Since 2005, the joint research unit Métafort based in Clermont-Ferrand (France) “Changing activities, areas and forms of organisation in rural “territoires”” has brought together some 70 researchers, research fellows, engineers and technicians from Inra and Irstea institutes, and AgroParisTech and VetAgro Sup engineers schools.

The Metafort joint research unit (UMR Metafort) have set themselves both objectives to better understand the changes underway in rural territories and to accompany the stakeholders producing these changes.

The UMR Metafort mobilises social science and biotechnology researchers in three main disciplines: 1- systems agronomy and animal production science, 2- geography, and 3- economics and, to a lesser extent, management (science) and political science.

At different levels (national, European, regional), the UMR Métafort is involved in a number of networks, especially through various European research projects and a programme to host foreign researchers, doctoral students and post-doctoral students.

The international partnerships of research concern themes corresponding to the privileged fields of works of the Unit as for example University of Wageningen (agro-environmental policies), University of Quebec in Abiti-Témiscamingue (participative steps/initiatives), Santa Anna school of Pisa (Italy) (agronomy of territories), University of Evora (Portugal) (relations farms - landscape), University of Maringa (Brazil) (work in farming systems), University of the Indiana (institutional economy), Royal University of Agriculture (Cambodia) (eco-systemic services).

With the stakeholders in the territories, the UMR Metafort teams contribute to policy-oriented works at a local, regional, national and European level (ex ante and ex post impact assessment for example). The researchers of the Unit are also widely implied in university education or of Grandes Écoles at the local level and three doctoral schools (one interdisciplinary; two in geography and economics).
SELECT TEAM: LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS, COORDINATION, TERRITORIES
The broad scientific focus is on analysing the adaptive capacities of agricultural production systems, with a view to increasing their contribution to sustainable development in the territories. Special attention is given to work organisation, flexibility and to land use practices. The operational goal of the research is to accompany changes in livestock farming activities, by providing methods and tools.

EIDER TEAM: LAND USE CHANGES, PUBLIC ACTION AND THE DYNAMICS OF RURAL AND PERI-URBAN AREAS
The team’s work revolves around changes in land use and activities in rural and peri-urban areas (productive uses, including tourism, residential and recreational uses, activities involving environmental goods and services). In particular, the research analyses the interaction between area characteristics and the emergence of new uses or activities, the organisational and strategic choices of stakeholders, and the role of public action in these dynamics, in the broader context of sustainable development. The research conducted informs and accompanies policy making and collective action in the “territoires”.

CFORT TEAM: BUILDING FORMS OF TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION
Organisational change in the rural and peri-urban “territoires” and the development of methodologies to accompany this change are at the heart of the team’s research questions. These focus first on the territorialisation of public action and territorial governance and, second, on the new competences that need to be developed in regional planning and local development and on accompanying change through training. This leads in particular to the conception of training as an opportunity for experimentation and a means of intervention, the mainspring of a research-training-action mechanism.