

 **July 2, 2025**
 10h-11h30 CET
 Online



AKIS in action:

Cultivating Innovation - AKIS as a Catalyst for Educational Excellence

Well-educated farmers, advisors, teachers and agri-food professionals are the vital for well-functioning Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS). Forward-looking training initiatives such as GEEK4Food's AI-powered programmes, vocational Centers of Excellence for the agriculture of the future, and regional knowledge hubs demonstrate how targeted, innovative education can accelerate the transition towards a more sustainable, digitally literate, and resilient food system.

Agenda

10:00H-10:15H

Introduction to the event and to modernAKIS

Elena-Teodora Miron, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture (Moderation)
Stephanie Bürger, Austrian Rural Educational Institute, Austria

10:15H-10:30H

Geek4food Learning and engaging the system: GEEK4Food's skills- and visibility-driven approach to agrifood transitions

Cecilia Tonelli, European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) Food

10:30H-10:45H

Life Long Learning of advisors and farmers as a tool for innovation in the entire agri-food sector - The AGRIFOOD4FUTURE pathway

Irene Diti, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

10:45H-11:00H

The role of the Rural Development Centers of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate as regional knowledge hubs for agriculture

Volker Wenghoefer, Ministry of Agriculture of the German Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany

11:00H-11:30H

Q&A Session

Key Learnings

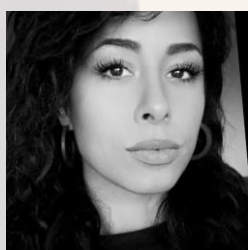
- Skills-based learning & labour market alignment
- Innovative, flexible learning pathways
- Collaboration across sectors as a key for needs-based training
- Regional knowledge hubs as innovation drivers
- Life long learning as innovation driver

Who should join?

- Advisors, innovation support services, and other providers of specialized services
- Education and vocational training representatives
- AKIS coordination bodies
- Researchers and academics
- Managing authorities and Public authorities



Meet the Speakers



Cecilia Tonelli

**Programme Manager Education –
 EU projects, European Institute of
 Innovation & Technology (EIT)
 Food**

Cecilia Tonelli is Programme Manager Education – EU Projects at EIT Food, where she co-manages the organisation's education portfolio under programmes like Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. Her work focuses on skills and capacity development, as well as systemic approaches to learning, collaboration, and ecosystem building in the agrifood sector. She supports the design and delivery of multi-actor education, research and innovation initiatives that connect agrifood system actors - from talent to policymakers.



Irene Diti

**Project Manager
 AGRIFOOD4FUTURE, Università
 Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy**

Irene Diti, agronomist, has a PhD in agricultural engineering. She is currently working on projects for climate risk adaptation and mitigation. She is working at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Italy as Project manager of the [AGRIFOOD4FUTURE](https://www.linkedin.com/in/irene-diti-25ba0320/) Erasmus+ project, aimed to support the training of “the farmers of the future”.
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/irene-diti-25ba0320/>



Volker Wenghöfer

**Chief officer for AKIS and
 digitalization in agriculture,
 MWVLW-Rheinland-Pfalz**

After studying agricultural sciences and completing his Ph.D at the University of Bonn, Dr. Volker Wenghoefer has held various positions in the Ministry of Agriculture of the German Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate since 2013. Since 2017, he is the responsible chief officer for AKIS and digitalization in agriculture. In addition, he coordinates the downstream authorities of the agricultural administration in the federal state.



Presentations

Geek4food Learning and engaging the system: GEEK4Food's skills- and visibility-driven approach to agrifood transitions

GEEK4Food is an Erasmus+ Forward-Looking project exploring how agrifood systems can better understand and support capacity development in times of complex transitions. It looks at the shift from a role-based to a skills-based labour market, and how transformations like digitalization and sustainability are reshaping what talent means in this space - responding to the need for greater visibility into skills, at both individual and system level. The project addresses this in two ways: through an AI-enabled platform that maps skills and gaps while connecting system actors - learners, workers, employers, educators, and policymakers; and through a learning approach that supports sustainability by developing key capacities such as systems thinking, design thinking, and entrepreneurship.

Life Long Learning of advisors and farmers as a tool for innovation in the entire agri-food sector - The AGRIFOOD4FUTURE pathway

The AGRIFOOD4FUTURE project promotes life long learning for advisors and farmers and VET and HEI training as a strategic driver of innovation in the agri-food sector. Through modular training paths, micro-credentials, and work-based learning, it addresses skill gaps related to the green transition, digitalization, and sector resilience. AGRIFOOD4FUTURE fosters collaboration among training providers, universities, enterprises, and institutions to ensure alignment with labour market needs.

The role of the Rural Development Centers of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate as regional knowledge hubs for agriculture

In the German federal system, the responsibility for the AKIS is shared between the federal government and the federal states. The federal states have a prominent role, as they are constitutionally responsible for vocational schools, research and the farm advisory system.

Even though there are a large number of different AKIS actors in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, the rural development service centers as agricultural state authorities have a prominent position in the state's AKIS. In the sense of a knowledge hub, these offer a variety of AKIS-relevant services, e.g. as vocational schools, research facilities and farm advisory services. They also offer other services for rural areas from a single source, e.g. as land consolidation state authorities.