



EISA

Integrated Farming

Framework

**A European
Definition and Characterization
of Integrated Farming**

November 2005

Preface

With this document, the European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture (EISA) offer their ***Integrated Farming Framework*** as a definition and in detail description of Integrated Farming as an approach to sustainable development in European agriculture.

A first working paper on such a European approach was presented by EISA in a conference in Brussels in July 2003. Since this conference, EISA and their members have sought intense discussion with a wide range of European experts.

This discourse has proven to be highly effective in terms of fine-tuning six chapters of the original working paper to the state presented today. The remaining chapters of the original document will be revised accordingly in the coming months.

As one decisive feature, the EISA Integrated Farming Framework goes into detail of agricultural production, covering a wide range of aspects from soil management to animal husbandry to landscape, wildlife and biodiversity. However, even when presenting detailed guidelines, practices and suggestions for documentation, the EISA framework is not meant as an auditing scheme.

Demonstration/Documentation for example can imply showing awareness, demonstrating practices and giving evidence of developments on farm. Accordingly, this Framework can be understood and used as a tool on two different levels:

- For the individual farmer, the EISA Framework offers a management tool which may help to further raise awareness, to continually improve everyday practice on farm and hence equally achieve economic, environmental and social progress.
- For politics and administration, the EISA Framework presents a definition and characterization of Integrated Farming, giving the basis for a common understanding and to be applied all over Europe.

All in all, the EISA Integrated Farming Framework points out guidelines and potentials for developments in agriculture. These potentials can be taken up by farmers and – if considered useful – can also be taken up by politics to shape incentives or programs in the future.

The ***European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture (EISA)*** was founded with the common aim of developing and promoting Integrated Farming throughout Europe. Integrated Farming is a sustainable system which helps farmers improve the way they farm for the benefit of the environment, the profitability of their business and social responsibility, all important aspects of sustainability.

EISA members also help create a better public understanding of agriculture through a network of demonstration farms. EISA brings farmers and consumers together to raise awareness of how farmers are working in harmony with nature to produce good food and renewable resources with environmental and social care.

EISA works in partnership with all stakeholders to achieve shared responsibility and decision making for collective action to promote the benefits and principles of Integrated Farming. Integrated Farming provides a framework to manage priorities. Attention to detail ensures the balance is achieved to create win win solutions.

As an organisation EISA works closely with EU Institutions and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of EU agricultural and environmental policies.

Thank you for taking the opportunity of **getting involved with the EISA Integrated Farming Framework**. At the same time, we would like to thank all stakeholders and experts who have given their valuable input over the last two years. We are looking forward to further sharing and discussing our views and perspectives with you and to commonly bringing forward what all of us are striving for: sustainable development in agriculture.

Heinrich Kemper
EISA chairman

Executive summary

Farming is facing changing demands. The challenge for the farmer is how to respond to these economic, environmental, social and welfare issues, the fundamentals of sustainable agriculture.

The ***Integrated Farming (IF) Framework*** outlined in this document is one solution towards making sustainable agriculture work. The Framework has been designed to provide a workable guideline for Integrated Farming in Europe. The prime objective of developing this Framework was to establish a guideline which covers and goes beyond the National Codes of Good Agricultural Practice and encompasses aspects of farming which provide consumers with the reassurance of environmental protection, animal welfare and the quality, safety and traceability of their food.

IF is a whole farm management system which offers the farmer the chance to identify opportunities and threats and to respond to consumer demands. Traceability is such a demand from society, a challenge which IF can address. Similarly, IF offers the flexibility required to refine farming practices in accordance with government objectives.

IF is not based on a set of fixed parameters but on informed management processes. This knowledge-based flexibility and multifunctionality of IF includes attention to detail and managing all resources available. This process is capable of identifying adverse effects such as leaching, soil erosion and damage to habitats and biodiversity – and of identifying the measures to reduce them. In animal husbandry, Integrated farming is a powerful tool to maintain health and welfare of the livestock on farm, to achieve high quality and good performance and at the same time reduce environmental impacts.

IF is a widely accepted and practical way forward for farmers across Europe. It is a means of achieving sustainable agriculture, a core objective in the formation of the European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture, EISA.

The EISA Integrated Farming Framework has been developed as a workable system to address economic, environmental, social and welfare issues. Currently, the six chapters

- Soil Management,
- Crop Nutrition,
- Crop Protection,
- Animal Husbandry and Animal Health,
- Landscape, Wildlife and Biodiversity and
- Waste Management, Product Storage and Waste Disposal

have been revised, intensively discussed and finalized. Each chapter is divided in subchapters such as “General Considerations”, “Decision Making Process”, “Implementation of Measures on Farm” and “Evaluation”. This structure allows for detailed planning, thorough implementation

and continuous evaluation of results and side effects, and hence for permanent improvement of farming practices.

Each subchapter is then divided into the columns “Item”, “Guideline”, “Explanation and Suggested Demonstration/Documentation”, “GAP” (Good Agricultural Practice), and “Integrated Farming Perspective”. The EISA Framework has been developed alongside existing standards, indicators and documented scientific research. The National Codes of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) were taken as the minimum requirements which have to be fulfilled under all circumstances. Using these legal requirements as a baseline, it can be demonstrated how IF goes beyond GAP – as a production system of today as well as a guideline for future developments (column “Integrated Farming Perspective”).

Management plans play a key role in the IF Framework. These plans have to be understood as concepts for the farming policy of an individual farmer rather than written statements. Such plans, concepts or policies can be seen as management tools which help farmers to identify targets, strategies and measures in the development of their enterprise.

The remaining chapters of the EISA Framework which are currently not included in this document are

- Organisation, Management and Planning,
- Energy and Water Efficiency,
- Human and Social Capital.

These chapters will be revised and discussed with experts shortly and will then also be made available on the EISA website for public discussion.

In spite of the detailed characterization of IF, the EISA Framework also provides the flexibility for the farmers to meet the needs specific to their location and situation. It is this dynamic quality of IF to embrace technology that is permanently developing that will make a difference to farmers to meet the challenges of modern farming, improve their performance and move their business forward.

Explaining Integrated Farming

Integrated Farming (IF) offers a whole farm policy and whole systems approach to farm management. The farmer seeks to provide efficient and profitable production which is economically viable and environmentally responsible and delivers safe, wholesome and high quality food through the efficient management of livestock, forage, fresh produce and arable crops whilst conserving and enhancing the environment.

At the core of IF is the need for profitability. To be sustainable, the system must be profitable; profits generate support for all the activities outlined in the IF Framework. Financial support for environmental and biodiversity activities varies throughout the European Community but in all cases requires the farmer to commit labour and planning to such activities.

IF goes beyond simple compliance with current farming regulations, reinforces the positive impact of farming practices on the environment and reduces their negative effects, without losing sight of the profitability for the farm.

IF is geared towards the optimal and sustainable use of all farm resources such as soil, water, air, farm workers, machinery, landscape and wildlife. This is achieved through the integration of natural regulatory processes, on-farm alternatives and management skills, to make the maximum replacement of off-farm inputs, maintain species and landscape diversity, minimise losses and pollution, provide a safe and wholesome food supply and sustain income.

IF methods involve the implementation of technical means in an overall approach to the farming activity. Above and beyond food safety regulations which are applicable to all systems of production, IF can facilitate the control of health risks and contribute to improving the health and safety of people at work and livestock on the farm.

IF requires considered management and a balanced approach of every farm decision. The following nine aspects are essential elements of Integrated Farming as whole farm management approach:

- **Organisation, management and planning:** This sets the framework, develops a sense of understanding from staff and visitors and ensures attention to detail. Important details of farm interventions and farming practices should be recorded and records kept. Planning and evaluation of practices is essential to ensure environmentally responsible production.
- **Soil Management:** Soil is fundamental to agricultural systems and a rich ecosystem contributes to crop and livestock performance: *“The quality of life below ground determines productivity above”*. Good soil husbandry will ensure the long-term fertility of soil, aid yield and profitability and reduce risk of soil damage and associated environmental concerns.
- **Crop Nutrition:** Nutrient Status is key to ensuring that only the recommended amount is applied. The decision making process involves crop demands, the supply that is in the soil and available nutrients from farm manure and crop residues. A balanced approach to fertilisation should be adopted, practices should be adapted to local situations, thereby reducing risks of environmental pollution by fertilisers.

- **Crop Protection:** This is the basic strategy for control of pests, disease and weeds. Any intervention must be accounted for. Crop protection practices should be rationalised by using integrated and biological methods whenever available, at the same time combining a balanced crop rotation with the selection of more tolerant cultivars to reduce risk.
- **Animal Husbandry and Animal Health:** Health and welfare are linked with performance. IF farmers employ and demonstrate techniques directed towards maintaining animals in good health, comfort and low stress. Balanced, healthy food for animals respecting their physiology is essential. Disease prevention plans and all statutory health controls should be complied with and all treatments administered be documented. National livestock identification systems have to be complied with to ensure traceability of origin, age, race and category of all livestock, animal feed and fodder, whether produced on site or purchased elsewhere.
- **Energy and Water Efficiency:** Sustainability and the responsible management of natural resources is central to IF. More careful and selective use of inputs lowers the energy requirement. Water resource use should be balanced and programmes be used which allow to determine crop needs.
- **Landscape, Wildlife and Biodiversity:** Managing wildlife and landscape is of great importance; enhancement of species as well as structural diversity of land and landscape features will benefit flora and faunal abundance and diversity.
- **Waste Management, Product Storage and Waste Disposal:** Wastes – including farm yard manure for example – must be seen as a valuable resource in terms of saving money and reducing pollution. Farming effluents should be managed to optimise recycling and re-use, thereby minimising effects on the environment. Also the correct storage of hazardous substances and/or material for off-farm disposal and the subsequent proper disposal are important parts of the IF whole farm approach. Produce on the farm is to be stored separately to avoid contamination.
- **Human and Social Capital:** Standards of employment practice, health and safety at work, and occupational training need to embrace EU standards of employment practice. Inputs can be obtained from many sources but the use of local suppliers should be favoured where possible. Using local markets will help to maintain both local business and livelihoods and can also improve efficiency. Besides, open and active involvement of the farmer in local community life can help generate transparency and trust.

Integrated Farming Framework – Key Points

The IF Framework gives guidelines which in some parts exceed the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice in all European countries.

This section specifies in detail the IF Framework and the principle differences between IF and Codes of Good Agricultural Practice.

1. The IF Framework is about continuous development whereby farmers are committed to improving the efficiency and value of managed resources.
2. The IF Framework is a tool to enhance the farm business. Accordingly a complete documentation of all quality systems and potential whole farm audits is suggested. Besides, farm environmental plans and other records are recommended as they allow for monitoring and benchmarking for performance.
3. Protection and enhancement of the environment and natural resources, including soil, water, and air are essential elements to improve biodiversity and minimise the impact of farm practices.
4. The use of crop nutrients, from both organic and mineral sources, is targeted to crop needs and requires the farmer/grower to be aware of soil indices and nutrient balances.
5. Crop protection relies principally on cultural, biological and mechanical control mechanisms as a first resort, together with a considerate use of registered crop protection products. These are used with regard to environmental and economic considerations.
6. The IF Framework ensures livestock are managed to reflect proper care and concern to their welfare and minimise damage to the environment.
7. The IF Framework seeks to improve the efficiency of energy use and to minimise wastage. The Framework recommends resources are re-used or recycled where possible, and their use is reduced where re-use or recycling is not possible. Renewable resources should be produced and used wherever possible.
9. IF embraces social and human capital issues. This includes employee involvement, training and strict adherence to health and safety aspects as well as the role of the individual farmer in the local community.
10. IF fulfils the requirements of the farmer in the food chain including national quality assurance scheme requirements.