

# Advisory Services

Within the Research and Advisory Services Directorate

## Malta CAP Network Meeting

16<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Dr Jurgen Mifsud  
Director



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# Understanding the Journey Here ...



Capacity Building and In-House Expertise



Providing a Higher Level of Service to Farmers



Establishment of A National Agriculture Research and Innovation hub



Obtaining Crucial Expertise and Support

Identifying Sectoral Needs



Agriculture Research & Innovation Hub

Research and Advisory Services Directorate



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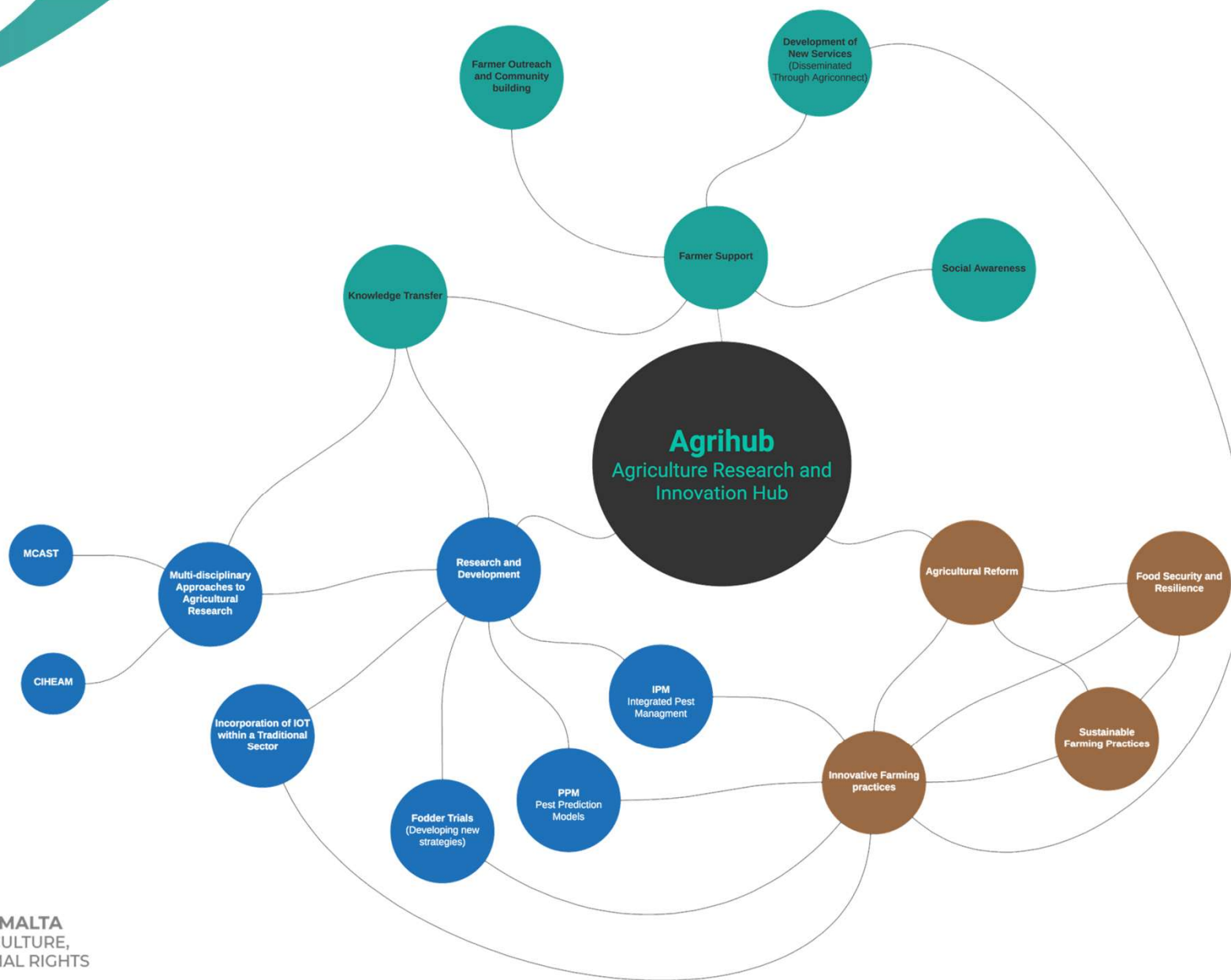


**Agriculture Research  
& Innovation Hub**



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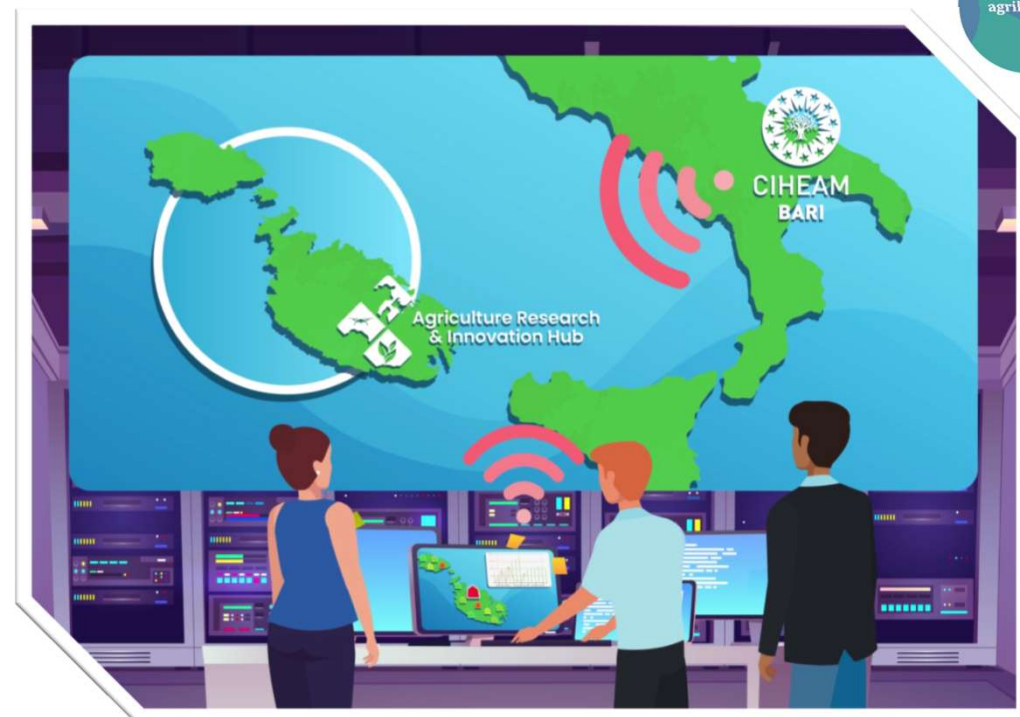


# A Multi-Disciplinary Team

Research within AgriHub is carried out through a multidisciplinary team of researchers across multiple entities.

A team that covers:

- Agronomy
- Phenology
- Environmental Engineering
- Agribusiness
- Geospatial Science
- ICT



MCAST







# Conceptualisation & Desk Study

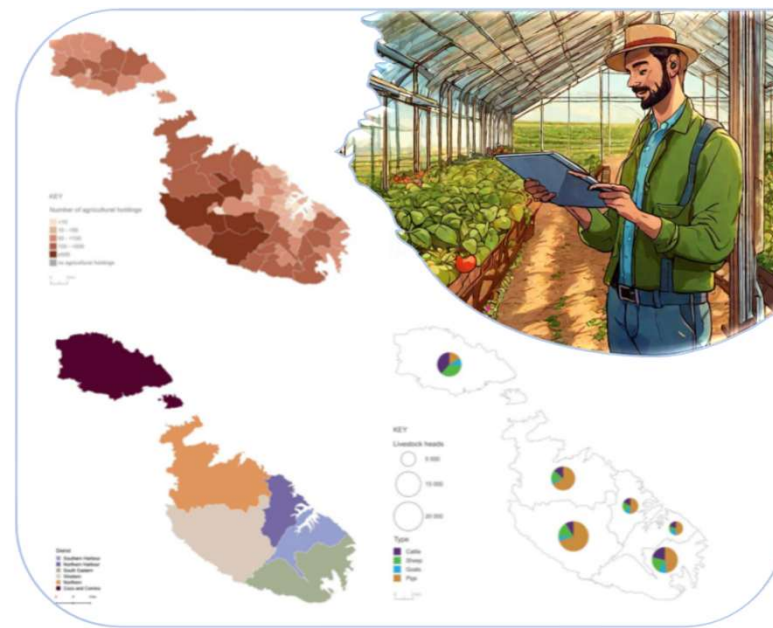
## Desk Study:

- Analysis of Literature on Regional and Local Pests
- Collaboration with Project Partners and Technical Experts



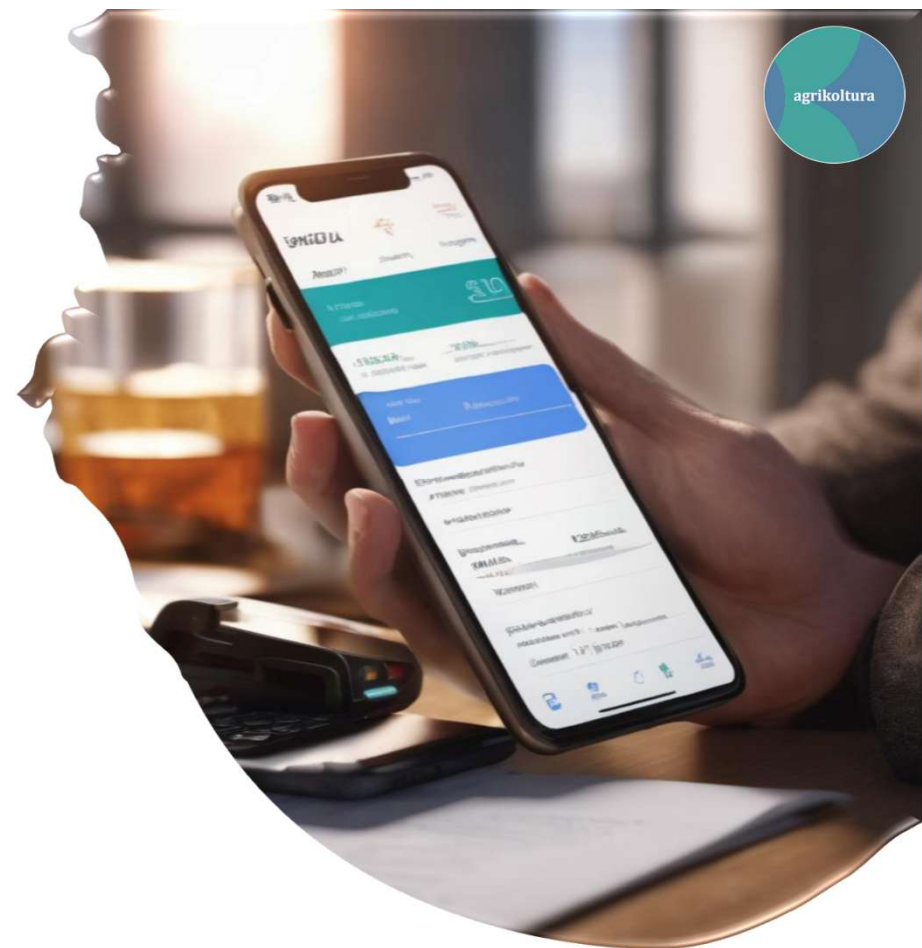
# Cross-sectional study of Maltese Agriculture

- Sector's Economic Profile
- Socio-demographic characteristics of the sector's workforce
- Policy frameworks
  - Malta National Strategy for Sustainable Development
  - National Agriculture Policy (NAP)
  - Rural Development Plan
  - Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) – Post 2020
  - National Artificial Intelligence strategy
- Quantity, variety and quality of local produce



## Scoping Phase

- 400+ Surveys on cultivation practices
- Identification of 5 prevalent Pests:
  - *Tuta absoluta*
  - *Bactrocera oleae*
  - *Lobesia botrana*
  - *Phthorimaea operculella*
  - *Tetranychus urticae*
- Contributed to IPM guidelines and PPM





# Setting up the Pest Monitoring Network

- Setting up of monitoring stations & IOT Probes
- Setting up of Monitoring Room at Ghammieri



# Agrometeorological Data – Available to famers



## Weather Stations

MET Office Data

Agrometeorological Data

Agrometeorological Data is provided by the Research and Advisory Services Directorate within the MAFA

WIND SPEED / DIRECTION

TEMPERATURE

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

RAINFALL

LEAF WETNESS

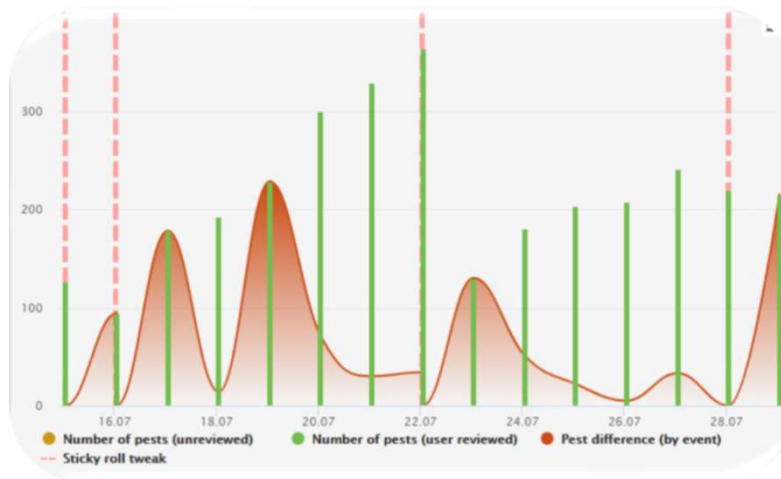
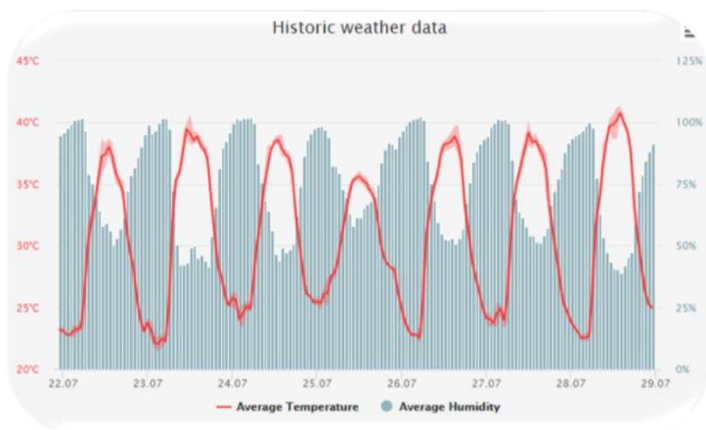
SOIL MOISTURE / TEMPERATURE



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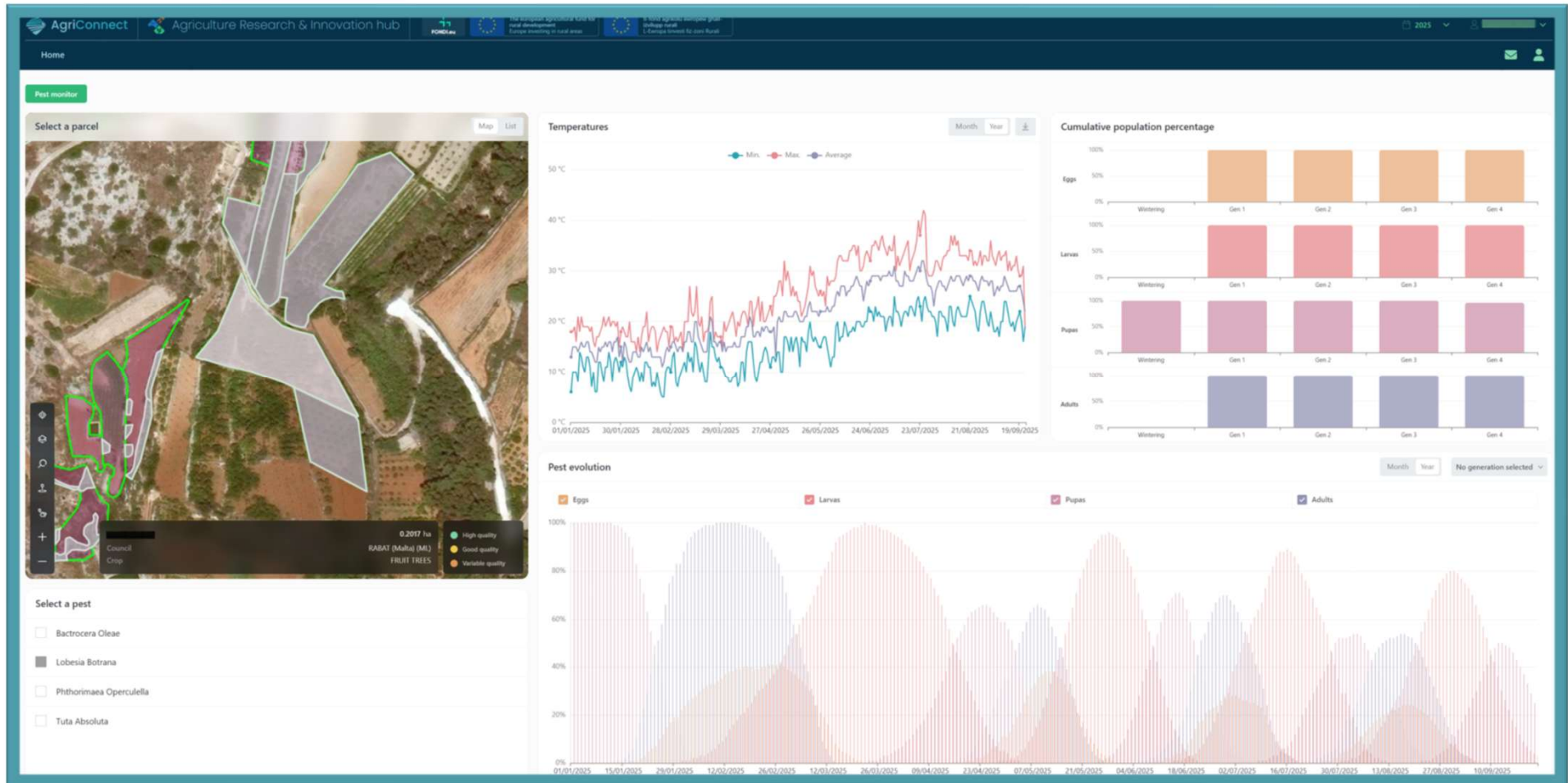
# Development of Pest Prediction Models

- AI Traps → Monitor current pest populations
- PPM → Forecast future pest populations based on meteorological conditions
- Four pest models developed

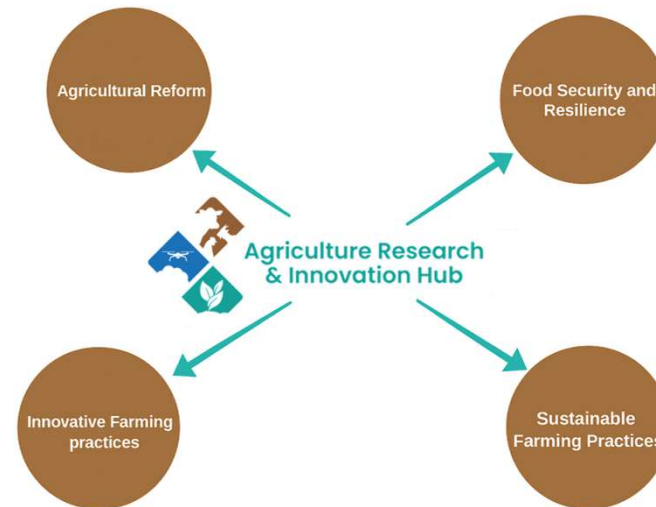
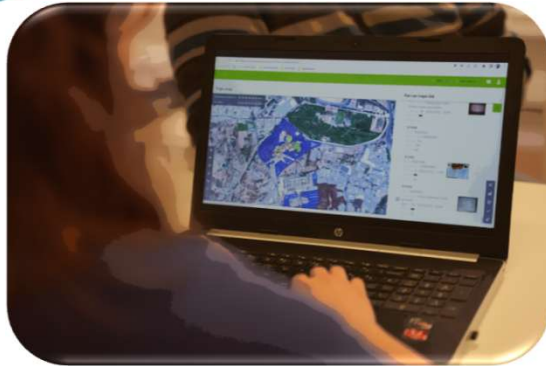




# Pest Prediction Models Platform







# AgriKonsulta Services



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## AgriHub's Knowledge Exchange Mechanisms Culminate in the AgriKonsulta Service

Tailored Farm advisory services on:

- Horticulture: Olericulture
- Horticulture: Pomology and Viticulture
- Animal Husbandry (specifically the production of pork)





## Objective of AgriKonsulta – Swine sector:

- Offering targeted advisory services to Maltese pig farmers
- To improve:
  - Reproductive efficiency
  - Biosecurity
  - On-farm record keeping



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## Visits by TEAGASC experts

- Meetings with cooperative
- On-farm visits
- Workshops for farmers

## Pregnancy Scanning

- Early detection of pregnancy in sows
- Improve reproductive management
- Reduction of number empty days, ensuring consistent piglet supply



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# AgriKonsulta – Swine sector: Expected Benefits

## For Farmers:

- Timely decisions on sow management
- Higher piglet output per sow per year
- Enhanced farm planning and profit margins

## For Sector:

- Improved consistency in local pork production
- Stronger national food security
- A step toward more sustainable and efficient swine production



# AgriConnect

[www.agricconnect.gov.mt](http://www.agricconnect.gov.mt)



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- AgriConnect, Civic Centre, Ċawsli Street, Żabbar
- Agriconnect, Pitkali Markets, Ta Qali L/O Attard
- AgriConnect, Level 2, The Duke Shopping Mall Republic Street Victoria Gozo

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# AgriConnect Mission & Core Approach

- Farm Advisory Service registered to support CAP compliance
- Provides complimentary services to overcome operational obstacles and technical issues
- Tailored guidance supporting diversification, quality enhancement, and innovation
- Partnership with AGRIHUB to implement contemporary practices and technologies
- Focus on productivity, environmental preservation, and biodiversity

# AgriConnect Advisory & Business Support

- Specialised support on:
  - Business planning and strategic farm development
  - Identification of funding opportunities
  - Long-term competitiveness and sustainability
- Young Farmers Financial Assistance – Up to €100,000 lump-sum support to establish or take over holdings
- Business Plan Support Grant – €5,000 to cover advisor preparation costs



## AgriConnect: AECC5

- Objective: Improve soil quality by addressing three main threats:
  - Low organic matter
  - Soil compaction
  - Soil erosion
- AgriConnect deliverables:
  - Soil sampling and analysis
  - Soil Management Plan
  - Fertiliser Plan (every 3 years)
  - Annual Soil Test Results with expert agronomist guidance



# AgriConnect: Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Primary Goal: Produce healthy crops with minimal agro-ecosystem interruption
- Method Hierarchy:
  - Physical/mechanical controls (preferred)
  - Biological controls (preferred)
  - Chemical treatments (only when necessary)
- Benefits: Effective pest control without excessive pesticides, prevents chemical resistance build-up, economically viable





# Integrated Pest Management Guidelines

IPM: Cost effective, environmentally friendly, and focuses on the proactive and effective managing of pests, weeds, and diseases.

Aims to:

- Reduce unnecessary agricultural inputs
- Use precise methods of pest control to limit environmental collateral (such as the destruction of benign insects)
- Takes on a holistic approach to pest management

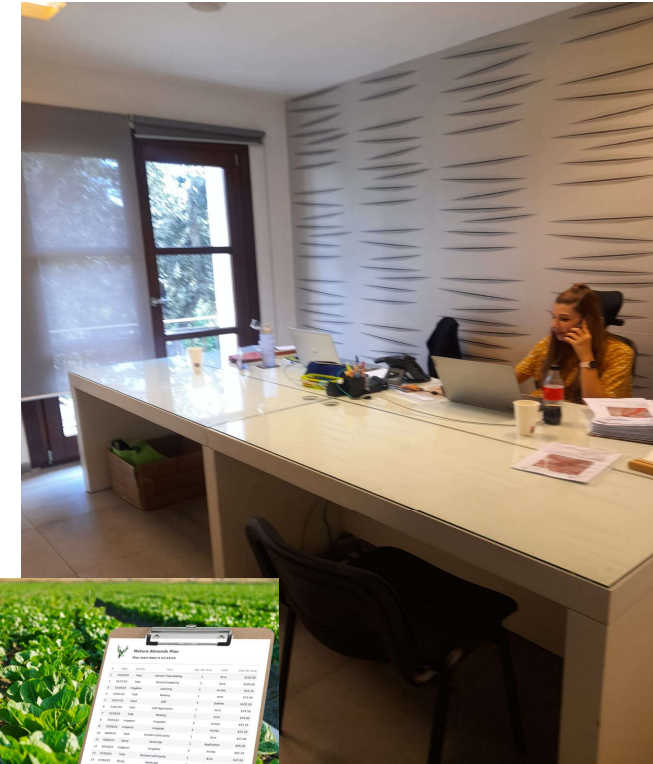
Current list of released guidelines includes:

- |                         |                  |                |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| • Olives                | • Grapes (Table) | • Strawberry   |
| • Tomatoes (Processing) | • Zucchini       | • Potato       |
| • Tomatoes (Table)      | • Lettuce        | • Stone fruits |
| • Grapes (Wine)         | • Citrus         |                |



## AgriConnect: Crop Plans

- 3-year planning horizon for efficient fertiliser planning and sustainable land management
- Structured review includes:
  - Crop selection and compatibility analysis
  - Ideal planting periods and plant density
  - Crop rotation schedules and development periods



## AgriConnect: Crop Plans

- Digital platform: BiedjaCam application for farmer input and planning
- Outcomes: Better resource management, improved soil health, more stable yields
- Requirement for access: Crop plan completion needed for certain agricultural services (e.g., New Water Scheme)
- Demonstration of responsibility: Shows sustainable land management to regulatory bodies

# Thanks

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[research.rasd@gov.mt](mailto:research.rasd@gov.mt)



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