

LIFE International networking conference
**LIFE farming – environmentally
sustainable agriculture**

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 8 May 2018 – FIELD TRIP

9.15 Meeting point in front of European Union House, Dunajska cesta 20, Ljubljana

09.30 Departure from Ljubljane

11.00 – 12.30 **Visit of project LIFE ViVaCCAdapt - Adapting to the impacts of climate change in the Vipava Valley ([LIFE15 CCA/SI/000070](#) - ongoing)**
(KS Ajdovščina, Prešernova 26, 5270 Ajdovščina)

The purpose of the project is to establish measures to avoid the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture in the area of the Vipava Valley. The project team already prepared a strategy for climate change adaptation. Next steps are establishment of decision support system for irrigation and increasing the surface of green windbreaks. How green windbreaks function, participants will learn on the field, during the visit of project area.

12.30 Departure from Ajdovščina

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.30 **Visit of the Ljubljana Marsh Nature Park and the presentation of LIFE project Intermittent Cerknica Lake (*Center Ig, Banija 4, 1292 Ig*)**

LIFE project Intermittent Cerknica Lake ([LIFE06 NAT/SI/000069](#) - finalised)

The project aimed to ensure long-term favourable conditions for the conservation of turloughs and other endangered habitat types and associated plant and animal species at Lake Cerknica. It simultaneously sought to promote an even development of local agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism, recreation and education in accordance with natural values. In overall the project tackled the three main threats identified to the habitats: modified watercourses, abandoning of meadow mowing by local landowners and lack of knowledge of local nature and its conservation. Numerous nature conservation activities were performed, from restoration of the natural watercourses, mowing of abandoned meadows to raising awareness of nature-friendly farming and agricultural policy. They will present measures, performed within the LIFE project, and their continuation through ESRR project KRAS.RE.VITA.

Ljubljana Marsh Natural Park([website](#))

Ljubljana Marsh Natural Park is a good example of a mosaic landscape with rich biodiversity, shaped through time also by agriculture. The Nature Park faces numerous challenges, from preventing the biodiversity loss and pollution to more frequent extreme climatic events. It demonstrates numerous challenges; protected area managers and farmers are facing, and will serve as basis for further discussion at the conference. The field part of the trip will be reserved for presentation of ESRR project PoLJUBA.

16.30 Departure from Ljubljana Marsh Natural Park



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Wednesday, 9 May 2018 – CONFERENCE (Brdo Congress centre, Brdo pri Kranju)

08.30 Registration opened

08.30 – 10.00 **LIFE knowledge fair**
Presentation of projects (stands) and networking

10.00 – 10.20 **Opening address**
Irena Majcen, the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning
mag. Tanja Strniša, State Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
dr. Patrik Kolar, Head of Department B at the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME)

10.20 – 11.20 **Introductory panels Environmental challenges in agriculture**
LIFE – new solutions for the environment and agriculture – dr. Patrik Kolar (EASME)
Contribution of LIFE programme to European agriculture
Challenges in agriculture – prof. dr. Luka Juvančič (University of Ljubljana)
Presentation of agricultural areas with highest demand for new development solutions
Agriculture and environment – dr. Marija Markeš (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning)
Presentation of identified environmental problems in agriculture

11.20 – 11.40 Break

11.40 – 13.00 **LIFE farming - Presentation of five LIFE projects**
Maria Bastidas (ADPM) - project **LIFE-Montado-adapt** ([LIFE15 CCA/PT/000043](#))
Dr. Giuseppe Bonazzi (C.R.P.A.) - LIFE project **AQUA** ([LIFE09 ENV/IT/000208](#))
Stefano Brenna (ERSAF) - project **LIFE HelpSoil** ([LIFE12 ENV/IT/000578](#))
dr. Patrick McGurren (DAHG) - project **AranLIFE** ([LIFE12 NAT/IE/000995](#))
Rok Černe (ZGS) - project **LIFE DINALP BEAR** ([LIFE13 NAT/SI/000550](#))

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 **Potential of LIFE programme for Slovenian agriculture**
Five workshops where participants will discuss on current problems and new possible solutions.
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION – moderator **prof. dr. Lučka Kajfež Bogataj** (UL): how to make Slovenian/European agriculture more resilient to climate changes
NITRATES – moderator **dr. Jože Verbič** (AIS): how to solve the problems of excessive amount of animal manure
SOIL – moderator **dr. Borut Vrščaj** (AIS): soil management in relation to sustainable agriculture and ecosystem services
GRASSLANDS – moderator **mag. Mateja Žvikart** (IRSNC): how to manage Natura 2000 sites with habitat types, used by farmers (e.g. dry grasslands). Within the workshop the project **LIFE TO GRASSLANDS** ([LIFE14 NAT/SI/000005](#)) will be presented.
COEXISTENCE – moderator **mag. Aleksandra Majić Skrbinšek** (UL): how to coexist with species, frequently in conflict with humans (e.g. brown bear)

15.30 – 16.15 **Conclusion of the conference** (summary of workshops' conclusions)



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introductory panels **ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN AGRICULTURE**

LIFE - NEW SOLUTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Since mid-20th Century agriculture has been increasingly affecting the environment due to the production intensification. Recent studies also confirm the link between the use of pesticides and loss of biodiversity. However, some solutions have already been developed and tested to move towards an environmentally sustainable agriculture through the LIFE programme funding:

- application of the variable rate technology, used in field crop management, to organic fertilisation in vineyards (VITISOM);
- reduction of ammonia emissions of dairy farming (CMCD);
- application of a demonstrative model of circular economy process in a high quality dairy industry on the production of Grana Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano cheeses (DOP);
- mitigating climate change through a sustainable supply chain for olive oil (OLIVE4CLIMATE);
- demonstration of a new agro-silvo-pastoral land use to improve farm profitability in Mediterranean mountain areas (POLYFARMING).

Results of these and other relevant projects supported by the LIFE programme during the 2014-2020 period will be presented and discussed.



Dr. Patrik Kolar joined the European Commission in 2007 and worked as Head of Unit in several Directorates. During his work for the Commission he contributed to designing and implementing EU Research and Innovation (R&I) policies – in particular the Framework Programmes for R&I (the 7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020). Currently he is the Head of Department B at the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), which is responsible for implementation of the LIFE programme.

CHALLENGES IN AGRICULTURE

Nature is the fundamental source of our prosperity and heritage, which has been entrusted to us by the generations that are yet to come. It is our duty to preserve this heritage and, if possible, to enrich it. This is especially true for agriculture, which production process takes place in direct interaction with natural resources, and consequently also co-shapes it. In public - both general and professional - there is a deeply rooted belief about the antagonistic relationship between agriculture and nature protection. Examples of good practices prove the opposite. Agricultural practices can contribute to maintaining or even improving the state of ecosystem services (eg. biodiversity, cultural landscape, carbon sequestration). At the same time, ecosystem services represent an inexhaustible source of value-added, both in residential and in economic terms, adding value to marketable products and services deriving from agricultural production. The presentation will show some of these types of practices.



Dr. Luka Juvančič is an agricultural economist and associate professor of economics of natural resources at the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. The range of areas of its research and professional activity is quite diverse: from economic and management issues in agriculture and agricultural policy, to evaluation of ecosystem services in agriculture and forestry, to social issues related to various aspects of agriculture and nutrition. More recently, he is more intensively engaged in the possibilities of environmentally more sustainable and economically more efficient use of biomass according to the principle of a circular economy, which is known as bio-economy.



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AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Typical for the present time is that we all speak about the sustainability of resources, and more, the country provides guidance and commitment to sustainable development in all its important documents. Sustainable development in terms of nature protection is understood as achieving positive results for all participants in the development chain, with all living beings and their support systems - not just for humans. Preserved nature is our central national wealth and our recognisability, so that through its protection and sustainable marketing and use, we can significantly strengthen the national economy. It is time to reconsider and realize the importance of linking natural resources and nature protection through the understanding of processes by food producers on the one hand and nature conservationists on the other. The task of all of us is to help establish appropriate conditions and direct the process of transition to such an agricultural policy that will ensure improvement of the living standard of the rural population while reducing the pressures on the environment and nature.



Dr. Marija Markeš is the Head of Conservation of Nature Division at the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. By training, she is an agrarian economist, and while dealing with developmental issues of agriculture in mountain and hilly areas, she became particularly involved in the connection and interdependence of agriculture and the nature protection. The experience from her work, ranging from the representation of Slovenian farmers in the first Slovenian parliament to the development of agro-environmental policy in the EU pre-accession period as employee of the Triglav National Park and the Ministry of Agriculture, helps her to understand the complexity and connection of nature protection from different perspectives.



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LIFE FARMING – presentation of LIFE projects

LIFE MONTADO ADAPT – Montado & climate; a need to adapt ([LIFE15 CCA/PT/000043](#))

The Montado (Portugal) / Dehesa (Spain) is an agrosilvopastoral and multifunctional system typical for southern and central Portugal and Spain. The system has recognized values at cultural and economic level, but is also seen as a biodiversity hotspot. The impact of climate change on Montado/Dehesa areas result in an increase of uncertainty, of extreme events (heat waves, drought and heavy precipitation), concentration of rainfall days, reduction of frozen days etc. Therefore the aim of the LIFE Montado-Adapt project is to promote the adaptation of the Montado/Dehesa system to climate change in Portugal and Spain, increasing the sustainability at an economic, social and environmental level. Together with the owners they are implementing an Integrated Land Use system (ILU), which represents a diversification strategy for the farms that takes into consideration not only the characteristics of endogenous aspects of each property, but also the expected climatic conditions and market opportunities.



María Bastidas has been working in natural conservations and economical valorization for the last 13 years. She is geographer and master in ecological restoration and experienced in rural development, territorial planning, wild resources valorizations, adaptation to climate change and promotion of sustainable agriculture. She is currently the coordinator of three European projects to aim increase the knowledge and promote a sustainable management of national and transboundary natural resources.

Life HelpSoil – Helping enhanced soil functions and adaptation to climate change by sustainable conservation agriculture techniques ([LIFE 12 ENV/IT/000578](#))

The Life project HelpSoil - started in 2013 and ended in 2017 – was addressed to compare Conservation Agriculture practices with conventional “ploughed” agriculture. To this purpose 20 demonstrative farms were selected all over the Po plain in North Italy, where agronomic and environmental indicators were monitored for three years. Results pointed out that soil conservation practices can provide a wide contribution to tackle global warming challenges and enhance soil natural ecosystem services delivering. Moreover, the project showed that allowing real opportunities for farmers to share experiences plays a key role and improving land management practices requires adaptation to the specific local conditions. Sometimes benefits of soil conservation practices cannot be immediately clear for farmers, but in the long term positive feedbacks also on the profitability of cropping systems occur.



Stefano Brenna has a Degree in Agricultural Science at the University of Milan (Italy). Currently he works at ERSAF – Regional Agency for Agriculture and Forests of Lombardy – where he is Head of the Research and Innovation Unit. Author of several publications, he is specialized on soil protection and monitoring and was the technical responsible for the Life HelpSoil project.



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AQUA – Achieving good water quality status in intensive animal production areas ([LIFE09 ENV/IT/000208](#))

The AQUA project “Achieving good water quality status in intensive animal production areas” was designed to show how to reduce pollution of both groundwater and surface water resulting from the losses of nutrient (nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P)) of agricultural origin, by optimising their use in livestock farms. The objective was achieved through the combination of innovative management techniques and practices:

- reducing N in livestock manure through the use of low-protein feed rations in pig farms and increased N efficiency in cattle farms;
- increasing the fertilising efficiency of livestock manure with the use of innovative distribution techniques on crops with long growing season and high uptake;
- reducing the losses of nutrient from soil to water through agro-environmental measures designed to reduce flows to water;
- to limit pressure and impact in areas with a high livestock farm density through the separation and transfer of solid fractions of livestock slurry.



Dr. Giuseppe Bonazzi, from 1980 to 2013 has been working at the CRPA Environment Department, managing group researches mainly concerned with the problem of stock farming environmental impact. He is an expert in pig housing, waste management and clean techniques in animal husbandry.

AranLIFE – The sustainable management of the priority terrestrial Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats of the Aran Islands ([LIFE12 NAT/IE/000995](#))

AranLIFE is an ongoing demonstration project operating on the three Aran Islands over a 5 year period from 2014-2018. The project is working with 67 farmers demonstrating the best conservation management practices on designated Natura 2000 sites including Calcareous grassland, Limestone pavement and Machair. The work includes:

- implementation of the project (e.g. the selection of the farms);
- completing actions on the ground (e.g. scrub removal, optimum grazing, improving access);
- the provision of a water infrastructure for the grazing livestock.

Other elements of the project include monitoring the impact of actions from an agricultural, environmental context. Informing the public of the work through communicating the project results and providing evidence of the importance of the agricultural system in protecting the Islands’ unique flora. It is hoped that the project’s results can form the basis of future support measures under relevant national policies and programmes.



Dr. Patrick Mc Gurn is currently the Project Manager for a LIFE project on the Aran Islands in Ireland (AranLIFE), working with farmers in the management of species rich dry grasslands. After graduating in Agriculture from Queen's University, Belfast, he went on to work in the agriculture advisory services for Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland. Working with farmers led to an interest in semi-natural grasslands and he went on to complete a PhD on the management of species rich grasslands.



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LIFE DINALP BEAR – Population level management and conservation of brown bears in northern Dinaric Mountains and the Alps ([LIFE13 NAT/SI/000550](#)) and SloWolf – Conservation and surveillance of conservation status of wolf (*Canis lupus*) population in Slovenia ([LIFE08 NAT/SLO/000244](#))

Damage to human property (e.g. beehives, livestock, orchards, fields, gardens, silage bales) is one of the most important causes for human-bear conflicts. Beside the loss of property, these locations also act as additional attractant for bears to approach human settlements and can cause bear habituation to human presence and food-conditioning. In order to reduce number of conflicts, the project LIFE DINALP BEAR implements best practice examples on the hotspots with frequent bear damages. This involves protection of livestock, beehives, orchards or individual fruit trees, fields, and gardens. Different protection techniques are used, including electric fences and other devices for deterring brown bears from causing damages.

One of the most effective methods for damage protection is the use of livestock guarding dogs (LGDs), which has been almost entirely abandoned in Slovenia. Within a LIFE+ project on wolves (SloWolf) they already donated guarding dogs to some interested sheep breeders and started to educate individual breeders how to properly raise LGDs. In project LIFE DINALP BEAR they are building upon this foundation and establishing a working line of LGDs and a network of dedicated livestock guarding dog breeders in Slovenia and in Italy.



Rok Černe is a forester by profession and have been working as a project manager on wildlife at the Slovenian Forest Service for more than ten years. I am currently a LIFE Lynx project coordinator. Additionally, I have been coordinating the LIFE DINALP BEAR project for the past three and a half years and will continue implementing LIFE DINALP BEAR until its completion.

LIFE TO GRASSLANDS – Conservation and management of dry grasslands in Eastern Slovenia ([LIFE14 NAT/SI/000005](#)) – The project will be presented within the »Grasslands« workshop

The purpose of the project LIFE TO GRASSLANDS is to improve to unfavourable status and ensure long-term conservation of dry grasslands as well as plant and animal species connected to them in the following areas: Haloze, Pohorje, Kum and Gorjanci-Radoha. All four areas face problems of overgrowth and abandonment of agricultural use on one hand and the problem of unsuitable (intensive) agricultural use of land on the other

With the project activities, the sustainable use of dry grasslands is promoted, in particular by connecting interested farmers / owners, cleaning overgrown areas, leasing / purchasing the land and providing grassland management equipment to gratuitous use. Currently, the project has signed 54 agreements for participation in the project's activities, where the investor (the farmer or the tenant) undertakes to manage the dry grasslands in accordance with the prepared nature protection plans until the end of 2025.



Dr. Nika Debeljak Šabec works at the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation. She has many years of experience in successful preparation of applications and project management (LIFE, Interreg, EGP financial mechanism). Currently she is coordinating the LIFE TO GRASSLANDS project. The subject of her PhD research was *in vitro* conservation of terrestrial orchids.



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POTENTIAL OF LIFE PROGRAMME FOR AGRICULTURE – workshops

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

In short term agriculture is directly affected by weather and in long term by climatic conditions of a particular area. Agricultural production depends on seasonal variables such as air temperature, solar irradiation, air humidity and precipitation, and is therefore highly vulnerable to climate change. The agriculture is most vulnerable due to extreme weather, which includes in particular droughts, floods, storms with hail, as well as low temperatures with frosts and heat waves. The frequency and intensity of extreme events determine how much food we are able to produce and what the price of this production is. As the negative effects of climate change on agriculture will prevail, it is essential that agriculture adapts to the predicted climate change as soon as possible.

Agriculture is fortunately a sector that can adapt but farmer adaptations are influenced by many factors, including government agricultural policy, prices, technology research and development, and agricultural extension services. The implementation of measures to adapt agriculture to climate change is also supported by the LIFE programme. The purpose of the workshop is thus to identify not only problems, but above all solutions suitable for implementation through a LIFE project.



Moderator: prof. dr. Lučka Kajfež Bogataj

Professor Kajfez Bogataj is the Head of the Centre for Agrometeorology, Professor of climatology at University of Ljubljana and a Slovenian member of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). With the background in physics and meteorology, she has dedicated her work to climatology and climate change. Her current research includes climate change scenarios and impacts on ecosystems and human wellbeing.

SOIL

Within the workshop, we will address the problems of soil quality and sustainable use of agricultural land. We will highlight the types and significance of essential ecosystem services of soil in agricultural land, their contribution to the diversity and general state of the environment and simultaneous provision of material and non-material goods, satisfying the needs of the population of the country. We will exchange views and confront opinions on the quality of agricultural land and agricultural areas, as discussed by public opinion, agricultural and pedological profession.

The purpose of the workshop is to collect initiatives, views and contents to be addressed within LIFE projects, with the aim of ensuring food security and at the same time sustaining the use of the agricultural land, the environment and the multifunctionality of the agricultural area.

The participants of the workshop will thus be able to familiarize themselves with the problems of agricultural land and the agricultural environment, and at the same time suggest the contents or initiatives for LIFE projects.



Moderator: dr. Borut Vrščaj

Dr. Borut Vrščaj is the Head of the [Department of Agricultural Ecology and Natural Resources](#) of Agricultural Institute of Slovenia. As soil scientist, he participates in domestic and international projects in the field of pedology and the environment. Currently he coordinates the international EU Interreg project [Links4Soils](#).



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POTENTIAL OF LIFE PROGRAMME FOR AGRICULTURE – workshops

NITRATES

With the introduction of industrial nitrogen binding from the air and the production of mineral fertilizers, the nitrogen cycle has increased significantly in agriculture. The production of mineral fertilizers enables on the one hand about half of the world's food production and causes, on the other hand, large quantities of nitrogenous compounds to be released into the environment. With industrial nitrogen binding also the nitrogen in nitrogenous fertilizers has increased greatly, which in many cases exceeds the needs of plants or even becomes waste. The consequences are reflected in the quality of underground and surface waters, air and soil. Some nitrogen compounds also have a greenhouse effect and thus contribute to climate change. Improving the efficiency of nitrogen utilization and thus reducing the release of nitrogen compounds into the environment has been a fundamental challenge for agriculture for decades. Given the projected global increase in food demand, this topic will become even more important. Measures to reduce water pollution with nitrates require a holistic approach focusing on more efficient nitrogen cycling in agriculture. In Slovenia, the use of nitrogen from livestock fertilizers could significantly reduce the need for nitrogen from mineral fertilizers, while reducing the burden on the environment.

At the workshop, we will try to identify solutions that will contribute to the preservation or increase of food production, as environmental pollution is reduced.



Moderator: dr. Jože Verbič

As researcher of the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia he is working on animal nutrition and quality of feed. His research and professional work also interferes with the fields of cycling and balance of nutrients in agriculture and on the releases of greenhouse gases.

COEXISTENCE

Preserving biodiversity in a modern cultural landscape always involves the complex (co)operation of various social factors and mechanisms. Many international conventions and directives governing this field testify to the complexity of this global challenge, where the results are too often inadequate, as biodiversity loss remains one of the major unresolved global challenges in the event of climate change. Nonetheless, occasional efforts to conserve biodiversity are paying off and one of such positive stories is the successful conservation of large carnivores in Europe. The brown bear, the wolf and the Eurasian lynx spread their populations in several European regions in recent decades. However, this nature conservation success also has its own price, as when the populations of large carnivores strengthen, the conflicts of these species with man both intensify and diversify.

Participants of the workshop will have the opportunity to share their views on the main challenges and opportunities for coexistence with species of Union interest (eg. grey wolf, brown bear, golden jackal, Eurasian beaver, common starling ...). We will discuss possible solutions for easier and better coexistence with these species, thus defining the key principles of coexistence in the future.



Moderator: mag. Aleksandra Majič Skrbinšek, dr.vet.med.

As researcher at the Department of Biology, Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, she is also a member of the IUCN's Large Carnivora Initiative for Europe (IUCN / SSC LCIE). As experienced project manager she is currently actively involved in three LIFE Nature projects - [LIFE DINALP BEAR](#), [LIFE WOLFALPS](#) and [LIFE Lynx](#).



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POTENTIAL OF LIFE PROGRAMME FOR AGRICULTURE – workshops

GRASSLANDS

We have been experiencing a decline in biodiversity in the agricultural landscape for several decades, and Slovenia, as a European country with extremely high biodiversity, has a particularly important role and responsibility in terms of maintaining it. Extensive grasslands are among the most endangered habitats at both, European and national level. The starting point of the workshop will be to present experiences and examples of good practices of past and ongoing LIFE projects aimed at finding solutions to the sustainable management of grassland.

At the workshop, we will try to identify the key challenges with grassland conservation; we are facing in Slovenia, and the stakeholders who can participate in the process. More than welcome are all conceptual designs of future LIFE projects on the grassland theme, which will surely be enriched with the knowledge and constructive suggestions of the participants.

Within the workshop, dr. Nika Debeljak Šabec will present the project LIFE TO GRASSLANDS.



Moderator: mag. Mateja Žvikart

As senior nature conservation consultant employed at the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, she is involved in implementation of customized agricultural practices in protected areas for the past 15 years. She has also participated in several LIFE projects, is currently a member of the [LIFE TO GRASSLANDS](#) project team.

