

LIVING LAB LITHUANIA

Lithuania covers an area of 65 000 square kilometres, of which 85% is rural territory. The country is primarily characterised by its rural landscape, with approximately one-third of the population living in rural areas. Located within a rural region affected by depopulation stemming from internal and external migration, this Living Lab addresses the consequences of historically intensive agricultural practices that have led to soil degradation and negative environmental impacts. Women in Lithuania cultivate small plots of land and haven't participated in the previous large-scale and harmful farming methods on their small-sized farms. There is potential for women farmers to be socio-ecological leaders and innovators in adopting greening measures. Moreover, their influence extends beyond agriculture as rural women actively cultivate the social capital and optimise community activities that signify their role in regional development. This Living Lab seeks to explore the innovation requirements of women managing small farms and rural women developing initiatives to strengthen the social capital in rural areas.

The Lab facilitates innovation among women on small farms and those working to enhance social capital in rural areas. It recognises their potential to lead in socio-ecological innovation and address environmental challenges in depopulated rural regions. The Living Labs are nurturing hubs encouraging cooperation among agricultural experts and rural women. This partnership offers mentorship and guidance, steering the course towards innovative agricultural practices led by women who would have a profound impact within and beyond their respective communities.

The Living Lab has the following **objectives**:

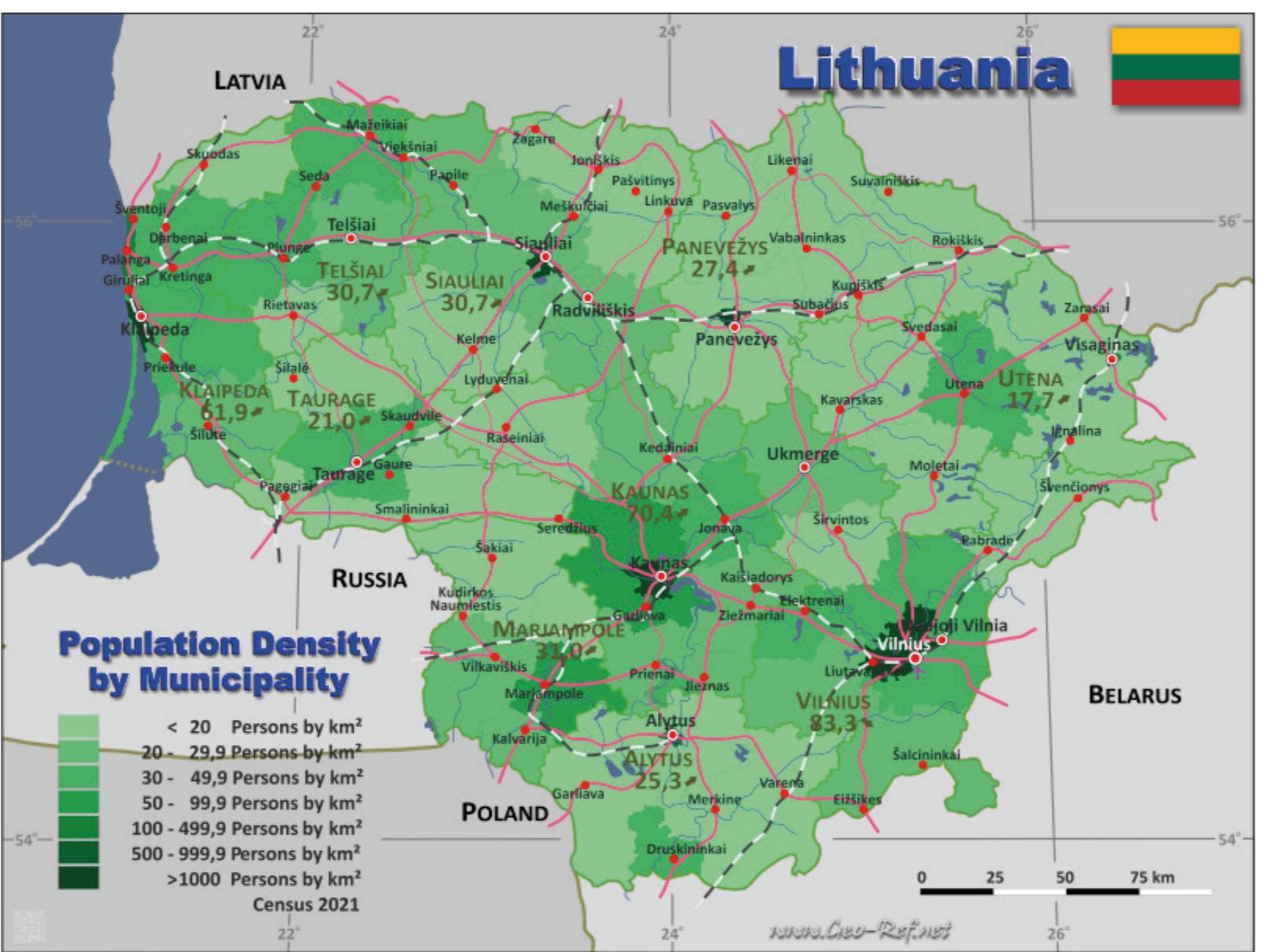
- Enhance the recognition of women's contributions to improving agriculture and rural regions. The insights gained will be used to create improved strategies and choices for farming and rural areas. This will also shape the actions and policies of European Union countries

AgriFood DIH Lithuania



To reach the main objective of assisting women who are leading or involved in innovative actions within the agricultural sector of rural areas, a set of **planned activities will be carried out** as part of this project:

- Regular briefings and review sessions will be orchestrated to foster knowledge exchange and engage various stakeholders with strong emphasis on giving advice and matchmaking tailored to the farmer's individual needs.
- A trio of personalised mentoring meetings, conducted alongside Lab co-leads, will be centred around the central stages of the innovation process.
- Women farmers will participate in strategically designed workshops to develop business and marketing skills, among others, and gain networking opportunities.
- A mentoring programme will encompass meetings, including business model innovation training and facilitating individual action plan creation.
- Three annual showcase events are organised that facilitate transnational networking and learning and experience sharing between women from different regions and sociopolitical contexts.
- Living Lab participants will be encouraged to connect personally, network, establish lasting partnerships, and exchange information and business opportunities.



Population Density

Source: Geo-Ref

- Create a system to support and enhance women innovators. This system helps women innovators build their identities and collaborate to create new knowledge and transform gender norms and stereotypes.
- Enhance the capacity of rural women to innovate for change by building the knowledge and skills needed to pursue and embed green innovations and by providing tools to assist women innovators in future green innovation advances.
- Facilitate knowledge creation through women-led innovation processes, favour exchanges across initiatives, derive new knowledge and practical tools for women, and support organisations and policy-makers at national and EU level.
- Build stronger connections and improve the sharing of ideas among women innovators in rural and farming settings by creating customised solutions through collaboration and the exchange of practices within and between these labs.



The **group comprises eight women** with different educational backgrounds and agricultural experiences covering areas of arable land practices and livestock farming. Their focus areas encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from beekeeping and shiitake mushroom cultivation to the production and marketing of distinct agricultural products, alongside an emphasis on societal education and new product innovation. Several participants actively promote ecological farming methods, cultivating various vegetables and blueberries. At the same time, a few are either already implementing or planning to adopt modern technologies such as solar-powered farming, drone mapping, and automated weeding systems.

Regarding **stakeholders**, there are representatives from associations for food exporters, innovation centres, universities, cluster network representatives, and business and information technology training centres. The dynamic interaction between the farmers and the stakeholders fosters knowledge exchange, where farmers act as the testing ground of new ideas, and the stakeholders contribute by bringing their expertise and resources that enhance the collective wisdom of the Living Lab. This collaboration transforms innovative ideas into actionable plans, showcasing the mutual benefits of teamwork.