

Fact Sheets On Pathways to Bioeconomy Growth

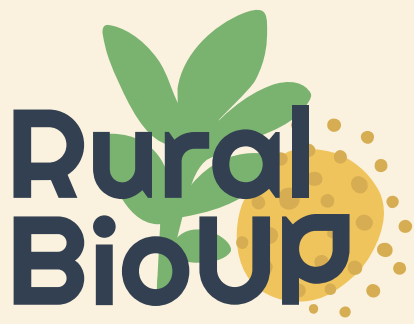


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Grow local, go global



Co-Creation and Engagement with Stakeholders

Catalysts for Change: Co-Creating the Future of Rural Bioeconomy



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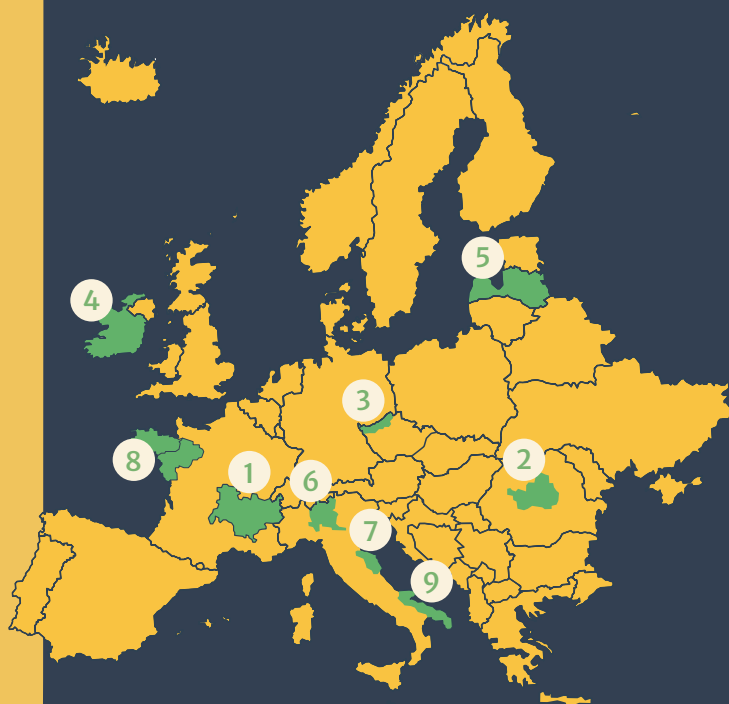
The RuralBioUp Project

Driving rural development through our regional hubs

RuralBioUp is a project funded by the Horizon Europe programme, running from October 2022 to September 2025.

Our mission is to scale-up local bio-based solutions for rural development by strengthening cooperation among two key groups: regional actors (like policymakers, producers, and citizens) and knowledge holders (such as industries, researchers, and EU agencies).

We set up 9 Regional Hubs in 9 regions in 6 EU countries.



- 1 Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, **France**
- 2 Centru Region, **Romania**
- 3 Charles Spa Region, **Czechia**
- 4 **Ireland** (The hub operates nationally with a focus on County Tipperary)
- 5 **Latvia** (The Latvian hub is a national initiative with stakeholders from all over the country)
- 6 Lombardia, **Italy**
- 7 Marche, **Italy**
- 8 Pays de la Loire & Bretagne Region, **France**
- 9 Puglia Region, **Italy**

What is a Bioeconomy Hub?

A bioeconomy hub is a collaborative space and facilitation tool that brings together diverse stakeholders – such as entrepreneurs, researchers, innovators, policy makers, civil society, media, and other regional actors – across the entire bioeconomy value chain.

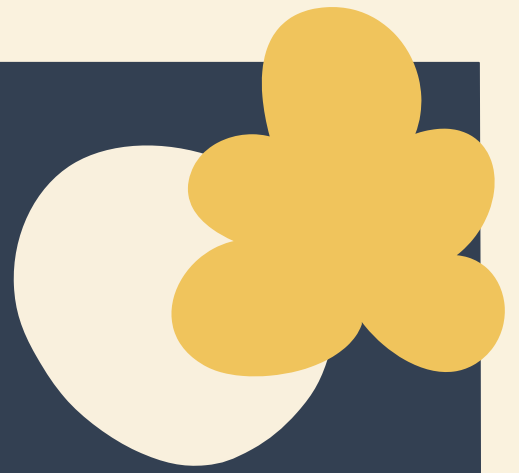
Its purpose is to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and networking to identify synergies, share best practices, and co-create solutions to regional and cross-regional challenges and opportunities in the bioeconomy.

Through training, consulting, and strategic collaboration, bioeconomy hubs aim to build capacity, influence policy, and support the effective and sustainable use of renewable biological resources.

Ultimately, they contribute to the development of functioning bioeconomy systems that align with broader goals such as regional development, climate neutrality, and the European Green Deal. The implementation differs highly from the regional identified opportunities, chances, and cultural working modes.



Co-Creation and Engagement with Stakeholders



How to Engage Stakeholders in Bioeconomy Hubs, turning Visions into real Value for Regions

The Premise: The Purpose of a Bioeconomy Hub

Bioeconomy hubs are vital catalysts for sustainable regional development, bridging the gap between innovation, tradition, and community.

They bring together diverse stakeholders from farmers and entrepreneurs to researchers and policymakers to co-create solutions that make use of renewable biological resources or your region.

But how can successful co-creation be done?

This fact sheet distills key lessons from nine pilot hubs across Europe. Its goal is to support those looking to follow, replicate, or scale bioeconomy hub initiatives in their region by offering concrete, tested insights on how to engage stakeholders, foster trust, and build collaborative ecosystems.

The Challenge

Establishing bioeconomy hubs is not just about introducing new technologies or processes – it's about changing mindsets, aligning interests, and overcoming barriers like skepticism, time constraints, and unclear value propositions. Engaging stakeholders across generations and sectors requires both strategy and empathy. As practitioners, you need strategies that address the needs of those involved and clearly demonstrate the value to overcome these obstacles and foster successful collaboration.



Lessons Learned

1

Attitudes Matter - Generational Change is a Lever for Innovation

Many rural stakeholders, especially older farmers, were skeptical of bioeconomy practices due to uncertainty, lack of perceived benefit, and time constraints. Yet younger generations showed more openness to long-term, sustainable approaches.

Practical Tip: Foster intergenerational dialogue and emphasize continuity, not disruption. Support peer-to-peer formats such as “farmers train farmers” and highlight tangible benefits with real-world examples.



2

Tangible Incentives Motivate Engagement

Stakeholders want to know: “What’s in it for me?” Without clear benefits, engagement drops. Financial incentives, visibility, networking, and funding insights proved to be effective motivators: Participants are more likely to engage when they clearly understand the benefits and what is expected of them. Confusion about the purpose and outcomes of hub activities can hinder involvement and limit the success of your initiatives.

Practical Tip: Provide a clear outline of the hub’s purpose, goals, and expected outcomes early on. Communicate the tangible benefits of participation, such as funding opportunities, visibility, and networking. This clarity will help participants understand the value of their involvement and encourage active engagement in your bioeconomy initiatives.



3

Co-Creation Builds Ownership and Trust

Stakeholders are more committed when they have a say in shaping the hub. Inclusive planning builds trust and encourages long-term involvement.

Practical Tip: Start with co-design workshops to define shared goals. Use participatory methods to ensure all voices are heard –from farmers to researchers.



4

Clear Vision Anchors Participation

Hubs that lacked a well-communicated vision struggled with stakeholder confusion and disengagement. Clear expectations and differentiation from other structures (e.g., clusters) are essential.

Practical Tip: Share a simple overview of the hub's goals, benefits, and activities. Revisit and update this vision collaboratively as the hub evolves.

5

Simplicity and Flexibility Enable Participation

Overly complex tasks, questionnaires, or unclear formats led to disengagement. Stakeholders preferred short, direct, and flexible engagements.

Practical Tip: Personalise communication. Use short emails, offer flexible scheduling, and reduce bureaucracy. Make participation as easy as possible.



Key Strategies: Make It Happen



1

Co-create from the Start

Invite stakeholders to shape the hub from the start. Co-design builds ownership and ensures relevance.

2

Be Concrete and Focused

Limit your scope to a few clear value chains or themes. Complete small, visible projects to build momentum.

3



Make Benefits Visible

Communicate the value of participation clearly—funding, visibility, connections, and expertise.

4

Simplify and Personalise Communication

Avoid generic outreach. Use direct invitations and tailor messages to your audience's interests and schedules.



Insights from the Field

Our final workshop, 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy,' took place in Brussels on May 14, 2025. The event explored a range of topics, from co-creation with stakeholders and bioeconomy training to business opportunities and replicating the RuralBioUp Hub model.



Within this broader agenda, this summary presents the key results from two specific roundtable discussions:

- Smart Co-Creation: How can we fully unlock the potential of stakeholder engagement in practice?
- Attitudes Matter: Encouraging change across generations and sectors.

To kickstart the discussion and encourage a dynamic exchange of ideas, we utilised a unique comics-based scenario (see the image below):



Workshop Outcomes & Key Learnings

The engaging discussions that followed the comic strip allowed us to collect and synthesise the key outcomes and learnings from the group. These points represent the collective insights on how to improve and implement effective co-creation practices.

The infographic is titled "Smart Co-Creation: How Can We fully unlock the potential of stakeholder engagement in practice?". It features the RuralBioUp logo (with the tagline "Grow local, go global") and the BIOMODEL 4REGIONS logo. The main heading is "Smart Co-Creation: How Can We fully unlock the potential of stakeholder engagement in practice?". Below this, it says "Time to make a comic! First, check out this scene".

The roundtable on sustainable development

During a roundtable on sustainable development, Dr. Paola Castellari, a Community Development Officer, presents insights on the vital role of stakeholder engagement and co-creation in advancing the regional bioeconomy.

Tomás Keller, an industry representative from a large agribusiness, responds skeptically. He argues that such approaches slow down innovation, increase bureaucracy, and risk making local businesses less competitive in global markets. He questions the tangible return on investment for engaging communities deeply in decision-making.

Three characters are shown with speech bubbles:

- Character 1: "Co-creation is nice in theory, but difficult to implement in practice."
- Character 2: "What factors have a negative impact on co-creation in your experience?"
- Character 3: "Lack of evidence of the benefits of co-creation, lack of strategic objectives and clear processes, imbalances in power and interest ... just to name a few!"
- Character 4: "There are solutions to that..."

Finish the comic strip

Four speech bubbles are shown, each with a quote:

- "Engaging all relevant stakeholders early, including those indirectly impacted or with complementary expertise, is crucial."
- "Given the diverse interests and value chains across sectors (e.g., agriculture, forestry, research, business), a critical step is to identify and focus on "common issues" or "topics interesting for all" to align activities and foster collective engagement."
- "Co-creation processes need to be adaptable, as stakeholders might evolve over time."
- "Establishing clear communication channels and being transparent about goals, expectations, and challenges helps build trust among all participants."

How is RuralBioUp fostering bioeconomy growth in European rural regions?

A QR code is located next to the question.

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This image shows the discussion results at our 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy' workshop, held in Brussels on May 14, 2025: Smart Co-Creation: How Can We fully unlock the potential of stakeholder engagement in practice?

What to Remember

- Start with people, not processes: Trust and attitudes are foundational.
- Tailor training formats to the specific needs and preferences of your stakeholders.
- Organise face-to-face events to foster deeper connections and trust-building.
- Clearly communicate the benefits and expectations of stakeholder participation.
- Use local languages and focus on relevant topics to enhance engagement.
- Provide a clear outline of the hub's purpose, objectives, and expected outcomes.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Make yourself familiar with the concept of co-creation and explore practical tools on how to implement it in bioeconomy.



Use existing networks, connect with locals and start making an action plan.



Training in Bioeconomy

Growing Green Careers: Knowledge and Skills
for the Bioeconomy of Tomorrow



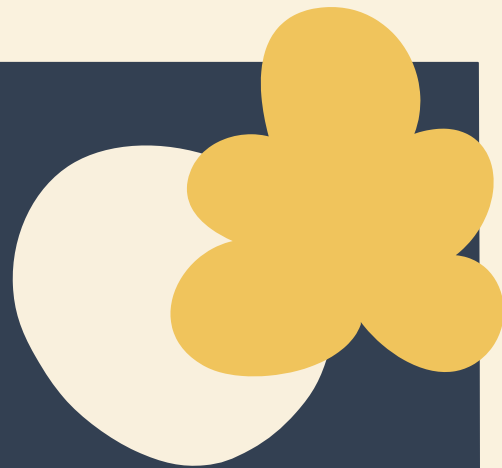
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Training in Bioeconomy



Smart Training and Knowledge gain for a Thriving Bioeconomy

People, Power, Progress: Unlocking the Bioeconomy Through Training

The bioeconomy relies not only on resources and technologies, but on people—on what they know, believe, and are equipped to do. As Europe's regions shape their sustainable futures, strategic capacity-building through education and training becomes a powerful lever for change. This fact sheet presents tested insights on how to effectively design and deliver training formats that engage stakeholders, build confidence, and support tangible outcomes for bioeconomy innovation.

It draws on the real-world experiences of RuralBioUp hubs to show how targeted learning can drive sustainable transformation in rural regions.

The Challenge

Delivering education and training in the bioeconomy is not a one-size-fits-all task. Stakeholders differ in time availability, learning preferences, and technical backgrounds. Many are skeptical or unaware of bioeconomy concepts. Generic training often fails to resonate, especially when disconnected from local realities. Designing formats that are both relevant and engaging requires understanding these needs and adapting accordingly.



Lessons Learned

1

Learning by Doing Works Best

Practical, hands-on experiences are consistently more effective than theory-heavy training. Study visits, field trips, and demonstrations make abstract bioeconomy concepts tangible, helping participants “see, touch, and try” new solutions.

Practical Tip: Organise study visits to innovative local businesses or projects. Design training formats around real examples and live demonstrations. Combine technical content with informal peer exchange.



2

Let Stakeholders Choose the Topics

When training covers topics stakeholders actively request—like funding opportunities, business models, or by-product legislation—engagement increases. Top-down, generic content often falls flat.

Practical Tip: Use simple surveys or informal interviews to pre-select training topics based on demand. Involve participants in shaping agendas. Reassess needs regularly.





3

One Format Doesn't Fit All

Face-to-face training often outperforms online formats, particularly in rural areas with lower digital readiness. But local language, flexible scheduling, and diverse formats (workshops, mentoring, short talks) matter more than channel alone.

Practical Tip: Mix and match formats: combine brief webinars with in-person follow-ups, use hybrid events, or adapt content to schools, SMEs, or policymakers. Always tailor to the audience.

4

Peer-to-Peer Learning Builds Trust

Farmers and SMEs respond better when they hear from peers rather than external experts. Training rooted in real experience fosters credibility and motivation to act.

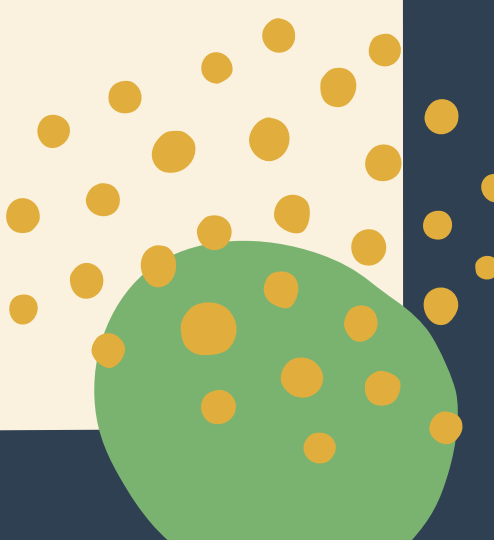
Practical Tip: Facilitate “farmers train farmers” or “SMEs for SMEs” sessions. Highlight local success stories. Use networks and trusted individuals to lead the conversation.

5

Cross-Sector Exchange Sparks Innovation

Transdisciplinary learning bringing together actors from agriculture, policy, industry, and research – generates richer dialogue and opens new collaboration pathways.

Practical Tip: Invite diverse actors to training sessions. Use world cafes or thematic networking to break silos. Structure sessions to encourage mutual learning.



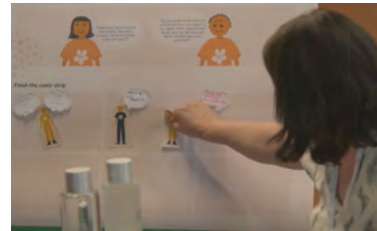


Key Strategies: Make It Happen

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- 1 Start from the Stakeholders' Needs**
Use surveys or informal outreach to identify relevant training topics.
 - 2 Keep It Practical and Tangible**
Prioritise field-based formats like study visits and peer exchange.
 - 3 Tailor the Format, Not Just the Content**
Adapt to local contexts, digital access, and time availability.
 - 4 Build in Reflection and Cross-Learning**
Facilitate regular sharing among participants and across regions.
 - 5 Empower Local Multipliers**
Train local actors to become ongoing knowledge ambassadors.
- 

Insights from the Field

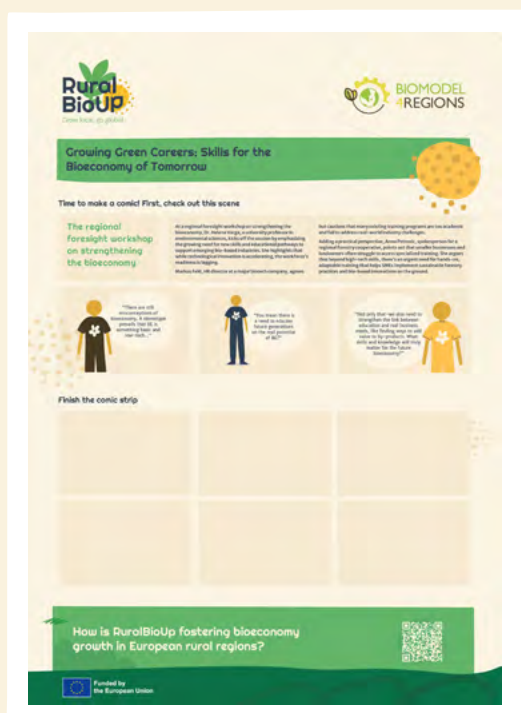
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Within this broader agenda, this summary presents the key results from one specific roundtable discussion:

- Growing Green Careers: Skills for the Bioeconomy of tomorrow

To kickstart the discussion and encourage a dynamic exchange of ideas, we utilised a unique comics-based scenario (see the image below):



Workshop Outcomes & Key Learnings

The engaging discussions that followed the comic strip allowed us to collect and synthesise the key outcomes and learnings from the group. These points represent the collective insights on creating effective training programs and educational pathways for green careers in the bioeconomy.

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Growing Green Careers: Skills for the Bioeconomy of Tomorrow

Time to make a comic! First, check out this scene

The regional foresight workshop on strengthening the bioeconomy

At a regional foresight workshop on strengthening the bioeconomy, Dr. Helena Varga, a university professor in environmental sciences, kicks off the session by emphasizing the growing need for new skills and educational pathways to support emerging bio-based industries. She highlights that while technological innovation is accelerating, the workforce's readiness is lagging.

Markus Feld, HR director at a major biotech company, agrees but cautions that many existing training programs are too academic and fail to address real-world industry challenges.

Adding a practical perspective, Anna Petrovic, spokesperson for a regional forestry cooperative, points out that smaller businesses and landowners often struggle to access specialized training. She argues that beyond high-tech skills, there's an urgent need for hands-on, adaptable training that helps SMEs implement sustainable forestry practices and bio-based innovations on the ground.

"There are still misconceptions of bioeconomy. A stereotype prevails that BE is something basic and low-tech..."

"You mean there is a need to educate future generations on the real potential of BE?"

"Not only that - we also need to strengthen the link between education and real business needs, like finding ways to add value to by-products. What skills and knowledge will truly matter for the future bioeconomy?"

Finish the comic strip

"Study visits work great to motivate stakeholders... learning by doing, learning by seeing and learning by touching."

"...we work with concrete examples to show students the possibilities offered by plant-based by-products. The students and educational team are calling for this type of exchanges with the private sector."

"Effective bioeconomy training must adapt to the diverse needs of stakeholders - young or old, urban or rural... traditional face-to-face methods remain crucial for engaging older farmers..."

"...trainings on topics the trainees had preselected work well. We had many requests on legislation for byproducts."

How is RuralBioUp fostering bioeconomy growth in European rural regions?

Funded by the European Union

This image shows the discussion results from one table at our 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy' workshop, held in Brussels on May 14, 2025: Growing Green Careers: Skills for the Bioeconomy of Tomorrow. The key results from the workshop are summarised in this fact sheet.

What to Remember

- Let stakeholders co-design training content to increase relevance and impact.
- Use study visits and practical formats to make learning concrete and memorable.
- Face-to-face and peer-led sessions build trust, especially with skeptical or time-constrained groups.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Explore our [RuralSpot](#) for more knowledge gain.



Join Events & Training:

Participate in upcoming training events to learn and exchange ideas with practitioners across Europe.



Find Collaborations:

Look for bioeconomy partnership opportunities through these key platforms: Bioeconomy Platform (by the [European Commission's Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy](#))

European Bioeconomy Alliance ([EUBA](#))



Actions that work on Bioeconomy Engagement

Driving Impactful Action in your region boosting
Bioeconomy – Intelligent use of subsidy money



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Actions that work on Bioeconomy Engagement

From Ideas to Impact

In bioeconomy initiatives, ideas alone are not enough—real impact stems from real action. Across the RuralBioUp project, regional hubs implemented diverse measures to foster participation, build trust, and demonstrate value. This fact sheet shares key actions that made a tangible difference in engaging stakeholders and accelerating regional bioeconomy efforts.

The Challenge

Stakeholders often face competing priorities, limited time, and skepticism about new initiatives. Even with well-structured plans, if actions do not offer immediate value or clear relevance, engagement may stall. This fact sheet highlights what actually worked on the ground – action formats that created momentum and moved hubs from intention to impact.



Recommended Actions

1

Study Visits to Demonstrate Innovation

Bringing stakeholders on-site to see bioeconomy practices in action proved to be one of the most effective engagement strategies. Participants could connect theory to real-world applications and explore hands-on solutions.

Practical Tip: Organise field visits tailored to stakeholder interests (e.g., biowaste recovery, new uses for co-products). Keep the format interactive.



2

Stakeholder-Driven Training Events

Workshops and training sessions based on pre-identified stakeholder needs—such as funding info or regulations —attracted higher participation and built capacity around relevant topics.

Practical Tip: Co-design training content through surveys or interviews. Use local language and practical examples.



3

B2B and Matchmaking Formats

Business-to-business (B2B) meetings helped foster collaborations across sectors. Stakeholders valued focused, small-scale settings to share needs and explore partnership opportunities.

Practical Tip: Structure short sessions around concrete value chains. Use moderated formats to keep discussions relevant and targeted.



4

Public Showcases and Rural Fairs

Hosting exhibitions and participating in local fairs increased awareness among broader audiences and connected bioeconomy themes with daily life.

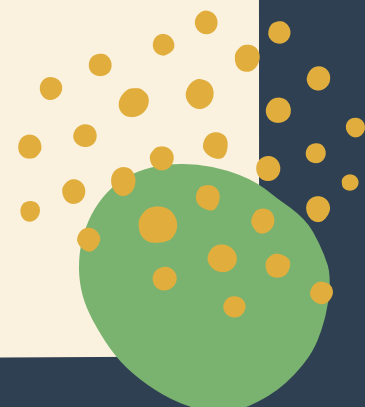
Practical Tip: Combine technical content with interactive displays. Use storytelling, videos, or local champions to engage the public.

5

Strategic Use of Peer Presenters


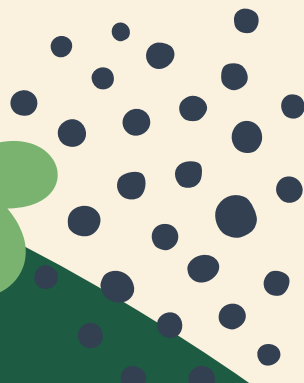

Allowing local practitioners (e.g., farmers or SMEs) to share their success stories resonated strongly with audiences. Peer examples enhanced trust and relatability.

Practical Tip: Create slots for short peer talks in events. Offer support in preparing visuals or presentations.





Key Strategies: Make It Happen

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- 1 Anchor actions in real - world needs and stakeholder interests.
 - 2 Start small - pilot actions that are easy to implement and show immediate results.
 - 3 Create feedback loops to refine actions as you go.
 - 4 Leverage peer learning and cross-regional exchange to amplify impact.
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Insights from the Field

Our final workshop, 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy,' took place in Brussels on May 14, 2025. The event explored a range of topics, from co-creation with stakeholders and bioeconomy training to business opportunities and replicating the RuralBioUp Hub model.



Within this broader agenda, this summary presents the key results from one specific roundtable discussion:

- Driving Impactful Action in your region boosting Bioeconomy – Intelligent use of subsidy money

To kickstart the discussion and encourage a dynamic exchange of ideas, we utilised a unique comics-based scenario (see the image below):



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The engaging discussions that followed the comic strip allowed us to collect and synthesise the key outcomes and learnings from the group. These points represent the collective insights on creating effective training programs and educational pathways for green careers in the bioeconomy.

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Driving Impactful Action in your region boosting Bioeconomy - Intelligent use of subsidy money

Time to make a comic! First, check out this scene

The strategic meeting of a regional bioeconomy initiative

At a strategy meeting of a regional bioeconomy initiative, Elena Schmitt, project coordinator for regional development, announces exciting news: significant new funding has been secured to advance bioeconomy initiatives in the region. Jonas Reuter, an analyst specializing in sustainable innovation proposes smart strategies for prioritizing future actions and emphasizes the need to revisit past gaps and missed opportunities.

"Okay team, we've received new funding. But which activities should be funded in the next years?"

"It's not simple to find tailored actions that have real impact in our region. Which opportunities did we miss the last time and which activities have true potential?"

Finish the comic strip

"A deeper dive into the past initiatives, understanding what worked, and more importantly, what didn't, can provide invaluable lessons."

"It's important to focus on the long-term sustainability of funded initiatives, ensuring they deliver lasting economic, social, and environmental benefits rather than just short-term results."

"Engaging with local stakeholders can help identify specific needs and ensure that initiatives are effectively tailored to address them."

How is RuralBioUp fostering bioeconomy growth in European rural regions?

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This image shows the discussion results from one table at our 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy' workshop, held in Brussels on May 14, 2025: Driving Impactful Action in your region boosting Bioeconomy – Intelligent use of subsidy money. The key results from the workshop are summarised in this fact sheet.

What to Remember

- Stakeholder participation increases with visible, hands-on actions.
- Peer involvement and real-life examples foster trust and credibility.
- Well-designed small actions can lead to big momentum.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Explore Our Resources:

Browse the [Portfolio of Services](#) to see what we offer.



Connect with Your Local Hub:

Contact your hub coordinator to plan a site visit. For guidance, see our [Handbook](#).



Share Your Success:

Inspire others in the community by sharing your own success stories.

Business Opportunities

Innovate, Create, Sustain:
Unlocking business opportunities
and potentials for Bioeconomy



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Business Opportunities



Beyond a Vision: An Economic Opportunity

The bioeconomy is not just an environmental vision – it's an economic opportunity. From agricultural residues to food by-products, Europe's rural regions are home to untapped bio-based resources that can fuel sustainable businesses. How can local entrepreneurs and SMEs get empowered to identify, develop, and scale innovative bioeconomy solutions?

The Challenge

Many rural actors are unaware of the economic value hidden in their bio-resources. Even when ideas exist, support for turning concepts into viable business models is limited.

Entrepreneurs need access to networks, funding insights, technical knowledge, and market validation to take the leap. Bridging this gap is key to making the bioeconomy both real and profitable.



Lessons Learned

1

Business Models Need to Be Local and Adaptable

Successful bioeconomy ventures reflect the regional context – available resources, market access, and cultural identity. Copy-paste solutions rarely work.

Practical Tip: Support SMEs in adapting proven concepts to local supply chains and consumer demands. Use feasibility tools and business mentoring.



2

Visibility Creates Market Pull

Public awareness and clear communication of benefits drive acceptance and demand. Showcasing real products helps make the bioeconomy 'real'.

Practical Tip: Encourage participation in fairs, media outreach, and product showcases. Use storytelling to highlight impact.





3

Small-Scale Innovation Has Big Potential

Innovation isn't limited to high-tech labs. Simple, low-cost solutions – like turning plant waste into packaging or cosmetics – can be powerful drivers of value.

Practical Tip: Highlight grassroots innovation and support low-barrier pilot projects to reduce perceived risk for SMEs.

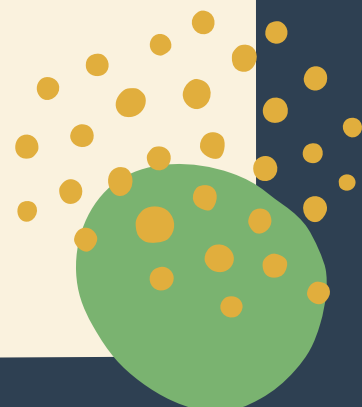


4

Connect Innovators with Networks and Capital

Entrepreneurs need more than ideas – they need connections to peers, funders, and buyers. RuralBioUp hubs acted as bridges to these networks.

Practical Tip: Host matchmaking events, provide funding guidance, and co-create roadmaps with local authorities and chambers of commerce.



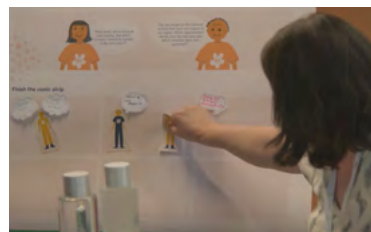
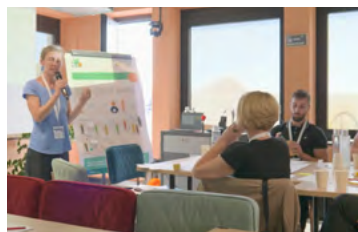


Key Strategies: Make It Happen

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- 1 Map regional bio-resources and assess business potential using local data.
 - 2 Offer mentoring and coaching programs for early-stage bioeconomy ideas.
 - 3 Use exhibitions and demo days to make innovation visible and accessible.
 - 4 Foster cooperation between SMEs, research institutions, and local governments.
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Insights from the Field

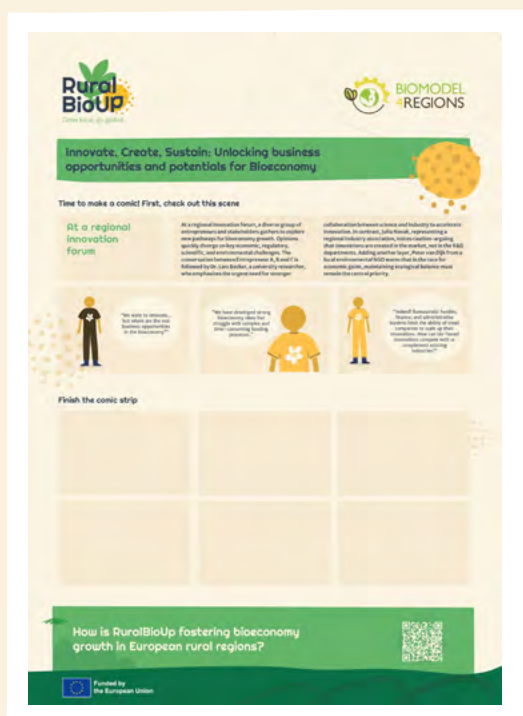
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- Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy

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Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy

Time to make a comic! First, check out this scene

At a regional innovation forum

At a regional innovation forum, a diverse group of entrepreneurs and stakeholders gathers to explore new pathways for bioeconomy growth. Opinions quickly diverge on key economic, regulatory, scientific, and environmental challenges. The conversation between Entrepreneur A, B and C is followed by Dr. Lars Becker, a university researcher, who emphasizes the urgent need for stronger collaboration between science and industry to accelerate innovation. In contrast, Julia Novak, representing a regional industry association, voices caution—arguing that innovations are created in the market, not in the R&D departments. Adding another layer, Peter van Dijk from a local environmental NGO warns that in the race for economic gains, maintaining ecological balance must remain the central priority.

Entrepreneur A: "We want to innovate... but where are the real business opportunities in the bioeconomy?"

Entrepreneur B: "We have developed strong bioeconomy ideas but struggle with complex and time-consuming funding processes."

Entrepreneur C: "Indeed! Bureaucratic hurdles, finance, and administrative burdens limit the ability of small companies to scale up their innovations. How can bio-based innovations compete with or complement existing industries?"

Finish the comic strip

Dr. Lars Becker: "Many companies in the BE sector have innovative ideas, but the lack of financial resources and the bureaucratic complexity of securing funding make it difficult to scale their projects."

Julia Novak: "Given our cultural, people tend to be cautious about new ventures, preferring stability over risk. Starting something new requires a guarantee that investments will yield returns."

Peter van Dijk: "There's a gap in understanding what bioeconomy truly is; different perceptions prevail, and many still see it as simple, when in reality, it encompasses complex technologies like AI and biometrics, far beyond just harvesting raw materials."

Entrepreneur A: "A bioeconomy business model needs key contacts, structured info, and funding opportunities—resources we gained through collaboration with other hubs, crucial for launching successful initiatives."

How is RuralBioUp fostering bioeconomy growth in European rural regions?

Funded by the European Union

This image shows the discussion results from one table at our 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy' workshop, held in Brussels on May 14, 2025: Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy. The key results from the workshop are summarised in this fact sheet.

What to Remember

- Bioeconomy innovation is economically viable—and accessible to rural SMEs.
- Local context, visibility, and mentorship are key to scaling business ideas.
- Empowering entrepreneurs unlocks circular value chains and regional resilience.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Identify local bio-resources with hidden value.



Co-create innovation journeys with entrepreneurs in your region.





Key Strengths and Challenges Across Our Hubs

Learnings from the RuralBioUp
Regional Hubs



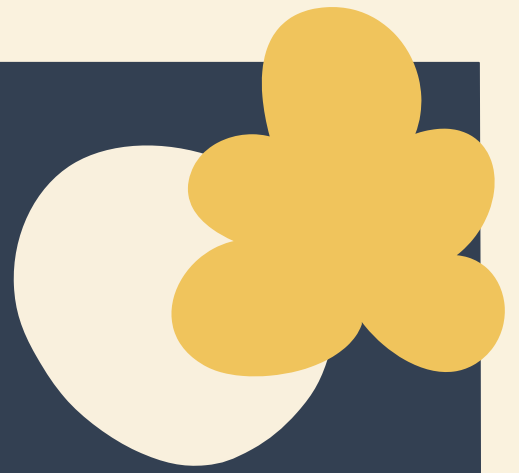
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Key Strengths and Challenges Across Our Hubs



Learnings from the RuralBioUp Regional Hubs

Suggestions and Recommendations for Long-Term Sustainability

The core strength of the RuralBioUp Project is the creation of stakeholder networks fostering the development of the bioeconomy in the Hubs' respective regions. The analysis of these hubs was based on their Action Plans, facilitator questionnaires, and direct feedback from members. This data was used to prepare the report, *RuralBioUp Recommendations and Actionable Knowledge*.

Our analysis found that the Hubs were formed in one of two ways: either “bottom-up,” where a group of stakeholders came together to collaboratively write the Action Plan, or “top-down,” where facilitators drafted a plan first and then identified stakeholders to match it.

However, regardless of the initial approach, a crucial finding was that every Hub went through a difficult and time-consuming negotiation process. This was necessary to align the unpredictable expectations of stakeholders with the project's predefined goals. This challenging alignment process is what ultimately led to the identification of the top 10 common strengths and weaknesses across the Hubs, which are summarized below.



Top Strengths

1 Strong Stakeholder Networks

The presence of representatives from public administrations (for example, regional Departments of Agriculture and productive sectors) and industry associations has been key to strengthening the Hubs.

2 Diverse & Complementary Skills

Diverse competencies are undoubtedly a strength, provided that initiatives are structured to foster synergy among stakeholders and prevent dominance by one area (for example, primary production, technology, governance). Stakeholder selection must be tailored for each action.

3 Innovative Solutions

Hubs provide an ideal environment for introducing and promoting innovative technologies and methodologies for the development of regional bioeconomy value chains. This is particularly enhanced by the involvement of public and private research entities.

4 Good Collaboration with Hub Contact Points

Contact Points should be representative of both the territory and its bioeconomic production system. Stakeholders particularly appreciated the involvement of public authorities and local industry associations.

5 Effective Knowledge Transfer

Effective knowledge transfer for practical application in the productive sector benefited significantly from a shared language between researchers and enterprises, with minimal theoretical content and a focus on practical implementation.



Top Strengths

6 High Bioeconomy Awareness

Preliminarily selected stakeholders demonstrated a strong awareness of the opportunities offered by bioeconomy development in their regions. This motivation was especially evident in activities involving knowledge transfer and best practice exchange. Such awareness is expected to foster enduring links between biomass-supplying agroforestry sectors and transforming industries.

7 Focus on By-Product Valorisation

A key aspect of the bioeconomy is the “cascading” exploitation of biomass. Beyond high-value applications (for example, food, biomolecules, fine products), it is crucial to “close the loop” by using residual fractions for soil fertility or bioenergy. The RuralBioUp Project’s residual biomass database is expected to play a vital role in matching supply and demand at a broader territorial level.

8 Synergies with Other Projects

The European Commission has funded many projects aimed at building networks for bioeconomy development. RuralBioUp facilitated multiple joint meetings with similar projects, fostering knowledge exchange and significantly expanding the stakeholder base. These synergies will help preserve the project’s legacy beyond its formal conclusion.

9 Presence of Local Clusters

The presence of bioeconomy-active local clusters in several Hubs promoted stakeholder interaction and aggregation, offering structured platforms for dialogue and experience sharing. Strengthening ties between clusters and local public administrations will be vital for the future.

10 Effective Study Visits

Study visits and showcased days proved particularly effective for experience sharing and knowledge transfer. Entrepreneurs appreciated the opportunity to observe technological applications in real production settings and assess their replicability. Short video interviews recorded during these visits helped disseminate information widely beyond the events themselves.

Top Weaknesses

1 Excessive Number of Activities

Most Hubs reported that the number of planned stakeholder-targeted activities, as initially outlined in the Action Plans, exceeded the actual availability of participants. Future planning should consolidate activities into fewer events, such as combining interviews, workshops, and coaching within a single study visit.

2 Lack of Stakeholder Time

Entrepreneurs, a key driver of bioeconomic development, often have limited time for Project-related activities. In addition to consolidating events, activities should be tailored to their specific areas of interest.

3 Limited Sectoral Interaction

Even among forward-looking entrepreneurs, a systemic understanding of interconnections between bioeconomic value chains is lacking. A sectorial approach persists. Promoting the concept of “industrial symbiosis” and highlighting linkages between supply chains and market niches will be essential. Support from researchers and public officials will be key here.

4 Uneasy Stakeholder Engagement

While stakeholder recruitment was relatively easy, sustaining active and high-quality participation proved more difficult. Extensive, detailed questionnaires to assess KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) were often seen as burdensome and “time waste”. These tools should be replaced by experience-based assessments from facilitators.

5 Low Willingness to Invest in the Bioeconomy

Bioeconomy is still widely perceived as a high business risk sector. Many stakeholders are interested but cautious to invest. This barrier – crucial for the success of RuralBioUp – can be addressed by informing entrepreneurs of available funding opportunities and establishing dedicated support desks within public institutions.

Top Weaknesses

6 Regulatory Difficulties

Bioeconomic legislation remains fragmented and complex in many Countries. In Italy, for instance, ambiguity between “by-product” and “waste” hampers permits and discourages investment. Projects like RuralBioUp, involving many stakeholders, can help propose policy solutions to streamline this framework.

7 Territorial Heterogeneity

This issue is especially evident in national-scale Hubs that cover diverse regions with different agricultural systems and value chains. It can be addressed by tailoring initiatives to specific territorial characteristics.

8 Limited Player Availability

Despite their potential, many Hub initiatives saw lower-than-expected participation. Improved communication strategies highlighting real, short-term economic benefits are needed.

9 Overlap with Other Projects

While collaboration with similar initiatives is a strength, it becomes problematic when stakeholders are asked to join redundant activities. Better coordination between projects is needed to avoid duplication of activities.

10 Prevalence of Researchers over Entrepreneurs

Hubs should include actors from different backgrounds. Although universities and research organisations ensure access to innovative technologies, issues arise from the use of overly technical language and differing timelines for results. These gaps can be bridged through peer-level discussions aimed at co-developing solutions, rather than imposing them.



Replicating a RuralBioUp Hub in a nutshell

Empowering Regional Bioeconomy
Through Structured Local Innovation



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Replicating a RuralBioUp Hub in a nutshell



Introduction / The “Why”

Starting a hub from scratch can be daunting. Regions must navigate fragmented stakeholder landscapes, unclear governance, lack of trust, limited funding, and uncertainty about which model will work. There is no ‘one size fits all’, but RuralBioUp’s model shows that structured replication is possible and impactful.

From Vision to Reality: Creating a Regional Bioeconomy Hub

What Is a Bioeconomy Hub?

A Bioeconomy Hub is a collaborative platform that brings together diverse regional actors—farmers, SMEs, researchers, public authorities, regional developers, NGOs, and citizens—to promote sustainable, bio-based innovation. It functions as a facilitation space and support structure that helps regions unlock new value chains, create local jobs, and contribute to EU goals such as climate neutrality and circular economy.





Why Building a Bioeconomy Hub?

- Bioeconomy hubs help regions to: Promote local, sustainable biomass use
- Connect actors across sectors (agriculture, forestry, food, biotech, etc.)
- Foster innovation and investment
- Increase rural resilience and social cohesion
- Align with EU Green Deal and Bioeconomy Strategy goals



How to build a Bioeconomy Hub – key steps to take

1

Build the Foundation

- Define your **vision and goals**: What change do you want to see?
- Understand your **strategic landscape**: Do a SWOT, PESTLE, or “map & gap” analysis.
- Develop a **logic model**: Connect activities to outcomes.
- Use tools like **the Golden Circle** (“Why–How–What”) to align your core team.
- Define **indicators** linked to your goals and define a monitoring strategy



2

Communication & Outreach

- **Tailor materials** to local audiences
- Use **trusted channels** and intermediaries
- Combine different formats (online and in-person formats) adapted to the target group



3

Co-Create with Stakeholders

- Identify key stakeholders using the **quadruple helix** (government, academia, business, civil society).
- Plan inclusive **co-creation workshops** to design the hub's mission, activities, and services.
- Focus on **shared value creation**: Ensure participants see tangible benefits.
- Create a **roadmap**: Translate ideas into milestones and pilot actions.



4

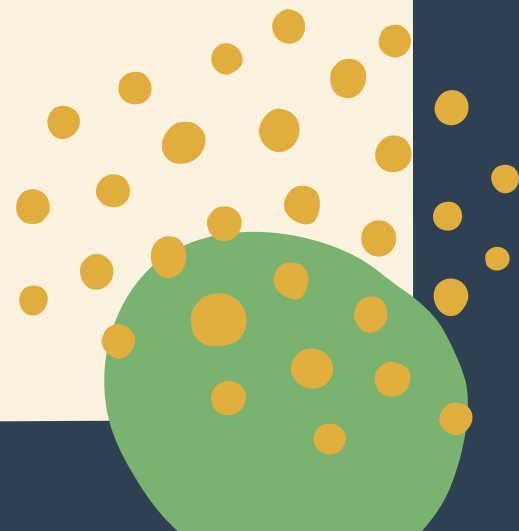
Co-Create Learning for Local Impact

- Design training and mentoring offers tailored to local needs.
- Launch pilot initiatives that work for your target group (e.g. study visits, matchmaking events).
- Promote your hub via accessible communication tools and local champions.
- Connect people, data, and services.

5

Developing Regional Bioeconomy Business Models

- Understand your region
- Adopt, don't copy
- Make innovations visible
- Start small, think circular
- Connect to Ecosystems
- Scale with purpose





6

Ensuring long-term sustainability

Secure the Future with Smart Funding

- Make the Hub Part of the Bigger Picture
- Grow Together, Not Alone
- Give the Hub a Backbone
- Work Smarter Through Collaboration
- Shape the Rules that Shape You

7

Evaluation, Optimization, and Scaling

- Set up a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system early.
- Track what works, then adjust.
- Share results to secure buy-in, funding, and long-term support.

A 7-Step Guide to Developing Local Bioeconomies



Build the Foundation

Develop vision, context, logic model, stakeholder mapping



Communication & Outreach

Tailor materials, Use trusted channels, Combine different formats



Co-Creation of Actions

Design training formats, Prioritise hands-on learning, Peer-to-Peer learning



Co-Create Learning for Local Impact

Design training formats, Prioritise hands-on learning, Foster Peer-to-Peer learning



Develop Bioeconomy Business Models

Support local entrepreneurs, Map value chains, Adapt successful ideas



Ensure Long-Term Sustainability

Secure funding, Formalise partnerships, Align with regional strategies



Evaluate, Optimise, and Scale

Set criteria for Monitor progress, Adapt based on feedback






Co-Creation: The Heart of a Hub

Co-creation means designing the hub with, not just for, the people it serves. Done well, it builds trust, relevance, and ownership.

The core principles of co-creation:

- Involve a diverse mix of voices
- Be clear about who makes which decisions
- Create safe, respectful spaces for collaboration
- Plan for iteration: test, learn, improve
- Empower stakeholders with real influence—not just consultation.

Success Factors

- Start small, but think long-term
 - Be transparent about goals and limitations
 - Make value visible—especially for time-strapped stakeholders
 - Plan for sustainability beyond the project
 - Embed the hub in regional policy frameworks, networks and opportunities
- 



Key Strategies: Make It Happen

1

Stakeholder Mapping

Identify all potential stakeholders across sectors using tools like the Power/Interest Grid.

2

Co-Creation

Invite stakeholders into the strategy development process early.

3

Governance

Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making procedures with room for adaptation.

4

Evaluation

Apply a logic model to track results, reflect, and improve.

5

Communication

Tailor outreach to your audience and celebrate small wins visibly.

6

Start Small

Launch pilot projects to gain traction and demonstrate value

What to Remember

- Replication requires local adaptation, not duplication.
- Vision, participation, and agile structures build resilience.
- Clear governance and small, visible successes create momentum.
- Start with what's already there: trust, networks, and needs.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Review the [RuralBioUp Replication Manual](#) for step-by-step support



Convene a local working group and define your shared values



Use the logic model template to plan your activities and outcomes



Launch your first pilot or co-creation event



Our Consortium



Want to Learn More?

Visit our website for full project details or get in touch directly.

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