

Excalibur: “Exploiting the multifunctional potential of belowground biodiversity in horticultural farming”

Excalibur is a Horizon 2020 project that addresses the call SFS-01-2018 “*Biodiversity in action: across farmland and the value chain*”, sub-topic A “*Small organisms, big effects for plants - Belowground biodiversity interaction with plants (RIA)*”.

Excalibur wants to deepen the knowledge on soil biodiversity dynamics and its synergistic effects with prebiotic and probiotic approaches in horticulture, using a multi-actor approach. To pursue this aim, new multifunctional soil microbial inoculants (bio-inocula) and bio-effectors will be tested on three model crops of economic importance (tomato, apple, strawberry) under different experimental and open-field conditions across Europe. In order to go beyond the multitude of studies on the links between soil biodiversity and plant health, Excalibur will develop a comprehensive strategy of soil management improving the effectiveness of biocontrol and biofertilization practices in agriculture.

Excalibur has the ambition of marking the road to a biodiversity-driven change in the soil management of crops through the acknowledgement of the important role of soil biodiversity conservation and exploitation. This goal is expected to be achieved by an integrated approach of research, development and field implementation.

The project will deploy the knowledge gained by new molecular techniques, such as genomic sequences characteristics to specific groups of microorganisms and to specific functions, in the creation of tools, indicators and evaluation systems functional to the operators of the sector.

Co-innovation is fostered in the project by collaboration of research centres of excellence with farmers and manufacturers, with a mutual exchange of information and feedbacks, which will contribute to disseminate new insights to stakeholders and to bring practical solutions, validated by process analyses (LCA), to growers.

Meeting agenda is enclosed with this mail for your kind reference and perusal. Kindly go through the same before coming for the meeting to have better understanding of meeting flow and timings. This meeting will give us an opportunity to get to know each other and to exchange and share our first views.