Regenerating soils for climate and farmers

AgriCaptureCO_2

22 December 2022

D2.5 ENGAGE year 2 report

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Executive summary

The AgriCaptureCO2 project seeks to make it easier and more profitable for farmers to adopt regenerative farming practices. We bring together pioneering farmers, agronomists, soil scientists, public bodies, and technology experts working in 6 pilot sites across Europe and Africa to co-develop a suite of valuable services powered by satellite data. At the same time, we are developing and promoting a European Regenerative Agriculture Community to facilitate engagement and knowledge transfer.

This document takes stock of the work and achievements of Work Package 2 ENGAGE in the second year of the AgriCaptureCO_2 project. It reviews key activities delivered under the four tasks of Work Package 2, and measures success against key performance indicators established in the Engagement Strategy drawn up for this Work Package.

Overall, the work and impact achieved in year two is very satisfactory, and strong progress has been made against key performance indicators.

Yet, some areas for improvement remain, and those are identified in the last chapter of this document, where three recommendations are made for year 2: Revision of contacts for WP6, and ensure better coordination between WP2 and WP5. For each of these three areas, specific solutions are proposed.

List of abbreviations

CEJA	Council of European Young Farmers
CC	Cross-cutting
EEB	European Environmental Bureau
ELO	European Landowners Organisation
ERAC	European Regenerative Agriculture Community
EU	European Union
GILab	Geographic Information LABoratory
GWCT	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
KPIs	Key Performing Indicators
LEAF	Linking Environment and Farming
SCARF	Soil Carbon Farming
WP	Work package

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1 Achievements in year 2

1.1. Aims of Work Package 2

The overall objective is to engage end-users and key stakeholders to generate and coordinate a European Regenerative Agriculture Network, as a major channel for promoting uptake of project results. Specific objectives outlined in the Grant Agreement include:

- To map a European-level Network multipliers and potential users, and establish and implement a detailed engagement strategy to reach and involve them.
- To gain understanding of market potential through characterising potential user interest and motivations.
- To understand Reg Agri complementarity with CAP and national agricultural/environmental legislation.
- To actively engage farmers and support knowledge-exchange activities within and across the case studies.
- To build a potential base of multipliers and users that can be drawn on to convert to customers

To guide the activities and track the progress of Work Package (WP) 2, the Engagement Strategy (D2.3) built on the list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included in the Grant Agreement (Table 1).

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators from the Engagement Strategy

	KPI	Final target	Mid-term target
CC	Number of external events at which AgriCaptureCO$_2$ is promoted	50	25
T2.3	Number of farmer-oriented external events at which AgriCaptureCO$_2$ is promoted	30	15
CC	Number of launch and demo day events	5	n/a
T2.3	Number of farmers attending demo days	250	n/a
CC	Number of attendees of the launch event	100	n/a
T2.4	Number of end-users responding to user need surveys	200	n/a

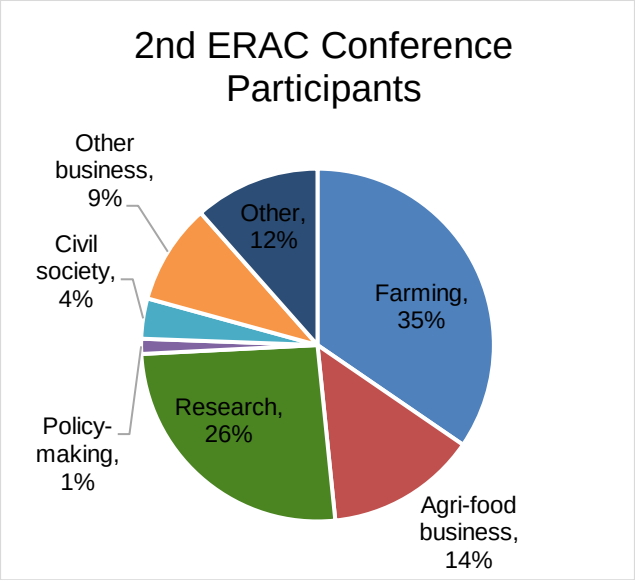
T2.4	Number of end-users engaged in focus groups and open-ended interviews	60	n/a
T2.3 & 2.4	Number of European Regenerative Agriculture Community members	50	n/a
T2.3	Number of AgriCaptureCO2 demo farms	14	n/a
T2.3	Number of farmers visiting AgriCaptureCO2 demo farms	500	200
T2.3	Number of farmer climate panels held	8	n/a
CC	Number of webinars held	12	n/a
CC	Number of multipliers engaged to promote AgriCaptureCO2	10	n/a
T2.3	Number of farmers directly involved in testing AgriCaptureCO2	500	n/a
T2.4	Number of AZCEEs involved in testing AgriCaptureCO2	5	n/a

1.2. Overall state of play of Work Package 2

The sanitary rules still in place at the onset of the second year meant that coordination needed to be held online. Nevertheless, all project partners met in an in-person meeting in Belgrade from 18 to 20 May 2022 with specific sessions dedicated to every WP. This first physical meeting of the AgriCaptureCO2 project with good attendance and participation was very much welcomed by the partners involved.

The second ERAC conference entitled "Solutions for regenerative and resilient farming" was organised in November 2022 and attracted over 200 registrations with more than 100 attendees. It consisted of three sessions. The first session was dedicated to the benefits of better soil health, the second one was dedicated to the policy scene relevant for carbon farming in the EU and the UK, and the third and main one presented and promoted the services that are being developed. The engagement by the participants was good, with a number of questions asked within each session, which allowed for a meaningful discussion.

The following chart shows the repartition of participants by sector:



Strong links with WP6 (in particular T6.1) have been identified and synergies were sought in terms of identifying the potential partners and end users of the products. The synergy between T6.1 and WP2 are ensured by EEB leading WP2 as WP leader and T6.1 as task leader. In addition, WP2 has strong synergy with exploitation-oriented tasks (T6.2 and T6.3). WP2 activities have helped raise awareness and create linkages that have already been used to discuss potential exploitation. This linkage will have to be further leveraged in year 3. Specifically, engagement will strengthen the promotion of exploitable assets (in particular AgriCaptureCO_2 services) and link highly interested parties to WP3 and WP6 partners leading these activities. Promotion through social media will be increased as well.

Links with WP5 have also been identified. The coordination has improved in year 2 with a dedicated meeting, and there was a substantial exchange at the partners' meeting in May. Still, room for improvement remains, and achieving an effective coordination between the two WPs will be a priority for year 3. Specifically, the EEB will organise dedicated meetings with WP5 partners where use case partners will present their progress and discuss issues. This will allow WP2 to recognise opportunities to use WP5 output.

Links between the WP2 and WP3 have also been increased. At the ERAC event in November 2022, WP3 was presented and promoted in front of the wider public. Additionally, the WP3 moved from the research phase to a narrative of providing concrete services. This narrative will have to take over a large part of the engagement effort under WP2 as the project transitions to the post-project phase in its last year.

Bilateral coordination meetings and input requests will make sure that WP2 intimately understands the output of WP3.

Stakeholder engagement outside of the UK has been significantly upscaled with several internal and external events taking place in Poland, Greece and Serbia. In Poland, for example, the recently adopted National Strategic Plans implementing the new CAP embed direct support for regenerative agriculture in the system of direct payments to farms. Because within Member States there is a whole ecosystem of companies and institutions which support the farms in their implementation of CAP rules and in applying for subsidies, this significantly widens the scope of partnerships around the promotion and implementation of AgricaptureCO2 services, especially onto a number of commercial and state-sponsored agro-consulting companies and institutions.

The year 2 has seen significant developments as regards the project website, which has seized upon its potential to a much greater degree. In this regard, insights into all pilot farms in Greece, Poland, Serbia, the UK, and Kenya have been added. The "Digital Solutions" section has also been improved, providing details of the services and tools that are being developed within the project. A dedicated AgriCaptureCO2 newsletter was circulated in March and November, targeted at all stakeholders, and AgriCaptureCO2 also featured in a EEB Newsletter circulated to policy stakeholders in November.

New items have been posted periodically on the info portal of the website, which include:

- Learning about farming in harmony with nature,
- Experimenting with biological fertilisation,
- Monitoring soil carbon: a practical field, farm and lab guide.

The WP2 is in a very good position at month 24. Table 2 presents the progress to date on "cross-cutting" (CC) KPIs. KPIs linked to specific tasks are reviewed in the next sections.

Table 2: Cross-cutting KPIs

	KPI	Final target	Achievement at M24
CC	Number of external events at which AgriCaptureCO2 is promoted	50	42
CC	Number of webinars held	12	8
CC	Number of multipliers engaged to promote AgriCaptureCO2	10	16
CC	Number of launch and demo day events	5	planned for year 3
CC	Number of attendees of the launch event	100	planned for year 3

The list of external events at which the project was promoted in year 2 is included in Annex I.

The project webinars in year 2 included in the KPI are listed below:

- LEAF organised a webinar with the topic of "What does regenerative agriculture mean to you?", aimed at farmers and researchers. It was attended by 25 participants.
- Planet organised and hosted a partner event under the EU Green Week with the topic "Boosting Carbon Farming With Earth Observation Technologies". It was attended by 101 participants (262 registrations). The webinar can still be viewed at https://learn.planet.com/webinar-eu-green-week-2022-registration.html.
- The second ERAC Conference was organised on 29 November 2022 which attracted more than 200 registrations (see above).

1.3. Task 2.1: Assess EU policy context for Reg Agri

In year 2, this task was focused on dissemination and monitoring of further policy developments. In the EU, these were centred on carbon farming and related climate and environmental legislation. In the UK, the focus was on the Environmental Land Management Schemes. This dual focus will continue into year 3.

Developments in the EU

In early November 2022, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached a provisional agreement on the Land use, land use change, and forestry Regulation (the LULUCF Regulation). The agreement sets out an EU-wide target to increase sinks in the land sector to 310 Mt CO_2 eq. by 2030.

The European Commission published, on 30 November 2022, the proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union framework for the certification of carbon removals (CRCF), which had been announced in the Commission's communication on Sustainable carbon cycles in December 2021. The proposal establishes a very basic framework for certification with a number of questions left unanswered and postponed to the future under numerous delegated and implementing acts, such as the management of potential reversals, liability issues, and monitoring requirements.

In June 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) which puts forward certain targets for nature restoration, such as rewetting of peatlands and restoring forest ecosystems.

The Commission has also announced that in the second quarter of 2023 they will publish a legislative proposal addressing the dire state of soil health in the EU, the new Soil Health Law (SHL). Along with the NRL, LULUCF and CRCF, if done appropriately and ambitiously, it should be part of a comprehensive policy package promoting carbon farming in the EU.

These developments show that carbon farming will play a big role in the EU policy landscape in the following years. At this stage, however, it is unclear how the new CRCF proposal is linked to the targets established under the LULUCF Regulation. All this leaves high uncertainty for land managers and for the EU's climate and environmental ambition. It is expected that more clarity will be given in 2023 during the co-decision process of the CRCF and SHL.

Developments in the UK

In England development of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme has continued through 2022 as a replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). With reference to Regenerative Agriculture, the first tier of ELM – the Sustainable Farming Incentive – is intended to encourage the adoption of some practices which would be considered 'regenerative' and are acknowledged as such by the AgriCaptureCO2 consortium.

For example, payments will be made for farmers to develop more diverse rotations and include diverse cover crops in their arable rotations, or to include more diverse herbal leys in their grassland systems rather than rely solely on simple ryegrass mixtures. There will also be a requirement to conduct detailed soil sampling across the farmed area.

In reality, the deadline for the full unveiling & rollout of ELM continues to be delayed, and is now scheduled for sometime in 'the New Year' of 2023. This is creating significant uncertainty for farmers, as the direct payments of the CAP are being phased out with little to replace them. English farmers are also waiting on the release of a 'Soil Health Action Plan for England' (SHAPE) trailed by the UK government as "crucial in driving progress across Government to restore the health of our soils. It will also help our efforts to halt the decline of species by 2030 and meet our long-term legally binding targets on biodiversity." However, progress on this piece of legislation has stalled and little has been heard of it since September 2021.

1.4. Tasks 2.3 and 2.4: Engage farmers, businesses and other stakeholders

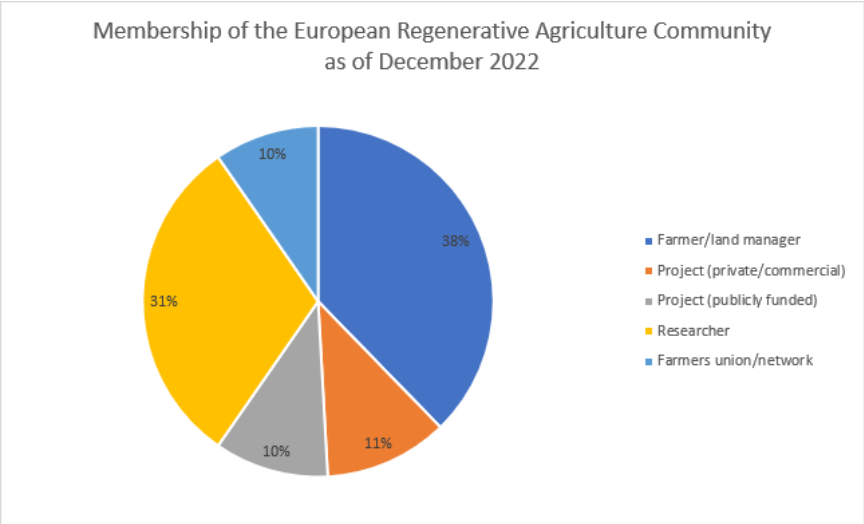
We have merged reporting for tasks 2.3 and 2.4 as they overlap significantly. During the second year, we continued the top-level engagement started already in year 1, but our efforts increased significantly at the individual stakeholder level as well.

Stakeholder engagement outside of the UK has been significantly upscaled with several internal and external events taking place in Poland, Greece and Serbia. Engagement has included the promotion of AgriCaptureCO2 at several external agricultural events, as well as webinars and other media platforms. On-farm visits have also facilitated engaging stakeholders such as farmers and policymakers. The farm visits included 2 AgriCapture CO2 events and 6 external events organized by partners in which AgriCapture CO2 was promoted. In April, an ERAC event was held at the AgriCapture CO2 demo farm Farrington Oils in the UK, followed by an ERAC event at the Allerton project (AgriCapture CO2 demo farm) in June.

The European Regenerative Agriculture Community platform has played a key role in engaging farmers and other stakeholders in year 2. In May, LEAF held an online workshop for the European Regenerative Agriculture Community. Since it was highly interactive, it represented an in-depth stakeholder involvement exercise. The workshop aimed to engage various stakeholders in considering what regenerative agriculture means to them, with a specific target audience of farmers and researchers. In

November, an ERAC webinar on solutions for regenerative and resilient farming was held, attracting farmers, businesses, and other stakeholders (see above). At the end of year 2, the Community unites 126 members, way above the target.

The following chart shows the repartition of members by sector:



The EU Green Week partner event was organized by Planet at the end of May with the topic "Boosting Carbon Farming with Earth Observation Technologies". The 1-hour webinar featured ongoing project developments with a closer look at the opportunities and challenges of using satellite-based monitoring as a means to optimise resource use at a farm level, to speed up the roll-out of carbon farming and the generation of carbon credits. Speakers were from OCW, SatAgro and Planet. It was attended by 101 participants from an international audience which included representatives from Europe, Africa, Asia and the US. Participants included companies and non-profit organizations which are specialised in digital farming, sustainable farming.

Year 2 marked a significant engagement with businesses on multiple levels. On one hand, use cases engaged with relevant businesses that are relevant for improving the use case activities and potentially using or being a partner in post-project exploitation. This has included cooperatives, a bank, an insurance company, input providers, equipment providers, consultants, and others. On the other hand, the project engaged with potential partners and customers. As discussed in the business plan, somewhat unintuitively, some entities that offer "similar services" are potential partners and customers of AgriCaptureCO2 services as these organisations rarely offer the full range of potential services (e.g. remote verification, smart sampling, carbon credit pipeline, etc.). This included agritech companies from both Africa and Europe, as well as organisations promoting sustainable/regenerative farming in their countries. Contacts

with the latter has already led to one MoU, with at least two additional ones in the pipeline.

The following table summarises the progress of KPIs at the end of year 2.

Table 3: WP2 KPIs

	KPI	Final target	Achievement at M24
T2.3	Number of farmer-oriented external events at which AgriCaptureCO2 is promoted	30	18
T2.3	Number of farmer climate panels held	8	1
T2.3	Number of AgriCaptureCO2 demo farms	14	7
T2.3	Number of farmers visiting AgriCaptureCO2 demo farms	500	217
T2.3 & 2.4	Number of European Regenerative Agriculture Community members	50	126
T2.3	Number of farmers attending demo days	250	(planned for year 3)
T2.3	Number of farmers directly involved in testing AgriCaptureCO2	500	394
T2.4	Number of AZCEEs involved in testing AgriCaptureCO2	5	3 (planned for year 3)
T2.4	Number of end-users responding to user need surveys	200	(planned for year 3)
T2.4	Number of end-users engaged in focus groups and open-ended interviews	60	(planned for year 3)

The regenerative agriculture space is becoming increasingly saturated, particularly in the UK. Subsequently, we are currently slightly below the track to achieve the first through fourth KPIs listed in the above table. Whilst there is room for improvement in these figures, this is not entirely unexpected and reflects the increasing competition for engaging farmers through regenerative agriculture events. In order to remedy these numbers, in year 3, we will utilise the European Regenerative Agriculture Community's success to engage farmers and deliver future activities.

2 Recommendations for year 3

Learning from the successes and weaknesses of year 2, the following key areas for improvement are identified for year 3:

1. **Revision of contacts for WP6.** For a successful uptake of the products, it will be important to identify who the end users and partners might be and who can play a role in the exploitation phase. Although there is already collaboration to this end between WP2 and WP6, WP6 has its own list of "leads" which has not been fully updated from engagement activities in WP2. Closer coordination between WP6 and WP2 is needed to identify the project's network and identify how to leverage it for exploitation activities in WP6. Regular bilateral meetings will be set-up.
   It should be noted that for the most part of 2022 it was not clear into what extent the financial support for regenerative practices will be provided under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on one hand, and from the private sector on the other. For this reason, the developments around the Strategic Plans implementing the new CAP was monitored closely, and at the same time it the options to create an offering within voluntary carbon markets were considered. It can be concluded that the defining of the new CAP's support for regenerative agriculture has significantly changed, but also clarified, the business environment for the implementation of AgricaptureCO2 services. This will have an effect on many details of the offering, and on the definition of relationships with end users and partners. Moreover, from this point in time the division between EU and non-EU cases has become stronger and it needs to be reflected by parallel considerations targeting these very different circumstances.
2. **Ensure better coordination between WP2 ENGAGE and WP5 PILOT**. In year 1, some case-study partners participated in WP2, others not. To try to remediate this, a meeting was held between WP5 and EEB in the first half of 2022 and further exchanges took place during the in-person meeting in Serbia; however, there remains room for improvement to the coordination between the two WPs. For the next year, the EEB will organise meetings with WP5 partners. This will allow for better preparation of the launch event.
3. **Explore opportunities to increase outreach.** We will explore the potential of leveraging existing networks to achieve a bigger attention of farmers for the project.

Annex I

List of external events at which AgriCaptureCO2 was promoted in year 2

Date	Orga-niser	Short Description	Target Audience	Estimated Reach
Mar 2022	SatAgro	UK-Poland Business, Trade and Investment (BTI) Forum 2022	Policy stakeholders	60
Apr 2022	SatAgro	EIT Food webinar: New trends and the future of food	All stakeholders	110
Apr 2022	GWCT	Accredited BETA Conservation Management training	Farmers, Policy Stakeholders	15
Apr 2022	GWCT	BSAS Conference speech	Policy stakeholders	20
May 2022	Planet	Poster at ESA Living Planet Symposium, Agriculture session	Researchers, IT companies	3000
May 2022	FrOils	Grower Day held at Farrington Oils	Farmers	13
May 2022	OCW	Horticulture farmers	Farmers	10
May 2022	GWCT	Country Landowners Association visit	Farmers	30
May 2022	GILAB	EJP SOIL Policy Workshop on Carbon Farming	Policy makers, Policy stakeholders, AZCEEs	50
Jun 2022	GILAB	Presenation of the project to Syngenta and discussion abiut the potential colaboration	Other	5
Jun 2022	GILAB	Presentation of the project to https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/ and discussion about the potential of starting C credit project in Kenya	Other	2
Jun 2022	GWCT	Land agency visit	Other	16
Jun 2022	GWCT	Nuffield Scholars International visit	Farmers	10
Jun 2022	GWCT	Accredited BETA Conservation Management training	Farmers, Policy Stakeholders	10
Jun 2022	GILAB	Innovate UK KTN event, promoting AgriCapture as a use case	IT companies, Researchers	200
Sep 2022	GWCT	Visit by Nottingham Uni	Other	20
Sep 2022	ELGO	10th International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies in Agriculture, Food & Environment (HAICTA 2022)	Researchers, IT companies	80

Date	Orga-niser	Short Description	Target Audience	Estimated Reach
Oct 2022	ELGO	29th Intrnational Fair for Agricultural Machinery, Equipment & Supplies	All stakeholders	150
Nov 2022	ELGO	InnoDays 2022 - Innovation Days of the Region of Crete	All stakeholders	125

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