

Introduction to the EFUA Project: goals, approach, challenges, foreseen outcomes



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The European Forum on Urban Agriculture (EFUA) is a 4-year project funded under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. The project is running from 2020 - 2024 with the objective of unlocking Urban Agriculture's potential through achieving better networking, better knowledge, better deployment and better policies in the field.

Through establishing an Urban Agriculture (UA) Forum, EFUA aims to develop new levels of stakeholder engagement to help inform decision making and to mainstream Urban Agriculture into European, regional and local policy.

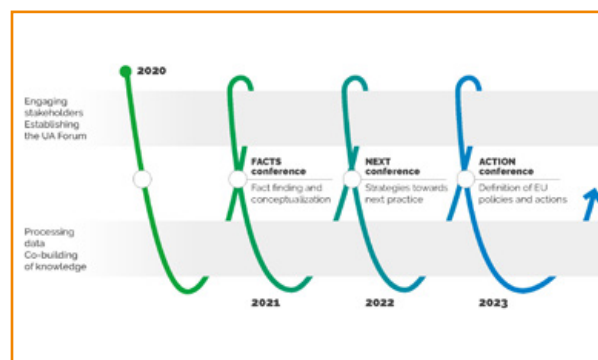


Figure 1: EFUA's Quad Helix Approach

EFUA's workflow is organized around "quad helix" principles, culminating in public conferences and the co-design of an UA vision.

Our online "FACTS" Conference "Live from Rome" started the ball rolling in 2022. This was followed up in Spring 2023 by the successful "NEXT" Conference held in Sofia. The final "ACTION" conference, to be held in Brussels in 2024, will set out a vision for establishing a long term and enduring alliance of Urban Agriculture stakeholders.



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Goals of EFUA

EFUA has set ambitious goals that involve identifying and addressing gaps in UA knowledge, awareness and best practice. Through supporting the EFUA Horizon 2020 Project, the EU has highlighted the significance of Urban Agriculture and the need to invest further in this burgeoning sector. EFUA stands for developing a synergised approach involving civil society, agricultural businesses, researchers and government working together to deliver common goals through participation in the UA Forum, which is intended to deliver:

1) Better networking of stakeholders in Urban Agriculture

Since its inception, EFUA has been building upon the work of the COST¹ Action Urban Agriculture Europe (COST UAE) which was funded by the European Commission (EC) during the period 2012-2016. A key challenge for EFUA has been to consolidate such earlier achievements and to link these with the wider activities of other European research networks to establish a European and a global community of stakeholders in the field of Urban Agriculture (UA). EFUA's aim is to sustain this newly created UA Forum beyond the project's lifespan. This will give UA a strong voice and a permanent European presence. In particular, EFUA has been developing the potential of:

- city networks for Urban Agriculture that build upon and expand existing partnerships and sharing of best practice between the different stakeholder groups and municipalities (in this respect EFUA aspires to be a "network of networks"); and



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- farm business networks, helping to develop the potential of individual farming enterprises and SMEs facing everyday commercial realities and business decisions;

2) Better knowledge in Urban Agriculture

EFUA has been reviewing research and related publications to determine the state of knowledge on UA. Furthermore, the partners consult and cooperate with ongoing research projects and help to influence upcoming new programmes that can help to better coordinate research and delivery in the field.

In this context, the project has also been helping: to identify knowledge gaps that currently hinder UA's development; to define Research & Innovation (R&I) activities to fill these gaps; and to provide stakeholders with up-to-date knowledge. Additionally, EFUA is providing a general framework of UA types, their benefits, challenges and risks. Specific outcomes that EFUA has been aiming at include:

- development of an EFUA Typology of Urban Agriculture;
- identifying the benefits of UA according to different types;
- examining how UA links to urban-oriented concepts;
- developing planning guidelines for urban agriculture;
- developing a series of UA case studies, which are highlighted on the website.



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3) Better deployment of Urban Agriculture

EFUA has been reviewing research, publications and reports with the aim of collating examples of best practice and their forms of governance across Europe. Governance concerns the ways of planning, realising and sustaining UA practices at a city level. It takes into account the interaction with local social, economic, political and environmental contexts. EFUA partners identify barriers that hinder UA's development and define strategies and actions that will overcome these constraints. EFUA is also identifying future challenges, potential game changers and "next practice". Next practice examples and case studies illustrate the full potential of urban agriculture and their multiple societal benefits.

4) Better policies for Urban Agriculture

By increasing understanding among policymakers, EFUA will help to define the UA agenda for the next two decades and will proactively advise on policy development from EU to city level. EFUA will investigate both the policies that impact upon UA and those that might benefit from inclusion of UA as an additional theme. In doing so, EFUA aims to synergise key EU agendas and priorities to enable better support and funding for UA. This will be a multiscale approach – from European level to individual city level – whilst also recognising the increasingly globalised nature of UA, including in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). The UA Forum will help to define a comprehensive vision for Urban Agriculture, ensuring that policies and actions are tailored to the requirements of UA stakeholders.

Approach of EFUA

EFUA brings together a network of researchers, practitioners and interested citizens from all over Europe with the aim of increasing knowledge and awareness of the discipline of Urban Agriculture and its potential to deliver multifunctional benefits that contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The EFUA partners work together closely to share latest knowledge through networking, publications, and the development of best practice guidelines.

EFUA is creating the UA Platform, a web-based interface aimed at increasing stakeholder participation and dialogue. The platform is promoting a long-term sustainable vision for UA that is embedding the discipline firmly into mainstream EU policy outcomes. Furthermore, the members of EFUA hope to reach out and to engage new groups of stakeholders from around the world, including from LDCs in Africa, Asia and Latin America, thereby creating a truly global voice for UA.

Challenges that EFUA can help address

In recent years it has become apparent that our planet's systems are under strain – the cracks are now becoming obvious for all to see. Pressing global challenges, including world population growth, urbanisation, climate change, growing social inequalities and the loss of global biodiversity, have all made it necessary to reconsider how we are feeding our cities. This requires the need to seek smarter, more sustainable, and more inclusive solutions as to how we reimagine our expanding cities and how urban centres interact with existing patterns of agriculture, food production and globalised markets. The emerging discipline of urban agriculture (UA) can help provide some answers to the challenges facing us, through delivering multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.

Although UA has recently become an important global topic – especially since COVID-19 has raised an awareness for the fragility of our global food system – it has yet to be fully integrated into the heart of European policy and practice. The European COST Action “Urban Agriculture Europe” research collaboration was the starting point of

this process. This Action brought together some 200 leading experts from across Europe to investigate themes relating to UA. Whilst the initiative made initial headway, there are still huge gaps in UA knowledge, awareness and best practice. Many localised initiatives have been established. However, these have not been part of a coordinated and networked vision for UA.

The need to foster and develop connections is therefore paramount, including reaching out to leading experts in UA in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. There is therefore an urgent and pressing need to widen the circle of participation and representation in UA to practitioners, researchers and engaged citizens across Europe. This is the key challenge and the primary purpose of EFUA.

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More information

- European Forum on Urban Agriculture <https://www.efua.eu>
- COST-Action Urban Agriculture Europe <http://www.urban-agriculture-europe.org>

