# BESTMAP

Behavioural, Ecological & Socio-economic Tools for Modelling Agricultural Policy

# It's been six months already! What have we been up to so far?

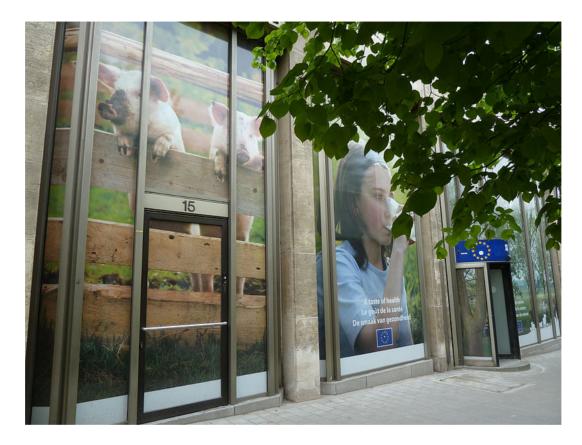### Ready for take-off: First BESTMAP meeting in Brussels

BESTMAP held its official kick-off meeting from 23rd to 25th September in Brussels, Belgium, where partners met for the start of the four-year research and innovation action.  Twelve partner organisations from seven European countries gathered to discuss the first steps towards developing behavioural, ecological and socio-economic tools for modelling agricultural policy.

Right after the kick-off - meeting with DG AGRI

Right after the kick-off meeting, project coordinator Prof Guy Ziv attended a workshop hosted by DG AGRI on '*Analytical tools and models to support policies related to agriculture and food'*.  This meeting brought together colleagues from DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, DG ENV, the Joint Research Centre plus coordinators of other H2020 projects on improving agricultural policy.

The workshop explored the challenges facing agricultural policy-makers and discussed how BESTMAP and other projects can fill these gaps.  It also discussed how coordinators can work together to maximise synergies and complementarity between the projects.
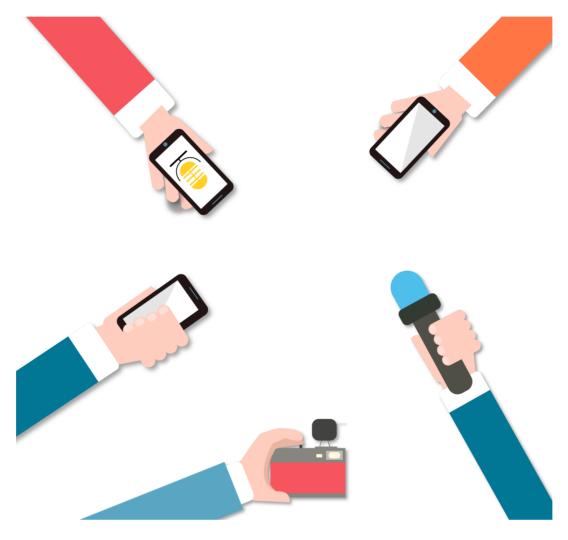
## Interviews with farmers

As part of our first phase of empirical research, we are conducting interviews with farmers in our five case study regions; U.K. (Humber), Germany (Mulde), Spain (Catalonia), Czech Republic (South Monravia) and Serbia (Bačka).  This is being done to gain a better understanding of the factors which inform farmers' decision making. The data collected through the interviews will serve to inform the creation of agent-based models later in the project.

Our interview campaign is now well underway in all case studies! Exploratory in nature, the interviews deliberately aim to discover new aspects of our research subject and show what is relevant for farmers with regard to agricultural policy.

The interviews consist of two parts. The first part is an open conversation that covers general attitudes towards farming, opinions about environmentally sustainable

behaviour and experiences with agri-environmental schemes. A semi-structured interview protocol enables us to be flexible during the interviews while at the same time ensuring that interviews are comparable across case studies. The second part is a questionnaire that covers more detailed aspects of agri-environmental schemes.

The interview campaign will run until the end of March 2020.



Policy engagement plans

In order to enhance the visibility of the project and its outcomes, BESTMAP is taking a strategic approach towards engaging with its key stakeholders.  This will also serve to explore potential common activities and complementarities with other projects, initiatives, networks, and with EU policy makers.

A comprehensive Plan for Engagement has been drafted which outlines a strategy on establishing strong connections with other projects, initiatives and institutions (on local, national, and EU levels), relevant to the BESTMAP project.

BESTMAP aims to help policy-makers rethink rural policy, in order to enhance the sustainability of agricultural landscapes while ensuring farmers' livelihoods.  As such, sufficient support and two-way communication with the policy-makers and regulators is crucial for this project to reach its full potential. BESTMAP project representatives will build strong relationships with the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ENV), Joint Research Centre (JRC) and European Parliamentary Research Service.

During the next phase of the project, BESTMAP will be consulting with members of local, regional and national governments across the five case study regions, as well as representatives of the EU institutions, to discuss how EU level policy is being interpreted into strategic plans by member states and to understand what environmental priorities are most relevant in different regions.

## Coming up next

EU level policy workshop in Brussels (Spring 2020)

## We are on Social Media

# BESTMAP is part of a bigger thing!

We are part of the AGRIMODEL Cluster between #BESTMAP, #AGRICORE and #MINDSTEP.

We will join efforts for the common goal - to enhance agricultural models and practices!

A mutual webpage is coming soon!

# Talk to us!

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