

Farmers' acceptability of copper alternatives

First results of the national workshops on copper
of the **RELACS** project

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Presentation of RELACS

Horizon 2020 Research Project

2018-2022



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RELACS in a nutshell

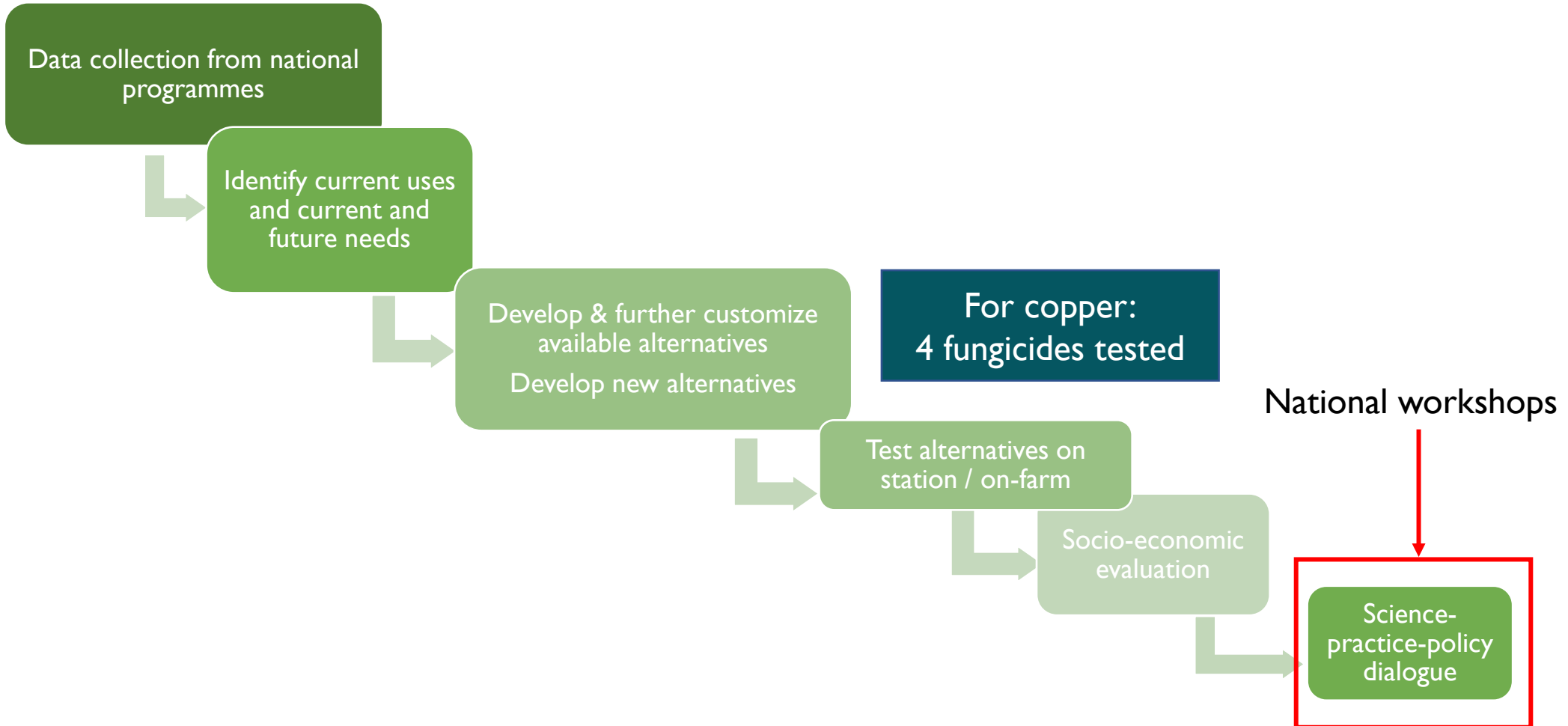
- **R**eplacement of **C**ontentious Inputs in Organic Farming **S**ystems
- Foster development and facilitate adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools & technologies to reduce the use of contentious inputs in organic farming systems, namely:
 - **Copper** & mineral oil for plant protection
 - Conventional manure & rock phosphate for plant nutrition
 - Antibiotics & anti-worm drugs (anthelmintics) in animal production
 - Synthetic vitamin B & E in animal feed
- Builds on results of previous research projects & takes far-advanced solutions forward
- 29 partners from thirteen countries: research, farming, advisory services & industry

Partners

- 13 European countries
- 15 partners
- 14 linked parties
- 11 research organisations
- 1 dissemination partner
- 3 SMEs
- 11 farmer organisations
- 3 research organisations



Approach & methodology





RELAACS

IMPROVING INPUTS FOR ORGANIC FARMING



Science-practice-policy dialogue

Developing national roadmaps to reduce the use of copper

Overview of the RELACS roadmap process

- 1st step: National roadmaps
 - National workshops will provide outcomes to develop national roadmaps for reducing the use of contentious inputs and adopting alternatives
- 2nd step: European roadmaps
 - National roadmaps will be discussed in a European workshop gathering policy-makers and stakeholders
 - The European workshop will provide outcomes to develop three European roadmaps for reducing the use of contentious inputs and adopting alternatives to contentious:
 - (1) plant protection products,
 - (2) fertilisers,
 - (3) inputs used in livestock production

How the RELACS Project fits the EU policy context

- The EU Farm to fork strategy (published in May 2020) sets the following targets by 2030:
 - Reaching at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming
 - Reducing by 50% the overall use and risks of chemical pesticides and by 50% the use of more hazardous pesticides
 - Reducing by at least 50% the nutrient losses while ensuring that there is no deterioration in soil fertility. This will reduce the use of fertilisers by at least 20%
 - Reducing by 50% the overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture

→ Opportunities and challenges for the organic agriculture and its approach to inputs

Aims of the national workshops

- Multi-actor involvement: farmers, advisors, scientists, competent authorities and policy makers
- Objectives
 - Discuss pros and cons of proposed alternatives (substances, tools and techniques)
 - Explore the current acceptance level of farmers
 - Identify bottlenecks for uptake of alternatives
- Outcomes → Input-specific national roadmaps:
 - Establishing national recommendations and action plans to reduce the use of contentious inputs



National roadmaps for copper reduction

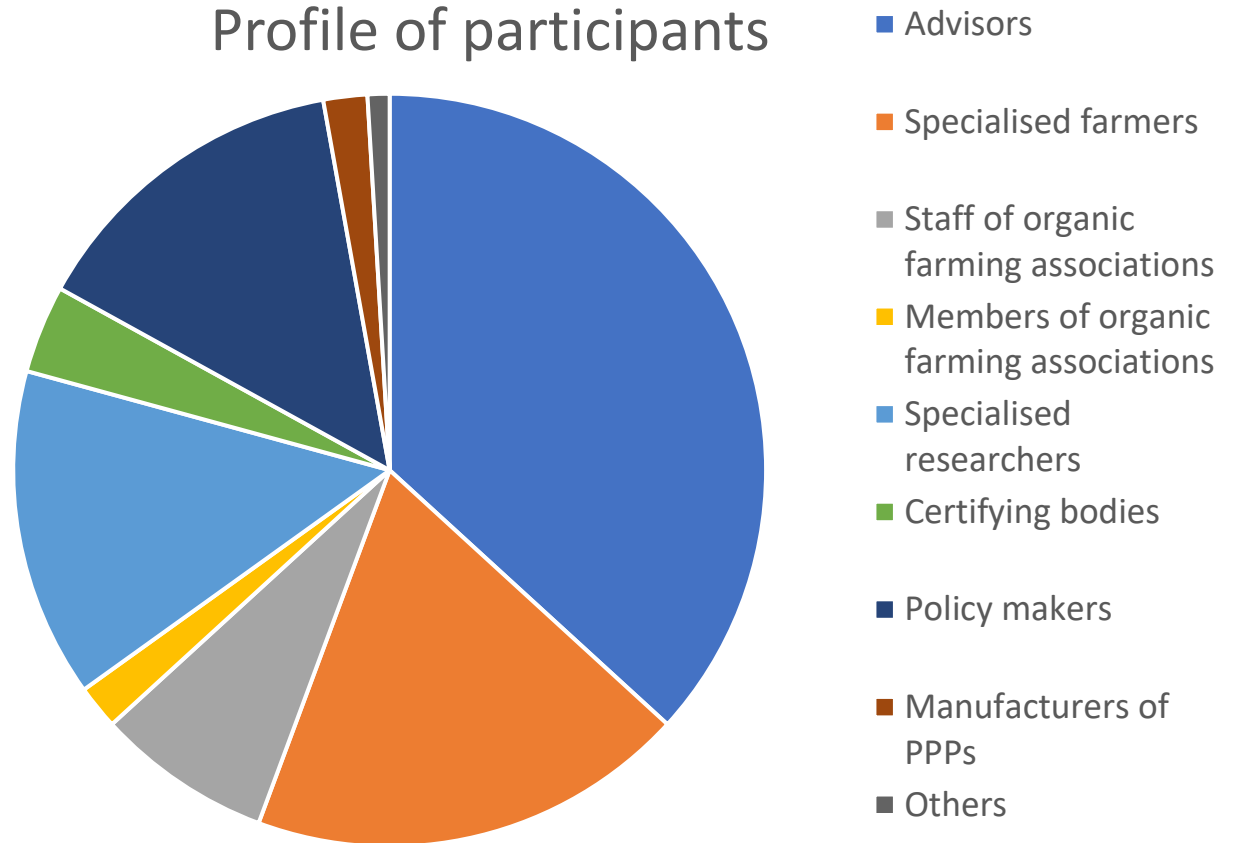
Main findings

/!\ Qualitative assessment

Background info on copper workshops

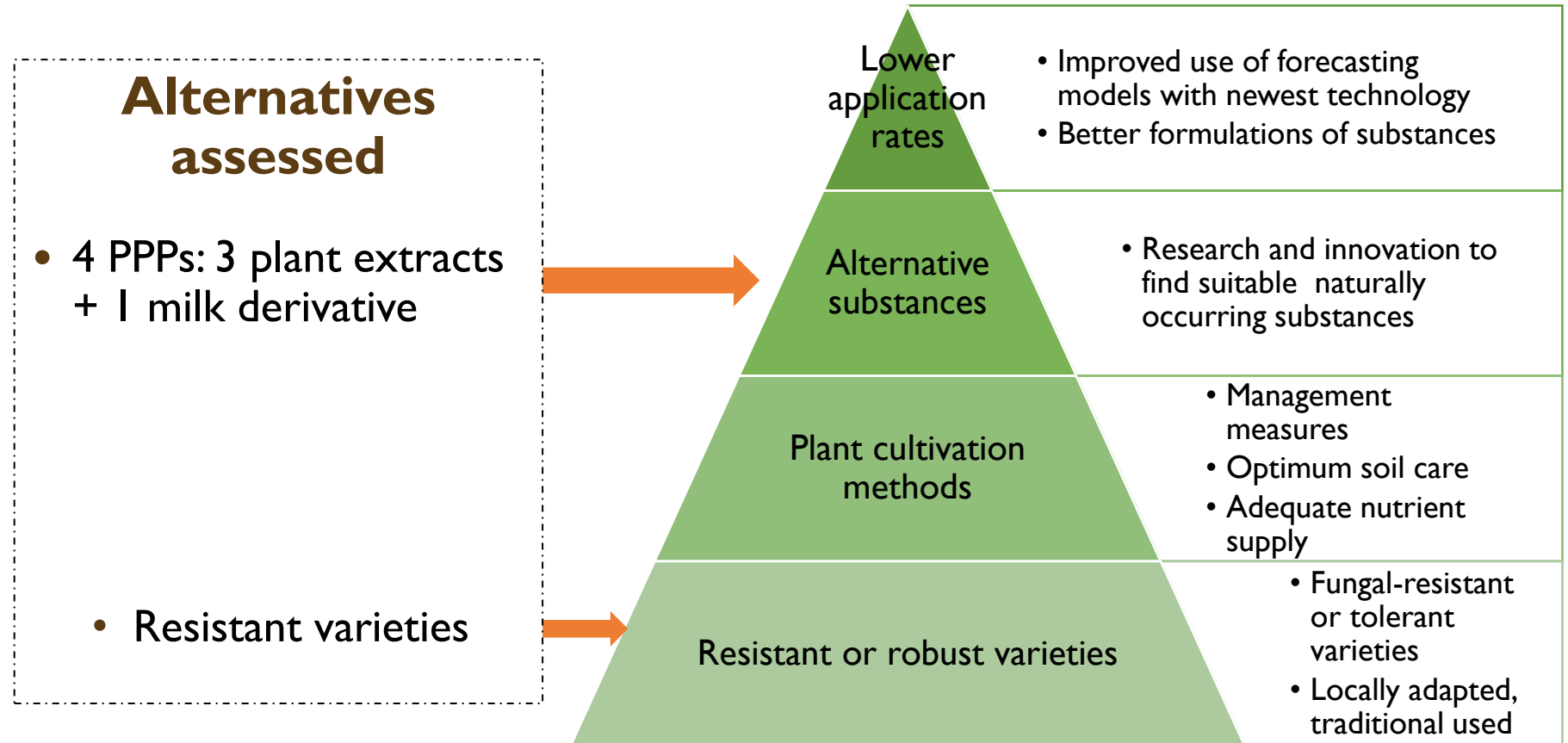
- 6 Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain + UK
- Between May and September 2021
- On average, 17 participants / workshop (from 8 to 33)

Profile of participants



RELACS and copper minimisation strategy

RELACS national workshops → discussions on single elements of the strategy and not on the whole strategy



Presentation IFOAM OE copper minimisation paper, Isabella Lang, Berlin, 2018

General remarks

- High interest from farmers to have access to alternatives to copper
- Farmers stressed that the adoption of any alternative should be thought as part of a comprehensive strategy for plant health
- Difficulties in assessing separately the different alternatives → more general comments than alternative-specific assessment.
- Difficulties in considering copper reduction paths with the alternatives presented as most of them are still at a development stage

Assessment of the PPPs alternatives by farmers

- Assessment by farmers of the 4 alternative PPPs are quite similar:
 - First indications of their effectiveness are already available
 - Current knowledge shows low impact on environment
 - But data are not sufficient to fully assess efficacy, environmental impact, costs...
- Interesting alternatives but none are as effective as copper
- Slightly higher prices could be acceptable if solid evidence provided (efficacy + environment)
- Importance of weather forecast tools and network

→ Good acceptability, or at least no red lines identified

Assessment of resistant varieties by farmers

→ Common agreement to say that this is a very important measure and there is a need to intensify breeding efforts

To be noted:

- Strong influence of consumer preferences (especially for wine growers)
- Investment level involved for long-lasting trees (pears: 40-70 years)

Bottlenecks identified

- Major issue → the **registration process** of botanicals at EU level is long, excessively complicated, involving high financial costs

Other concerns:

- Doubts regarding the **social acceptability** of alternatives regarding organic principles:
 - If they are authorised as herbicide in conventional agriculture
 - If they are synthetically manufactured, even if they are nature-identical

Conclusions common to all alternatives

- High interest from farmers to have access to alternatives to copper
- Any alternative should be considered as part of a comprehensive strategy for plant health.
- Alternatives are considered relevant tools to reduce the use of copper but not to phase out.
- There is a lack of data on efficacy, environmental impacts, price, technical practices...
- There is a need to evaluate the combined use of alternatives with other substances or with each other
- Price is a sensitive topic
- Registration process is too long, laborious, it is seen as a major constraint for the adoption of alternatives

Main recommendations

- More **research** is needed to assess environmental impact / adverse effects, use of alternatives with other PPPs and as part of a whole plant health strategy
 - Further scientific studies
 - Develop on farm trials / Demonstrations
- **Advisory services / knowledge:**
 - Establish working groups → facilitate exchanges, share new knowledge and skills
- **Public authorities**
 - Improve registration process

Next steps

Building EU policy recommendations on the basis of research results

RELACS European workshop

Objectives:

- Share and consolidate outcomes of the national workshops with EU policymakers
 - Design fair and implementable EU rules on the use of inputs in organic agriculture
 - Identify the policy measures needed to achieve realistic reduction paths for contentious inputs
- Outcomes → 3 European roadmaps for reducing the use of:
 - i. Contentious plant protection products (copper, mineral oil)
 - ii. Contentious fertilisers (manure from conventional agriculture, recycled nutrients)
 - iii. Contentious inputs used in livestock production (antibiotics, anthelmintics and vitamins).

A promotional banner for 'Organic Innovation Days'. The background is a mix of green and blue with stylized leaf patterns. The text is white and yellow. The main title 'Organic Innovation Days' is in large white font. Below it, the dates '30 November - 1 December 2021, Online' are in yellow. On the left, there's a list of topics under the heading 'JOIN US & DISCUSS:'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'ORGANIC PLUS', 'TPorganics', 'RELACS', and the European Union flag.

JOIN US & DISCUSS:

- ALTERNATIVES TO INPUTS IN ORGANIC FARMING
- SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS & THE WAY FORWARD FOR CONTENTIOUS INPUTS

Organic Innovation Days

30 November - 1 December 2021, Online

   TP Organics in cooperation with RELACS & Organic-PLUS  

Join us at the final event of the RELACS and Organic-PLUS projects!

Registration is open until 28 November

→ Event website: <https://tporganics.eu/organic-innovation-days/>

Thank you for your attention!

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