. Before the activation of the Sub-measure, social farming was a marginal phenomenon, as evidenced by the extremely limited number of registrations in the regional register. The projects had the merit of **making this opportunity concretely known**, generating widespread interest and a **significant increase in participation**.

A particularly significant result concerns the **impact on regional policy**. Through SM 16.9, the process of **revising the regional guidelines on social farming** was initiated, after having remained unchanged for approximately ten years. The new guidelines incorporate the **indications emerging from the lead partners and from the project results**, placing particular emphasis on **strengthening cooperation among stakeholders**, **creating stable territorial networks**, and **establishing a Regional Observatory for Social Farming**. This thus represents a virtuous example of **policy learning**, in which operational practice informs and improves the regulatory framework.

Lessons Learned and Areas for Improvement

The interview with the Measure Managers (MMs) provides explicit indications regarding the critical issues encountered and the solutions tested, which have already, to a large extent, been translated into operational measures within the 2023–2027 RDC.

The experience highlighted the importance of achieving a balance between breadth of participation and governability. For SM 16.4 and SM 16.9, the requirement to reward a higher number of participating enterprises resulted in excessively large and ineffective partnerships, leading to the introduction in the new programming period of a **maximum limit on the number of participants**. For SM 16.9, it is also considered preferable to assign the role of **lead partner to entities other than Local Health Authorities**—such as social cooperatives—which have greater managerial flexibility.

Among the main corrective measures introduced in the 2023–2027 RDC, the following should be highlighted: the **requirement to illustrate partnership coordination** arrangements at the project design stage; **information courses for all partners** following project approval; the **introduction of standard costs covering 40%** of personnel costs; the **obligation to submit the cooperation agreement within six months** from the start of the project; the introduction of **advisory services (SRH01) and training for advisors (SRH02)**; the **assessment of the Communication Plan** within the selection criteria; and an **approach based on priority themes** in the SRG01 call, structured around five macro-sectors with dedicated allocations of EUR 150,000 per thematic area.

The activation and maintenance of systematic monitoring prove to be complex, particularly in the post-completion phase of projects. The absence of a dedicated technical support figure—

foreseen under Measure 124 of the 2007–2013 RDP but not reintroduced in the 2014–2022 programming period—left a gap both during implementation and after project completion. The technical documentation produced by lead partners, although available, is used primarily for administrative control and reporting purposes and is not structured to support the analysis of results and impacts. The transition from the SIAR system to AGEA's SIAN system also resulted in the loss of important functionalities for partnership monitoring.

4.2. EIP OG Case Studies

This chapter presents the **in-depth profiles dedicated to three OGs funded under SM 16.1 of the 2014–2022 RDP of the Liguria Region**, selected with the aim of ensuring representation of the variety of experiences developed across the territory, differentiated by sectoral areas, innovative approaches, and partnership composition. The information presented derives from **in-depth interviews with the lead partners of the OGs** and from a **documentary analysis of the projects**, and should be understood as reflecting the views of the interviewed subjects rather than as independent assessments by the evaluator.

Table 9 - Projects Funded under SM 16.1 Selected for the Case Studies

Name	Acronym	Province	Sector	OG lead partner	Interview date
Improving the profitability of the organic livestock supply chain through the innovative management of local forage resources and livestock facilities	INNOVABIOZOO	La Spezia	Livestock farming	Biodistretto Val di Vara	06/11/2025
Productive supply chain to be explored for sustainable and multifunctional floriculture and nursery production	MULTIFLORA	Imperia; Savona	Floriculture	Centro di Sperimentazione e Assistenza Agricola	13/11/2025
Mechanical and automation solutions for the safe execution of the main cultivation operations in Ligurian olive growing	SINOL	Imperia; Genova; La Spezia	Olive-growing	Centro Istruzione Professionale e Assistenza Tecnica della Regione Liguria	07/11/2025

INNOVABIOZOO - Improving the profitability of the organic livestock supply chain through the innovative management of local forage resources and livestock facilities

General Information	
	
Project Location	La Spezia.
Project Sector	Livestock farming.
OG Lead Partner	Biodistretto Val di Vara.
RDP Public Contribution	€ 99,859.47.

Genesis and Development of the OG

Genesis and Objectives of the Project

The project originated from a direct listening process initiated by the Biodistretto Val di Vara in 2017, before the SM 16.1 call was published, with the objective of achieving together what individual enterprises can't accomplish alone in terms of innovation. The two main needs identified by enterprises were: **to reduce livestock feed costs through more efficient management of fodder resources; to have structures better suited to rational livestock management.** Two project proposals emerged from these needs: the introduction of **permanently worked litter barns** (composting barn) and the adoption of **GPS systems for herd management at pasture** in mountain areas between 700 and 1,100 meters altitude.

Partnership Constitution and Partner Roles

The OG was established through the **animation activities of the Biodistretto Val di Vara**, which brings together seven municipalities of the Alta Val di Vara and represents 20% of Ligurian organic producers. The partnership comprised **six partners** with clearly defined roles: the Biodistretto ensured **operational coordination**; CRPA contributed its **expertise on dairy barns**, adapting it to the context of beef barns in the Apennine environment; FIRAB handled **territorial animation** and **connections with external networks**; AIAB Liguria supported **results dissemination**; the two partner agricultural enterprises carried out field experimental activities.

Activities Implemented

The **implementation phase** proceeded along two main lines. For **GPS geolocation**, after reviewing European and international experiences, the project adopted the **ear tags from the Australian company Moovement**, based on Long Range technology with antennas covering 6/7 km, better suited to mountain terrain than 4G/5G systems. The system allows real-time monitoring of herd movements, alerts for stationary animals, and optimisation of pasture surface management. For the **composting barn**, CRPA conducted trials on the **permanently worked**

litter barn at Azienda Agricola Semenza Andrea. Within the project, an **illustrative scheme of the composting barn** applied to a beef barn was also produced. **Demonstration activities** were further carried out through SM 1.2 after project completion

Results Achieved and Dissemination Activities

Strengthening Research-Agriculture Linkages

The project represented the **first direct collaboration between the Biodistretto and the research world**, with a key distinctive element: **innovation needs were identified directly by agricultural enterprises**, ensuring that activities responded to concrete territorial needs. CRPA adapted its competencies to the specific context of beef barns in the Apennine environment. FIRAB facilitated a **dialogue with the University of Florence** within the V-Stock project, leading the OG to serve as a reference for an inter-regional **knowledge exchange between research projects active on the theme of grass-fed animals**.

Main Results for Partner Enterprises

The composting barn is still in use at Azienda Agricola Semenza Andrea, with **documented improvements**: low internal humidity, absence of ammonia and reduced methane production. Some challenges emerged in winter management, related to excess external moisture hampering the aerobic process in the colder months. Diffusion of this innovation remains **limited to larger enterprises**, as smaller farms in the territory already have existing structures. The **GPS system** attracted the **greatest interest among livestock farmers**, giving the project wide regional and national visibility.

New Collaborations

Azienda Agricola Semenza Andrea **further developed the geolocation system**, introducing also a **Bluetooth technology** for automatic animal counting. This innovation was incorporated into a **subsequent project funded under SM 4.1**, submitted by an TAP comprising three agricultural enterprises that jointly purchased the necessary devices.

Effectiveness of the Dissemination Phase

Dissemination took place through the **DEMOBIOZOO project submitted by AIAB under SM 1.2**, with seminars in several provinces, demonstration activities at Azienda Agricola Semenza Andrea and the involvement of a **second pilot enterprise** in the Genova area. **Dissemination materials** — posters and YouTube videos — proved effective tools. Thanks to connections activated by FIRAB, the Biodistretto was invited to present its experience at several national events, including the LIFE ShepForBio project and conferences organised by CREA

Prospects

Relevance and Replicability of the Innovation Introduced

The innovation developed in relation to the initial objectives is relevant, as the calculations carried out by CRPA highlighted an **increase in farm profitability margins** and a **qualitative improvement of soils**. Furthermore, the project was **relevant to the initial objective of reducing livestock feed costs** through more efficient management of farm fodder resources, having planned interventions dedicated to rational herd and pasture management with a focus on feeding.

The composting barn model had already been tested in Reggio Emilia and the No Fence system had been trialled in Maremma on a buffalo farm. Visits to these experiences allowed direct observation of the operational conditions required for the application of both technologies, confirming their full replicability in contexts with similar characteristics. The GPS system adopted

in the project is **fully replicable** in any territory, and particularly in mountain areas, as it does not require 4G coverage to operate.
Areas for Improvement for the New Programming Period Among the weaknesses noted: the **complexity of the application format** and **financial management difficulties** for entities with limited liquidity. Available budgets were considered **rather modest**. Among the success factors, **100% cost coverage** is considered essential for the feasibility of initiatives of this kind, as is the **direct involvement of enterprises as active participants** rather than merely as testing sites. For the new programming period, the introduction of **structural measures** among support actions and the possibility of **slightly larger OGs** beyond the current six-partner limit are desirable.

SINOL - Mechanical and automation solutions for the safe execution of the main cultivation operations in Ligurian olive growing

General Information	
	
Project Location	Imperia; Genova; La Spezia.
Project Sector	Olive growing.
OG Lead Partner	Centro Istruzione Professionale e Assistenza Tecnica (CIPAT) della Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori (CIA) della provincia di Imperia.
RDP Public Contribution	€ 100,000.

Genesis and Development of the OG

Genesis and Objectives of the Project

The project was born from the concrete need to **provide Ligurian olive growers with operational tools capable of improving working conditions in a particularly complex territorial context**. Ligurian olive growing is characterised by a **terraced and walled morphology that prevents the use of traditional mechanisation solutions**: the presence of tree stumps close to walls and the need to frequently work at several metres height make pruning and harvesting high-risk activities with very high labour costs. The technology developed also contributes to **reducing uncultivated areas** through the potential recovery of abandoned land and supports **generational renewal in olive growing**, promoting greater sector attractiveness

Partnership Constitution and Partner Roles

The OG was promoted by **CIPAT**, which identified the territorial need and acted as spokesperson for the productive sector's needs. The partnership comprised **four partners** with clearly defined roles: CIPAT as **needs carrier and coordinator**; DIME of the University of Genova for the **definition of technical solutions** and compliance with safety regulations for elevated work; Azienda Agricola Valle Ostillia to **test the feasibility of proposed solutions**; Moirano Costruzioni Meccaniche S.n.c. for the **physical construction of the prototype**.

Activities Implemented

The **initial phase** was dedicated to studying and reviewing existing solutions, found unsuitable for the Ligurian context characterised by steep and rugged terrain. In the implementation phase, **two project solutions** were developed and tested: the first, simpler and more economical, did not meet safety standards; the second, based on a pantograph system mounted on a motorised carrier, constituted the final prototype. In parallel, through **SM 1.2**, **demonstration days** were organised at olive groves to present the prototype to sector operators.

Results Achieved and Dissemination Activities

Strengthening Research-Agriculture Linkages

The project represented an **important opportunity to strengthen research-agriculture links, particularly for DIME of the University of Genova**, traditionally oriented towards industrial sectors such as port, steel and defence industries. For CIPAT it constituted the first structured relationship with the University of Genova in the agricultural sector. The partnership proved particularly fruitful, to the extent that **the cooperation will continue in the new programming period** with the submission of further joint projects.

Main Results for Partner Enterprises

The main result is the **delivery of a functioning prototype** to the partner agricultural enterprise, still available for use. The device allows the operator to **work safely at around two metres height** without climbing trees, thanks to a stabilisation system and an integrated power station for electric and pneumatic devices. The solution simultaneously addresses multiple objectives: **reduction of injury risk**, including serious injuries; **reduction of musculoskeletal strain**; **extension of productive working life** for older operators. The design approach favoured **light mechanisation**, suited to the Ligurian orographic context where traditional mechanisation is practically unfeasible.

New Collaborations

The project generated **limited impact** on the initiation of collaborations with the agricultural machinery manufacturing sector. The main barrier is the **size of the potential market**, predominantly Ligurian, which does not justify investments for industrial production of the device. This constraint has oriented development towards a **more versatile solution**, usable not only in olive growing but also in fruit growing, professional gardening and building maintenance, so as to expand the potential user base.

Effectiveness of the Dissemination Phase

Demonstration activities carried out through SM 1.2 registered **participation below expectations**. The main causes are structural and cultural in nature: Ligurian agriculture is a **traditional and family-based** production system with a high average operator age (around 60 years), characterised by a **marked resistance to change**. This is compounded by the practical difficulty of organising demonstration events during daytime hours when farmers are occupied on their own farms

Prospects

Relevance and Replicability of the Innovation Introduced

The innovation developed responds to a **concrete and urgent need**, confirmed by the fact that Ligurian olive growing records serious and even fatal accidents. The prototype represents a **pioneering response** for terraced and marginal olive-growing areas, for which no consolidated and widespread technical solutions exist. Once perfected, it has potential replication margins in other hilly and mountain areas of Italy with similar geomorphological characteristics. The choice of developing the system from the motorised carrier — **a technological base already widespread in Liguria** — with interchangeable modules for different cultivation operations aims to contain adoption costs and promote **greater economic accessibility of the innovation**.

Areas for Improvement for the New Programming Period

The main weakness noted concerns the **territorial restriction limiting the partnership to Ligurian entities only**, particularly penalising for mechanical innovation projects which would have benefited from the involvement of specialised enterprises from other regions. A further weakness concerns the **application of the flat-rate cost system** in projects with a high proportion of materials and equipment, for which the flat-rate calculated on personnel costs is insufficiently

flexible. Among the success factors, the **strategic importance of AKIS interventions** for bridging the competitive gaps arising from Ligurian territorial characteristics is highlighted.

MULTIFLORA - Productive supply chain to be explored for sustainable and multifunctional floriculture and nursery production

General Information	
	
Project Location	Imperia; Savona.
Project Sector	Floriculture.
OG Lead Partner	Centro di Sperimentazione e Assistenza Agricola (CeRSAA), special agency of the Chamber of Commerce Riviere di Liguria.
RDP Public Contribution	€ 99,994.81.

Genesis and Development of the OG

Genesis and Objectives of the Project

The project was born from the need to offer Ligurian floriculture **operational tools capable of responding to structural sector weaknesses**. While maintaining a national reference role in ornamental plant production, **the sector is going through a period of significant difficulty** in marginal and hilly areas, where cut flower production is in constant decline. The objective was to promote **multifunctional floriculture** through the introduction of cultivars capable of generating income through different end uses — ornamental, extractive and phytosanitary —, to achieve **"zero residue" production** and to develop a **technical support programme** for enterprises aimed both at production management and at the definition of a possible commercial brand.

Partnership Constitution and Partner Roles

The OG was established on the basis of a **network of territorial collaborations** that CeRSAA has maintained for over twenty-five years. Partnership formation was facilitated by the presence of **formal and informal supply chain agreements** rooted in the Albenga area, involving around 900 enterprises. A **preliminary consultation phase** with the Cooperativa Perinaldese allowed the most relevant and feasible objectives to be identified and prioritised from the many initial requests. The partnership comprised **six partners** with distinct roles: CeRSAA handled **general coordination and developed phytosanitary protection protocols**; DIFAR of the University of Genova developed **sustainable extraction methods**; CREA-OF conducted **varietal selection activities**; the three partner agricultural enterprises carried out **field cultivation trials**.

Activities Implemented

After an **extensive consultation phase** with partnership enterprises, the **operational activities** were organised at multiple levels. Various species and varieties with multifunctional potential were

tested — rosemary, helichrysum, old roses, lavender, peonies, eucalyptus and mimosa — directly at partner agricultural enterprises in marginal and hilly areas. The University of Genova developed sustainable extraction methods, and the extracts were tested by CeRSAA to evaluate their efficacy as fungicides, insecticides and natural biostimulants. A **"zero residue" production system** was developed and **aromatic characterisation of Ligurian rosemary** was initiated, demonstrating distinctive organoleptic profiles compared to the same varieties grown elsewhere. A **technical support platform** connecting farmers directly with competent technicians for specific issues was also developed.

Results Achieved and Dissemination Activities

Strengthening Research-Agriculture Linkages

The project represented an **example of virtuous integration between research and agricultural production**, continuing a collaborative thread active since 2000. The research process involved a **constant dialogue between experimental results and production needs**, allowing the discarding of varieties unsuited to territorial conditions — such as helichrysum, found sensitive to cold — and the translation of protocols into **immediately applicable operational guidance**. **"Zero residue" protocols** were adopted by numerous enterprises in the Albenga area outside the partnership. Scientific results were **published**, ensuring knowledge dissemination in compliance with the principle of accessibility of publicly funded research.

Main Results for Partner Enterprises

The most significant commercial success is the **introduction of rosemary for fronds**, adopted not only by partner enterprises but also by numerous other local businesses, now successfully traded at the Sanremo Flower Market auction. The **PGI pathway for Ligurian rosemary** is now approaching the dossier construction phase. Other plant materials of interest were recovered and valorised, including helichrysum, eucalyptus, thyme and mimosa. The latter, incorporated subsequently due to interest emerging during the research phases, revealed **varieties capable of extending the commercialisation period by over thirty days** and an **extractive potential for the perfumery sector**.

New Collaborations

The project contributed to a **broadening of the collaborative network**. A **collaboration with a Genovese company specialised in fragrance bases** was established to valorise the extractive potential of mimosa. In September 2024 a **permanent table with Ligurian traders and exporters** was launched to define a rosemary supply chain pact. The positive results also stimulated the submission of **new project proposals in the SRG01 call** of the new programming period, initiated directly by cooperatives and sector associations involving CeRSAA and the other partners, confirming the solidity of the network built.

Effectiveness of the Dissemination Phase

Dissemination took place through **two demonstration projects activated through SM 1.2** at an advanced stage of the project, when results were already consolidated and verified. Events, organised directly in the project areas, adopted a **participatory approach** with informal convivial moments that facilitated networking and the creation of new commercial relationships, attracting also **operators outside the partnership**. The **"Plant Doctor" platform** served as a **permanent dissemination channel** for knowledge beyond the formal project closure.

Prospects

Relevance and Replicability of the Innovation Introduced

The innovation developed simultaneously addresses **economic, territorial and environmental needs**. The **concept of multifunctional floriculture** allows income diversification, overcoming seasonality and responding to growing demand for sustainable products. "Zero residue" protocols are **applicable to other Ligurian plant productions** and transferable to contexts with similar climatic conditions. Replicability is facilitated by **standardised certification schemes** such as Global GAP and the possibility of using **European territorial quality labels** such as PGI or PDO, which allow enterprises to benefit from shared recognition without independently bearing significant promotional investment.

Areas for Improvement for the New Programming Period

Among the weaknesses noted: the **complexity of call schemes** and the **project duration**, not always aligned with the timelines needed for significant results in areas with multi-year biological cycles. **Greater flexibility in defining timelines** according to the specificities of interventions is desirable. The creation of a **more permeable and flexible OG system** is proposed, with successive calls enabling the expansion, reduction or replacement of partners over time, so as to keep cooperation alive on complex themes. The opportunity of having, at national level, a **shared and streamlined reference framework** from which Regions can draw inspiration is recalled.

5. Main Results of Indirect Surveys

5.1. Desk Analysis of EIP-AGRI OGs

The desk analysis was conducted on OGs activated under SM 16.1, based on data available on the Innovarurale portal, reorganised and interpreted in light of the evaluation matrix criteria.

Characteristics of Funded OGs

The **total cost** of the 18 projects amounts to approximately **€1.75 million**, with a homogeneous distribution of amounts: most projects cluster close to the **€100,000 ceiling**. **Duration** is also uniform, between **17 and 18 months** for almost all OGs, confirming that beneficiaries used the maximum time allowed by the call. Most projects (**15 out of 18**) were implemented in the 2020-2021 period, while the remaining 3, all forestry projects, took place in the **2021-2023 period**.

From a territorial perspective, projects show a clear **concentration in western Liguria**: the province of **Imperia** is involved in **67% of projects**, followed by the province of **Savona** also at **67%**, which hosts the three forestry projects and numerous floriculture projects. The provinces of **La Spezia** and **Genova** are present in 22% and 17% of projects respectively.

From a sectoral perspective, the distribution directly reflects the regional agricultural structure: the **floriculture sector** concentrates **50% of projects** (9 out of 18), consistent with western Liguria's strong specialisation. The **forestry sector** accounts for **3 projects** (16.7%), all located in the province of Savona, where around 60% of Ligurian forestry enterprises are concentrated. These are followed by **olive growing** with 2 projects (11.1%), **horticulture**, **horti-floriculture**, and the **livestock** and **cereal** sectors each with one project.

Table 10 - Main Characteristics of Funded OG Projects

Project Title	Acronym	Sector	Province	Cost (€)
Chrysanthemum cut flower: varietal improvement interventions	CRIREC	Floriculture	Imperia and Torino	99,857.90
A production chain to explore for a sustainable and multifunctional floriculture sector	MULTIFLORA	Floriculture	Imperia and Savona	99,994.81
Innovation of succulents in Liguria	INSULI	Floriculture	Imperia and Savona	99,772.67
Biotechnological innovations to strengthen a breeder network in western Liguria	BREEDNET	Floriculture	Imperia, Savona and Genova	97,823.76
The roses of Sanremo: research and selection of new native hybrids for botanical perfumery	ROSAEXTREM	Floriculture	Imperia	100,000.00
Improving the profitability of the organic livestock supply chain through innovative management of local fodder resources and livestock structures	INNOVABIOZOO	Livestock	La Spezia	99,859.47
Innovative energy models for agricultural enterprise competitiveness and territorial valorisation in Liguria	M.ER.LI.N	Floriculture	Imperia and Savona	99,616.80
Olive growing in Liguria: innovation in low-impact production strategies for quantitative and qualitative improvement	OLIG+	Olive growing	Imperia, Savona and La Spezia	99,281.33
Innovative Forestry Organisation for Wood Chips	OR.F.IN.CIP	Forestry	Savona	73,809.51
Optimising flowering programming and post-harvest conservation of cut flower species of interest for the Ligurian Riviera di Ponente	OTTIPROGRAM	Floriculture	Imperia, Savona and Milano	99,988.48
Logistic and Economic Optimisation of Firewood	O.L.EC.LEGN.ARD	Forestry	Savona	93,493.11
Water and energy saving in nursery practices using native psammophilous plants	PSAMMBEACH	Floriculture	Savona	99,272.53
Reducing the environmental impact of soilless cultivation of cut flower species in the Riviera di Ponente	FUORISUOLOSMART	Floriculture	Imperia and Pisa	99,970.49
Mechanical and automation solutions for safe olive growing operations in Liguria	SINOL	Olive growing	Imperia, Genova and La Spezia	100,000.00
Smart and precision agriculture strategies for the potted aromatics supply chain	SMARTAROMA	Horti-floriculture	Imperia and Savona	99,996.89
Development and application of microbial consortia to improve nutrient use efficiency and biotic/abiotic stress resistance in wheat	CORNELIA	Cereal	La Spezia	99,999.43
Use of cableways for forest territory management in Liguria	TELE.FOR.LIGURIA	Forestry	Savona	90,477.17
Towards a Ni-free tomato market	TOMATO	Horticulture	Imperia, Savona and Genova	99,932.50

Partnership Analysis

OGs involve on average **4.8 partners**, ranging from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 9 entities. The typology of **lead partners** is highly heterogeneous: **research bodies** lead **28% of OGs**, followed by **training and advisory bodies** and **agricultural enterprises**, both at **22%**, and **sector associations** at **17%**. A **stable core of entities** serving as Lead Partner in multiple partnerships is observed — notably **CeRSAA** and **Florcoop Sanremo**, Lead Partners in three OGs each — confirming the existence of **central nodes of the regional innovation system**.

Considering all partners involved, SM 16.1 projects involve a total of **87 entities**. **Agricultural enterprises** represent the largest group with **38 presences** (44%), distributed across 94% of OGs. **Research bodies**, with **30 presences** (34%), are the only category present in **100% of partnerships**, confirming their central role in innovation processes. The partnership structure is therefore founded on the **integration between the productive world and the research system**, around which other professional profiles are more selectively embedded.

Innovation Analysis

The distribution of innovations by type evidences a **plurality of approaches** and **complementarity** among the different development directions. The most represented area is that of **biological, genetic and materials innovation** with **33% of projects**, followed in equal measure by four further categories — technological innovation and mechanisation; supply chains, organisation and services; digital agriculture and decision support systems; sustainable and agro-ecological production systems — each with approximately **17% of projects**.

The cross-tabulation of productive sector and innovation type shows that the floriculture sector focused on biological, genetic and materials innovation; the forestry sector on mechanisation; olive growing on digital and technological innovations; livestock farming and horticulture on sustainable and agro-ecological production systems; horti-floriculture on digital agriculture; and the cereal sector on biological and genetic innovation.

Table 11 – Cross-tabulation of Agricultural Sector and Innovation Type

Agricultural Sector	Digital Agriculture	Supply Chains & Services	Genetic Innovation	Technological Innovation	Agro-ecological Systems
Floriculture	1	2	5		1
Forestry		1		2	
Olive growing	1			1	
Horticulture					1
Horti-floriculture	1				
Livestock					1
Cereal			1		
Total	**3**	**3**	**6**	**3**	**3**

5.2. Analysis of Thematic Studies on OG Support in Other Italian Regions

This chapter enriches the evaluation framework through **comparison with experiences in other Italian Regions**, with the aim of identifying analogies, differences and useful insights for programming choices. The comparison does not propose models for direct transfer, but offers a **broader information base** to support possible improvement directions. The conclusions of thematic studies conducted within the evaluation services of the 2014-2022 RDPs of **Puglia, Marche and Tuscany** are presented.

PSR PUGLIA 2014 - 2022 COLTIVIAMO IDEE RACCOGLIAMO FUTURO	**Region**	Puglia
	Document	Annual Evaluation Report 2025 (pending MA validation)
	Focus	SM 16.2 – Support for pilot projects and development of new products, practices, processes and technologies

Main conclusions on OG support measures

The analysis of **38 OGs** under SM 16.2 highlighted the **central role of universities and research bodies**, present as Lead Partners or **innovation brokers** in over two-thirds of projects, with a prevailing orientation towards **process and technological innovations**. Sectoral distribution shows a concentration in cereal (28%), wine (24%) and olive supply chains (18%). 85% of OGs implemented experimental and pilot activities. **65% of OGs declare a medium-high replicability of results and the cooperation level between partners was medium-high in 70% of cases**. The main weaknesses concern **procedural delays** (43%), technical difficulties (28%) and management issues (19%). A particularly significant cross-cutting result is the **construction of relational capital** between enterprises and research bodies.

PSR MARCHE 2014-2020	**Region**	Marche
	Document	Thematic Report (October 2023)
	Focus	Innovation: How the RDP Strategy Fostered the Diffusion of Innovation

Main conclusions on OG support measures

The analysis of **43 OGs** under SM 16.1 shows a prevalence of the **fruit and vegetable** (16%) and **cereal** (14%) sectors, with investments concentrated on **low-impact and organic techniques** (43%). **Innovation was rated good in 77% of projects**. Partnership composition is appropriate, with research bodies accounting for 10% of total partners and **agricultural enterprises representing 39%**. Projects developed solutions oriented towards **improving enterprise productivity and competitiveness**, ranging from production diversification to process efficiency improvements, from reduction of **energy, water and fertiliser** use to improvement of **working conditions**. Innovation responds to specific needs

such as **labour shortages**, **generational renewal** and **economic sustainability in inland areas**. The **centrality of dissemination activities** and **high replicability of innovations** in different contexts emerge strongly, as these are solutions whose level of specialisation does not prevent their adoption in contexts without specific competencies and tools.

PSR 2014-2020 Programma di Sviluppo Rurale Regione Toscana	**Region**	Toscana
	Document	Third Thematic Evaluation Report (September 2022)
	Focus	Innovation in Agriculture – Strategic Plans of Operational Groups

Main conclusions on OG support measures

The analysis shows that partnerships originate mainly from **prior knowledge and shared intent**, proving more effective when actors share the same context or supply chain. The **added value** of the instrument lies in the **constant partner involvement** from project definition to conclusion, creating **stable networks that continue beyond the funding period**. For the 52 projects selected under the 2017 call, an **excellent mix of researchers and professionals** is noted, with a **significant presence of agricultural enterprises** (40.4% of partners). The **recognition of the farmer's contribution** through the application of flat-rate costs in the 2022 call favoured direct enterprise participation. Three critical elements emerge: **collaboration with universities** is constrained by administrative rules that can cause delays; **small and medium enterprises** find it difficult to participate actively due to limited structure and lack of dedicated staff; and **different OG management approaches** were observed in terms of meeting frequency, involvement and documentation sharing, which contributed differently to project effectiveness. The **regional commitment to administrative simplification** — through revision of documentation, dialogue with regional offices and **rewriting of the 2022 call** — was recognised as a positive element by beneficiaries who participated in the review process.

Comparative Elements with the Ligurian Context

Comparison with experiences in Puglia, Marche and Tuscany shows that the Ligurian model has **common elements** with other Regions, but also **specificities** linked to the regional productive and territorial structure.

In terms of **leadership**, Liguria stands out for a **more balanced and multi-actor governance model**: research bodies, while present in 100% of partnerships, directly lead only 28% of OGs, while leadership is distributed among agricultural enterprises (22%), training and advisory bodies (22%) and sector associations (17%). This contrasts with Puglia's **predominantly scientific leadership model**.

In terms of **partnership composition**, Liguria shows a **strong integration between the research system and the productive fabric**: agricultural enterprises represent 44% of

partners and research bodies 34%, a figure higher than both Tuscany (40.4% agricultural enterprises) and Marche (where the research component stands at 10%).

In terms of **sectoral concentration**, Liguria stands out for its **marked specialisation in floriculture**, which concentrates 50% of funded OGs and represents approximately 70% of regional agricultural GVO, while Puglia, Tuscany and Marche show a more balanced distribution across supply chains.

6. Main Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Main Conclusions in Light of the Evaluation Matrix

This chapter synthesises the evidence emerging from the analysis conducted according to the evaluation matrix criteria, integrating the results of direct surveys, desk analyses and monitoring data.

Relevance

The Sub-measures of M16 demonstrate a **high level of strategic coherence** with the needs identified in the RDP. Implementation built on a **consolidated institutional context**, characterised by a dedicated regional regulatory framework for agricultural research and a structured network of university collaborations. The **segmentation of Sub-measures** responds to differentiated needs: SM 16.1 is oriented towards **rapid technology transfer**, SM 16.2 towards **pre-competitive development**, while SM 16.4 and 16.9 found favourable contextual elements in previous cooperative experiences and in the social farming regulatory framework.

The **sectoral and geographic distribution of the 18 OGs** confirms strategic alignment with territorial needs: the 50% concentration of projects in floriculture in the provinces of Imperia and Savona reflects western Liguria's specialisation; the exclusive localisation of forestry projects in the Savona area corresponds to the concentration of 60% of forestry enterprises; support for olive growing addresses mechanisation and safety challenges in a sector characterised by terraced morphology and a relatively high average operator age (around 60 years). Coverage of less widespread sectors such as livestock farming demonstrates the Measure's capacity to support innovations strategic for the **territorial stewardship of inland areas**.

The **three case studies** confirm full coherence with agricultural sector needs: **INNOVABIOZOO** addresses the challenges of Ligurian livestock farming through the introduction of permanently worked litter barns and GPS systems; **SINOL** tackles the needs of terraced olive growing through the development of a prototype improving safety and efficiency; **MULTIFLORA** mitigates the challenges of floriculture in marginal areas through the concept of **multifunctional floriculture**. Two critical elements nonetheless emerge: the **limited relevance of the two-phase structure** of SM 16.1 in contexts where qualified actors already capable of autonomously identifying innovation needs are present, and the **Lead Partner's coordination capacity** as a determining factor for results quality, difficult to codify in formal selection criteria.

Effectiveness

The indicators picture shows an **overall very positive level of objective achievement**: **100% of the target** for funded EIP OGs, **96%** for total cooperation operations, **94%** for other-type cooperation interventions and **99%** of programmed financial allocation actually disbursed.

However, **significant gaps** emerge limiting substantive effectiveness. In several cases **partner collaboration remained more formal than substantive**. **Excessively large partnerships** generated by SM 16.9's rewarding criterion produced cumbersome and ineffective structures. A particular weakness concerns **innovation transfer and dissemination**: participation in support services (SM 1.1 and 1.2) was limited and the **lack of structured monitoring** after project completion made it difficult to assess actual medium to long-term territorial impact. The **technical documentation** produced, sent to the Regional Agricultural Inspectorate for administrative controls, **is not valorised for results analysis**, representing an inadequately exploited knowledge asset for evaluative and dissemination purposes.

The three case studies show **significant differences in dissemination effectiveness**. **INNOVABIOZOO** demonstrated high effectiveness through the DEMOBIOZOO project (SM 1.2), with seminars in several provinces, effective dissemination materials and new collaborations leading to the development of **Bluetooth technology** and the involvement of new enterprises in TAP. **SINOL** encountered **structural dissemination weaknesses**, with below-expected participation at demonstration days due to resistance to change typical of a traditional production system and the limited size of the potential market, highlighting how formal effectiveness **does not automatically translate** into actual innovation adoption when context represents a structural constraint. **MULTIFLORA** demonstrated a **virtuous integration model** between research and enterprises, with commercial success of the rosemary fronds product, PGI pathway progress, valorisation of mimosa — adopted spontaneously by non-partner enterprises — and creation of stable collaborative networks continued in the new programming period.

The most effective projects are those that **valorised the SM 1.2 connection**, adopted **participatory dissemination approaches**, created **permanent knowledge dissemination channels** and generated interest translating into **new project proposals** in the subsequent programming period. Limits emerge when contextual characteristics — resistance to change or restricted market size — impede diffusion even in the presence of **technically sound innovations**, highlighting how substantive effectiveness also requires **favourable contextual conditions**.

Efficiency

The Measure 16 implementation picture is marked by certain **weaknesses** attributable to three main dimensions.

On **expenditure capacity**, **99% of programmed resources was effectively disbursed**, with significant differences between Sub-measures: from 96% (agricultural phase 2 of SM 16.1) to 46% (forestry phase 2). Generally, public grants settled below maximum eligible expenditure, with the exception of SM 16.1 agricultural phase — where the average grant per project reached 90% of the maximum threshold — while for SM 16.2 grants settled at around 77%.

On **timelines**, calls proved longer than expected, with repercussions on the timeliness of innovation introduction. The delay is attributable largely to the initial phase, characterised by **predominantly physiological procedural timelines**.

On **administrative complexity**, the actual-cost reporting system and the regulatory requirement to obtain at least three quotations per expenditure item represented a significant burden, particularly in the early phases of projects.

The main barriers are attributable to **endogenous factors** — procedural rigidity, territorial partnership restriction, transition from the SIAR to the SIAN system of AGEA — and **exogenous factors**, primarily the **COVID-19 emergency** and the intrinsic complexity of multi-actor projects. It should be noted that the territorial restriction, while limiting participation to Ligurian entities, **did not preclude the use of extra-regional expertise**, available as service provision or external supply.

Conversely, a **system management adaptation capacity** emerged: removal of temporal constraints during the COVID-19 emergency, the possibility of carrying out SM 1.1 and 1.2 demonstration activities also in the project closing phase, and the Region's **intensive support work** partially compensated for procedural obstacles.

Beneficiaries recognise that **M 16 represented one of the genuine innovations and most effective RDP instruments** and that **100% cost coverage** is fundamental for initiative feasibility. The need to direct **greater resources to cooperation lines** clearly emerges, with the SM 16.2 allocation confirmed insufficient relative to demand. New programming period improvements — flat-rate cost introduction and call scheme rationalisation — represent steps in the right direction, though margins for improvement remain in the application of flat-rate costs in projects with high material costs.

Results

M16 Sub-measures produced **significant results on multiple dimensions**, generating structural transformations in the regional innovation and cooperation system. SM 16.1 and 16.2 fostered a **strategic broadening of university collaborations**. SM 16.4 demonstrated the capacity to operate effectively in diversified sectors, promoting supply chain projects with appreciable results. SM 16.9 particularly stands out for the richness and articulation of its results: activated during a period of strong dynamism in social farming, it acted as a **concrete device for implementing regional legislation, transforming social farming from a marginal phenomenon into a widespread area of interest**, creating operational networks between agriculture and socio-healthcare services, and launching a regulatory revision process culminating in new regional guidelines — a virtuous example of **policy learning** in which operational practice informs and improves the regulatory framework.

The 18 OGs funded under SM 16.1 show a **moderately sized partnership structure** (average 4.8 partners), with high heterogeneity in lead partner type: research bodies (28%), training and advisory bodies (22%), agricultural enterprises (22%) and sector associations (17%). The presence of entities serving as lead partner in multiple partnerships — such as **CeRSAA and Florcoop Sanremo** with three OGs each — confirms the existence of **central nodes of the regional innovation system**. Overall, partnerships involve 87 partners, with agricultural

enterprises at 44% and research bodies at 34%, present in 100% of OGs, evidencing a structure founded on the **integration between the productive world and the research system**.

Case studies demonstrate **high levels of cooperation intensity and quality** between research and enterprises. **INNOVABIOZOO** represented the **Biodistretto's first collaboration with the research world**, with needs identified directly by agricultural enterprises, and generated measurable improvements in animal welfare through the **composting barn** still in use and new collaborations with Bluetooth technology development funded by a subsequent TAP project. **SINOL** delivered a functioning prototype significantly reducing injury risk and musculoskeletal strain, initiating a partnership with DIME of the University of Genova continued in the new programming period. **MULTIFLORA** produced diversified benefits: commercial success of the rosemary fronds product; PGI pathway progress; recovery of ancient mimosa varieties; collaboration with the perfumery sector; launch of a permanent supply chain pact table; and new project proposals in the SRG01 call.

Comparative analysis shows that SM 16.1 results were achieved through:

- functional partnerships integrating agricultural enterprises and research bodies;
- development of diversified innovations by type and consistent with sectoral specificities;
- substantive cooperation, not merely formal, between partners;
- concrete and measurable benefits for enterprises — with measurable improvements in performance or market opportunities;
- effective dissemination activities when supported by SM 1.2 and adapted to contextual characteristics.

Lessons Learnt and Areas for Improvement

M16 implementation generated a significant body of lessons learnt, testimony to a continuous institutional learning process, which has largely found operational translation in the 2023-2027 RDC.

Among the **success factors** identified: **100% cost coverage**, making otherwise unsustainable initiatives feasible; the **direct involvement of agricultural enterprises as active participants** — in many cases as lead partners — ensuring genuine responsiveness to real needs and avoiding academic drift; **recourse to SM 1.2 support measures** in the final phase; the **strengthening of collaborative networks** between research and enterprises; and the **capacity to produce institutional learning** impacting the regional regulatory framework, as demonstrated by the revision of social farming guidelines.

Weaknesses found response through specific corrective measures introduced in the new programming period: the **introduction of a maximum partner number limit**, to balance breadth and manageability; the **requirement to describe coordination arrangements** in the project proposal and the obligation to attend **information courses for all partners** after approval; the **introduction of 40% flat-rate costs**, a progressive evolution from 5% to 15% to the current level; the **obligation to submit the cooperation agreement within six months**

of project start; **advisory services (SRH01) and specialist consultant training (SRH02)**; **assessment of the Communication Plan** in selection criteria; and the **thematic approach for the SRG01 call**, structured on five macro-sectors with dedicated allocations of €150,000 per thematic area.

Certain weaknesses persist, however. The activation and maintenance of **systematic monitoring** is complex, particularly in the post-project phase. The absence of a **dedicated technical support figure** — provided for in M124 of the 2007-2013 RDP but not reproduced in the 2014-2022 period — left a gap both during implementation and after project completion. **Technical documentation produced by lead partners**, while available, is predominantly channelled into administrative control and accounting processes and is not structured to support results and impact analysis.

The **complexity of call schemes**, characterised by redundancies, points to the need for a more rational and streamlined national reference framework. The **territorial restriction** limiting partnership to Ligurian entities only prevents the involvement of extra-regional expertise. The consideration also emerges that **cooperation should be practised in an ordinary and continuous manner**, through a **structured planning of strategic priorities**, rather than through calls that open and close rapidly.

6.2. Progress Diary

This chapter introduces the Progress Diary, conceived as a tool for the synthetic presentation of evaluation outcomes. It collects the main conclusions and recommendations emerging from the analysis, with the objective of supporting the regional Administration in implementation and improvement choices.

Consistent with the state of programming progress, the Progress Diary focuses exclusively on **SM 16.4 and 16.9**, where margins for intervention still exist, and not on SM 16.1 and 16.2, given that the SRG01 call has already been published (and no further activations are foreseen).

Evaluation criterion	Conclusions	Recomendations
Relevance	M16 Sub-measures demonstrate high strategic coherence with RDP needs. Implementation built on a consolidated institutional context: the dedicated regional regulatory framework for agricultural research, a structured network of university collaborations and the experience accumulated during the 2007-2013 period. These elements provided an in-depth understanding of territorial needs, forming a solid base for calibrating objectives and implementation tools.	Maintain high attention to and observation of territorial needs, providing where appropriate mechanisms that balance the economic weight of sectors and the strategic importance of minor sub-sectors.
Effectiveness	Partner collaboration remained more formal than substantive in several cases, with limited actual exercise of the coordination role. Formal partnership constitution does not automatically guarantee actual cooperation, which is instead the central objective of the instrument. Excessively large partnerships generated by SM 16.9's criterion rewarding the highest number of enterprises produced cumbersome and ineffective structures. The LHA case in SM 16.9 highlights a contradiction between the strategic adequacy of the lead partner and the operational	Revise rewarding criteria that incentivise excessively large partnerships, prioritising instead collaboration quality and competency complementarity. Plan periodic in-itinere consultations and/or meetings to verify actual cooperation effectiveness.

Evaluation criterion	Conclusions	Recomendations
	difficulties in managing complex, bureaucratic and inflexible organisations.	
Efficiency	The COVID-19 emergency had a cross-cutting impact on implementation, requiring extensions and intensive support work, particularly for SM 16.4 and 16.9. The intrinsic complexity of multi-actor projects requires continuous coordination between partners with different organisational cultures and adaptations to market dynamics, often difficult to reconcile with rigid administrative procedures.	Provide in future calls physiological temporal flexibility margins that take account of the intrinsic complexity of multi-actor projects, avoiding that external events or necessary market adaptations require extension requests.
	Beneficiaries recognise that M16 represented one of the genuine innovations and most effective RDP instruments and that 100% cost coverage is fundamental for the feasibility of initiatives of this type. New programming period improvements with the increase in flat-rate cost percentage and the rationalisation of call schemes represent steps in the right direction.	Maintain 100% coverage of eligible costs, which is an essential element for the feasibility of cooperation projects, given the management complexity and the pre-competitive nature of activities that do not generate immediate economic returns for participants.
Results	SM 16.9 stands out for the richness and articulation of its results. It functioned as a concrete device for implementing regional legislation, transforming social farming from a marginal phenomenon into a widespread area of interest. It created operational networks between agriculture and socio-healthcare services, generated documented social value and launched a regulatory revision process culminating in new regional guidelines. It represents a virtuous example of policy learning where operational practice informs and improves the regulatory framework.	Having verified the 2023-2027 programming intervention design, confirm the strategic approach adopted, orienting it towards quality and specialisation of interventions. Prioritise projects responding to documented specific territorial needs, fostering the creation of networks between agriculture and socio-healthcare services.