Technical Sheet for Solution Implementation

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Thematic area: Socio-Economic Performance.

Priority: How to improve farms profitability?

Need: Cost control: How to pool agricultural equipment?; How to reduce energy consumption?; How to control production costs?; How to avoid food waste?; How to limit the impact of inflation on operations?; What solutions to fight the increase in production costs (food, labor and fuel in particular)?

Solution EU number: PRO-02.

Content of the solution: Collaborative use of resources—including machinery, labour, infrastructure, and management tools—between farms reduces costs, improves efficiency, enhances animal welfare, and promotes sustainability through coordinated cooperation.

Reasons for Implementing the Solution

The rising cost of agricultural machinery and infrastructure makes it increasingly difficult for many—especially young or small-scale—farmers to access the equipment needed to remain competitive. Sharing resources provides a cost-effective way to use modern, high-performance tools while improving work organisation and reducing individual investment burdens.

Description of Solution Strategies

Sharing resources ("mutualization") refers to the collaborative use of equipment, labour, infrastructure, and services between multiple farms. This approach helps reduce operational costs, optimises utilisation rates of machinery, and strengthens resilience within agricultural communities. Common organisational models across the EU include (non-exhaustive):

- **Cooperatives:** Farmer-led organisations enabling the joint use of production, packaging, storage, marketing, or processing facilities, as well as collective purchasing of inputs.
- **Machinery rings / machinery-sharing groups:** Common in several EU countries; these groups coordinate the shared use of tractors, harvesters, or specialised tools, often using booking systems and shared maintenance rules.
- **CUMA (France-specific example):** Cooperatives for the collective use of agricultural equipment. Farmers jointly invest in machinery and manage its operation, sometimes employing shared labour.
- **Joint cropping / collaborative field management:** Farmers manage specific plots together as a single production unit without merging their businesses.
- **Shared structures:** Examples include shared workshops, storage buildings, repair facilities, livestock housing, or processing units.
- **Mutual aid networks:** Informal or semi-formal arrangements in which neighbouring farms support each other through labour exchange, shared equipment use, or coordinated purchasing.

- **Employer groups / shared workforce models:** Several farms jointly hire employees or specialists, such as mechanics, equipment operators, or administrative staff.

These structures vary across EU regions but share a common goal: reducing costs, improving efficiency, and strengthening cooperation between farms.

Implementation Steps

1.Identify local needs and opportunities: Assess which resources (equipment, labour, storage, workshops, facilities) could be beneficial to share based on the characteristics of your farm.

2. Connect with neighbouring farms or existing organisations: Establish contact with local farmers, cooperatives, machinery rings, or similar networks to discuss potential collaboration.

3. Choose an organisational model: Decide whether to join an existing cooperative/ machinery-sharing group or create a new partnership with neighbouring farms. Ensure that legal and financial frameworks follow national and EU regulations.

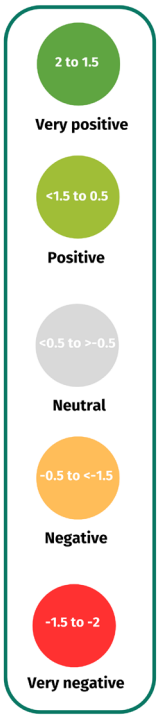
4. Plan investments and agreements: Jointly invest in equipment or infrastructure, or formalise access to existing shared resources. Define responsibilities, usage rules, scheduling systems, and maintenance procedures.

5. Implement shared resource use: Begin coordinating equipment use, labour sharing, or joint facility operation. Regular evaluation and communication help maintain efficiency and cooperation.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

How Will this Solution Impact the Performance of your Farm?

TOPIC	SCORE
Social	1,50
Economics	1,25
Welfare	1.00
Health	0.75
Environmental	0.67
Pasture access and management	2.00
Global	1.08



Traffic light explanation

Socioeconomics: This solution will support the social performance of the farm because sharing resources and cooperating with other farms strengthens relationships, trust, and coordination within the local agricultural community. Mutualization improves the farm's reputation by demonstrating openness, professionalism, and responsible resource management. Access to more modern equipment and shared labour can improve working conditions and reduce physical strain, contributing positively to quality of working life. Although cooperation requires coordination and may impose organisational constraints (e.g. equipment availability), it fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective problem-solving, which enhance social cohesion and long-term resilience.

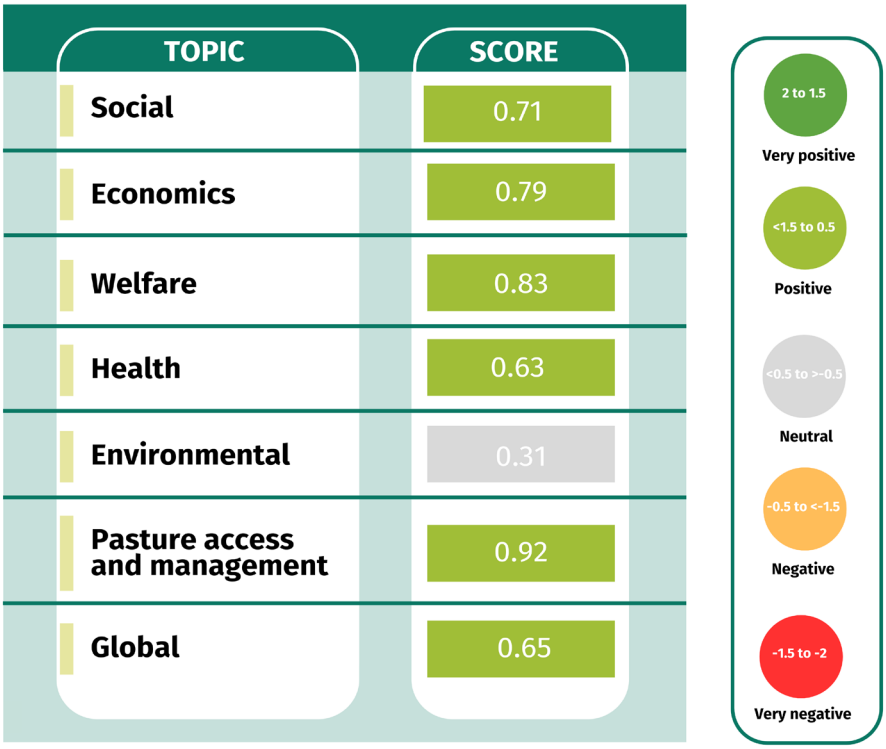
This solution will support the economic performance of the farm because collaborative use of machinery, labour, and infrastructure significantly reduces fixed and investment costs, improving overall profitability. By avoiding large upfront investments, farms preserve liquidity and lower financial risk while still benefiting from efficient, modern equipment. Shared costs and optimized resource use enhance operational efficiency and help stabilize margins, especially in periods of rising input prices. While mutualization does not directly increase farm capital—since assets are shared rather than owned—it strengthens economic resilience by improving cost control and flexibility. The effectiveness of this solution depends on well-structured cooperation, clear agreements, and mutual trust, but when successfully implemented, it offers strong potential for sustainable profitability gains.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Health & Welfare: This solution will have a positive indirect effect on the everyday farm's health performance since, with more time gained by sharing work, it may help to detect first symptoms of illness and then to maintain low levels of pain, mortality, and drug use. However, attention should be paid to biosecurity when staff change from farm to farm. This solution will indirectly support equine welfare performance due to the same reason: caretakers less overloaded with work may be more attentive to the welfare needs of equines, which may lead to a positive emotional state and provision of welfare-friendly housing conditions.

Environmental sustainability: This solution will support the environmental performance of the farm because it enhances sustainability by encouraging efficient and rational use of shared environmental resources. The solution supports mitigation of climate change because less material/equipment can be purchased. Possible pooling to create water bodies will support water management, although one must be beware of the risks related to health problems. The positive environmental impact depends on governance quality and shared ecological goals among partners. This solution will support the land access or management performance of the farm because It facilitates best practices in grazing, reduces equipment redundancy, and promotes environmental stewardship through collective responsibility. It does promote optimisation by allowing access to equipment for making hay, fencing, etc.

How Will this Solution Impact the Resilience of your Farm?



Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Socioeconomics: This solution will support social performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because mutualization strengthens cooperation, trust, and solidarity between farmers, which becomes particularly valuable during periods of uncertainty such as inflation, pandemics, disease outbreaks, or extreme weather events. Continuous exchange with other farmers enables moral support, shared problem-solving, and collective learning, reducing isolation and stress. By improving access to modern equipment, better working conditions, and coordinated labour arrangements, the solution supports professionalism and enhances the farm's public image. Even though coordination constraints may arise (e.g. shared equipment availability or biosecurity protocols), strong cooperative networks improve adaptability, maintain social outreach, and reinforce community resilience when individual farms are under pressure.

This solution will support economic performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because sharing resources reduces capital expenditure, limits exposure to inflation-driven price increases, and lowers fixed costs related to machinery, labour, and infrastructure. By avoiding heavy individual investments, farms preserve liquidity and maintain flexibility to adapt activities without being locked into equipment purchases. Mutualization enables cost-sharing for risk management (e.g. water storage, shelters, feed procurement) during extreme weather events and supports continuity of operations when labour shortages or disease-related restrictions occur. Although coordination and governance are essential to avoid conflicts—especially when resources are simultaneously needed—the overall model improves cost efficiency, stabilizes profitability, and strengthens economic resilience by diversifying access to resources rather than concentrating financial risk.

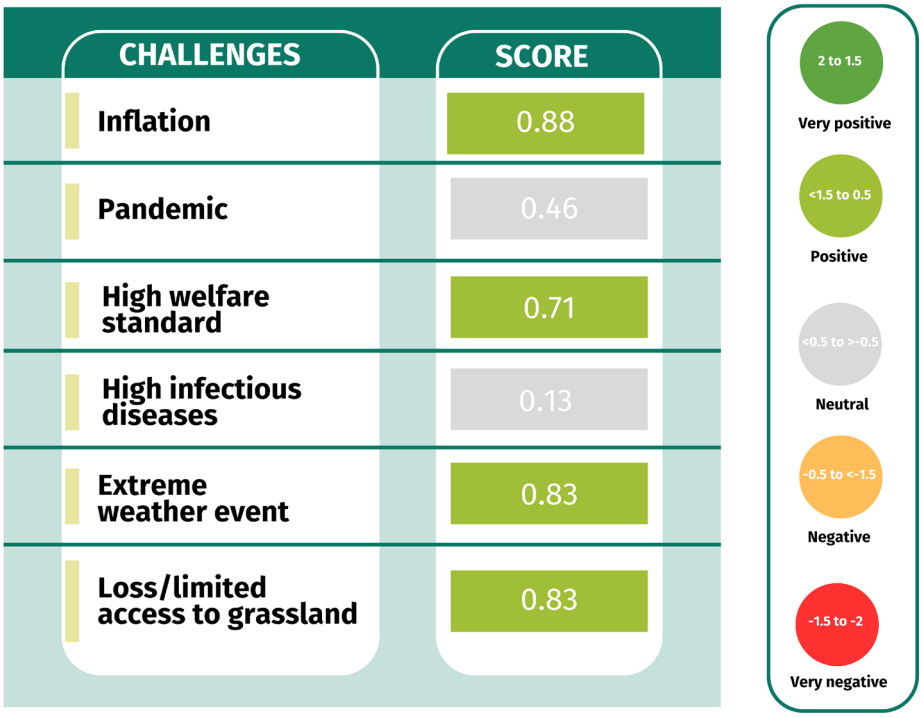
Health & Welfare: This solution will have a positive impact on the health performance when the farm faces external challenges, since it may indirectly reduce pain, mortality, or the need for extensive medication thanks to more people observing the animals. Attention should be paid to biosecurity with high rate of staff exchange. This solution will have a positive indirect effect on the welfare performance of the farm when faced with different external challenges. With more people having contact with equines, the more chances that they will try to ensure appropriate welfare to horses, i.e. the satisfaction of all 3Fs and positive emotional state.

Environmental sustainability: This solution will not impact environmental performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because, there are no clear benefits at most of the assessed challenges. However, there are some positive effects in climate change mitigation and adaptation in case of inflation, pandemics and in a case of extreme climate event and water management. Negative effects on environmental sustainability were not reported at the assessments.

This solution will support land access or management performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because it it enables flexible, cooperative access to grazing resources, reducing the vulnerability of each individual farm. In addition, it emphasizes production of high-quality forage via sustainable land use and self-reliance. Farms that implement this solution may turn to local forage and better land use, reducing dependence on distant, disrupted feed supply chains. It may support better grazing rotation and land management, aligning with outdoor access requirements. Sharing resources clearly offer resilience advantages in pasture access and management in all six challenges.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

How can this solution help your farm to face specific external challenges to be more resilient?



Inflation & Social Crises: Social challenge: This solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing pandemics because while cooperation can provide moral support and shared problem-solving, pandemics often restrict labour pooling, equipment sharing, and external interactions due to health and biosecurity constraints. Illness, movement restrictions, and the need to limit contacts can reduce the effectiveness of mutualization, meaning that its social benefits are limited or neutral in such contexts rather than decisive for farm performance.

Economic challenge: This solution will support the global performance of the farm facing inflation because sharing resources and cooperating with other farms reduces investment needs, limits exposure to rising equipment, labour, and input costs, and increases flexibility in adapting activities without tying up capital. By pooling machinery, skills, and infrastructure, farms can lower fixed charges, optimize workloads, and maintain economic viability despite price volatility, thereby strengthening overall resilience to inflationary pressure.

Welfare & Diseases: Health challenge: this solution will not support the global performance of the farm across all three areas when facing infectious disease challenges because it does not directly prevent potential disease outbreaks. Thus, preventing or dealing with the pain or overuse of drugs and the mortality rate may not be successful when using this solution.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Welfare challenge: this solution will support the global performance of the farm when faced with high welfare standards legislation, because the possibility of assuring better welfare conditions increases with more people engaged in occasional observation of animals. Thus, the fulfilment of enhanced standards of welfare legislation increases by better fulfilment of 3Fs criteria, including positive emotional state of animals according to high welfare standards.

Climate Change & Access to Land: Environmental challenge: this solution will support the global performance of the farm facing abnormally high or low temperatures, drought, excessive raining, windstorms or flood. This solution proves highly beneficial during extreme weather events. Shared pasture access and feed procurement directly address the loss of forage and rising hay costs. Pooled infrastructure (e.g., water tanks, shelters) supports better animal welfare and reduces mortality risks due to heat stress. Furthermore, this collective model enhances social cohesion, improves workload management, and builds adaptive capacity. The shared investments in capital assets such as water storage and shade structures contribute to long-term farm resilience. However, administrative coordination and logistics can require effort and trust among farms, and benefits may depend on local governance

Land access/management challenge: this solution will support the global performance of the farm facing loss or limited access to agricultural land because by encouraging collaboration and shared land use, sharing resources strengthens social ties between equine farms and local communities. This is especially important when negotiating shared access to community grasslands or developing new land-use partnership. However, coordination among stakeholders requires additional communication, which may bring minor complexity.

Sharing resources reduces the need for emergency feed purchases or land leasing, softening the financial impact of grassland loss. Still, there may be shared costs or trade-offs. Shared land and infrastructure can lead to more efficient long-term investments and avoid individual capital expenditure on land expansion or backup grazing systems. This solution supports welfare and health of the equines. The solution ensures continuity in care and environment: coordinated land use can include rotational grazing and ecological planning that supports carbon sequestration and soil health and halt biodiversity loss. Shared land use agreements can promote conservation grazing or better grassland stewardship, helping preserve plant and insect biodiversity. Collaboration can optimize the use of available water sources, for example through shared infrastructure or storage, especially when relocating horses to new areas. This solution also enables flexible, cooperative access to grazing resources, reducing the vulnerability of each individual farm.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Cost-benefit Analysis

Costs

Socioeconomics:

- Membership or financial contribution to the pooling system.
- Equipment not always available when needed.
- Need to reorganise work schedules around shared equipment.
- Initial learning curve for coordinated management or new practices.
- Training or consulting costs (if external advice is required).
- Need for additional small tools or digital tools for coordination.
- Increased time burden for planning, monitoring, and communication.
- Possible stress due to shared responsibilities and expectations.

Health & Welfare:

- Risk of errors in feeding/management when multiple people or farms are involved.
- Potential for inappropriate feeding strategies if coordination is poor.
- Delays or inconsistencies in care routines due to shared systems.
- Overcrowding or behavioural issues if shared facilities are poorly managed.

Environmental Sustainability:

- EIncreased feed demand may raise pressure on local feed supply chains.
- Higher transport emissions if external feed inputs are required.

Benefits

- Lower production costs through shared equipment, labour, and services.
- No individual investment in expensive machinery.
- Increased productivity and operational efficiency.
- Better working conditions through mechanisation and shared labour.
- Shared employees = more attractive, stable jobs.
- Improved management outcomes (e.g., better planning, fewer delays)
- Lower long-term labour stress due to coordinated systems.

- More time for animal care due to mechanised/shared labour.
- Reduced risk of developmental diseases through better nutrition management.
- Improved immune function and growth outcomes.
- Early detection of health issues through shared monitoring systems.
- Behavioural benefits from more consistent routines and improved weaning management.
- Overall improved welfare through higher-quality care and more available human attention.

- Reduced production and purchase of tractors and machinery.
- Use of newer, more efficient, lower-emission equipment.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Costs

- Risk of reduced on-farm biodiversity if concentrate feeding replaces forage.
- Potential soil/water risks if manure is not sustainably managed.

Benefits

- More sustainable pasture and grassland management.
- Reduced feed waste through coordinated resource use.
- Better nutrient cycling through optimized manure management.
- Lower pharmaceutical input due to better-preventive care.
- Support for biodiversity when shared systems encourage pasture-based management.

Cooperation between farms:

Costs

- Potential tensions due to equipment damage or scheduling conflicts.
- Coordination costs for aligning practices, feeding protocols, and monitoring systems.
- Need for strong communication to prevent misunderstandings.
- Data sensitivity: reluctance to share performance/health data.
- Possible inefficiencies in managing shared facilities (pastures, storage, machinery).

Benefits

- Stronger networks between farmers.
- Shared experience and knowledge transfer.
- Joint purchasing of specialised feed or equipment.
- Standardised monitoring practices improve overall production quality.
- Benchmarking improves collective outcomes and transparency.
- Supports a culture of innovation, professionalism, and continuous improvement.

Additional Resources

Websites

- French Language:
  - https://www.ifce.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Webconference_CUMA1.pdf https://www.terreencommun.be/mutualiser-le-materiel-agricole-les-avantages/
  - https://deux-sevres.cuma.fr/app/uploads/sites/34/2024/01/tarifs-cotisations-et-prestations-2023-2024.pdf

- In Finnish Language:
  - https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/tuet/maaseudun-palvelut-ja-elinkeinojen-kehittaminen/kehittaminen-ja-yhteistyo/maatalouden-yhteistyohankkeet/maatilojen-yhteistyohankkeet/

Webconference

- French Language: Webconférence IFCE – Présentation des Cuma – C. Revert (CUMA)
- https://www.ifce.fr/ifce/connaissances/webconferences/economie-et-filiere/presentation-des-cuma-services-pour-la-filiere-equine/

Funded by the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101086551.

Sharing Resources and Cooperation

Annex

Ideas to Animate a Workshop About the Solution

- Invite a local advisor, manufacturer, or service provider specialised in machinery rings, cooperatives, or agricultural technology solutions to sponsor the workshop or provide expert input.
- Identify a farm or machinery-sharing group that already practices resource sharing successfully and can serve as a model farm.
- Organise practical demonstrations allowing participants to experience concrete steps of resource sharing (e.g., booking systems, shared machinery use, coordinated work organisation).

Proposed Structure For the Workshop on Sharing eEssources and Cooperation in Equines Farms

1. Introduction to Sharing Resources and Cooperation

- What is resource sharing/mutualization?
  - Collaborative use of machinery, labour, infrastructure, and services between farms.
- Key features and components
  - Shared equipment, flexible labour pools, cooperative planning, joint investments.
- Types of mutualization available
  - Cooperatives, machinery rings, joint cropping structures, shared staff models, CUMA-like systems.

2. Benefits of Sharing Resources in Equine Farms

- Reduced physical strain: Less manual labour through shared mechanisation.
- Cost savings: Lower investment costs and reduced maintenance burdens.
- Increased efficiency: Better organisation, fewer delays, access to high-performance machinery.
- Improved working conditions and enhanced professional networks.

3. Practical Applications on Equine Farms

- Shared use of machinery for pasture management, bedding transport, fencing work, ground care.
- Shared labour for peak times (weaning, pasture rotation, facility maintenance).
- Joint use of storage areas, workshops, transport equipment, or digital monitoring tools.

4. How to Choose the Most Suitable Approach

- Evaluate the farm's needs (equipment gaps, labour bottlenecks, seasonal workloads).
- Assess structural and organisational requirements (infrastructure, logistics, distances).
- Compare cooperative models: machinery rings vs. cooperatives vs. shared-staff models.
- Consider usability, reliability, administrative workload, and available governance structures.

5. Hands-On Demonstration

- Live demonstration of coordinated equipment use (e.g., scheduling tools, joint-machine operation).
- Testing different cooperative tools or equipment-sharing platforms.
- Techniques for maximizing efficiency and reducing wear on shared equipment.

6. Maintenance and Troubleshooting
- Routine maintenance of shared machinery (lubrication, cleaning, inspection).
- Clear protocols for reporting issues and organising repairs.
- Readjustment and redistribution of responsibilities when challenges arise.

7. Case Studies and Real-World Examples
- Examples of equine farms using cooperatives or machinery rings.
- Discussion of how shared labour and equipment improved workflows or reduced costs.
- Lessons learned: communication, scheduling, transparency, and trust-building.

8. Cost Analysis and Return on Investment (ROI)
- Comparison: own machinery vs. shared machinery.
- How to calculate ROI based on farm size, usage frequency, and maintenance costs.
- Benefits through reduced strain, increased productivity, and longer equipment lifespan.

9. Q&A Session
- Open discussion about practical concerns (data sharing, scheduling conflicts, maintenance).
- Clarifying organizational models and legal considerations.

10. Wrap-Up and Resources
- Summary of key takeaways: economic benefits, sustainability gains, animal welfare improvements.
- Resource list: cooperatives, machinery rings, advisory services, online tools.
- Information on discount options or partnerships with suppliers/cooperatives (if arranged).