



# Training Manual

Developed by

**KARBON**  
CONSULTING  
TRAINING  
SUSTAINING



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## 1. Introduction

The OFAFFU Training Manual is intended to provide guidance and assistance to all those who intend to conduct training on Organic Farmers for Future. In general, it is important that trainers have the necessary qualifications to deliver such training.

The following document begins with information about the Erasmusplus [OFAFFU](#) project as well as interesting facts about the framework and approach of the OFAFFU training, which was carried out in Caudiel/Spain in March 2024. Subsequently, reference is made to the didactic methods that can be supportive for the implementation of such training. The next section deals with the learning environment and which aspects should be considered when conducting training in a natural learning environment. Finally, the relevant skills that trainers need to have to successfully lead a training course are outlined. The model of professional competencies is used as a basis for this. The training manual was created for practical use to create the best possible transfer for holding a OFAFFU training.

## 2. About OFAFFU

The European Commission has set a target of at least 25% of Europe's agricultural land being managed organically by 2030. Currently, we are only at 8.5% across Europe (Organic Action Plan, European Commission. 2021).

With **Organic Farming for Future** we want to contribute to achieving this goal - from practice for practice. **OFAFFU** combines two essential areas that will transform Europe on its way to sustainability: Education and Agriculture.

Particularly considering the European Reference Framework for Sustainability - GreenComp - we develop innovative educational concepts in vocational education and training for future. Here, green skills meet entrepreneurial thinking, so that the profession of farmer can once again become a viable profession with quality of life.

### **Our project goals**

- Identify the obstacles that prevent farmers from converting to organic farming.
- Raise awareness of environmental and climate issues.

- Develop green skills among farmers
- Increase motivation for sustainable management
- Capacity building & knowledge transfer through exchange of best practices in organic farming, considering innovative and resource-efficient farming methods.
- Creating a green alliance of farmers & relevant stakeholders
- Implementation of ecological transformation factors
- More sustainable food system by increasing the number of organic farmers and improving their agricultural and economic skills.

### **Our project results**

- White paper based on an extensive needs assessment, presenting barriers and obstacles to organic farming
- Development of a curriculum
- Preparation of training materials and a training manual
- Delivery of a training in Caudiel, Spain
- Implementation of Impact Hubs in Austria and Spain

**OFAFFU** is a Small-Scale-Project co-financed by the European Union within the framework of Erasmus+. The project period is from 01.01.2023 - 01.07.2024.

### 3. [About the training](#)

One of our highlights was the OFFAFU training, which was developed and implemented as part of the project. For the pilot, the free training took place in Caudiel, Spain in March 2024 and the basis for the implementation was the OFAFFU Curriculum (cf. project website. document: OFAFFU\_Training Design\_Curriculum\_EN)

### **Target group**

The target group of learners were participants from Austria and Spain who work and /or tend to work in the agricultural sector and have a special interest in the future of agriculture with a focus on organic farming. The plan was to pilot the training with five people from each of the two project countries to facilitate a transnational exchange and strengthen a transnational network. It turned out that there were a lot of people interested in training in Spain and a

waiting list had to be drawn up. A total of two people from Austria took part. The training was held in March 2024 with a total of 10 people.

One of the main barriers in working with the target group was the language barrier. This must always be considered in the preparation of a transnational training course for farmers. On the one hand, this includes the preparation of training materials, writing of flipcharts and other documents for the training. When conducting the training, care must be taken to ensure that it can take place bilingually, i.e. if there is a language barrier, an interpreter is needed to translate the training content and support communication between the participants. A second empirical value when piloting the training was the training times. According to the syllabus, these were scheduled to start at 09:00 and last until approx. 14:00 and 16:00 to approx. 18:00. Due to the cultural circumstances in Spain, it turned out that a compressed training session lasting until the early afternoon would have suited the participants better than an additional afternoon session. Conversely, the times would have been planned differently in another country, as this goes hand in hand with the usual breaks such as lunch breaks and the local work culture must be taken into account accordingly.

### **Training objectives**

The OFFAFU training is a unique opportunity for participants who want to shape the future of organic farming. Learning with and from each other provide learners with insights into innovative practices and open to new impulses to shape organic agriculture. Participation in the training aims to raise awareness of the challenges of the environment and climate change, promote the development of green competencies among farmers, increase motivation for sustainable management, support capacity building and the exchange of good practices, make visible the consideration of innovative and resource-efficient farming methods as well as the implementation of ecological transformation factors. The detailed formulation of the expected learning outcomes for the individual participants is discussed in the next section.

### **Training venue and learning environment**

One of the central priorities of the OFAFFU training is to provide a very high practical transfer for the participants. For this reason, the use of classical training rooms is avoided, but a natural and practical learning environment is enforced. For practical units, learning will take place directly outdoors. In addition, a high value is placed on good practice examples and several farm visits will be carried out. The farms were selected according to the objectives of

the training - to strengthen the learners in their skills and to get ideas and inspiration for their own situation by means of innovative farm models and sustainable business concepts.

The training comprises a total of 40 learning units, which are divided into five training days. Regarding quality management, an evaluation of the training content, assurance of learning success, impact and effectiveness of the training and the framework of the training will be developed. On the one hand, this is done by direct feedback from the individual participants on the last day of training to gain qualitative insights into the learning process of the individual persons. On the other hand, a template for an evaluation form with scaling questions, open and closed questions will be created to obtain meaningful results for the further development of the training.

#### 4. Didactics

In vocational training, it is increasingly important that the use of didactic methods is designed to be appealing, contemporary and target group oriented. This requires trainers to have an appropriate toolbox of methods to convey the training content in a fun way. In addition, the 'farmers' target group has a very high practical relevance to the content. It is therefore even more important that a training course such as OFAFFU's is not held in a frontal teaching style but contains a good mix of theory and practice. We have compiled some relevant didactic methods for OFAFFU training that we consider appropriate and do not claim to be exhaustive.

#### **Experiential learning**

Experiential Learning is the process of learning by doing. By engaging learners in hands-on experiences and reflection, they are better able to connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations. It emphasizes active engagement, direct experience and the opportunity for reflection. It is not just about acquiring knowledge. It is about understanding how to apply that knowledge in real-world contexts.

It is important as it deepens the understanding of a specific context. By engaging directly with the material, learners can gain a deeper understanding of concepts. They are not just memor facts or theories. This approach can be used when it comes to soil management or to better experience the impact, positive or negative, on biodiversity. At the same time experiential learning supports the development of critical thinking skills of learners, because it

encourages learners to analyze, evaluate and solve problems. In an increasingly complex world and globalization, this can be very helpful for farmers to understand complex interrelationships and interactions in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, this didactic approach promotes active engagement of participants as they are not just passively receiving information. Learners actively explore, experiment and discover.

### **Challenge based learning**

Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) is an educational approach that involves presenting participants with real-world challenges and empowering them to devise and implement solutions. It's a dynamic process that combines critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and practical execution. Regarding the OFAFFU training, this could be, for example, dealing with climate change such as extreme weather conditions (prolonged drought or large amounts of rainfall in a short period of time) or increasing price pressure combined with quality assurance of products by retailers. The aim is to anticipate problems that correspond to the living environment of the learners. The use of challenge-based learning makes it possible for participants to think outside the box when finding solutions. This is also expressly encouraged, and people are encouraged to develop innovative approaches to such tasks. It helps that learners develop problem-solving skills as it requires learners to identify problems, generate potential solutions, evaluate these options, and implement their chosen solution. At the same time, it fosters resilience and adaptability. Challenges often involve setbacks and require adjustments along the way. Navigating these obstacles can help learners develop resilience and adaptability, key skills in today's fast-paced world.

### **Gamification**

The use of gamification elements has become increasingly important in all educational categories in recent years. The aim is to create conditions that allows participants to learn through play. There are several ways to incorporate this into OFAFFU training. Through the implementation of points and rewards learners can earn points for completing tasks or mastering concepts, which can then be exchanged for rewards. This can motivate learners to engage more deeply with the material. For example, a quiz battle or a kind of treasure hunt can be designed for this purpose.

Another way of gamification elements is the integration of levels and progression. The training can be structured into levels, with each level representing a new set of challenges or

a more advanced set of skills. This gives learners a clear sense of progression and achievement. This can be done, for example, during the training days or by solving specific tasks. It is important that learners can associate this with a sense of achievement, which strengthens their motivation. Another form of recognition of learning achievement is the introduction of badges and achievements. Participants can earn badges or other symbols of achievement when they reach certain milestones. This can provide a visual representation of their learning journey. Gamification is important in a training context like OFAFFU for several reasons: It increases the engagement of participants by making the training more fun and game-like, which can lead to better retention and application of the material. Furthermore, it strengthens the motivation of learners. Rewards and recognition that come with gamification can motivate learners to put more effort into the training. This can enhance their learning outcomes and finally it promotes continuous learning. The levels and progression systems in gamification encourage learners to keep advancing their skills, which promotes a culture of continuous learning.

### **Collaborative learning**

The potential of a group in a training course should not be underestimated in the elaboration and development of didactic methods. A peer-group learning approach can promote mutual support in the learning process and at the same time increase the credibility of people who practice or would like to practice the same profession, as they have something in common. In general, collaborative learning is an educational approach where learners work together in groups to solve problems, complete tasks, or learn new concepts. It's based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act, and that learners can benefit from the skills, knowledge, and experiences of their peers. Historically, this can also be found in ancient Greece under the agora principle in the learning context.

For a OFAFFU training collaborative learning can be applied with group projects. Participants could be grouped together to tackle a common agricultural challenge, such as improving soil health or increasing crop yield. Each group could then share their findings with the larger group, allowing everyone to benefit from their collective knowledge. Another way of using the collective skills intelligence is the introduction of discussion forums. A platform could be set up where farmers can ask questions, share experiences, and discuss solutions to common problems. This could be done in person, or through digital tools if the farmers are spread out geographically in case the digital skills are given to navigate through such a platform. Similar to a mentoring or buddy system collaborative learning can take place in a peer teaching



format. This means more experienced farmers could be paired with those who are newer to the profession. The experienced farmers could share their knowledge and insights, while also learning from the fresh perspectives of the newer farmers.

Collaborative learning is important because it leverages the collective wisdom of the group. Each participant brings unique experiences and insights to the table, and by working together, they can come up with solutions that are more effective and innovative than what they might have achieved on their own. Plus, the process of collaborating can help to build a sense of community and mutual support among farmers, which can be invaluable in a profession that often involves significant challenges and uncertainties as learning is never a one-way street but takes place in mutual interaction.

### **Inquiry based learning**

Like challenge-based learning the approach of inquiry-based learning is also an opportunity to activate the learner to deal with content in advance before the relevant information is provided. This also reinforces a sustainable transfer of learning, as the knowledge has been acquired by the learners themselves, so to speak. Inquiry based learning can be seen as an educational strategy where learners actively pose questions, investigate phenomena, and interpret results. This can be applied by starting with a question, which can be introduced at the beginning of each training day or session that guides the learning process. This question should be open-ended, relevant, and thought-provoking to stimulate curiosity and engagement. In the next step participants are encouraged to explore the question in depth, using resources such as readings, discussions, experiments, or simulations. The trainer's role is to guide this exploration and provide support as needed, rather than simply providing answers. Subsequently reflection is promoted with the invitation that participants reflect on what they've learned and how it relates to the initial question. This could involve activities such as journaling, group discussions, or presentations. Finally, participants are asked how their new knowledge and skills can be applied in practical ways.

### **Self-reflecting learning**

Another method, which is sometimes underestimated or taken for granted, is the integration of self-reflective learning in a training. This can be seen as a process where learners engage in deliberate thinking about their experiences, actions, or ideas. It involves examining one's own learning and experiences to gain insights and improve future performance. This can be implemented by reflection activities like journaling, group discussions, or individual exercises

designed to prompt reflection on the learning material and its application. Another way can be the provision of feedback by the end of a training day or the end of the training itself. This could be done through self-assessment tools or guided reflection sessions.

Trainers can also guide this process by introducing reflective questions. These questions should encourage learners to think deeply about what they have learned, how they have learned it, and how they can apply it.

Self-Reflective Learning is important because it encourages deep, meaningful learning. It allows learners to take ownership of their learning process and to understand their strengths and weaknesses better. This kind of reflection can lead to personal growth, improved performance, and a greater ability to adapt to new situations. It fosters a mindset of continuous learning and improvement, which is crucial in today's fast-paced world.

## 5. Framework of the training

The OFAFFU training aims to strengthen the green skills of learners. This also implies developing awareness of nature, processes and cycles and sensitization for the entire ecosystem. Therefore, the learning environment is also central. Even when the content can be taken theoretically from textbooks and training materials, but to achieve a lasting effect on the participants, a natural learning environment is also needed. Especially for farmers, nature is not only the basis for food production and agriculture-related work, but also a powerful learning tool. It offers countless opportunities to explore the environment and learn new skills.

Learning in nature begins with observation. By taking the time to observe plants, animals and landscapes around us, we can learn a lot about the natural processes that make life on earth possible. We can observe the seasons and their effects on flora and fauna, study the life cycle of insects and birds, or simply notice the diversity of plants in a forest or meadow, which are the basis for organic farming. Whether this concerns the right time for sowing or the best possible pest control from an ecological point of view. In addition, nature offers numerous opportunities for practical learning. Through activities such as gardening, hiking or bird watching, we can learn practical skills while developing a deeper understanding of

nature. These activities can also help us to better understand important concepts such as sustainability and environmental protection. Finally, learning in nature can also help us to develop a greater awareness of our environment. This can inspire us to take action to protect our environment and pursue more sustainable ways of living. Overall, learning in nature offers a wealth of opportunities for discovery and connection. It is a journey that not only provides us with knowledge and skills, but also offers the opportunity to deepen and strengthen our relationship with the natural world.

When delivering training in a natural learning environment, there are some important aspects to consider ensuring that the desired learning outcomes can be achieved.

#### Aspect I

**Safety:** This is always a top priority. It is recommended to ensure that participants have the necessary knowledge and equipment to be safe in the outdoors. This includes knowledge of the weather, wildlife, and the basics of first aid. In addition, when preparing the training, learners should be informed about what they need for their stay in the natural training environment. This may include, for example, information about sturdy footwear, rain protection or sufficient water to drink.

#### Aspect II

**Respect for nature:** At the beginning of the training, it is recommended that learners are made aware of what behavior is appropriate in nature to protect the environment. This includes not leaving garbage behind, not disturbing plants and animals and staying on marked paths. For many people, this may already seem like a matter of course, but it is important as a trainer to ensure that learners treat their natural learning environment with care.

#### Aspect III

**Practical learning experiences:** The diversity of nature offers learning with all the senses, which can be used as support in the didactics when carrying out such training. Practical learning experiences can be included in the design of the training, such as identifying plants and animals, learning survival techniques, or carrying out scientific experiments outdoors. It is important to work in the context of the target group and to select the exercises according to the needs of the learners. In the case of farmers, for example, this could be identifying

beneficial insects or pests, introducing the different layers of humus formation, or pricking out young plants using different techniques.

#### Aspect IV

Raising awareness for nature: With increasing agricultural technologies and current developments, it has also become a challenge for farmers not to regard natural resources as an endless production site for economic yields, but to find careful and, above all, healthy and environmentally friendly farming methods. Nature as a place of learning helps participants to regain a greater appreciation and awareness of the entire ecosystem and to better understand overall interrelationships and modes of action.

By taking these aspects into account, training in nature can become an effective and profound learning experience. The aspects listed are not exhaustive and can be developed further depending on the context and type of training. OFAFFU's approach is to view nature as a resource and a place of learning and to enable participants to learn in a sustainable, practical and, above all, effective way by creating appropriate framework conditions and an environment conducive to learning.

### 6. Relevant skills of trainers

Not only the selected training content, the didactics and the learning environment play a decisive role in imparting or expanding skills of learners, but also the skills of the trainer who conducts the training. In a training course such as OFAFFU, we therefore not only use the European [GreenComp](#) competence framework for learning outcomes of the participants (see curriculum), but also see the defined GreenComp competences as a prerequisite for trainers. In addition, we see the model of professional competence as a supporting orientation for defining the relevant competences for training in the context of OFAFFU training:



## **Personal competences**

### *Leadership qualities*

A trainer must be capable to lead a group, make decisions and resolve conflicts. In addition, this implies the ability to create a positive and supportive learning environment.

### *Proactive attitude towards sustainability*

In addition to having the appropriate expertise in organic farming, the attitude and values that the person holds are equally important. This includes a proactive attitude towards sustainable practices and a respect for nature. This contributes significantly to the credibility and authenticity of the training content that is to be conveyed.

### *Adaptability*

Not only does farming depend on many factors, including weather and market conditions, but training also requires the ability to be flexible and adapt to changing circumstances.

## **Social competences**

### ***Communication skills***

The basis for being able to lead a group and to pick up each individual participant well is the ability to communicate effectively. This includes the ability to listen actively, to respond to the participants, to find a common language, to express oneself clearly, to react appropriately to dynamics in the group and to understand and respond to the needs and questions of the participants.

### *Digital skills*

For the preparation of the training and administrative tasks within the organization of an OFAFFU training, it is necessary that trainers have a certain level of digital competence according to DigComp. This also ensures that the person is able to communicate with participants digitally, for example via email, messenger services or even in an online setting. In addition, when creating a photo protocol of the training, for example, basic knowledge in dealing with digital IT end devices and common programs is required in order to create a corresponding document.

## **Methodological competence**

Basically, it is important that a trainer is capable to explain complex concepts in a way that is easy to understand and accessible for participants. In addition, it is necessary that the

person has a toolbox and various didactic methods that they can use as a repertoire for OFAFFU training. A variety of teaching methods also enables the different learning styles of participants to be considered. In addition, it is important that the respective methods are adapted to the context and the needs or expectations of the learners.

### **Expertise**

To carry out the OFAFFU training, it must be assumed that the person has the necessary expertise in organic farming. This implies a sound understanding of the principles and practices of organic farming, including soil management, pest control, crop planning and animal husbandry, as well as basic knowledge of the interrelationships and dynamics of the overall ecosystem.

It is important here that the specialist knowledge is not just theoretical knowledge from literature or training courses, but that the trainer himself has a certain amount of experience in agriculture. Practical experience in agriculture can help the trainer to give realistic and practical recommendations and also increases credibility and authenticity with the target group 'farmers'.

## Annex A: GreenComp

AREA	COMPETENCE	DESCRIPTOR
1. <i>Embodying sustainability values</i>	1.1 <b>Valuing sustainability</b>	To reflect on personal values; identify and explain how values vary among people and over time, while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values.
	1.2 <b>Supporting fairness</b>	To support equity and justice for current and future generations and learn from previous generations for sustainability.
	1.3 <b>Promoting nature</b>	To acknowledge that humans are part of nature; and to respect the needs and rights of other species and of nature itself in order to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems.
2. <i>Embracing complexity in sustainability</i>	2.1 <b>Systems thinking</b>	To approach a sustainability problem from all sides; to consider time, space and context in order to understand how elements interact within and between systems.
	2.2 <b>Critical thinking</b>	To assess information and arguments, identify assumptions, challenge the status quo, and reflect on how personal, social and cultural backgrounds influence thinking and conclusions.
	2.3 <b>Problem framing</b>	To formulate current or potential challenges as a sustainability problem in terms of difficulty, people involved, time and geographical scope, in order to identify suitable approaches to anticipating and preventing problems, and to mitigating and adapting
3. <i>Envisioning sustainable futures</i>	3.1 <b>Futures literacy</b>	To envision alternative sustainable futures by imagining and developing alternative scenarios and identifying the steps needed to achieve a preferred sustainable future.
	3.2 <b>Adaptability</b>	To manage transitions and challenges in complex sustainability situations and make decisions related to the future in the face of uncertainty, ambiguity and risk.
	3.3 <b>Exploratory thinking</b>	To adopt a relational way of thinking by exploring and linking different disciplines, using creativity and experimentation with novel ideas or methods.
4. <i>Acting for sustainability</i>	4.1 <b>Political agency</b>	To navigate the political system, identify political responsibility and accountability for unsustainable behaviour, and demand effective policies for sustainability.
	4.2 <b>Collective action</b>	To act for change in collaboration with others.
	4.3 <b>Individual initiative</b>	To identify own potential for sustainability and to actively contribute to improving prospects for the community and the planet.