

AKIS in action: AKIS in support of the environmental and climate ambition of the CAP

Q&A Documentation

Networking event on March 04, 2024 - Online

Welcome and introduction to modernAKIS

Florian Herzog, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Austria

Q: How can the EU and modernAKIS ensure that technological solutions are implemented systemically to avoid creating additional problems, particularly in relation to climate change and biodiversity loss?

A: In modernAKIS, we embrace systems thinking and the systemic view, and develop solutions that fit the framework. Ecological thinking, systemic thinking and sustainability are at the heart of modernAKIS and are therefore promoted in this project.

Q: How does the EU plan to address the shifting agricultural expertise and practices northwards due to climate change, ensuring that local laws, regulations, and cultural considerations are respected to prevent the loss of human expertise?

A: Support the development of the modernAKIS network and transfer knowledge to where it is needed. Through our network, knowledge and expertise should be readily available.

Q: Is the training of AECMs funded by the relevant farmer training CAP intervention (Art. 78)?

A: Yes it is funded within the CAP. We have set up a funding system which is provider funding. So it's not the farmers who get the funding when they go on the courses, it's the training providers.

Q: What are the criteria that providers have to meet in order to be able to offer advice?

A: Depending on the distinction between training and advice. Mandatory knowledge sharing is training. Advice is provided by the Austrian Chamber. ÖPUL training has to be justified and currently 15 providers are available. There is more than one provider for each measure.

Training to help farmers in AECM implementation with updated knowledge

Thomas Weber, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Austria

Q: As you have been using this approach for a long time under the CAP (RD), have you evaluated the effectiveness of this specific approach? By what quantitative/qualitative indicators?

A: There have indeed been several evaluations of the AE programme in AT (e.g. farmland bird index, soil erosion, locusts, extensive grassland, etc.). But no - at least as far as I am aware - there has never been an exclusive assessment of the impact/effectiveness of mandatory training requirements. A good idea, which I will certainly pass on to our department. What I can say is that over the last three CAP periods the number of AECMs with training requirements has increased. Slightly, but it has increased.

Q: How independent is the advice given by the Chamber of Agriculture or Chamber of Agriculture when they are the only ones allowed to give advice and training? Training that is from the perspective of current political views, whereas farm planning is often six to maybe even ten years ahead, and certain investments even longer. Are there no independent advisory services that could at least support the Chamber of Agriculture or give farmers a choice?

A: There are 15 approved training providers in AT, and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture (or rather, it's an institute for further education) is the only one approved for all six AECMs.

Training to help farmers in AECM implementation with updated knowledge

Elisabeth Süßenbacher, Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Austria

Q: How are advisors in Austria trained to efficiently connect farmers with innovative solutions, allowing farmers to focus on farming rather than attending multiple training sessions, and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of available implementations that fit individual farms and farmers' needs?

A: In Austria, advisors are trained in the AE programme and its measures and requirements as part of the multiplier training at the beginning of each new CAP period. In addition, there are specialised consultants in the field of biodiversity whose services are "purchased", and of course there are also purchased services in other environmental fields (soil, water, and climate).

Q: There are very interesting projects going on in Austria to improve individual farms. What I miss is the training of the advisors themselves, so that the farmers can get on with farming. In the Netherlands, a farmer depends on a wide availability of possibilities, where a good adviser already understands which implementations are available that fit the farm and the farmer. An adviser is the link between the many solutions available and knows his customers (the farmers). So training the adviser means that the farmer does not have to be endlessly busy with numerous training sessions. How are advisors trained to connect with all farmers?

A: The adviser trainers from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture and the Rural Institute for Advanced Training have had many meetings and discussions with the Ministry to gain knowledge of the measures. In the Chamber of Agriculture, we have a quality management system, the ISO certified quality management system implemented and we have the mandatory recommendation requirements that our advisors have at least 30 hours of training, continuous training every year and at product level, like e.g. biodiversity advice.

Insights into the Signpost programme - Reduction of gaseous emissions, improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity

Tom O'Dwyer, Head of Signpost programme, Ireland

Q: Do you have specific environmental training or AgNav solutions for participants in the short food supply chain?

A: AgNav generates a greenhouse gas emissions figure to the farm gate. So it's the emissions associated with the production of your product up to the point where it leaves the farm.