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List of abbreviations

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
AKIS-CB	AKIS Coordination Body
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CAP-SP	Common Agriculture Policy-Strategic Plan
CCO	Cross Cutting Objective
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EIP-AGRI	European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability
EIP-OG	EIP-Operational groups
EU	European Union
EUR	Euros
FBO	Farmer based organisations
ISS	Innovation Support Services
MA	Managing Authorities of CAP Strategic Plans
M01	Measure 01
M02	Measure 02
M16	Measure 16
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SCAR	Standing Committee of Agricultural Research
SOs	Specific Objectives of CAP SP
WP	Work Package

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1. Executive Summary

This is the first “Compendium of insightful new know-how and ready-for-practice solutions” (D1.3) of a series that will be delivered over the years 2023-2029, on yearly basis. It is prepared under task 1.2, which entails collecting and delivering practice-based/oriented knowledge (new know-how, insights and practical solutions) that is widely available, shared and accessible and that enables policy makers and other AKIS actors improving knowledge flows and developing well-functioning AKIS in their countries.

This Compendium represents a lab leading to share and co-develop with partners and other key AKIS actors ready-to-be-put-in-use knowledge and practical insights (e.g. administrative procedures) that will hopefully support the (re)design and implementation of the strategies strengthening the AKIS in MSs, through ensuring their valuable contribution to the cross-cutting objective of modernizing the sector by fostering and sharing knowledge, innovation and digitalisation and to the other specific objectives of the CAP, along with those that are linked to Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe Programme, such as the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy.

On this regard, follow-ups of the Compendium by networking (WP2), capacity building (WP3 and WP4), communication and exploitation (WP5) activities will be based on the practical solutions and examples already applicable/applied and insights that it provides and that are of actual interest for the AKIS actors engaged in modernAKIS.

The Compendium is organized around a quadruple format:

- **A Report** that is delivered on annual basis as a collection of **AKIS-in-practices!** and insights on topical matters of interest for the key AKIS actors of change.
- Some **AKIS-in-practices!** schemes, that are ready-to-be-put-in-practice solutions for delivering the AKIS strategies. These are produced on iterate basis during a year and by following up the needs of the key AKIS actors (CNA in T1.2) and of the other activities of modernAKIS (e.g. networking and/or capacity building workshops of WP2 and WP3/WP4). Additionally, online **AKIS-in-practices!** workshops, which over each year will be run in collaboration with the other WPs, will focus on the topics of the practices, through helping the key AKIS actors deepening into the experiences, reflecting on possible replication and co-create new/adapted solutions.
- **On-line Tool** of AKIS-in-practices! that will be delivered in collaboration with WP2, starting from M18. This online tool will make the AKIS actors easily discovering the AKIS-in-practise! by key words/tags.
- **Videos and podcasts:** these are impactful methods to enable potential users listening the story of the certain AKIS-in-practice! from the implementers.

Form the methodological point of view, some boundaries affected the full engagement of a wide range of potential users due to some issues: the delays in setting up the AKIS coordination bodies in MSs, the early stage of implementation of modernAKIS network (with registrations started just in July), the, still, less satisfactory degree of interaction towards knowledge exchange among partners, and the scarcity of relevant experiences on actual topical matters (e.g. back-office and innovation support services).

However, the incoming advancements in the nominations of the AKIS-CBs and of the registrations to the network, lead thinking that during the forthcoming months more efforts can be put to share the collected practices and make use of them for a meaningful engagement of partners and other key actors of modernAKIS network through thematic workshops.

In practice, this Compendium covers 5 themes (CAP Networks, standard costs, AKIS Coordination bodies, Back-office and training of advisory services) and includes 22 relating AKIS-in-Practices!

The list of these themes is in line with the results of the iterate engagement of the partners and wider network of modernAKIS, that started already during the project kick-off meetings (October 2023) and,

passing by the general assembly of the AKIS Coordination bodies (March 2023) and ending by the survey for needs assessment that was open in July until September 2023.

The first theme regards the AKIS Coordination bodies, which is represented by some AKIS-in-Practices! (4) that, as expected, show a certain early stage of configuration and operationalization, but they already provide some variety in examples and insights, by including the designation responsibilities, the configuration of the a certain functional organization (individual/collective) and the identification of some key functions.

In general, still the procedures and mechanisms for effectively operationalise the functions attributed to the AKIS coordination bodies are little defined, but some tentative governance models seem to being already emerging.

The second theme of this Compendium regards the delivery for the CAP strategic plans with specific reference to the use of simplified cost options n AKIS interventions.

Since the European programming period 2007-2013, the use of SCOs is strongly endorsed and progressively simplified by the EC to promote the administrative simplification by reducing probatory documentation for budgeting and reporting of co-funded interventions. This helped developing a variety of methodologies standard costs that through modernAKIS can be shared and put in use by the AKIS actors.

The methodologies developed for the reported AKIS-in-Practices! (8) have been successful applied in different MSs, through sensitively simplifying and even incentivising a plurality of AKIS actors to access to RDPs and benefit from relevant CAP interventions like vocational training, use and provision of advisory services to support innovation processes, actively participate to OGs and implement transregional OGs.

The third theme is training and knowledge exchange. On this regard, some AKIS-in-Practices! (5) describe approaches and methods for strengthen capacities and knowledge exchange of advisors, also in view of the provision of innovation support services. The practices reported in this "Compendium" benefit from innovative training methods that were already successfully tested by some European projects (Field Peer Review, Cross Visit, Train-the-trainer for innovation support). In particular, they highlight that to qualify innovation advisors, new approaches are needed that also enables the advisors, as trainees, a) to experience interactive innovation creation methods, b) to reflect upon their effects and impacts and c) to provide a safe space for practicing to get enough self-confidence before applying the methods in collaborative learning and daily work situation.

As fourth theme, there are the CAP networks. The AKIS perspective emphasizes the knowledge flows and diffusion based on exchange within heterogeneous and multi-stakeholder contexts, networks or platforms, because this can lead to increasing access to knowledge, learning by interacting and by using it until innovation development.

On this regard, under the CAP programming period 2023-2027, networks as recognized by regulation (art. 126 UE Reg 2115/2021) as key tools to drive and steer policy and to promote stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing and capacity building for Member States and other actors. Besides, the role of the national CAP networks for innovation support is possibly more strongly supported and coordinated then the previous programming period. Indeed, the function of digital knowledge platforms is highlighted because of its potential to systematize of large numbers of innovation projects' and their materials in one point of access for all the potential users.

The AKIS-in-Practices! (2) presented in this "Compendium" provide an overview on some functions that CAP networks can play in MSs, that beyond the EU regulatory requirements, shed the light on basilar and operational activities like stakeholder mapping, needs assessment and systematic realization of networking meetings.

The organization of back-office services, eventually, represent the fifth theme of this Compendium.

Under the CAP 2023-2027 it is promoted the support of typical functions of "back-office" that are aimed at supporting on-field advisors with competencies, up-to-date knowledge and linkages with actors that are

relevant to help solving complex problems, thus supporting innovation processes based on farmers' demands and co-construction of solutions.

The topic is quite new and certainly there's a need to deepen the meanings and conditionalities for setting-up and implementation of proper back-office. Public policy and MAs/AKIS coordination bodies are starting new experiences and face challenges in configuring this new type of intervention.

Two practices are reported in this "Compendium" that can be possibly inspirational for AKIS coordination bodies and they show a similar approach to the implementation of back-office services where databases and digital tools represent their core components of the service.

All in all, for all the proposed themes, some food for thinking and insights offer some reflections for follow-ups of the reported AKIS-in-Practices! and on the opportunities for capacity building and networking activities that can be certainly considered for further activities and the co-construction of the TAJs by the different WP leaders and contributors and the AKIS actors that will join the network of modernAKIS.

During the forthcoming months, certainly, networking, communication and capacity building activities will focus on the proposed AKIS-in-Practices!, to help the key AKIS actors deepening into the experiences, reflecting on possible replication and co-creating new/adapted solutions for the implementation of the AKIS strategies in MSs.

2. Introduction

The “Compendium of insightful new know-how and ready-for-practice solutions” (this D1.3) is prepared under task 1.2, which entails collecting and delivering practice-based/oriented knowledge (new know-how, insights and practical solutions) that is widely available, shared and accessible and that enables policy makers and other AKIS actors improving knowledge flows and developing well-functioning AKIS in their countries.

The aim is to co-develop with partners and other key AKIS actors and ready-to-be-put-in-use knowledge and practical insights (e.g. administrative procedures), that over the years 2023-2029, will hopefully support the (re)design and implementation of the strategies strengthening the AKIS in MSs, through ensuring their valuable contribution to the cross-cutting objective of modernizing the sector by fostering and sharing knowledge, innovation and digitalisation and to the other specific objectives of the CAP, along with those that are linked to Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe Programme, such as the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy.

On this regard, rather than providing good or best practices, the Compendium is meant to provide contents based on practical solutions and examples already applicable/applied and insights that well fit specific topics of actual interest to feed on-going basis networking (WP2), capacity building (WP3 and WP4), communication and exploitation (WP5).

As a matter of fact, consistently with the TAJs, a worthwhile methodological multiactor approach of practices co-development will be applied through reflexive, knowledge and views exchange processes that will allow discovering, renewing, co-creating, tailoring and sharing relevant practices and experiences among project partners and other key AKIS actors that actively participate to modernAKIS network.

All this multiactor approach will help the latter acquiring competencies and ownership about the practices in view, also, of a timely utilization of insights and replication of the practical solutions in MSs.

Besides, interconnections with other projects, CAP networks (T2.4) and desk research will help drawing additional experiences and insights on common relevant topics to advance effectiveness in practice (e.g., knowledge reservoir of EU-Farmbook; CAP SPs and respective AKIS strategies; Agrilink; i2connect; ATTRACTISS; EU4Advice; CORENet; DESIRA).

Topics of the Compendium will be defined throughout modernAKIS project, by following up the yearly needs' assessments (CNA in T1.1.).

Practices will be described through different methods and tools that, beyond the main document (Compendium), include an on-line repository tool, videos, podcast and other impactful media.

Indeed, the overall methodological approach to the Compendium foresees the full engagement of key AKIS actors and the availability of ready-to-be-put in practices solutions and insights. However, for the time being, the full engagement is reached to little extend due to some issues: the delays in setting up the AKIS coordination bodies in MSs, the early stage of implementation of modernAKIS network (with registrations started just in July), the, still, less satisfactory degree of interaction towards knowledge exchange among partners, and the scarcity of relevant experiences on actual topical matters (e.g. back-office and innovation support services).

Thus, this D1.3 (first Compendium) has been fully co-developed with partners and other key actors of change only to certain extend. In consideration of the incoming advancements in the nominations of the AKIS-CBs and of the registrations to the network, more efforts will be run during the forthcoming months to share the collected practices make of them use for a meaningful engagement of partners and other key actors of modernAKIS network through thematic workshops.

D1.3 includes practices that refer to needs and expectations on specific topics (see 5.1) that emerged during the first year of implementation of modernAKIS project (cfr. D1.1 and 5). In the future, it is expected that the

themes of topical interest for key AKIS actors, will vary, in terms of enlargement, major focus and numerosity, depending on the state of play of the AKIS strategies and of the respective CAP SPs.

Examples for new topics to deal with through the Compendium might be farm viability and generational renewal, agro-ecology, climate mitigation and adaptation, pesticide reduction, reduction of water use and pollution, etc.

3. The Compendium is ...

The Compendium is delivered on annual basis (Table 1), and it is a report that collect and systematize some **AKIS-in-practices!** by providing insights on overarching themes of the AKISs and their contribution to the CAP.

The Compendium has a quadruple format:

- **Report** that is delivered on annual basis as a collection of **AKIS-in-practices!** and insights on topical matters of interest for the key AKIS actors of change.
- **AKIS-in-practices!** individual modules. They are ready-to-be-put-in-practice solutions for delivering the AKIS strategies that are produced on iterate basis during a year and by following up the needs of the key AKIS actors (CNA in T1.2) and of the other activities of modernAKIS (e.g. networking and/or capacity building workshops of WP2 and WP3/WP4). Additionally, online **AKIS-in-practices!** workshops, which over each year will be run in collaboration with the other WPs, will focus on the topics of the practices, through helping the key AKIS actors deepening into the experiences, reflecting on possible replication and co-create new/adapted solutions.
- **On-line Tool** of AKIS-in-practices! that will be delivered in collaboration with T2.X, starting from M18. This online tool will make the AKIS actors easily discovering the AKIS-in-practise! by key words/tags.
- **Videos and podcasts:** these are impactful methods to enable potential users listening the story of the certain AKIS-in-practice! from the implementers.

Table 1: Schedule of the Compendium of insightful new know-how and ready-for-practice solutions

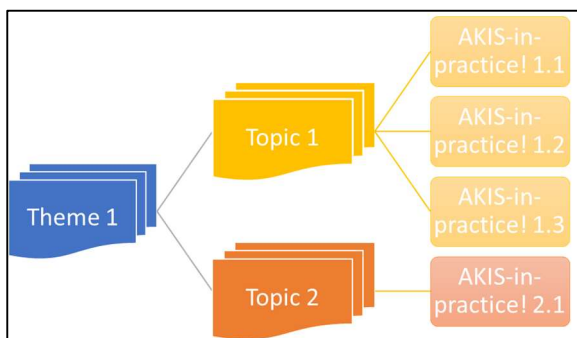
M14 (Oct23)	M24 (Aug24)	M36 (Aug25)	M48 (Aug 26)	M60 (Aug 27)	M72 (Aug 28)	M84 (Aug 29)
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4. How is the Compendium organized?

The Compendium is articulated to explain the context and rationale at the basis of the problem/opportunity that the specific AKIS-in-practice! is solving (Figure 1). This also in view of providing the track for further networking, capacity building and exploitation activities. In practice, a reference theme and topic present a concise dissertation aimed helping the users to acquire general understandings, knowledge and learnings, policy and practical insights that set the rationale of the specific AKIS-in-practice!

So that to one theme (e.g. Delivery of the AKIS strategies) may correspond one or more topics (e.g. simplified cost options; implementation of the strategic approach) and under each topic it can be found one or more AKIS-in-practice! (e.g. standard unit costs for advisors; rewards/priority for OGs including training of farmers into respective actions plans).

Figure 1: Structure of the Compendium



Finally, for each theme there are two sections that provide:

- A brief systematization of the results of the underlying AKIS-in-practice! presented in the actual Compendium.
- Some insights and questions for further advancement in conceptualization, strategies and practices to uptake and follow-up across the TAJs and their implementation through the WPs/Tasks of modernAKIS.

5. How is the Compendium co-developed by key AKIS actors?

The development of the Compendium on yearly basis is meant to represent not just a desk-based collection of practices but thought, a reflexive process, by the contributors, of systematization of learnings about the respective experiences and practices relating of the implementation of the AKIS strategies. So that, applying a multiactor approach to the co-building of the Compendium is crucial to allow the contributors learning from the same process of identification and preparation (i.e., description of key facts, acts and implications) of the relevant practices.

The methodology for the collection, developing, sharing and discussing the contents of the Compendium is based on MA principles highlighted in D1.1 in view to address specific needs and expectations of key AKIS actors of change, through providing insightful meanings for the overall capacity development path applied by the TAJs.

After the discussions held during the KOMs (online and in person), recurrent executive board meetings and WP1 meetings, in June 2023, a methodological document on Compendium of insightful new know-how and ready-for-practice solutions (Task 1.2, D.1.3) was shared with all the partner through common SharePoint platform. The methodology was specifically discussed with WP2 and WP4 leaders that will be mostly interconnected with the process of Compendium.

With regards to this specific Compendium2023, it is worth noting that some boundaries (see §7) affected the full implementation of the multiactor approach that it is established for modernAKIS (D1.1).

However, it must be noted that, the process of maturing awareness about the common interest and relevance of own experiences/practices, certainly, needs some time, along with building trustfulness for sharing and allowing replications and ownership to collaborate in co-developing common outputs.

The overall methodology approach includes the following main steps.

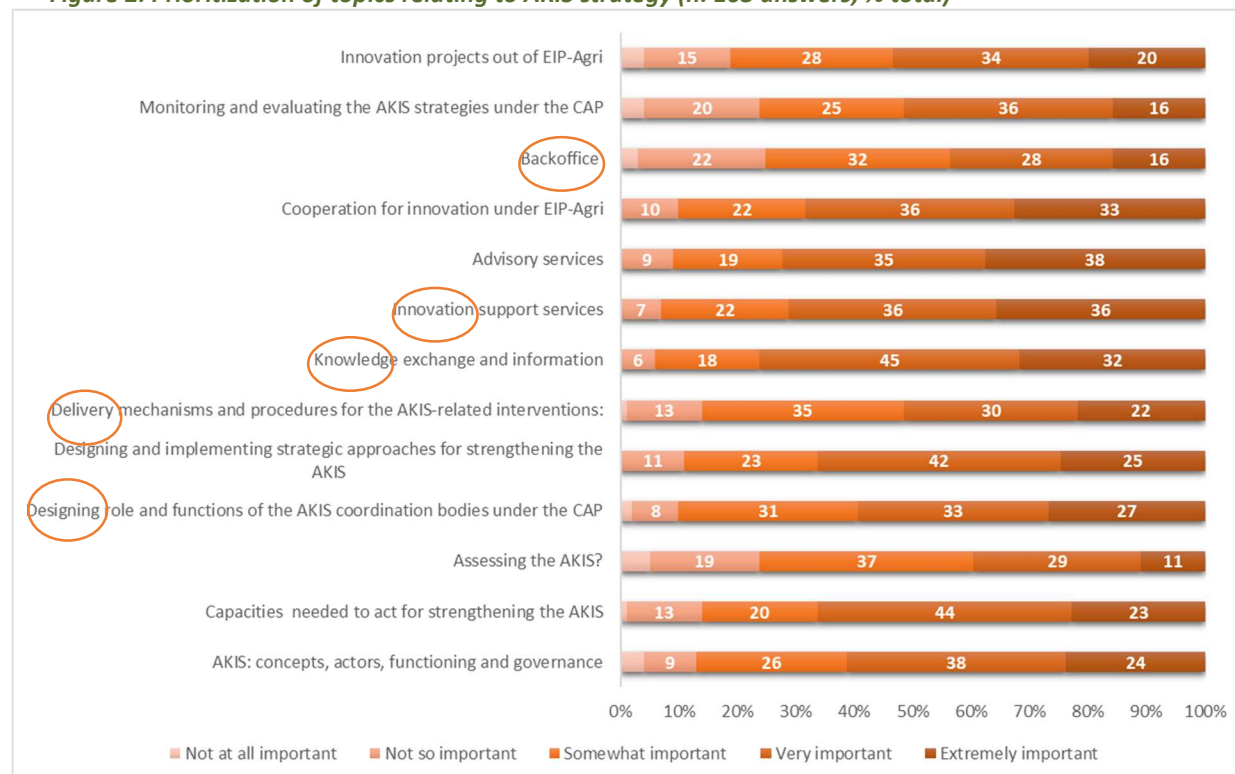
5.1. Identification of key topical areas of relevance

The list of topical areas is defined based on the results of a yearly Capacity Needs Assessment that is conducted in collaboration with the partners in view to set the agenda for activities development.

First list of topics for capacity building activities have been defined through some meetings held among the partners and wider network of modernAKIS.

The first survey for needs assessment was launched, in coordination with T2.2, in early July 2023 (07/07/2023) and among the partners, the AKIS coordination bodies and the other key AKIS actors that by that time were registered to the project network (n. 29, partners excluded). Subsequently three reminders were sent out in July (27/07/2023) and early September (09/08/2023). All in all, the survey for was open from 07/07/2023 until 10/09/2023.

Figure 2: Prioritization of topics relating to AKIS strategy (n. 103 answers; % total)

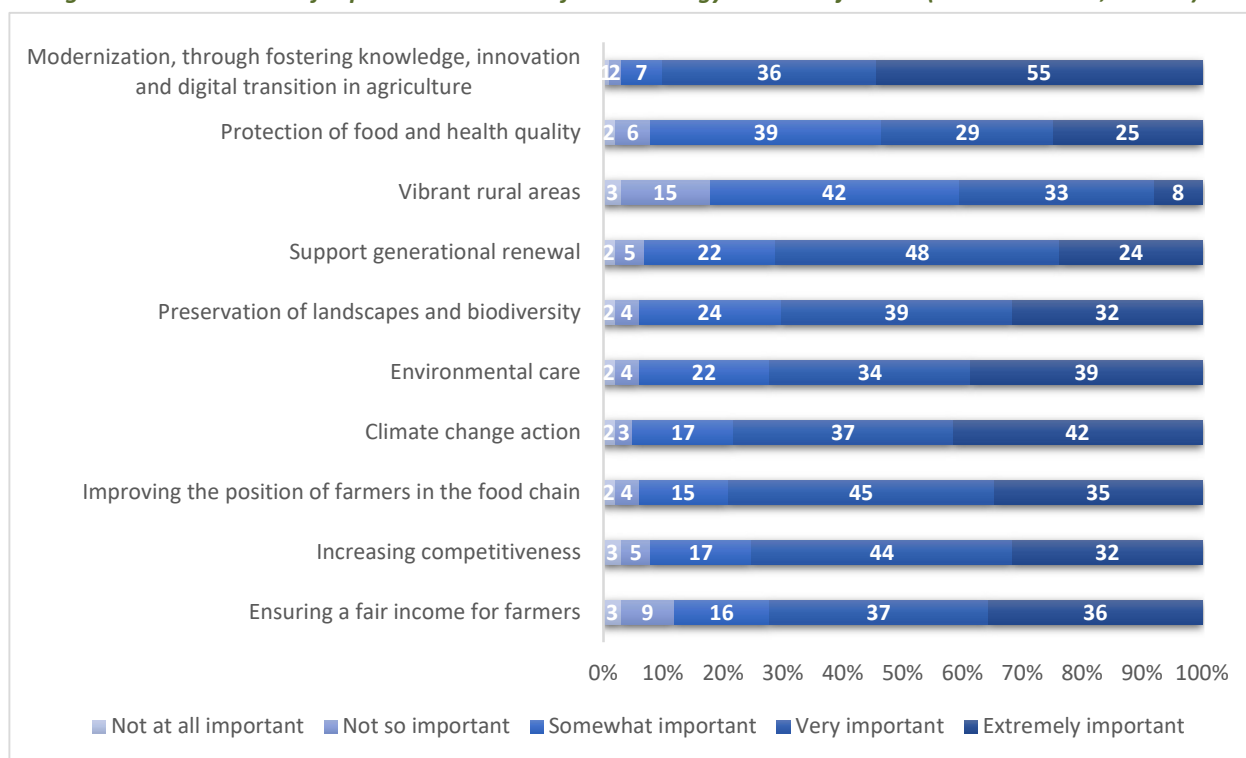


Source: modernAKIS

Figure 2 shows makes evident that that the most important topics regard the innovation support (36%) and the farm advisory services (38%), followed by operational groups (33%) and knowledge exchange and information. While, still very important are also the design and implementation of the AKIS strategies along with the design and organization of AKIS coordination bodies.

Evidently, the novelty of some topics (ISS, AKIS-CB) is influencing the answers of the respondents also because their definition is quite urgent in view to deliver the AKIS strategies.

Figure 3: Prioritization of topics: contribution of AKIS strategy to CAP objectives (n. 103 answers; % total)



Participants to the CNA survey arose also the following topics: fostering knowledge of advisors; cross border experiences and cross visits; digitization and platform for exchange experiences, gender equality, AKIS System thinking.

5.2. Identification of challenges/problems

Conduction of a focus group (15 persons/rotation across the years) to capture challenges/problems/experiences of the AKIS actors in relation to the specific topical matter. For example, for the 2nd year, the role and functions of the integration of the advisory services within the AKIS is a topical area of interest. Current challenges regard: simplification of administrative burdens for access and reporting of costs, impartiality, incentives, training.

The list of topics relating to challenges/problems/experiences will set the indexing for practical solutions.

5.3. Collection of AKIS-in-practices!

Once, the list of challenges/problems/experiences is defined, the Task contributors will start collecting already in place solutions and practices.

As a general principle, the Compendium is meant to provide contents based on practical solutions and examples already applicable/applied and insights that well fit specific topics of actual interest to feed on-going basis networking (WP2), capacity building (WP3 and WP4), communication and exploitation (WP5).

On this regard, consistently with the TAJs, a worthwhile methodological multiactor approach of practices co-development will be applied through reflexive, knowledge and views exchange processes that will allow discovering, renewing, co-creating, tailoring and sharing relevant practices and experiences among project partners and other key AKIS actors that actively participate to modernAKIS network.

So said, rather than describing “good” or “best” practices, AKIS-in-practices! are meant to provide contents based on practical solutions and examples applicable/already applied and insights that well fit specific topics

of actual interest to feed on-going basis networking (WP2), capacity building (WP3 and WP4), communication and exploitation (WP5).

All this multiactor approach will help the latter acquiring competencies and ownership about the practices in view, also, of a timely utilization of insights and replication of the practical solutions in MSs.

Additionally, the interWPs cooperation will help drawing practices during networking and capacity building activities, through co-creation focus group/workshops that will be conducted to develop new know-how that is ready-to-be-put-in-practice to solve the specific challenges/problems/experiences.

Besides, interconnections with other projects, CAP networks (T2.5) and desk research will help drawing additional experiences and insights on common relevant topics to advance effectiveness in practice (e.g. knowledge reservoir of EUFarmbook; CAP SPs and respective AKIS strategies; Agrilink; i2connect; ATTRACTISS; EU4Advice; CORENet; DESIRA).

The identification/selection of the AKIS-in-Practices! Is based on the following criteria:

- Relevance by topic: the practice regards one of the priority topics emerging from the CNA.
- The practice is in place under an RDP (2007-2013 and on) or CAP SP 2023-2027.
- The practice is in place under another public/private funding scheme (e.g. national/regional/Horizon) and it's consistent so that it can be put in practice under one of the types of interventions of the CAP SPs.

For the purpose of this D1.3 the collection of the relevant practices was based mainly on desk research and on the contributions of some partners.

The request for practices was included in the CNA survey, bilateral meetings and interactions with some partners.

5.4. Contents development

The AKIS-in-Practices! are developed by task 1.2 leaders and contributors and by the other AKIS actors that actively participate to modernAKIS activities. In this view, templates have been developed and shared in Sha point.

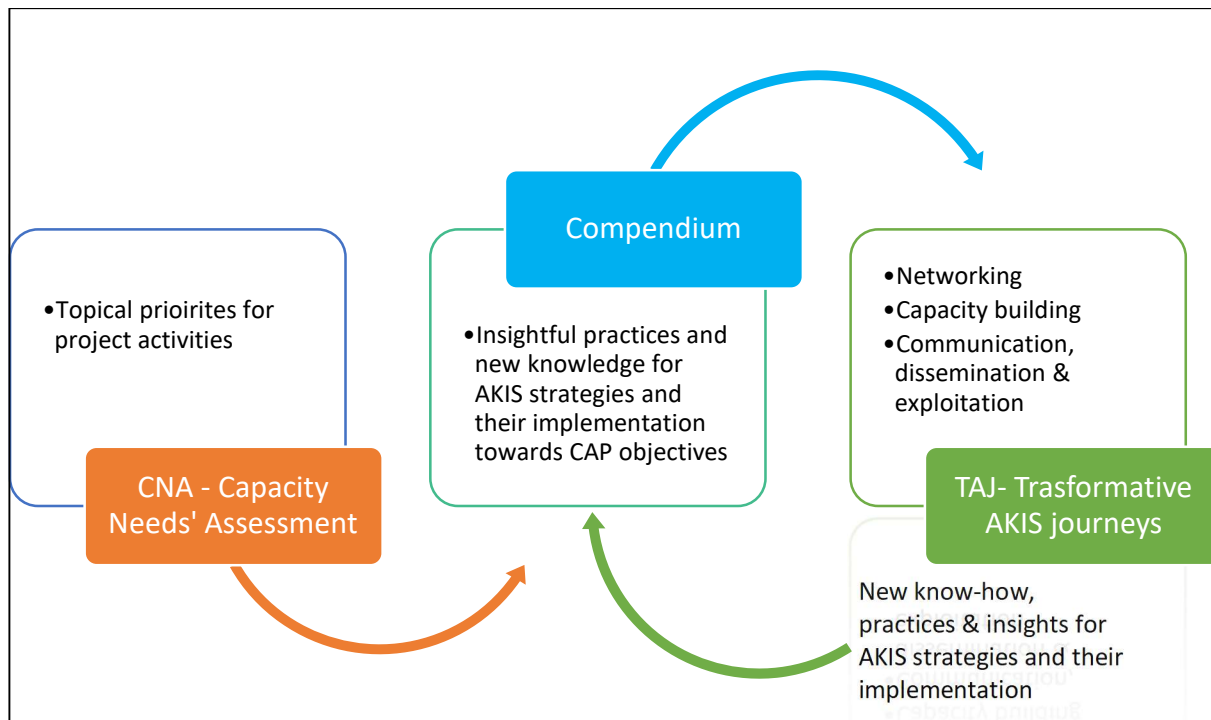
For D1.3, in general, the AKIS-in-Practices! were drafted by the team of task leader and sent to relevant partners/AKIS coordination body for integrations/validation. Some from partners contributed through fully writing the AKIS-in-Practices!

List of contributors is in first page of this D1.3.

6. Interconnections with other WPs/Tasks

This deliverable is meant to systematize and act as a repository of relevant practice-based knowledge (new know-how, insights and practical solutions) to use for the development of the TAJs (D1.1), by the capacity building (WP3 and WP4), networking (WP2), communication, dissemination and exploitation (WP5) activities (Figure 4). The interconnections between the Compendium and the WP1-WP5 activities are strongly based on a mutual co-development of new practices and experiences, insights and know-how that will be co-constructed on on-going basis by the project partners, AKIS coordination bodies and other key actors of change that actively participate to the TAJs. Eventually, over the years, the continuous development of capacities will be reflected into new (renewed/meliorated) practices, solutions, insights that will be systematized on systematic basis, through the Compendium.

Figure 4: Interconnections with other WPs/tasks of modernAKIS



In practice, on each of the themes and AKIS-in-practice of this the Compendium (D1.3), a series of activities can be conducted in view to deepen existing knowledge, learning through reflecting, and co-developing new solutions and insights to implement in day-to-day life within the AKIS in MSs.

Figure 5: How interconnections with other tasks will be developed from the Compendium



7. Boundaries of this first Compendium

Given that this Compendium is practice-base, the development of this D1.3 encountered some limitations that will be, very possibly, outdone over the following year, particularly:

- The actual early stage of engagement of the AKIS coordination bodies and of other actors by modernAKIS.

- The actual early stage of implementation of the AKIS strategies of the CAP Strategic Plans made difficult collecting already-in-place and well-defined practices on relevant but new topics, such as the role and the functions of the AKIS coordination bodies and the organization of the back-office.
- The early setting up of the modernAKIS network which registrations started in July 2023.
- Still, there's a less satisfactory degree of interaction towards knowledge exchange among partners.

8. Themes and Topics of the Compendium2023

The following list of topics and themes is based on the iterate process of needs assessing conducted over the first year of modernAKIS.

This Compendium includes a total of n.5 themes, n.8 topics and 22 AKIS-in-practice!

As showed in table 2 the most represented topic is the use of simplified options costs (n.8) that were applied on some AKIS-related types of interventions: training of farmers, partners of the operational groups, provision of farm advisory services.

Secondly, there is the functional organization of the AKIS coordination bodies (n.5) that, although in some cases they are not fully profiled by the respective MAs, certainly provide valuable insights on how to structure this new governance entity in MSs.

The MS that mostly provided AKIS-in-practice! is Italy, that certainly benefit from the diversity of regional experiences (i.e., RDPs of Sardinia, Tuscany, Veneto).

Table 2: List of themes/topics and AKIS-in-practice! included in this Compendium

Themes and Topics		AKIS-in-practice!
1. Roles and functions of the AKIS coordination bodies	Functional organization of the AKIS coordination bodies	<i>1.1 AKIS CB of Sardinia Region (IT)</i>
		<i>1.2 AKIS CB of Croatia</i>
		<i>1.3 AKIS CB of Estonia</i>
		<i>1.4 AKIS CB of Finland</i>
		<i>1.5 AKIS CB of Spain</i>
2. Delivery mechanisms for the AKIS strategies	Simplified cost options (SCOs) for CAP interventions	<i>2.1 Use of standard costs to incentivize the interactive participation of farmers/foresters to cooperation for innovation</i>
		<i>2.2 Standard Unit Costs for researchers and academics participating in OGs</i>
		<i>2.3 Determination of the unit cost of the supported training actions for farmers</i>
		<i>2.4 Standard costs to incentivize the interactive participation of farmers/foresters to cooperation for innovation</i>
		<i>2.5 Simplified cost options (SCOs) for advisory services</i>

		<i>2.6 Standard Unit Costs for vocational training</i>
		<i>2.7 Use of SCO for staff costs of operational groups</i>
		<i>2.8 Simplified costs options for trans-regional operational groups</i>
3. Training and knowledge exchange	Advisor's training	<i>3.1 AKIS Academy: a holistic approach to professional development of the advisors</i>
		<i>3.2 Train-the-trainers for innovation support</i>
	Peer-to-peer learning among advisors	<i>3.3 Peer Review: a peer-to-peer method of experiential learning</i>
	Cross-visits	<i>3.4 Cross visits: increasing capacities of advisors through peer-to-peer learning on interactive innovations</i>
	Farmers training	<i>3.5 Training farmers on Environmental, climate and other management commitments</i>
4. Organizing CAP networks	Structural organization and activity plan	<i>4.1 Digital knowledge platforms: the case of InnovaRurale</i>
		<i>4.2 Identifying AKIS actors for network organisation - Hungary (AKI)</i>
5. Back-office	Organization of back-office services	<i>5.1 Organizing back-office services to support up-to-date knowledge flows within the AKIS: the case of Veneto Region</i>
		<i>5.2 Organizing back-office services through digitalization: The case of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region</i>



Theme n. 1

Role and functions of the AKIS Coordination Bodies





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The AKIS Coordination bodies

Rationale

What are the AKIS coordination bodies?

The institute of the AKIS-CBs represent the first attempt, within the European policies, to identify an institutional structure in charge of creating an enabling environment for innovation.

Indeed, the introduction of this institute comes along with the acquisition of policy dignity of the AKIS and their strategies, which main goal is to strengthen the agricultural systems in rural areas and contribute to more competitive and sustainable primary sector in Europe (Cristiano et., al, 2023; D1.1).

So that, AKIS coordinating bodies (AKIS-CB) are new governing actors of the CAP SPs 2023-2027, which responsible are identified under chapters 8 of the CAP SPs and which overall goal is to enable the environment for well-functioning AKISs, through fostering cooperation, effectively combining the interventions of the CAP Strategic Plans and satisfying the need for a quicker, more qualitative and more inclusive AKIS.

Approaches and roles of AKIS coordination bodies in CAP-SPs

Indeed, as it emerges from the study on the comparative analysis of the AKIS in EU (Fanos et al. 2023; D1.10), "the managing authorities play a pivotal role in strategizing the AKIS coordination and serving as the umbrella organization".

While the strategic coordination tasks are taken up by the managing authorities, multiple approaches/models are observed across the CAP-SPs for the operational coordination tasks.

Firstly, the different institutional configuration of MSs, with some having the competence for the primary sector at national and some at regional levels makes some difference, by shaping more centralized or decentralized approaches to AKIS coordination.

For example, "in MSs with a decentralized AKIS organization, particularly Germany, Italy and Spain, role of and facilitate knowledge exchange between the regions" (Birke et al. 2023; D1.10). AKIS-CBs at the national level is dedicated to bringing regional or provincial AKIS coordination bodies together by setting up a working group or an advisory board in which the group proposes an overall strategy.



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP
Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



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Which functions to ensure an overall AKIS Coordination

As a matter of fact, the only reference to the responsibilities and tasks of AKIS CBs is provided by the Tool 8.1 “Tool for the CAP Cross-Cutting Objective” (EC, 2021) that proposes the followings:

- Acting as the contact point for the Commission as regards the governance and coordination of the AKIS strategic approach.
- Organising the advice and advisors and all other related AKIS interventions.
- Keeping close and regular contact with the main AKIS (regional) coordinators and actors in the country by giving suggestions for encouragement of more effective knowledge exchange activities (advice, training, ...), including also the generation and co-creation of innovation (EIP OGs) and the broad sharing of it.

Box 1: AKIS governance levels across EU

The organisation of national AKISs and the degree of public sector engagement in the AKIS governance entail differences in how AKIS-CBs may implement their coordination tasks:

- *AKIS-CBs in a centralized AKIS governance with strong engagement of managing authorities may have a more focused mandate at the national level with a well-defined hierarchical structure that also influence the coordination efforts.*
- *AKIS-CBs in a centralized AKIS governance with medium or low engagement of managing authorities need to navigate their coordination by aligning between the state and non-state structures, which may be diverse and flexible.*
- *AKIS-CBs in a decentralized AKIS governance will need to facilitate coordination among diverse regional actors while aligning with the strategies at the national level.*
- *AKIS-CBs in a hybrid AKIS governance (centralized with a tendency for decentralization), similar to those in a decentralized AKIS need to facilitate coordination among regional actors while aligning to the strategies at the national level.*



(Birke et al. 2023)



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However, beyond the institution and the identification of some tasks, the coordination of the AKIS is a strategic process of systems functioning and transformation. Consequently, governance models in MSs should be appropriately defined by including clear a definition of role, responsibilities, and approaches, along with capacity development strategies that would enable these bodies playing an overall process of coordination of the AKIS and their actors towards the good implementation of the respective strengthening strategies.

“The challenge lies in strategically aligning knowledge exchange and collaboration between diverse actors at various levels” (Birke et al. 2023; D1.10).

All in all, the configuration of appropriate models of AKIS coordination bodies should consider that some key processes should be organized under their responsibility in view of enabling the environment for effective knowledge flows and innovation towards well-functioning AKISs (Cristiano et al., 2023; D1.1, Annex 2).

Among them, the AKIS-CB should balance, according to the contextual situation of the AKIS, the roles of “player” with the one of “enabler” as it showed in Table 1.

First insights from practices

The practices reported in this "Compendium" show a tentative to profile the AKIS coordination bodies, that certainly include the definition of the responsibility, the configuration of the (individual/collective) responsible body and some key functions.

Still, the procedures and mechanisms for effectively operationalise the functions attributed to the AKIS coordination bodies are less defined, except that for the one case of pre-existing collective body (i.e. Sardinia Region).

A preliminary insight about the different organization models and functions described by the CAP SPs, and as deepened in the AKIS-in-practices! that are included in this Compendium, is that apparently, in general, two governance models are being applied (Figure 1: AKIS coordination bodies' models in EU):

- A **managerial model** characterizes those AKIS coordination bodies which responsibility, role and the functions are fully maintained at institutional level, under the responsibility of the MA of the SP. The coordination functions are all run by an already existing unit (e.g., research and innovation) or a new established unit, but still by public servants of the Ministry of Agriculture. Tasks applied under this model concern the simple translation, at the level of AKIS strategies, of typical functions of the MAs, such as the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of AKIS interventions. Possibly, the functions of the AKIS coordination bodies are supported by technical assistance. In practice, the managerial model implies that the AKIS-CB collaborates with other institutional governance bodies of the SP (such as the responsible for communication, the monitoring and evaluation unit, paying agency, etc. in ch.7 of the CAP SPs) that are internal to the MA of the CAP SP or external (e.g., ministry of research).



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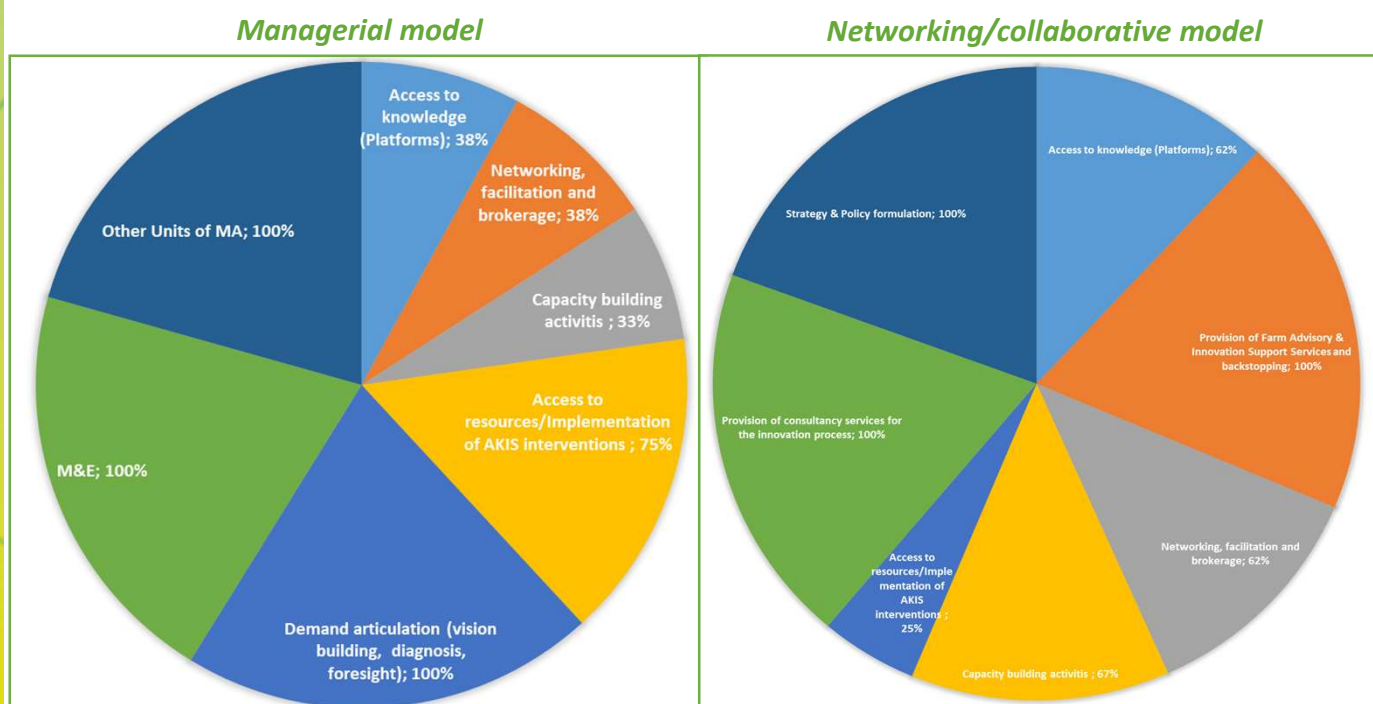
In these cases, the planned operational activities are varied and include networking, that is delegated to the CAP Network and to other bodies that remain external to the AKIS-CB, M&E, information for enable the access to the CAP SP, strategy formulation and implementation.

• A **networking/collaborative model**, that characterizes those AKIS coordination bodies which role and functions are almost or fully shared within, mostly new established, collective bodies, such as the CAP network, steering committees, working groups, ect.

In these cases, in general, typical functions of strategy management and implementation are assigned to the institutional body, while other entities are assigned more operational functions that better suit their nature: research, territorial networking, advisory services, etc. The operational activities, are evidently focused on networking and capacity building activities (newsletters, conferences and discussion forums) and enabling access to knowledge particularly by the establishment of web platforms and innovation databases.

This model is applied, for example, by the Region of Sardinia, whose AKIS coordinating body is a collegial body including institutional entities (i.e., the Minister and the Managing Authority) and non-institutional entities (Agencies) with a clear separation of their respective tasks: planning, programming and management, implementation, monitoring, payment and monitoring of interventions.

Figure 1: AKIS coordination bodies' models in EU (n./tot)



Source: own elaboration from CAP Strategic Plans



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Food for thinking

The results of the observation on the first modelling and approaching the AKIS-CBs, brings some reflections on the needs for capacity building and networking activities that can be certainly considered in modernAKIS:

- How to configure best fitting models in each MS? Managerial versus Networking.
- How to organize procedures for monitoring of the AKIS strategies and connections with the paying agencies?
- How to organize procedures for fruitful collaboration within collective AKIS-CB? Which separation of tasks and how to coordinate knowledge flows and common goals between the different members of the AKIS-CB?
- Which organization in regionalized systems? Which coordination between the AKIS-CBs of different levels?
- Which support by the CAP Network?

How to follow-up with the results of collection of AKIS-in-practice!

- AKIS-CB identity cards. Short description of the key features of the AKIS coordination bodies in view to share information for knowledge and further interaction.
- Practice workshops, aimed at sharing practices, reflecting on experiences and views on the models applied, early functioning and further organization of coordination tasks.
- Peer-to-peer review, within the CoPs in view to allow comparison and mutual learning.
- Tailored capacity building to address both strategic aspects like planning and priority setting, as well as operational tasks such as collaboration facilitation and communication (Birke et al., 2023).
- Capacity building on exploitation of modernAKIS
- Capacity building on functional skills “to engage and align diverse actors to create a coordinated approach” (Birke et al., 2023).
- Training on fundamentals on AKIS concepts and principles, system thinking structure, infrastructures, processes, governance and coordination.
- Training on AKIS actor diagnosis, assessing interactions and benchmarking performance (Birke et al., 2023).



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Table 1: Role of governance bodies to enable processes for AKIS well-functioning

Process	Description	Role of governance bodies
Attitude to change and innovation	The entrepreneurs/farmers are central in AKIS perspective. The role of the entrepreneur is to turn the potential of new knowledge, networks, and markets into concrete actions to generate and take advantage of new business and innovation opportunities. Therefore, the more the entrepreneur is well-interconnected within the AKIS and has the capacities to access and take advantage of the different sources of knowledge to develop innovation the more the AKIS has the innovative potential.	Enabler
Knowledge development	This function encompasses learning by searching (e.g. research bodies and universities) and collective learning leading to new knowledge and innovation (e.g. learning by doing, social learning, transdisciplinary learning, transformative learning). Therefore, knowledge is not only the product of formal research, but is developed through a social learning process among all AKIS actors and from the re-combination of different forms of knowledge (e.g., practical, tacit, scientific).	Enabler
Knowledge diffusion through networks	The AKIS perspective emphasizes the knowledge diffusion based on exchange within heterogeneous and multi-actor contexts and/or networks. This can lead to increasing access to knowledge, learning by interacting as learning by using. Thus, the more the actors within the AKIS are well-interconnected and interact, the more effectively the knowledge is disseminated.	Enabler
Guidance of the search	This process regards focusing investments of the specific fields of interest, and it encompasses mechanisms that influence supply-side actors in applying their resources, driving them work within strategic choices in that field. Guidance of the search represents the process of selection one or more knowledge pathways towards innovation on the best fitting certain needs or policy objectives among different knowledge processes.	Player
Market formation	The opening up of a space/arena in which goods and services can be exchanged in (semi-)structured ways between suppliers and buyers. Within such an environment actors can learn about an innovation (e.g. new technology) and expectation can be developed.	Player
Resource mobilization	Resources, both financial and human capital, are necessary as a basic input to all activities within the innovation system. CAP support to AKIS-related interventions represents this function. As well, national strategies supporting research and innovation and digitalization or forms of incentives for both researchers, advisors and other actors to engage in innovation processes relate to this function	Player
Creation of legitimacy/counteract resistance to change	The process of gaining regulative, normative and cognitive legitimacy for innovations and regime change, which is crucial for the embeddedness and the creation of a favourable environment to innovation. Innovations and regime change can encounter oppositions and reluctance by established actors, particularly in certain sectors/fields of knowledge/farming systems (e.g., organic vs. conventional). Advocacy coalitions or group of interest can act as catalyst in influencing the transition	Player

Further information

- Cristiano et al., 2023 (D1.1 modernAKIS)
- EU SCAR AKIS (2019), Preparing for Future AKIS in Europe. Brussels, European Commission
- Fanos et al., 2023 (D1.10 modernAKIS)
- Fanos et al., 2022 (i2connect)
- Knierim A., Gerster-Bentaya M., Birke F., Bae S., Kelly T., 2020. Innovation advisors for interactive innovation process: Conceptual grounds and common understandings. [Deliverable 1.1 i2Connect project](#)



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1.1 Organization of the AKIS Coordination body of Autonomous Region of Sardinia

AKIS contest

The Sardinian AKIS presents a structural complexity and high fragmentation due to the high number of actors involved. Sometimes the diverse components act as separate entities, not enough connected. Moreover, the prevalence of the sheep sector, often characterized by problems of ageing of farmers, small medium size and lack of innovations, influenced the structure of the actual AKIS and the propensity for innovation. However, there is a huge effort to overcome the risk of gaps and overlaps in research programs and projects, high administrative costs and duplication of interventions.



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP
Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



Country

Italy: Sardinia Region

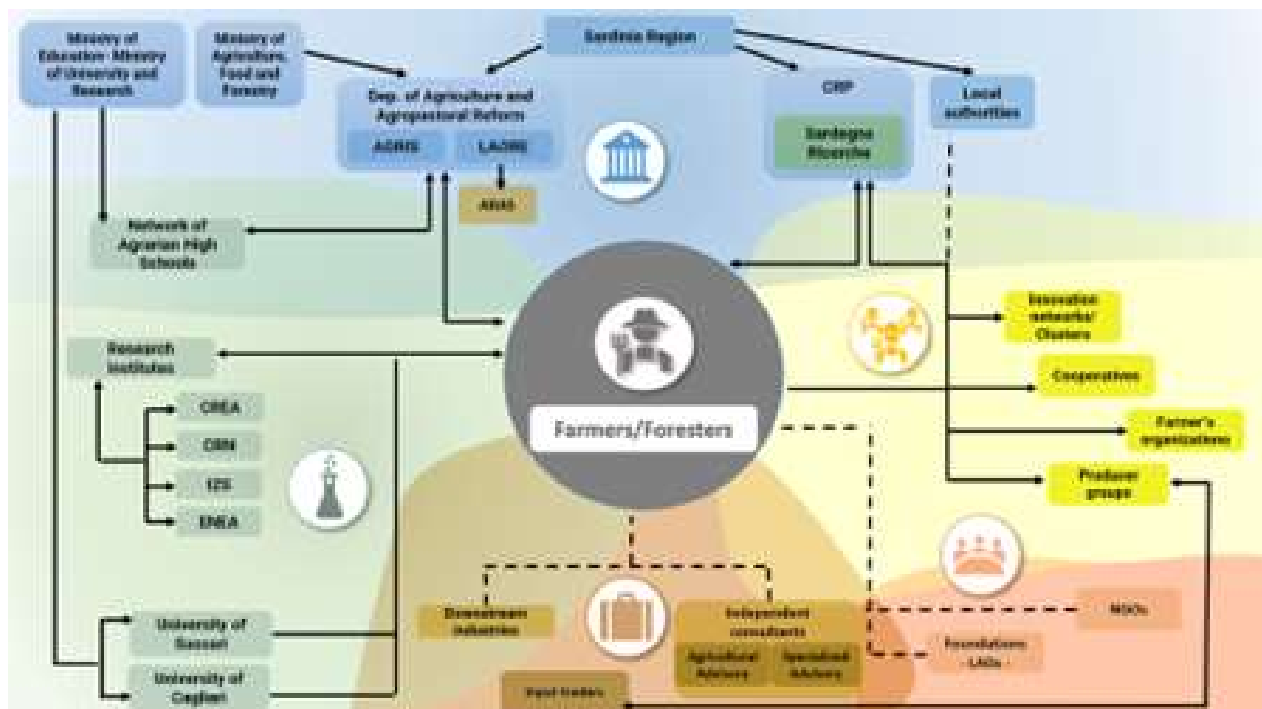


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Source: i2connect AKIS country report (2020)

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-relating interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

Particularly, the AKIS coordination body is indicated by the CAP SP 2023-2027 as a point of contact of the European Commission and of the European CAP Network.

The lack of a clear and common definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In Italy, as a consequence of the new delivery model, and differently from the previous programming periods, the former CAP SP 2023-2027 is established only at national level. However, given that the Regions/Autonomous Provinces have, by Constitution, the competence on agricultural matters, they have established Rural Development Complementary programmes (RDCPs), which, within the framework of the CAP SP, have their own governance and implement at the territorial level the rural interventions that are relevant to their specific territories.

This programming scenario implies that in Italy there are foreseen one AKIS strategy and an AKIS coordination body at CAP SP level (ch. 8 of the CAP SP; general directorate of rural development at the Ministry of Agriculture, food sovereignty and forestry) plus 19 AKIS strategies and respective AKIS coordination bodies at the level of the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces.

The general model of the AKIS coordination bodies for Italy is already indicated by the CAP SP and it mentions a composition by “the institutions that have responsibility/capacities to provide training, advisory services, research, information”. Sardinia Region can count on the presence of several public Agencies that have a widespread presence in the territories through various departments and offices. which together provide a variety of innovation support services in agriculture.

Through the institution of the AKIS coordination body, the Region of Sardinia aims at strengthening the coordination between Regional Agencies, Universities, Research Centres, Training bodies, Advisory services providers and other regional actors involved in agriculture and rural areas, with the ultimate purpose of: i) improving the relations within the system and knowledge flows between farms, agri-food and forestry enterprise; ii) promoting knowledge exchanges at national and international level within the framework of the European Partnership for Innovation in Agriculture (EIP).

Already in 2006, Sardinia region reorganized some roles and functions of bodies providing research, technical assistance and extension services within the AKIS, by establishing, based on a Regional Law, three regional Agencies, namely AGRIS, LAORE and ARGEA (see boxes). The coordination of the activities of the three of them was set based on the establishment of the Technical and Programmatic Coordination Committee that is composed by the general directors of the three Agencies and the Regional Minister for Agriculture.

Since then, the roles and functions of the three agencies has been clearly defined and applied, for example, for the purpose of the implementation of the rural development programmes.

The three agencies have territorial offices across the region, through which, over the years, they consolidated a certain capacity to engage with local AKIS actors.

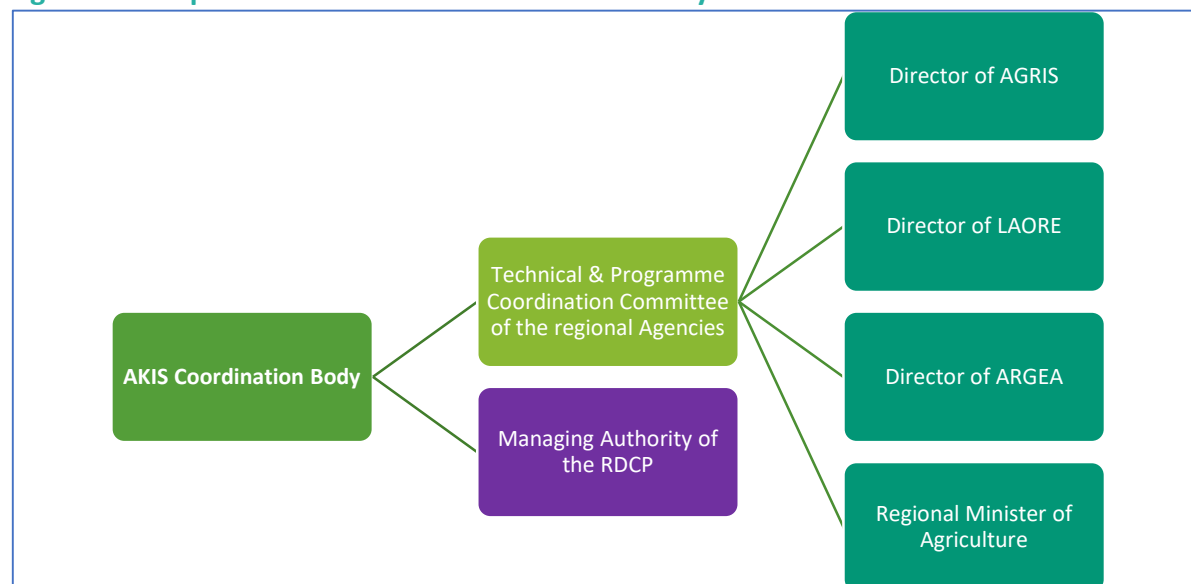
In practice...

1. Who is the AKIS CB

The Sardinian AKIS coordination body is set upon the former Technical and Programming Coordination Committee of the Regional Agencies (TPCC) and includes the Managing Authority of the Sardinian RDCP 2023-2027 (figure 1).

2. Composition of the AKIS CB

Figure 1: Composition of the AKIS Coordination Body of Sardinian RDCP 2023-2027



3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

This implies that the AKIS coordination body is a collective one that includes sharing responsibilities and applying different institutional (i.e. Minister and managing authority) and non-institutional (Agencies) roles and functions relating to the AKIS strategy: design, programming and management, implementation, monitoring, paying and control of the interventions.

The functions of the AKIS coordination body include the following tasks:

- acting as the contact point and coordination with the AKIS coordination body of the national CAP SP 2023-2027,
- coordinating the strategic decisions and implementation of the AKIS strategy,
- coordinating the implementation with the periodic activity plans of the individual agencies,
- ensuring operational coordination and functional integration between the activities assigned to the agencies.

AGRIS

AGRIS is the regional agency for scientific research, experimental and technological innovation in the agricultural, agro-industrial and forestry sectors. AGRIS has incorporated some important research departments as the Interprovincial Fruit Growing Consortium, the Provincial Fruit Growing Consortium, the Sardinian zootechnical and dairy Institute, the Cork Experiment Station, the Regional experimental center in agriculture and the Institute of Equestrian boosting. Its main goal is to promote the dissemination of its research and experimental activities among farms. For this objective, it collaborates with universities (e.g. University of Sassari and University of Cagliari), the institutes of the National Research Council (CNR), the Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA) and other public and private actors both at national and international level. AGRIS is involved in several national and European projects (as LIFE and H2020 projects) and it has an important collaboration with Sardinian Agricultural High Schools, for example, for the provision of training to students and other types of exchanges with the educational system.

AGRIS has 9 experimental and research centres across the regional territory.

More information is available at: <https://www.sardeгнаagricoltura.it/innovazione/ricerca/agris/>

LAORE

LAORE provides technical assistance and advisory support to the farms and to processing firms aimed at quantitative optimization of production processes and the introduction of technological and product innovations. It represents the public advisory services provider in Sardinia. The main aim of the agency is to promote the development of the territories, multifunctionality, agrobiodiversity and Sardinian food products. It is a key actor in the Sardinian AKIS because of its role in providing technical assistance to farmers. Thanks to its 32 territorial offices, it covers the entire regional territory in a capillary way.

More information about the role and functions of LAORE are available at: <https://www.sardeгнаagricoltura.it/assistentatecnica/laore/>

ARGEA

ARGEA is the regional Pay Agency since October 2020 for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF).

More information about the role and functions of ARGEA are available at: <https://www.agenziaargea.it/>

While procedures that are already in place for the TPCC will be applied for common decisions at strategic level, between the directors of the different agencies and institutions; decisions at operational level will be taken at organizational level according to the different competencies and responsibilities of the components of the AKIS coordination body.

For example, the delivery of the AKIS strategy, through the establishment operative manual and the publication of the calls for proposals., will be applied by the managing authority of the RDCP 2023-27.

Practical implications for replicability

Sardinia Region established the AKIS coordination body upon a pre-existing body and already in place regulation framework and procedures for its components that represent an advantage.

Clear definition of responsibilities is certainly needed along with:

- an overarching regulation framework that it is recognized by all the components of the AKIS coordination body (i.e. government regulation/decreet).
- separation of competences and mutual recognition of respective functions (e.g. technical assistance, research, innovation support services, administrative controls, monitoring and evaluation, ...) by the components of the AKIS coordination body.
- establishment of internal regulation/procedures for coordination meetings and co-decision about the action plans for the implementation of the AKIS strategy.

Benefits

- Adaptation of a pre-existing body that was already well functioning for the coordination of some key functions of the AKISs.
- This configuration of the AKIS CB brings together the actors that are already playing some institutional and operational key functions/activities within the local AKISs.
- The presence of the Agencies at territorial level and their actual interconnections within the local AKIS represents an added value for the implementation of the AKSI strategy.
- The three Agencies and the managing authority of the RDCP have all a consolidated experience in managing and applying CAP interventions.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- [Italian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 -Sardinian Rural Development Complementary programme 2023-2027](#)
- [Resolution of the Region of Sardinia n. 3/51 \(27.01.2023\), about "the Italian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 -Sardinian Rural Development Complementary programme 2023-2027"](#)
- [Regional law 8th Augustu2006, n. 13, about the " institution of the regional agencies AGRIS; LAORE and ARGEA](#)
- Interviews to the regional contact person:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIO2x7zsTH_UNGs968c9QRw

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1.2 AKIS Coordination body in Croatia

AKIS contest

The Croatian Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) is characterized by numerous public and private entities well experienced in education, research or advisory activities, but their connections are weak and there is no systematic and effective exchange of results, knowledge, data or innovation, which limits their impact to the economy. Research and applied research is happening to some extent but there is no system of transforming of acquired knowledge to the farmers or other stakeholders in the system. Although it was envisaged during establishment of Research Council for Agriculture (VIP) in late 90', the system of transfer of the project results, in form of the technical packages to the farm advisors, was never established. Also, except occasional involvement of some educational entities in short trainings, there was no systematic transfer of knowledge towards advisors.

Croatian AKIS is moderately diverse with strong influence of public funded entities and, till recently, strong emphasis on public advisory service. Other significant contributions come from the food industry and input providers, who more and more invest in research and innovation and often include highly specialized advice to their cooperants or customers. Least developed part of the AKIS is the one related to the NGOs and farmers association, which is historically conditioned and typical for Croatia and neighboring countries.

Considering this situation, the overall AKIS strategic approach, based on SWOT and assessed need, is based on:

1. Strengthening links with scientific and other relevant institutions and sources of knowledge
2. Increasing the knowledge of the savjetnika and their interconnectedness
3. Meeting and launching innovation partnerships
4. Effective use of information and communication technologies to improve the flow and dissemination of knowledge



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



Country

Bulgaria



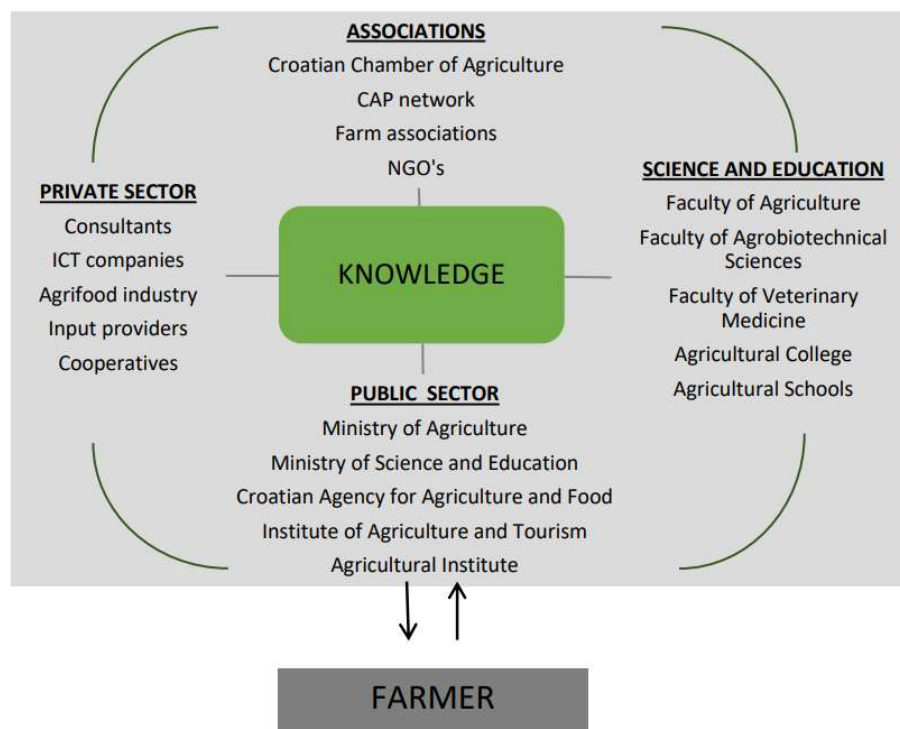
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Figure 1: Croatian AKIS Diagram



Source: i2connect AKIS country report (2020)

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2023 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-relating interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

Particularly, the AKIS coordination body is indicated by the CAP SP 2023-2027 as a point of contact of the European Commission and of the European CAP Network.

The lack of a clear definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In the case of Croatia, the establishment of the AKIS coordination body addressed the specific problem/opportunity of better connection as well as of AKIS stakeholders in accordance with identified needs. With the aim to fulfil its name – Coordination Body Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia decided to create the AKIS Coordination Body as a board with the aim put in the comparable role representatives of all relevant stakeholder types (farmers through their associations, policy makers through representatives of Directorates of the Ministry responsible for the creation of policies in the agricultural sectors, advisors through public advisory service and representatives of private advisors, farmers through farmers associations, etc).

As AKIS analysis created through the H2020 i2connect project and through SWOT analysis for the CAP SP showed that Croatia has strong individual members of the AKIS, with the aim to make all of them work together with the Croatian CAP Network on the XCO objective of the CAP SP the creation of the board was planned.

Official request for nominations of persons (member of the AKIS CB and replacement person) from the Ministry agriculture to the chambers / agencies/ institutions is sent and responses and nominations are coming.

Public advisory services and Managing authority will have 2 members each, and all others one member per stakeholder.

In practice...

AKIS Coordination Body of Croatia is in the final stage of setting up. Ministry of Agriculture is the carrier of the Board and thorough direct connection as a board of experts it is directed towards improvement in the knowledge flow regarding agriculture in the country of Croatia. Several strong individual institutions exist but the level of connection of the overall AKIS is low and the intension is to speed up the connection process by direct contact and influence on decisions as a members of the AKIS board.

1. Who is the AKIS CB

AKIS Coordination Body will be a Board of AKIS stakeholders and it will be set up within the Ministry of Agriculture as. The AKIS coordination body include representatives of all the relevant AKIS actors from Croatia (advisory service, CAP network, Directorate for rural development, etc). Operational activities will be performed by the Secretariat of the AKIS Coordination Body consisting of employees of the Ministry.

2. Composition of the AKIS CB

Final list still does not exist. Members provided in this document originate from the working documents of the Ministry.

The AKIS coordination body encompasses several parts of the Ministry (Directorate for the Professional Support to the development of Agriculture – public advisory service; Directorate for Support in Agriculture and Rural Development -as a CAP SP Managing Authority; Directorate for the Agricultural Policy, EU and international relations), CAP Network of Croatia), universities and other educational institutions (Faculty of Agriculture University of Zagreb, faculty of agrobiotechnical sciences University Josip Juraj Strossmayer Osijek, Križevci University of Applied Sciences; Faculty of Veterinary Sciences). As already mentioned, relevant research institutes (Institute for Agriculture and Tourism Poreč, Agricultural Institute Osijek and Institute for Adriatic Crops and Karst Reclamation) . Croatian Agricultural Chamber as a representative of farmers, agronomic journalist representative, Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food Farmers, representative of private advisors are planned to be a part of the AKIS Coordination Body.

3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The operational responsibilities of the AKIS CB are:

Overall aim of the body is determination of cross-sectoral goals for the modernization of the agricultural sector by promoting and exchanging knowledge, innovations and digital technologies in agriculture, forestry and rural areas as part of the Strategic Plan of the Joint Agricultural Policy of the Republic of Croatia 2023 – 2027. Additionally, the role of the body is also participating in the process of creating an AKIS plan with defined forms of cooperation and the roles of all actors involved in the transfer of knowledge, application and adoption of innovations and digital solutions in agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The rules and procedures that ensure operationalization of AKIS coordination body and its components' functions are under definition. As soon as AKIS CB is formally set up they will be defined.

Practical implications for replicability

Considering the choice of a boarding body some practical implication might be considered:

- Balanced representation of AKIS actor in the nation (in terms of number of people for each member)
- Nomination through official request (member of the AKIS CB and replacement person) from the Ministry agriculture to the chambers / agencies/ institutions
- Clear definition of role and functions of the members involved, to avoid overlapping or delays in implementing actions.

Benefits

- This configuration of the AKIS CB brings together the actors that are already playing some institutional and operational key functions/activities within the local AKISs.
- Well defined functions and roles at regulatory level give a stronger impulse to the AKIS CB mandate

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- Croatia CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 (HR)
(<https://ruralnirazvoj.hr/files/Strateski-plan-Zajednicke-poljoprivredne-politike-Republike-Hrvatske-2023.-2027..pdf>)

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1.3 AKIS Coordination body in Estonia

AKIS contest

So far, the Estonian AKIS has had a rather fragmented image. However, important steps towards greater integration have been taken during the 2014-2020 programming period (e.g. nationwide coordination of supported advisory services, etc). To a certain extent, fragmentation has been fostered by the current structure of the support measures, with (sub-)activities being targeted at narrowly defined target groups. Thus, there have been separate support measures for advisory services, for knowledge transfer, for innovation cooperation, but few opportunities to provide, for example, joint training seminars for advisors and researchers or otherwise to strengthen cooperation and contacts between them, or to promote cooperation and information exchange between.

The main characteristics of Estonian AKIS can be summarized as follow:

- Estonian AKIS benefits from the small size of the country. Key persons in different institutions know each other well and cooperate in different forms and topics.
- Several measures support cooperation between the actors. Training and farm advisory services are provided by publicly supported advisors and a number of independent organisations.
- No central hub existed until 2023 for overall coordination innovation and knowledge exchange in agricultural sector and rural activities

Considering such a context, one of the orientations for the new period will be to strengthen the common information space between the different actors involved in the AKIS, to enable joint activities involving different actors, and to allow for a more efficient, holistic planning of AKIS activities and the consolidation of relevant information and opportunities in a single online repository.



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP
Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



Country

Estonia



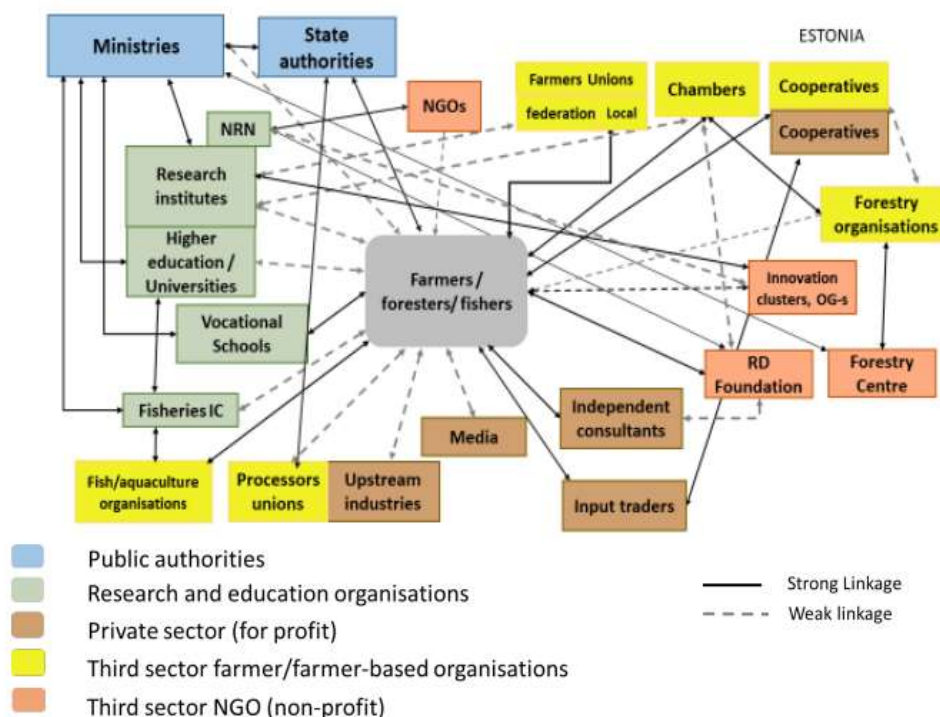
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Figure 1: Estonian AKIS Diagram



Source: i2connect AKIS country report (2020)

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-relating interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

Particularly, the AKIS coordination body is indicated by the CAP SP 2023-2027 as a point of contact of the European Commission and of the European CAP Network.

The lack of a clear definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In the case of Estonia, the establishment of the holistic AKIS coordination body addressed the horizontal need to increase the knowledge base and cooperation between AKIS actors. A unit organizing knowledge related services all over Estonia would reduce the fragmentation and duplication of specific knowledge creation and transfer, advisory and brokering services

In practice...

1. Who is the AKIS CB

The AKIS coordination is established around two bodies: the **Research and Development Department of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture (REM)** and Maaelu Teadmuskus (METK, Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge).

2. Composition of the AKIS CB

The function of the AKIS coordination body in the managing authority is performed by the **Research and Development Department of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture (REM)**, as stated in CAP SP section 8.1. In the coordination structure of AKIS, the ministry has the role of policy maker for enabling legislation. There are 10 people working in R&D department, from which the advisor is the contact person for the AKIS topic.

The **operational actions of AKIS coordination** are appointed to Maaelu Teadmuskus (METK), a semi-governmental research and development agency officially appointed on by the Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture to act as a National AKIS Operational Centre for CAP 2021+ period. METK itself is an example of multi-actor entity: it covers research units, laboratories, and field trial centres along with national rural network, innovation, and advisory services. The nomination of METK to this role is provided in the national CAP law and described in more details in implementation act signed at 30th May of 2023.

The **AKIS centre** acts as a support unit ensuring the daily coordination and actions for all AKIS organisations. The main objective of the AKIS action plan in Estonia is to increase productivity and innovation capacity in the agricultural sector. To achieve this objective, the main tasks will be to develop and coordinate a coherent AKIS system, strengthening the role of advisors in the AKIS health system and raising public awareness of the opportunities offered by the knowledge transfer and innovation system. The back-office for advisory services will be fully integrated to METK/AKIS centre by 2024 as the ongoing public procurement obligation ends.

Main contact point for AKIS is appointed to the **Department of Networks within METK**, although total of 8 FTE persons are working in several different units towards healthy AKIS ecosystem. The concept of AKIS center is a new institution, but it is built on the basis of existing structures and functions. Firstly: the tasks of the Estonian **National CAP Network support unit (NSU)** is executed by the same department in METK (nominated in the regulations for the third RDP/CAP period, no procurement). Secondly: multi-actor **knowledge transfer programme** for agriculture, food and the rural economy since 2021 is led by the same department in METK. The project implemented by multi-actor consortia of information action providers, covers most nationally supported knowledge transfer actions (M01 in RDP, public procurement) with the goal to provide more efficient and coherent information and knowledge flows to the agricultural and food sector. During the implementation of the programme, the concept of AKIS has been observed and put in practice as much as possible already before the official start of AKIS centre.

3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The R&D department at the Ministry plays a policy-making role by designing the strategy for AKIS strengthening and providing guidance to ensure that the activities of the AKIS centre on knowledge transfer, advice and innovation are in line with the overall national and EU objectives.

The AKIS centre is in charge of the day-to-day organisation of knowledge transfer and advisory activities and the mapping of future needs. This is done in cooperation with representative organisations in the sector, regional organisations, etc. to ensure that the practical needs of the sector are taken into account.

The goals of AKIS coordination actions are described in the action plan for the whole CAP period, and the long-term perspective goals for AKIS will be described in the development plan beyond the period of 2023-2027. On the basis of the input gathered from the various stakeholders, the AKIS centre draws up annual implementation plans (including budgetary needs) that will be submitted to the R&D department at the Ministry for approval.

The tasks of the AKIS centre, in relation to its role as a component of the AKIS coordination body are:

- promote cooperation and networking with various AKIS stakeholders in Estonia and abroad, including all creators and users of practical agricultural and rural expertise, via several councils and working groups etc,
- analyse the need for knowledge transfer and advisory services in Estonia as a whole and by region, identify the needs for AKIS activities of agricultural and rural entrepreneurs and communicate them to policy makers;
- actively organise outreach and promotional activities to promote the opportunities offered by advice and knowledge transfer services;
- perform a support function for innovation brokers and advisors in the provision of advisory services, ensures the quality and availability of services to the sector, including the use of digital solutions and the pre-processing of scientific information (specialist service, *back office*),
- keeping an overview of the training needs of producers, advisers and other target groups.

As a component of the AKIS coordination body, the National CAP network plays the following tasks:

- promote cooperation and networking with various rural stakeholders in Estonia and abroad, including AKIS related issues,
- actively organise outreach activities to promote the opportunities offered for rural stakeholders, including introducing CAP-funded projects and other activities for advisors and innovation brokers;
- actively promote innovation opportunities, like cross-border EIP operational groups within the CAP interventions, international Horizon projects (e.g. ERA-Nets), etc.

As a component of the AKIS coordination body, the AKIS Council plays the following tasks:

- monitoring the course of the AKIS action plan, deciding the scope of activities and giving guidelines.
- assess the implementation of the AKIS long-term development plan, periodical action plan and annual implementation plan and the AKIS activity reports before submitting it to the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture;
- review of the results of the implementation of activities for the target group and the progress in achieving the goals of the relevant national strategy documents;
- evaluate the quality of the implementation of activities, monitors or investigates the circumstances that affect the information, training and advisory needs of the target group (validates the feedback analysis of the target groups);
- assign tasks to AKIS centre for the implementation of goals and activities.

Before the implementation of the AKIS center and the convening of the council, the steering role was performed by the thematic councils of the knowledge transfer program. In these councils, evaluations were also made about the needs of information and the implementation of annual plans in the context of knowledge transfer activities. Knowledge transfer activities are organized by involving various parties both in the decision-making process and in the implementation of activities.

In summary there are three levels of planning:

- 1) Annual implementation plan – with details, budget and indicators;
- 2) Action Plan for the period of CAP;
- 3) Long-term development plan.

4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The functions of the AKIS centre are stated in:

- CAP strategic plan for Estonia (also the organisation of CAP network is stated there)
- European Union Common Agricultural Policy Implementation Act
- Decree of the Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture (this includes also the action and implementation plans of AKIS centre)

The AKIS Centre, the CAP network, knowledge transfer programme and operate under the same authority and their daily cooperation is inevitable and desirable. In terms of practical division of labor, the NSU focuses on all CAP measures as a whole, while the focus of the AKIS center is primarily on AKIS. In the performance of its tasks, the CAP network can use the possibilities of the AKIS digital knowledge platform, the contact network and expert information, but at the same time, it can offer support in introducing Estonia's most successful CAP-funded projects and other activities through the pan-European CAP network.

The R&D department at the Ministry is a contact point in policy level for European Commission and government of Estonia, reporting indicators and overall performance.

The AKIS centre and CAP network are implementing the actual networking within the country and among peers in other countries. There are several councils for different occasions (also at Ministry) to ensure, that the practical needs and EU developments are affordable and in correspondence to the rural stakeholders.

Practical implications for replicability

Based on successful implementation of the CAP/Rural Network and RDP knowledge transfer programme call, METK as a semi-governmental research and development agency was officially appointed by the Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture to act as a National AKIS Centre.

The concept to AKIS coordination for the whole country is a unique holistic way to approach the needs and elaborate cooperation between agricultural and rural stakeholders (farmers, food processors, local ambassadors, researchers, advisors, officials etc).

The lessons learnt from knowledge transfer programme show, that cooperation happens only via real actions, not only in councils and working groups. Long-term programming with a multi-actor organisations is big step towards developing a co-creative mind-set amongst knowledge providers (rural university, research stations, farmers organisations, professional associations, governmental institutions, vocational schools, advisory organisations etc) in Estonia.

The safety of decision described firmly in law, puts AKIS connections in practice in a systemic way. It enables to invest methodologically and systematically into the skills development and capacity building of the facilitators. The knowledge, how to manage and maintain networking is a set of personal characteristics and methodological skills.

Benefits

- Specialist multi-actor network of key partners and participatory/consultative stakeholder processes to deliver the best possible sustainable holistic AKIS coordination and enabling services to Estonian farmers and wider rural community, possible only with a semi-state agency.
- Well defined functions and role thanks to the legislative act.

Further information

- PRO AKIS study, 2014, <https://i2connect-h2020>
- Estonian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans/estonia_en

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1.4 AKIS Coordination body in Finland

AKIS contest

Finland has a diverse and nationwide network of research, development and education actors. Alongside the national organizations, there are many small organizations in their own specific fields. Some efforts must be made to coordinate resources and to cooperate effectively to ensure the vitality of rural areas and the renewal, development and diversification of their livelihoods. This has been the focus of attention in recent years and the AgriHubi network has been established in 2021 to coordinate and enhance AKIS cooperation and to target resources on perceived weaknesses.

AgriHubi focuses on strengthening the business management skills of farm businesses, promoting the uptake of smart agriculture and making more efficient use of data sources and resources.

Box 1 - Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)

The Natural Resources Institute Finland is one of the most multidisciplinary research institutes in the world. Established in 2015, Luke conducts research on natural resources and collects statistics on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural areas. Just over half of its research funding (€133 million in 2021) comes from the state budget. It has 22 locations in Finland, plus two research cooperation sites, and five field bases across the country, as well as two research collaborations with universities.



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



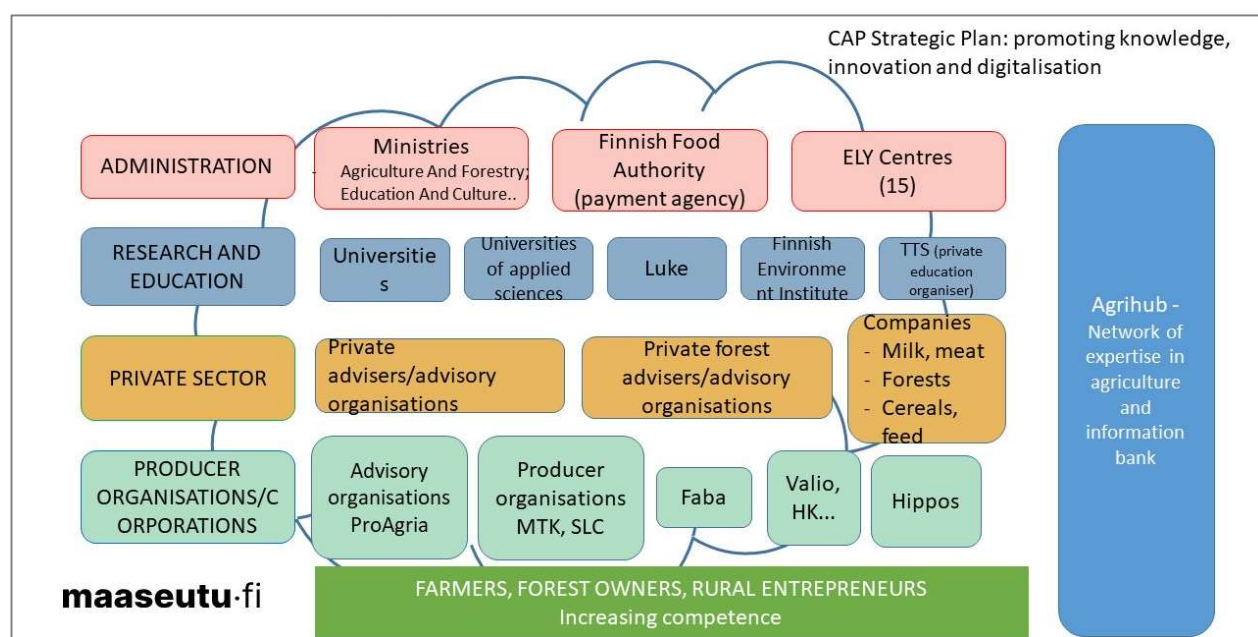
Country

Finland



However, the Finnish AKIS seems to be in some ways characterized by fragmentation and under-utilization of advanced interfaces. At a time when rapid and efficient knowledge transfer and accessibility is essential for the development of the economy, it is important to make national and international research knowledge rapidly available to support practice. Farm entrepreneurs who are developing their business also want to be more actively involved in development and research. The younger generation of farmers is well educated, but education must provide young people with the skills they will need in the 2030s, as well as further training for existing entrepreneurs and advisers. School teaching farms and willing private farms must be made more effective in sharing knowledge and examples by promoting activities such as Living Labs and demo farms. All AKIS actors also want to link more actively to international networks and strengthen the discussion and exchange of information between Finnish actors on the various possibilities for participating in international cooperation.

Figure 1: Finland AKIS Diagram (to be completed)



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Finland

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-relating interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

In Finland's CAP SP, AgriHubi is nominated as the AKIS coordination body. In addition, in the CAP SP it is said that AgriHubi and the National Rural Network will develop the functioning of the AKIS system together with the AKIS working group consisting of representatives of the network.

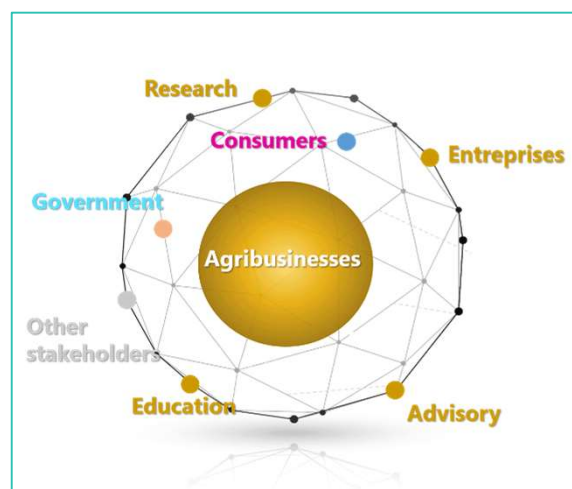
The lack of a clear definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In practice...

1. Who is the AKIS CB

The AKIS Coordination body is AgriHubi which is part of Public affairs and governance in Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke). The AgriHubi Network is a national initiative that brings together research, advice and training in the field and builds interaction with other actors in the food system. The overall aim of the network is to promote and facilitate scientific knowledge into the better use of farm enterprises in order to develop their competitiveness and renewal.

Figure 2: the AKIS network in Finland coordinated by Agrihubi



2. Composition of the AKIS CB

Agrihubi is a collaborative network of research, the steering group includes farmers, educational institutions, advisory organisations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and private companies.

3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The main operation responsibility of AgriHubi as AKIS CB is to support AKIS activities, foster farmer participation in RDI projects and foster activities to support farm profitability.

More in detail, role and responsibilities/activities include:

- generate and coordinate cooperation among actors and build new connections on the following topics: i) Business management; ii) Data sources and resources; iii) Smart farming.
- supports farmers participation to RDI – projects → innovations for and with practice.
- fosters and develops an open network.

Coordination team of AgriHubi is composed by the coordinator, a communications specialist, senior scientists and a professor to run and discuss of the daily basis work.

A steering group, that includes all the representative of AKIS actors, is set up to ensure its functioning and realization of the activities.

Along the CAP programming period, the financial resources are provided the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for the years 2021 – 2022 and by the Ministry of Education for the period 2023-2025.

4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The procedures for interplaying and the main activities of Agrihubi are defined in an internal annual goals paper, according to which Luke has meetings on regular basis with AKIS actors. Particularly, they organize 6 steering group meetings per year, 4/5 meetings with the AKIS group stakeholders and meetings with MoAF's leaders once/twice per year.

Practical implications for replicability

Natural Resources Institute Finland is under Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland's governance and provides also policy support for the ministry. Budget funding from MoAF and the annual strategy and steering discussions are MoAF's tools to guide Luke's work. Within the role of managing authority, MoAF appointed the task of establishing AgriHubi to Luke at the end of 2020 with seed funding.

AKIS coordination was appointed to AgriHubi, however, the CAP Network Finland has a strong role of coordination AKIS -related activities such as Leader, EIP, rural businesses, and rural women entrepreneurship.

The Finnish CAP Network is appointed to Food Authority Finland's tasks and works as an own unit. There are common members in AgriHubi's and CAP Network Finland's steering group. Furthermore, great number of activities among the AKIS goals are supported by AgriHubi's and the Finnish CAP Network's work together. Example of this close collaboration is the networking platform maaseutuverkosto.fi / agrihubi.fi. However, in Finland the work that AgriHubi is accomplishing could not be located on the Finnish CAP Network that works within the CAP's technical support funding. Part of AgriHubi's tasks is closely related on other sectors field and cannot be financed by CAP.

Benefits

- Adaptation of a pre-existing body that was already well functioning for the coordination of some key functions of the AKISs.
- This configuration of the AKIS CB brings together the actors that are already playing some institutional and operational key functions/activities within the national AKISs.
- The network organization allowed increasing the collaboration between research institute and education actors.

Further information

- Finland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027,
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans/finland_en

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1.5 AKIS Coordination body in Spain

AKIS contest

The current political and territorial organization of Spain (based on Spanish Constitution), shape a decentralized system in which the regions (NUTS-2 according to Eurostat) have much of the responsibilities and decision-making powers.

On the one hand, the Spanish Constitution establishes that the regions may assume competences in the promotion of research, however the central government has exclusive competences in the promotion and general coordination of scientific and technical research, as well as international –scientific- relations. And on the other hand, all regions have established, in their Statutes of Autonomy (the main legal reference in each region) the assumption of competences in the field of agricultural research.

As soon as it is finished the public participation procedure for the royal decree of the Spanish AKIS Coordination Body. Finally, it will be published in the Official State Gazette (www.boe.es).



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



Country

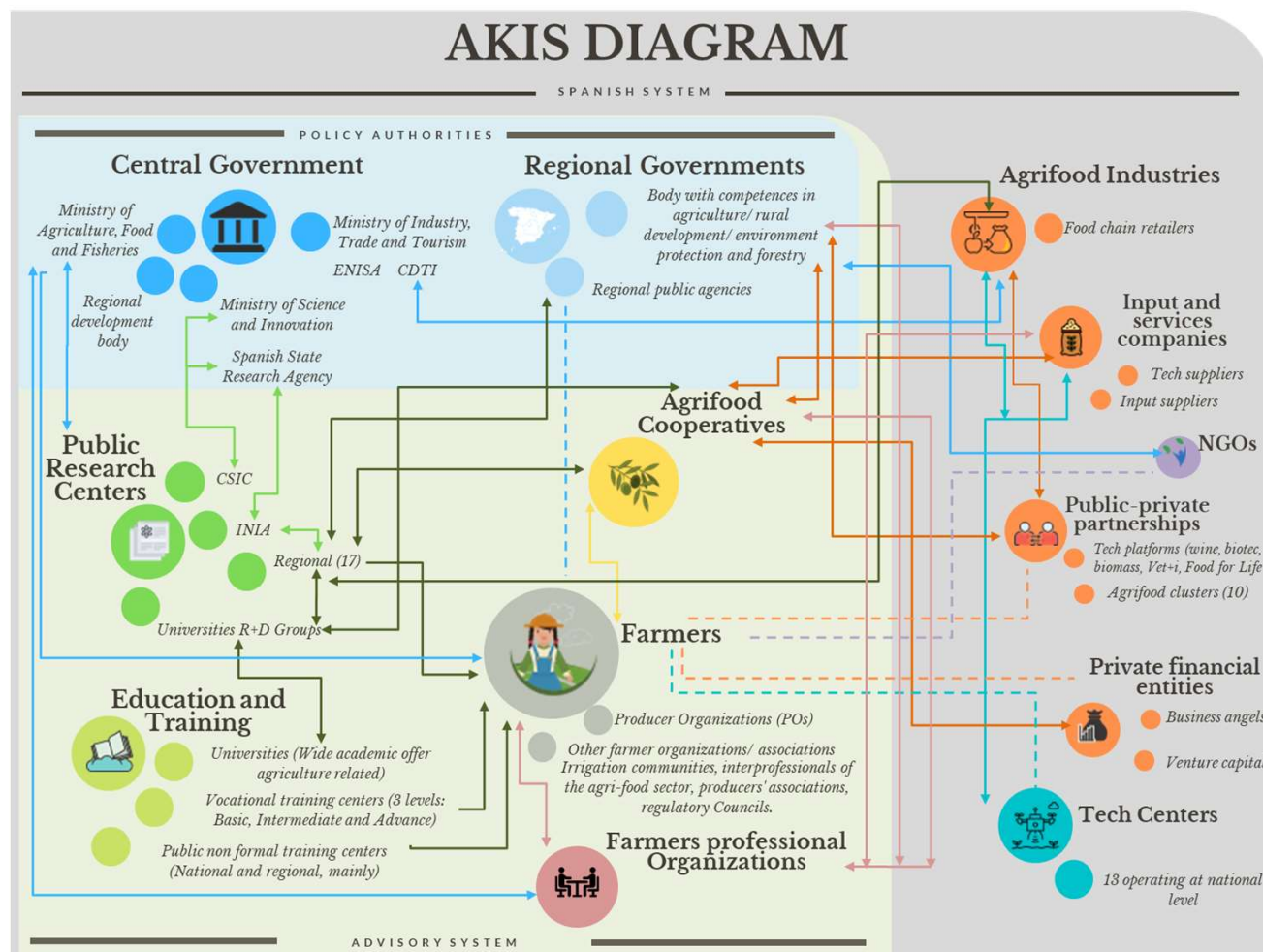
Finland



Figure 1: Spanish AKIS SWOT analysis

Weaknesses	Threats
- There is a general disconnection between actors, including the institutional level. (Difficult synergy and knowledge transfer). - The AKIS system does not efficiently integrate changes in consumer trends and technological development. - Lack of putting the knowledge generated into practice. - Excessive proliferation of measures or duplicate initiatives (lack of communication).	- The agricultural sector has a low level of training. - In the field of advice, the complexity and heterogeneity of existing regulations contributes to generating deficiencies in the advisory systems. - Disparity between territory and sectors and low level of investment in innovation.
Strengths	Opportunities
- Agri-food industry (powerful innovation broker). - Great initiative and commitment to innovation (high participation in H2020 R&D&I aid calls). - EIP-Agri measure of the RDPs (large number of OGs created). - High degree of professionalization of the research sector. - Structures of producers and associations (connection of producers with AKIS actors).	- Support for investment in research and innovation. - Creation of permanent working groups in the National Administration. - Participation in Smart Specialization Strategies. - Multi-actor approach (collaborator, producer and researcher sector). - Identification of stakeholders with a high degree of interaction and knowledge exchange (Research Centers and Universities). - Learning between regions (diversity of AKIS experiences between Autonomous Regions).

Figure 2: Spanish AKIS Diagram



Source: i2connect AKIS country report (2020). In course of updating

Actor's categories are represented in circles. Under one category, there are several actors (e.g. Education and training). Impartial agricultural advisory system includes some of the relevant AKIS actor's categories (green box). The lines represent the linkages between AKIS actors (dashed lines for weak linkages, and solid lines for strong linkages).

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-relating interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

Particularly, the AKIS coordination body is indicated by the CAP SP 2023-2027 as a point of contact of the European Commission and of the European CAP Network.

The lack of a clear definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In the case of Spain, the establishment of the AKIS coordination body addressed the specific problem/opportunity of AKIS CAP interventions.

In practice...

1. Who is the AKIS CB

The Spanish AKIS Coordination Body is under development, and it is set up with the presidency of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Science. The Spanish AKIS Coordinating Body will function in plenary or in Institutional Commission. The AKIS coordination body includes 3 working groups.

2. Composition of the AKIS CB

The AKIS coordination body encompasses the following types of actors:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Public Authorities. | 3.3. Public-private partnerships |
| 2. Research and Education | - Tech platforms |
| 2.1. Education and agricultural training. | - Agrifood clusters or Innovative Enterprise Clusters (IEC) |
| - Higher education. | 3.4. Private financial entities |
| - Vocational training. | 4. Farmer based organization |
| 2.2. Research | 4.1. Agri food cooperatives |
| 3. Private sector | 4.2. Farmers professional organizations (FPO) |
| 3.1. Agrifood industries | 4.3. Other farmers and forester organizations |
| 3.2. Input and services companies | 5. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). |

3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The operational responsibilities of the AKIS CB are:

1. Collect needs from the actors of the agri-food sector that use knowledge with the aim of channeling it towards actors that generate it or institutions that finance public policies of R&I, both nationally and regionally, through the Spanish Strategy of Science, Technology and Innovation and the corresponding associated plans of the General Administration of the State and the autonomous communities.
2. Promote strategies and efforts in innovation of the General State Administration and the autonomous communities in the agri-food sector to optimize efficiency in the use of resources and their impact, in order to promote the transformation of the agri-food sector towards competitive and sustainable production models.
3. Promote joint actions between autonomous communities, or between them and the General State Administration, to promote synergies in research programs and projects, with the shared objective of avoiding overlaps and sharing good practices.
4. Promote the integration of research staff in activities related to knowledge transfer, demonstration events, thematic networks, technical conferences for the exchange of knowledge and good practices, among others.
5. Share information, statistics and comparable data on the situation of counselling in Spain.
6. Promote the identification of good practices for the provision of agricultural advisory services, with the aim of increasing their quality.
7. Ensure compliance with the obligations laid down in Article 15(2), (3) and (4) of Regulation 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 laying down rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans), financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) N° 1305/2013 and (EU) N° 1307/2013.
8. Provide the necessary support for the autonomous communities, competent in advice, to facilitate and validate the list of advisory entities or advisors active in their territories that comply with the provisions derived from article 15 of Regulation 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 2, 2021 and integrate this information into the AKIS Consulting Professionals Platform that will be launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as a support tool for the promotion of the integration of advisors in the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System in Spain, as well as to strengthen the interrelation of the different actors of the same.
9. Analyze the needs and opportunities in terms of training for advisors in the agri-food sector.
10. Facilitate the exchange of information and collaboration with the autonomous communities and professional organizations of the sector, about the demands and training opportunities for professionals in the agri-food sector.

11. Promote and disseminate initiatives to promote the acquisition of professional skills in the agri-food sector.
12. Promote the recognition of professional skills acquired through work experience of workers in the agri-food sector.
13. Monitor the implementation of innovation, knowledge transfer and advice interventions, both at national and regional level, analyzing the substantial modifications of the CAP Strategic Plan on these areas when they occur.
14. Promote a culture of evaluation in the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System.
15. Promote synergies in terms of dissemination of knowledge transfer and innovation in the agri-food sector between the R + D + i Policy Network and the CAP Network.
16. Promote good practices in the dissemination of innovation actions, knowledge transfer and advice so that they are properly captured within the CAP Network.
17. Propose, once the National PAC Network has been established, with the temporality and periodicity to be determined, an Action Plan (events, conferences, studies, tools) in the field of innovation and knowledge transfer for its transfer and subsequent execution in the National PAC Network.
18. Provide relevant information to the AKIS Advisors Platform, which will act as an open platform for the exchange and dissemination of knowledge generated in the scientific and academic field in a simple and understandable language by other actors of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System and in an interoperable format, such as:
 - a) new knowledge or innovations generated in the field of intervention (regional or supra-autonomic) cooperation within the framework of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, known as EIP-Agri (Articles 77 and 127 of Regulation 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021), Horizon Europe, State Plan of R + D + i, Complementary Plans of R + D + i, or Regional Plans of R + D + i.
 - b) Events of interest.
 - c) Training of advisors.
19. Report its conclusions to the Sectoral Commission of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and to the Delegate Commission of the Council of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Policy.
20. Identify information gaps regarding the situation of agri-food R+D+I, contributing to the adequate reflection in the SICTI (Information System on Science, Technology and Innovation) of the financing flows of agri-food innovation from the Common Agricultural Policy.
21. Ensure that there is a key vision of the agri-food sector of the credits allocated annually to projects and actions of R + D + I within the framework of the State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation.

4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The regulatory procedure is governed by the regulations that the AKIS CB will develop normatively and the administrative law rules applicable to collegiate bodies.

However, it is necessary to create and specify the informal communication procedure between the different members of the AKIS CB, in order to allow an efficient knowledge flow and exchange.

It is already established that operational activities will be performed by annual meetings.

Practical implications for replicability

This configuration of AKIS CB can only be replicated in decentralized countries in which the regions have a high level of competencies.

Fragmentation and decentralization of AKIS in Spain, should not represent a weakness, what's more, with adequate mechanisms of coordination, and involvement of the different actors, at different levels (regional and national), will allow reinforcing the AKIS and the generation of synergies between the territories.

In terms of their replicability, there are different options for the design of a possible governance structure that must be governed by three main principles:

- ✓ Be simple and adapted to reality and level of development of a decentralized country.
- ✓ Be operational.
- ✓ Respect the powers of each area and reinforce the AKIS CB through a reinforced cooperation.

And that, in turn, must be oriented to work in four areas:

- ✓ Coordination.
- ✓ Exchange of experiences.
- ✓ Identification of good practices.
- ✓ Monitoring, evaluation and proposal of corrective actions.

Finally for a well functioning and division of the roles it might be important to define them in a formal act.

Benefits

- A collegial body with a well represented AKIS (both at national and regional level) allows a better capturing of the needs and priorities;
- Establishment of common elements of execution of AKIS actions more complex (advice and cooperation) avoiding distortions between regions and public entities.
- From the development of synergies and complementarities with other funds and actions developed by other departments to strengthen the AKIS.
- Well defined functions and roles at regulatory level give a stronger impulse to the AKIS CB mandate
- Monitoring supported by indicators that are agree, in a way that allows the evaluation of achieving objectives and identifying possible corrective actions.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- Spain CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans/spain_en#:~:text=Goal%20and%20strategy,-Spain%20has%20designed&text=This%20will%20provide%20support%20to,a%20competitive%20agri%2Dfood%20sector
- Provisional regulation of the Spanish AKIS CB on public participation: https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/participacion-publica/audiencia_rd_scia.aspx
- Explanation of the Spanish AKIS CB set up. EU CAP Network.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nP0QqHrg4Rw>
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Theme n. 2

Delivery mechanism for the AKIS strategies





Simplified cost options (SCOs) for CAP interventions

Description of the topic

SCOs are a method of calculating the eligible costs of an operation to be used as an alternative to the traditional method: the calculation is made on costs actually incurred and paid [article 67, paragraph 1, letter a), of the Regulation n. 1303/2013, "real costs"].

The eligible costs of an operation, where simplified cost options (SCOs) are used, shall be calculated with a predefined method based on outputs, results or other costs that are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount for unit or by application of a rate.

Benefits and insights for using simplified cost options

Since the European programming period 2007-2013, the use of SCOs is strongly endorsed and progressively simplified by the EC to promote the administrative simplification by reducing probatory documentation for budgeting and reporting of co-funded interventions.

The use of SCO is highly recommended, by the EC and the ECA, for the following cases and reasons:

- **reducing administrative burden and workload:** with SCOs, it's no longer necessary to trace each euro of co-funded expenditure back to individual supporting documents. Furthermore, the collection and verification of (financial) documents is less resource-intensive by both public administration and beneficiaries.



Keywords

Advisory services, Operational groups of the EIP, Simplified cost options, Budgeting & Reporting, Administrative procedures & Documentation



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Farmers/ Foresters participating to OGs, Coordinators of OGs.

- **reducing the error rate** in public funds management. Over time, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has repeatedly recommended to the European Commission to encourage and extend the use of SCOs. Finally, during the programming period 2014-2020, these demonstrated to be highly effective in reducing the risk of error and the administrative burden of the beneficiaries and managing authorities of rural development programmes (RDPs). Apparently, projects using SCOs are less prone to error than the ones using real costs.
- to **focus on outputs**: the use of SCO is well-suited by a managing authority/policy maker that prefers focusing on outputs rather than on resources committed relating to the funded intervention, because ex-ante estimations about the expected realizations are easier to run. This is just the case of CAP 2023-2027.
- **bridging the gap of common methodologies/standards or of probative documentation** for certain type of interventions/operations. This is case, for example, of the fees of advisory services or the remuneration of the farmer/forester for the time spent on joint actions of the operational group (OG).
- **Consistency of public support**: the use of SCOs certainly helps balancing the efforts with the possible small amounts of support or little impact of the specific interventions.

Besides, the use of SCOs implies:

- availability of reliable data on the financial and quantitative execution of funded operations for which the SCO are put in use;
- SCOs methods already exist for similar types of operations and beneficiaries under other EU or national funds/framework or they can be defined based on robust data and methodologies of calculation.

Scope, types of simplified cost options (SCOs) and conditionalities

Simplified costs are one of the eligible forms of grants and repayable assistance foreseen for the ESIF by article 67.1 of the Regulation n. 1303/2013.

Within this scope, for each specific ESIF and at Programme level, the managing authority may to decide to make the use of SCOs optional or mandatory and for all the types of operations or for just some of them.

There are three options simplified costs (EC Regulation n. 1303/2013 art. 67 c. 1b, 1.c, 1d):

Outside of these cases, administrations can choose which reporting mode to use, whether at real costs or with a simplified option.

Indeed, the Regulation laying down the common provisions (Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 for the 2014-2020 programming period and Regulation (EU) 1060/2021 for the 2021-2027 programming) provides options for the ESI Funds to calculate the eligible expenditure of grants and repayable assistance on the basis of real costs, but also on the basis of SCOs. The use of SCOs must be defined ex ante. The Common Provisions Regulation (DRC) explains that grants provided by Member States to beneficiaries can be made by:

- reimbursement of costs actually incurred and paid for the implementation of operations (real costs);

- standard scales of unit costs, lump sums, flat rate financing (simplified costs);
- a combination of the previous forms.

In case of standard scales of unit costs, all or part of the eligible costs of an operation shall be calculated on activities, inputs, outputs or quantified results, which shall be multiplied using standard tables of predetermined unit costs.

In case of lump sums, all or part of the eligible costs of an operation shall be calculated on a predetermined lump sum. The grant shall be paid if the default terms of the assets and/or outputs agreement are met.

In case of flat-rate financing, specific categories of clearly identified eligible costs shall be calculated by applying an ex ante fixed rate for one or several other categories of eligible costs.

Amounts and rates established by Member States need to be a reliable proxy to real costs. Periodic adjustments are a good practice in the context of multiannual programme implementation to take into account factors affecting rates and amounts.

In order to ensure compliance with the principles of transparency and equal treatment of beneficiaries, the scope of the simplified cost options to be applied, that is the category of projects and activities for which they will be available, should be specified and published in the call for applications.

Methodologies for calculate SCOs

Some simplified cost options can be directly used without having to carry out any calculation: in this case they say «ready to use». This is the case with the following flat rates, indicated directly by the Regulations:

- Calculation of indirect costs: flat rate up to 15% of direct eligible personnel costs;
- Calculation of personnel costs: flat rate up to 20% of direct costs other than personnel costs;
- Calculation of remaining eligible costs: flat rate up to 40% of eligible direct staff costs;
- Calculation of indirect costs: flat rate up to 7% of eligible direct costs (news of 2021-2027 programming);
- Staff cost calculation (hourly rate): last documented gross annual labour cost/ 1720 hours.

The following types of SCOs require well-prepared methodologies:

- flat rate for calculation of indirect costs (up to 25% of eligible direct costs)
- standard scales of unit costs
- lump sums.

Methodologies may be developed on the basis of:

- statistical data, other objective information or expert assessments;
- verified historical data of individual beneficiaries;
- draft budgets drawn up on a case-by-case basis and approved ex ante by the body selecting the operation (where the total cost does not exceed € 200,000);
- in accordance with the rules for the application of the unit costs, lump sums and flat rates applied by the Member State for similar types of operation;
- flat rates and specific methods provided in the Fund Regulations.
- application of normal cost accounting practices of individual beneficiaries.

Methodologies for calculation of SCOs must be fair (reasonable, based on real data), equitable (not favouring some beneficiaries or types of transactions to the disadvantage of others) and verifiable (based on documentary evidence that can be verified).



2.1 Use of standard costs to incentivize the interactive participation of farmers/foresters to cooperation for innovation

Rationale

The implementation of multi-actor approaches (MAA) to cooperation for innovation is a challenge for farmers/foresters, as it requires certain commitment and the distraction from typical on-field farming activities which is due to their participation in interactions with the partners within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (OG) (e.g. participation in project meetings, European CAP Network).

This represents a deterrent to farmer'/forester's active participation in multi-actor innovations. During the project life of an OG, in addition to the investment on innovative tangible/intangible assets, a farmer/forester is committed to two overarching types of interactive activities with other partners of the OG that are instrumental to the effective implementation of the multi-actor and interactive innovation process: (1) joint actions of the OG for internal coordination and interactions, external dissemination and peer-to-peer activities (e.g. general assembly of the partners, demonstration of innovation, showcases, cross-visits, CAP network events) and (2) technical meetings aimed at co-development, co-adaptation and adoption of innovation (e.g. practical on-field and laboratory tests).



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs, interactive innovation, Operational Groups, agricultural income



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers.



Country

Italy



During these cooperation actions, the farmer/forester provides some relevant contribution during the development and dissemination of the innovation, through sharing his practical and exclusive knowledge and experience within and outside the OG.

It is, therefore, relevant to properly recognize such an important contribution of the farmer/forester by establishing an adequate remuneration corresponding to the time spent on such collaborative work.

Solution

During the programming period 2014-2022, the National Rural network (NRN), through a guideline document, provided the methodologies for the determination of standard costs to apply to some cases relating to the OGs implementation, including the ones for calculating the remuneration of farmers/foresters participating in joint actions of the OGs. That document included also the indication of the number of man/days to make eligible in relation to the participation of OGs' partners in national (internal to the OG or, for example, organized by the NRN) or international (e.g. organized by the EU level CAP networks, H2020 projects) relevant meetings. That number of man/days had been calculated based on a series of data collected by the NRN over the programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

Territoriality of the meeting		Duration	Eligible man/days
A	Local/regional level	1/2 - 1 day	1
B	Country level	1/2 - 1 day	1
C	EU level	1/2 - 1 day	2
D		2 days	3

One of the methodologies proposed by the NRN to recognize to farmers/foresters a remuneration corresponding to the time spent on joint actions of the respective OG is based on the conventional agricultural income of farmers that it is normally used as social security taxable base to determine the contributions owed by them. It is concerted between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the farmers' unions, and it is based on the average of daily wages relating to the agricultural income from the land and/or from animal husbandry. The amount of the conventional agricultural income is determined at national level, updated on yearly basis and established by a ministerial decree.

In practice...

The managing authority of the RDP 2014-2022 (MA) of Abruzzo Region adopted the methodology based on the conventional agricultural income to determine the standard cost for recognizing to farmers/foresters a remuneration corresponding to the time spent for the type 1) of joint actions applied within the respective OG and this was established within the RDP 2014-2023 as it was requested by in force EU regulation.

As it was suggested by the NRN, to avoid updating the basic parameter on yearly basis, the standard cost was then determined as the average of the conventional incomes established for the years 2014 to 2018, that is equal to 56,20 euros/day.

In practice, for example, the remuneration recognizable to a farmer participating in a full day meeting of the European CAP network is determine as showed in Box 1.

Box 1: Remuneration of the farmer/forester

Eligible amount of remuneration = EUR 56,20 × 2 (C) = EUR 112,40

Besides, the documentation to provide for the probation of the effective participation to the meeting was established by the call for applications of the OGs (e.g. list of participants with signatures).

Practical implications for replicability

The use of standard costs under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 has been furtherly simplified.

However, some administrative arrangements remain relevant:

- This practice implies that a conventional income has been already established at Country/regional level.
- The methodology for standard costs determination should be better shared with the paying agency and made clear by the calls for applications. As well, MA must clearly list the documentation that is required to demonstrate the effective participation of the farmer/forester in joint actions of the OG.
- For the case of open or periodic call for applications of the OGs along the programming period, yearly updates of the conventional income in use as the basis for the standard cost determination is needed; in alternative, it can be used an average income that it is based on a period of 3 or 4 years.

Benefits

- Incentivization for farmers/foresters to actively participate in OG.
- The use of this reference income ensures an equal treatment to farmers as it represents the best possible approximation to an economic treatment that it is already in use for their category of workers, and it is co-decided with their representative organizations.
- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for budgeting.
- The reference income is easily verifiable, as it established by ministerial decree.
- Equal treatment of farmers/foresters and other OG's partners (e.g. researchers, academics).

Further information

- [Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\)- Abruzzo Region](#)
- [NRN Guidelines Simplified costs for operational groups \(2018\) \(EN\)](#)
- [Decree of 11/05/2018 n.195 of the Director-General for Social Security and Insurance Policies at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy \(IT\)](#)

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2.2 Standard Unit Costs for researchers and academics participating in OGs

Rationale

In the Multi-actor Approach (MAA) to cooperation for innovation different types of partners are involved, with the aim of building up bridges/connections between farmers/foresters and results of research. Within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (OGs), researchers and academics make a significant contribution to the development and dissemination of innovation, the transfer and share of their knowledge on innovation, inside and outside the OG. However, MAAs are time-consuming, so that the willingness and efforts, if not capacities, of researchers/academics to effectively apply interactive models for innovation within OGs are be limited.

Solution

The use of simplified cost options can help simplifying the administrative processes, through reducing the bureaucratic burdens related to the participation of staff employed in the actions of the OG by Public Research Institutes and Universities.



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs, interactive innovation , Operational Groups



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Italy

In line with the principle set by the EU Regulation that promotes the use of simplified cost options (SCO) methods already in place for similar types of operations and beneficiaries under other EU policies (i.e. Operational Programmes 2014-20 funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)), the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the RDPs of the Sardinia Region and the Emilia-Romagna Region adopted the standard unit costs established for the typical three professional levels of researchers and academics.

That methodology, that had been shared with the European Commission, has been developed by a study of the *ad hoc* working that had been promoted by the MAs of the National Operational Programmes for Research and Innovation and for the Enterprise and Competitiveness 2014-2020, the Agency for Territorial Cohesion, its Audit and Control Unit and in collaboration with the European Commission.

All in all, hourly standard unit costs are established for the staff of Universities and Public Research Institutes who do not receive salary for carrying out project activities detailed by professional level (high, medium, low) and based on series of historical data of expenses certified to the EC for research and universities staffs under EU funded programmes for the period 2009-2016.

Professional level	High	Medium	Low
Research	55	33	29
	Director of Research Technologist 1 st level Researcher 1 st level	Researcher and Technologist 3 th level	Researcher and Technologist 4 th – 7 th Levels Technical support Administrative staff
Academia	73	48	31
	Ordinary Professor	Associate Professor	Researcher/Administrative and Technician staff

In practice...

The methodology was applied by the Regions of Sardinia and Emilia-Romagna under the RDPs 2014-2020 for the staff of research and universities participating in OGs.

In practice, the overall personnel cost to refund to the research body/university is calculated by multiplying the n. of worked hours in the project of the OG and reported by the timesheet for each staff employee by the SUC of pertinent professional level.

Practical implications for replicability

The use of standard costs under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements remain relevant:

- The standard unit cost was defined starting from a database implemented on the historicity of the projects, obtaining from those carried out in the 2009 - 2016 period (similar, in terms of industrial research and experimental development activities, nature and beneficiaries, to the interventions of the 2014-2020 programming cycle), the information necessary for the analysis and definition of the sample for the determination of the standard hourly cost. If the standard unit costs are updated to a more recent period, the new hourly values identified can be applied.
- The MA should clearly provide for the use of standard costs and indicate the adoption of the specific methodology by the DP of the CAP and the call of the OG.
- The MA should clearly indicate the documentation required to demonstrate the actual commitment of the staff of the universities and public research organisations in the interactive actions (e.g. attendance sheets, named timesheets, signatures during meetings, reports, etc.) and to be attached to the request for staff remuneration.

Benefits

- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for cost reporting
- Acceleration of the achievement of performance targets
- Acceleration of the declaration of expenditures to the European Commission
- Incentivization for researchers/academics to actively participate in OG

Further information

[Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\)– Region Emilia Romagna](#)
[Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\) – Region Sardegna](#)
[Guidelines of the National Rural Network \(EN\) – Simplified costs for operational groups \(2018\)](#)
[Interministerial decree 24.01.2018 about Calculation Methodology Standard Unit Cost Tables, Standard Unit Cost Tables, Official Journal 9 May 2018 \(IT\)](#)

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2.3 Determination of the unit cost of the supported training actions for farmers

Rationale

Under the CAP 2023-2027, the support of the variety of types of interventions, (art.83 of EU Reg. 2021/2115), may take the form of unit costs, among the others. This is the option that the Managing Authority of the CAP strategic plan of Hungary took on board for the implementation of training actions for farmers.

According to applicable regulation, the amounts for the unit costs shall be established in one of the following ways:

- (a) a fair, equitable, and verifiable calculation method based on:
 - (i) statistical data, other objective information, or an expert judgment,
 - (ii) verified historical data of beneficiaries; or
 - (iii) the application of usual cost accounting practices of beneficiaries.
- (b) draft budgets established on a case-by-case basis and agreed on ex-ante by the body selecting the operation in the case of interventions in the wine and apiculture sectors or the body approving the operational programs referred to in Article 50 in the case of interventions in the other eligible sectors;
- (c) in accordance with the rules for the application of corresponding unit costs, lump sums, and flat rates applicable in Union policies for a similar type of intervention;
- (d) in accordance with the rules for the application of corresponding unit costs, lump sums, and flat rates applied under support schemes funded entirely by the Member State for a similar type of intervention.



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Hungary



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Accordingly, the Managing Authority had the necessity to determine the unit cost of reference for training interventions.

Solution

The solution adopted refers to the verified historical data of the beneficiaries (option a) ii)) collected for the Agri-food and preparatory training interventions that were funded under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

In practice..

In view to determine reliable unit costs, the identified solution applied a four-step approach:

1. Identification of the different types of training courses and the respective costs

On the basis of the experience of the previous financial period, the unit costs of four different types of training have been determined for the period 2023-2027, as their cost structure (e.g. depending on the length of the training material, the ratio of practical and theoretical hours, the number of organizational cost items) varies considerably. The following types of training are considered separately, taking into account both the current legal and regulatory environment and the expected needs of the final beneficiaries (e.g. farmers):

- vocational training: courses that are longer than of 280 hours on average. Generally, these types of training courses vary in length (e.g. beekeeping, global farming);
- other training: courses that are of 24 hours duration. These courses cover different priority topics such as young farmer training, producer groups, precision, innovative horticultural technologies, and entrepreneurial knowledge;
- official training: courses that are of 80 hours duration. This includes the 80-hour plant protection course and the agricultural tractor driver training;
- compulsory training: courses that are of 8 hours duration based on the obligations of the CAP Strategic Plan under the various interventions (e.g. agri-environment, eco-management, forest-environment, producer groups, young farmers, etc.).

2. Definition of eligible costs

The costs cover mainly staff costs (including coordination, instructors, and examiners), but also the preparation of didactical materials and the renting of rooms.

Overall, the following types of costs have been considered in determining the unit cost:

- Direct training costs: • writing and proofreading of course materials • copying • training of trainers • hourly rates for trainers • catering • room renting	- Organizational costs of courses and training: • IT system development • project management salary costs • staff costs of local/county coordinators • cost of customer service • telecommunications costs • operational costs (legal, procurement, data protection, finance) • overheads • reimbursement of car expenses • IT equipment
- Examination costs: • examiners' fees, • room hire cost	

3. Determination of costs per capita for each type of training course

For each type of training, the training organizations supported by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 have determined the average hourly rates, specific organization and examination fees, and cost items used in their practice, which have been sum-up¹. For examination fees, current market (or statutory) fees were considered. Based on the data collected, the per capita costs of the types of training supported are as follows:

Table 1 Cost per capita of subsidized training

Type if training	Number of hours per training	Direct cost of the training (EUR/person)	Organization costs (EUR/person)	Cost of examinations (EUR/person)	Total cost of the training (EUR/person)
Vocational training	280	921	205	466	1592
Other training	24	145	123	11	279
Official training	80	263	178	82	523
Compulsory training	8	26	96	11	133

Note: Data are based on reports of training bodies supported by the Hungarian RDP 2014-2020

4. Calculation of the unit costs per hour by type of training

For each type of training, the unit costs per hour are based on the number of participants planned in previous years, the total number of hours, and the total cost per person of the training

Table 2 Estimated unit costs per hour by type of training

Type if training	Planned n. of participants in training courses (A)	Total cost of training* (EUR) (B)	Total n. of hours of training (C)	Unit cost per hour of training EUR/hour/person (B)/(C)
Vocational training	2,505	3,987,411	701,400	5.7
Other training	6,350	1,771,041	152,400	11.6
Official training	7,100	3,715,342	568,000	6.5
Compulsory training	31,730	4,224,871	253,840	16.6
Total	47,685	13,698,666	1,675,640	8.2

**Total training cost per person x number of participants planned.*

Note: The exchange rate used is HUF 365/EUR

The calculations thus show that the overall average unit cost of the subsidized training is therefore EUR 8.2/hour.

Practical implications for replicability

- Under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 the adoption of standard cost has been further simplified. In the case of measures that include some form of training, the input may be the unit cost.
- Availability/Preliminary calculation of unit costs already reported for the different types of training courses realized during the previous programming period.
- The average unit cost of the overall intervention could only be determined if the monitoring system reports the data on the number of hours planned for the four types of training.

Benefits

- The methodology can be put in use to estimate budgets for training interventions-types
- Evidence-based methodology for the determination of standard cost allows the best approximation to real costs of training courses.
- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and time to spend on budgeting
- Incentivization for training organizations to give supported training for beneficiaries.

Further information

- [Hungary CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Ministry of Agriculture \(HU\)](#)

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2.4 Standard costs to incentivize the interactive participation of farmers/foresters to cooperation for innovation

Rationale

The implementation of multi-actor approaches (MAA) to cooperation for innovation is a challenge for farmers/foresters, as they require certain commitment and the distraction from typical on-field farming activities which is due to their participation in interactions with the partners within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (e.g. participation in project meetings, European CAP Network).

This represents a deterrent to farmer'/forester's active participation in multi-actor innovations. During the project life of an OG, in addition to the investment on innovative tangible/intangible assets, a farmer/forester is committed to two overarching types of interactive activities with other partners of the OG that are instrumental to the effective implementation of the multi-actor and interactive innovation process: (1) joint actions of the OG for internal coordination and interactions, external dissemination and peer-to-peer activities (e.g. general assembly of the partners, demonstration of innovation, showcases, cross-visits, CAP network events) and (2) technical meetings aimed at co-development, co-adaptation and adoption of innovation (e.g. practical on-field and laboratory tests,).

During these cooperation actions, the farmer/forester provides some relevant contribution to the development and dissemination of the innovation, through sharing his practical and exclusive knowledge and experience within and outside the OG.



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs, interactive innovation, operational groups, remuneration



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Italy: Sardinia Region, Emilia-Romagna Region

So determined, the standard cost will be the base for the calculation of the amount of remuneration that it is eligible for the farmer/forester, in relation the actual engagement into joint actions (box 3).

Solution

The introduction of standard costs served the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the RDPs of Sardinia Region and Emilia-Romagna Region recognizing a remuneration of the farmer/forester to the cooperation for innovation project correspondent to the time spent in joint activities of the OG.

The methodology adopted for the determination of the standard cost is the ones already in use by the European Research H2020 framework programme, that recognizes unit costs/hourly rates for a SME owner/beneficiary that is a natural person not receiving a salary for carrying out project activities¹.

This implies also that this methodology is compliant with the principles of²:

- being a fair, equitable and verifiable calculation method,
- using the values identified for other EU policies, similar operations and beneficiaries.

In practice...

The selected methodology for the calculation of the standard cost for the case of type 1) of joint actions of the OG is based on the parameters that are, by convention, established by the H2020 programme³ and listed in box 1.

Box 1: Conventional parameters for the calculation of the standard cost

- (A) Units: hours worked on the joint action
- (B) Maximum yearly productive hours= 1720
- (C) Maximum monthly productive hours: $1720 \div 12 = 143$.
- (D) Monthly living allowance: EUR 4.880,00*
- (E) Unit cost = Hourly rate = $\text{EUR } 4.880,00 \div 143 \text{ hours} = \text{EUR } 34,12$
- (F) Country-specific correction coefficient*
- **Standard cost** = Units (A) $\times$ Hourly rate (E) $\times$ country-specific correction coefficient (F)

** The applicable monthly living allowance and the country-specific correction coefficients were set out in the Work Programme (section 3 MSCA) in force at the time of the call for applications of OGs (2018-2019).*

In practice, for example, in the case of 16 hours worked by the farmers/foresters on the joint action, the two MAs adopted the following formula to determine the eligible amount of remuneration (box 2).

Box 2: Calculation of the standard cost for Italy

Standard cost = EUR 34,12 ("E" for Italy) $\times$ 106,7% (F) = EUR 36,41

Box 3: Remuneration of the farmer/forester

$$\text{Eligible amount of remuneration} = \text{EUR } 36,41 \times 16 (A) = \text{EUR } 582,50$$

So determined, the standard cost will be the base for the calculation of the amount of remuneration that it is eligible for the farmer/forester, in relation the actual engagement into joint actions (box 3). As for the case of the participation of the farmer/forester to the technical meetings of the OG (point 1) under Rationale §),

- Sardinia Region applies the methodology shown in boxes 2 and 3 but under the following conditions: a) maximum eligible commitment of the farmer and forester is up to 200 hours per year; the man-day of a farmer is established by convention as equal to 6.3 hours of work.
- Emilia-Romagna Region adopted the hourly rate established by the national legislation for a farm employed worker that is equal to EUR 19,5.

Practical implications for replicability

Under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 the adoption of standard cost has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements still remain relevant:

- Standard unit costs set up for the research programme Horizon Europe, instead of the Horizon 2020, should be applied for the case of CAP SP 2023-2027.
- The standard unit cost used for H2020 is based on the average salaries of research staff calculated at European basis, which are likely to differ from the actual average income levels of EU farmers participating in OGs.
- The MA should clearly foresee the use of standard costs and indicate the adoption of the specific methodology (e.g. H2020 programme) by the CAP SP and the call for applications of the OGs.
- MA clearly indicates the necessary documentation to demonstrate the real engagement of the farmer/forester in interactive actions (e.g. timesheets and collection of signatures during the meetings, reports) and to attach to the request for remuneration of the farmer/forester.
- The corrective country-specific coefficient for H2020 projects is calculated on the basis of the final accounts for each full financial year. This means that administrations need to take care to update the parameter to the financial year of the publication of the call/grant for the OGs.
- If several public calls for applications are published during the implementation period of the CAP SP, MA may have to apply different standard unit costs depending on the financial year of the publication of each call/grant for the OGs.
- Alternatively, administrations may use an average of country-specific coefficients established for the Horizon Europe during the programming period 2023-2027.
- This methodology does not refer to the loss of income, which is due to the farmer's temporary distraction from the on-field farming activities.

Benefits

- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for budgeting.
- Equal treatment of farmers/foresters and other OG's partners (e.g. researchers, academics).
- Incentivization for farmers/foresters to actively participate in OG.

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Further information

- [Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\) – Emilia-Romagna Region](#)
- [Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\) – Sardinia Region](#)
- [Guidelines of the National Rural Network \(EN\) – Simplified costs for operational groups. \(2018\)](#)
- H2020 Model Grant Agreement (Annex 2a): H2020 General MGA ([Multi: v5.0 18.10.2017](#)).

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2.5 Simplified cost options (SCOs) for advisory services

Rationale

The extreme heterogeneity and variability of agricultural advisory services and fees of the advisors is a challenging aspect for the Managing Authorities who support interventions relating to their use and provision.

Financing even small-scale projects often requires burdensome technical and administrative activities, involving numerous human resources and a large volume of documents to be verified for each application.

Moreover, the administrative burdens might be a deterrent also for, especially individual, advisors to apply to CAP for the provision of advisory services.

However, this type of intervention is extremely relevant to improve the farming practices and performances of the farmers towards more sustainable and competitive agriculture.

The following issues were encountered in delivering and accessing to interventions relating to the use and setting up of advisory services:

- Lack of standards (e.g. tariff/fee listing) for calculating the amount of financial resources to allocate on calls for applications and in relation to the target number of expected beneficiaries;
- Lack of standards for gaging the value for money and comparability of the applications to CAP interventions;
- Possible diversity of tariffs/fees applied by the agricultural advisors to the clients (e.g. farmers);
- Difficulties in defining the global fee for the provision of a mix of advisory services that reflect the diversity of services and covers the possible expenses of the advisor;
- Need to minimize the error rates in reporting and paying the fees/costs of the advisory services funded by the CAP;



Keywords

Simplification, Simplified cost options, advisory services, Interactive innovation, Operational Groups



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Italy: Sardinia Region



- Need to simplify administrative burdens for reporting the costs/fees relating to the use and provision of advisory services under the CAP programmes;
- Need to incentivize the advisors applying for CAP measures.

Solution

The use of Simplified Cost Options (SCO) is considered to be highly effective in reducing administrative burden and error rates. To this end the National Rural network (NRN), through a guideline document, provided the methodology for the determination of a standard unit cost (SUC) to apply to M2 of the RDPs 2014-2022 for those categories of advisory providers that most significantly cover the CAP topics: agronomist, land surveyor, agrotechnicians and veterinarians (only animal husbandry). The latter categories were identified by considering the experts' opinion and the information collected over the use/provision of farm advisory services applied under the RDPs 2007-2013 (M114).

The overall methodology for the determination of the SUC was concerted among some thematic experts of the NRN (i.e. experts on simplified costs, farm advisory services), 5 representatives of the MAs of the RDPs and 16 advisory organizations of across Italy.

All in all, it was decided to determine one hourly SUC with the view to cover both, the fees and the possible costs being occurred for the provision of advisory services (for field visits and for equipment).

The list of the documentation to provide for the probation of the effective provision of the planned farm advisory services includes:

- Report on the farm advisory services provided by farms.
- List of participants with signatures probing the field visits and meetings with clients.

During the programming period 2014-2020, this solution was adopted for 28 out of 361 (78%) calls for applications on advisory services (Measure 2.1), so that the standard unit cost was applied to about 18.200 beneficiaries under Measure 2.1 of 17 Italian RDPs 2014-2020.

In practice...

A mix of methods, tools and sources of information were applied to collect and validate relevant information: (a) desk research on official statistical data; (b) surveys to public servants that were responsible for M2 of the RDPs and to 340 advisors to collect experts' opinions, data and information and to validate the consistency of the results of the calculations/official statistics.

The variables were determined as it follows:

A. Hourly standard fee of the advisory services' provision.

This is determined by considering the diversity in types of advisory services (box 1), of advisory methods (es. Individual/in-group), of typologies of advisory organizations (freelance or associated advisory body). In practice, the average hourly standard fee³ of advisors, that is equal to EUR 44,00, is drawn from the statistical data of income sector studies provided by the national revenue agency. This reflects the average remuneration of the abovementioned categories of farm advisory providers by the year of the guideline document of the NRN (2018; 2023).

B. Working hours needed for the provision of the advisory services.

On this regards, two main types of advisory services normally provided under the CAP were distinguished as they have different implications in terms of commitment by the advisors. (table 1).

Table 1: Types of advisory services applied under the RDPs 2007-2013 (M114)

Type of advisory service	Basic provision of advisory services	Specialized advisory services
Purpose	solutions to problems related to techniques and fulfilments of which the entrepreneur (or the entrepreneurs in the case of collective consultancy) is competent, but needs advice, improvement adjustments.	solutions to problems that require the use of an innovative technique, tool or method innovative management method, even within a usual production process.
Methods	a) direct confrontation at the engineer's office, b) information gathering by means of multimedia tools or by comparison with different subjects, c) direct comparison at the company, d) planning, management and coordination.	a) direct confrontation at the technician's office, b) gathering information by means of multimedia tools or by comparison with different subjects, c) carrying out practical test practical test at the user's company or other company to verify how the innovative solution identified, individually or collectively, d) direct comparison at the company the company(ies), e) design, management and coordination.
Working hours	14	26
Field visits	1	2

C. Travel costs for field visits and meetings with clients

In order to recognize a refund for travels these category of costs are based on a mileage refund, so that the SUC is determined just to cover the average cost occurred by the advisor to reach the farm by car, as it follows: (i) the average distance from office to clients that, based on advisors' opinions, was determined as equal to 50 Km per field visit and, (ii) the average rate of refunding per kilometre (Km), that it is established on annual basis by the Ministry of Transport and it was determined as equal to EUR 0,40 (2017; updated to 0,50 in 2023).

D. Overheads to cover indirect expenses relating, for example, to equipment (e.g. tests, meeting room renting, telephone bills).

By referring to art. 68, 1.b) of the EU reg. 1303/2013, overheads are fixed on a flat rate equal to 15% of the direct eligible personnel costs, that, by assumption for the purpose of the SUC, are represented by the hourly standard fee (A).

Based on the identification of the abovementioned variables, the SUC for the two types of advisory services are calculated as it is showed in boxes 1 and 2.

Table 2: Determination of Standard Unit Costs

Type of farm advisory services	Variable	Year 2017	Year 2023
Basic fam advisory service	(A) Hourly fee for the provision of the advisory services	EUR 44	EUR 51
	(B1) Average working hours spent on advisory provision	14 hours	14 hours
	(B2) Average n. of visit at farm	1	1
	(C1) Average kilometers to reach the farm	50 Km (100 Km D/R)	50 Km (100 Km D/R)
	(C2) Average rate per Km	EUR 0,40	EUR 0,50
	(C3) Hourly rate of travel expenses = $(C1 * 2 * C2) / B1$	EUR 2,86	EUR 2,86
	(D1) Flat rate for overheads	15%	15%
	(D2) Overheads = $(A) * (D1)$	EUR 6,60	EUR 6,60
	Hourly Standard Unit Cost = $(A) + (C3) + (D2)$	EUR 53,46	EUR 61,17
Specialistic fam advisory service	(A) Hourly fee for the provision of the advisory services	EUR 44	EUR 51
	(B1) Average working hours spent on advisory provision	26 hours	26 hours
	(B2) Average n. of visit at farm	2	2
	(C1) Average kilometers to reach the farm	50 Km (100 Km D/R)	50 Km (100 Km D/R)
	(C2) Average rate per Km	EUR 0,40	EUR 0,50
	(C3) Hourly rate of travel expenses = $(C1 * 2 * C2) / B1$	EUR 2,86	EUR 2,86
	(D1) Flat rate for overheads	15%	15%
	(D2) Overheads = $(A) * (D1)$	EUR 6,60	EUR 6,60
	Hourly Standard Unit Cost = $(A) + (C3) + (D2)$	EUR 53,68	EUR 61,45
Simplified Hourly Standard Unit Cost		EUR 54,00	EUR 62,00

In practice, for simplification, only one SUC was determined as reference for the provision of both types of advisory services provided under the RDPs 2014-2020 in Italy (EUR 54,00 at 2018; EUR 62,00 at 2023).

So calculated, the SUC represents and all-inclusive hourly fee that, as multiplied by the n. of hours actually spent for the provision of one advisory service, determines the global remuneration to refund to the advisor.

Practical implications for replicability

The use of standard costs under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements still remain relevant:

- Availability of reliable series of historical data at country/territorial/sector level in order to determine the best possible approximation to an economic treatment that it is already in use by the concerned advisors.
- The methodology for standard costs determination should be shared with MAs, advisory organizations and experts in order to capture the country specificities.
- The methodology behind the so-defined standard unit cost tends to flat the diversity of possible advisory services being provided under one type of CAP intervention.
- The methodology for standard costs determination should be better shared with the paying agency and made clear by the calls for applications. As well, MA must clearly list the documentation that is required to demonstrate the effective provision of the advisory service.

Benefits

- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for budgeting/costs reporting.
- The so-defined standard unit cost can be used for the CAP Strategic Plans, including budgeting and target indicators setting.
- Incentivization of advisors to apply to CAP interventions.

Further information

- *Analysis on the adoption of simplified cost options (SCOs) developed by NRN-Ismea in the RDPr calls of the 2014-2020 programming period"* - NRN 2020 (IT)
- *Methodology for the identification of standard cost units (SCUs) for advisory services financed by RDP sub-measure 2.1"* - NRN 2018 and 2023 (IT)-
- *National Rural Network call database (September 2023) (IT)*
- *European Court of Auditors. European Annual Report on the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2012 (2013/C 331/01).(IT)*
- *European Commission (2014). Guide to Simplified Cost Options (CSOs) - European Structural and Investment Funds (EIS Funds) - EGESIF 14-0017. (EN)*

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2.6 Standard Unit Costs for vocational training

Rationale

The implementation of the RDPs 2014-2020 made evident the need to simplify the administrative procedures for reporting the costs of the training bodies, at the penalty of low level of applications and of access to vocational training by the farmers, other farm workers and advisors (M1 and M2).

Solution

During the programming period 2014-2022, for the purpose of simplifying the planning and reporting of vocational training activities (M1 and M2), the Managing Authority (MA) of the Tuscany Region adopted a simplified cost options (SCO) method that was based on the series of historical monitoring data already gathered for training courses that were realized under the ROP - Regional Operational Programme of European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-2013.

In practice...

As a first step, monitoring data were clustered by the following key variables that normally affect the costs of training:

- A. Category of costs of training: A1 - Training Structural Costs; A2 - Attendance costs.
- B. Duration of the training in hours: B1 – Long term training (≥ 61); B2 – Medium term training ($\geq 21 \leq 60$); B3 - Short term training (≤ 20).



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Italy: Tuscany Region

Secondly, average costs were determined for the variables A. in relation to the duration of the trainings (variable B).

As a matter of fact, the results of the data analyses brought to three SUCs that depend on the duration of the trainings (table 2).

Table 1: Categories of costs relating to vocational training under RDPs

Structural Costs of Training (SCT)	Attendance costs (EA)
They are fixed costs that relate directly to the overall structural organization and realization of the training course. They depend on the duration of the training.	They are variable costs relating to the number of trainees, of the duration of the training and of training methods and tools
This category includes: • fees of teaching staff (training, tutoring, coaching) • travel and accommodation of Teaching staff • classrooms and equipment • teaching materials • fees of Project manager; coordinator; administrative staff • legal and financial services • fees of commissions of evaluation • Overheads	This category includes: • allowances/insurance for trainees • travel and accommodation of trainees • information and publicity of the training courses • teaching materials (e.g., texts/exercises, brochures, consumable materials) • field visits and other events • care services • software users' licenses • final reports

Table 2: SUC for vocational training under RDPs

Category of cost (EUR)	Duration of the training (hours)		
	B1. Long term training (≥ 61)	B2. Medium term training (≥21≤60)	B3. Short term training (≤20)
A1. Training Structural Costs (TSC)	161,47	196,81	254,31
A2. Attendance costs (EA)*	1,35	1,7	2,2

**For single trainee.*

The costs of each training course are then determined by the following formula:

Box 1: Calculation of training courses under RDPs

Total cost = A1(B1; B2; B3) + (A2(B1; B2; B3) × n. trainee))

Practical implications for replicability

The use of standard costs under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements still remain relevant:

- Availability of reliable series of historical data at country/territorial/sector level in order to determine the best possible approximation to the cost of training courses. However, this kind of data seems to be often available for other funds (such as ESF).
- The methodology for standard costs determination should be shared with MAs, training providers and experts in order to capture the country specificities.
- The use of standard costs and the related methodology to calculate them, should be clearly reported in the CAP Strategic Plan and in the call for training activities.

Benefits

- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for budgeting.
- Facilitation for the achievement of targets.
- Definition of a homogeneous cost across the country, avoiding excessive disparities.

Further information

- [Public call for training and skills acquisition \(IT\)](#)

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2.7 Use of simplified cost options for partners of OGs

Rationale

The implementation of multi-actor approaches (MAA) to cooperation for innovation is a challenge for many stakeholders, as they require certain commitment and the distraction from typical on-field farming activities which is due to their participation in interactions with the partners within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (e.g. participation in project meetings, European CAP Network).

Given the example of use of Simplified Cost Options in other Member States and other regions of Spain, it was decided to seek their use.



Keywords

CAP intervention, Supra-regional operational groups, EIP-Agri, Simplified Cost Options, unit costs



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Spain. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food



The Ministry of Agriculture decided to carry out a study to reduce the administrative burden of the procedure and to speed up the concession deadlines.

The data used in the SCO study, which will make it possible to identify SCO for the current programming, come from sub-grant payment files under coordination sub-measures 16.1 and 16.2. These are aid for the creation of supra-regional operational groups in relation to the EIP-Agri granted under the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) 2014-2020 and aid for the implementation of innovation projects of general interest by operational groups of the EIP-Agri granted under the NRDP 2014-2020, respectively. The data, provided by the paying agency (FEGA), responsible for the management and control of expenditure, at the request of the instructor body of aid (General Subdirectorate of Innovation and Digitalisation) have been from different calls for grants.

Solution

The Directorate-General for Rural Development, Innovation and Agri-Food Training, through the Subdirectorate-General for Innovation and Digitalisation; promoted a SCO study in order to address, on the one hand, the repeated recommendations of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), on the promotion and extension of the use of SCO, and on the other, to respond to the difficulties encountered during the management of EIP-AGRI aid, of the current cooperation measure in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Aid for the establishment of operational groups of the EIP AGRI and the implementation of innovative projects by these groups have been programmed in 15 of the 17 regional Rural Development Programmes as well as in the NRDP, with a great reception by the agricultural sector, forestry and livestock.

Despite the differences in the implementation of these aids in the different programs, the managers agree on the complexity of their management (and justification by the beneficiaries); by the typology of the beneficiary (groups of beneficiaries of different legal nature), diversity of innovation projects, the multiannual nature of innovative projects, the wide variety of eligible costs, among others.

The SCO study chosen, has been carried out by TRAGSATEC (MAPA's entity), following the work scheme drawn up by the Subdirectorate. Thus, to prepare the proposal for the implementation of SCO, in the next programming period of the CAP 2023-2027, in the aid for the cooperation of OGs of the EIP-AGRI, it has been necessary to identify different SCO alternatives, determined from the study of costs of aid files for the creation and operation of OG at supra-regional level, and for the execution of innovative projects of general interest to be executed by supra-regional OGs (submeasures 16.1 and 16.2 of the NRDP), observing in all phases of the study the applicable regulations, and selecting the proposal for the implementation of SCO, which guarantees compliance with the principle of sound financial management and in particular the principles of economy, efficiency and prohibition of double financing.

This SCO study with comparable data would be the key element to implement SCO in the intervention 7161.

In practice...

Alternative 1: sets a unit cost (EUR/hour), calculated from the average hourly cost value determined using the staff costs available in the sample of files reviewed by the managing body with expenditure documents. In this case, the average value resulting from the calculation of the real hourly cost per worker without limits and with social security, by occupational group is taken. The values considered atypical of each of the occupational groups have been excluded from the calculation.

Calculation method: application of the average unit cost, calculated for each occupational group, shown in the following table, to each justified hour of the workers participating in the project.

Unit cost according to professional group (EUR/hour)				
SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4	SC5
27,59	19,61	15,93	15,42	12,47

Source: own elaboration based on Staff Costs review data of files of submeasure 16.2 of calls 2018, 2019 and 2020

Alternative 2: application of the unit cost (EUR/hour), calculated from the median and mode obtained using the staff costs available in the sample of files reviewed by the managing body with expenditure documents. In this case, the value of the median resulting from the calculation of the real hourly cost per worker with limits and with social security by occupational group, for groups SC1, SC2 and SC3, and mode, for groups SC4 and SC5 to provide the best results. Outliers are excluded from the calculation.

Calculation method: application of the unit cost calculated for each professional group, is shown in the following table to each justified hour of the workers participating in the project.

Unit cost according to professional group (EUR/hour)				
SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4	SC5
21,35	17,76	14,03	11,68	11,00

Source: own elaboration based on Staff Costs review data of files of submeasure 16.2 of calls 2018, 2019 and 2020

Alternative 1, unit cost (euros/hour), calculated from the average value of unlimited personnel costs, is selected as the fairest and most equitable.

Tabla 9. Comparación CU gastos personal (Importes propuestos OCS/Importes convocatoria 2022).

Costes Unitarios - Opción de simplificación de coste de personal seleccionada en el estudio			Coste horario máximo de la última convocatoria de ayuda 16.2 (2022)		
Grupo profesional	Coste horario sin SS (EUR/hora)	Coste horario con SS (EUR/hora)	Grupo profesional	Máximo coste horario sin SS (EUR/hora)	Máximo coste horario con SS (EUR/hora)
		SS % (moda GP)*			SS 31,55%*
1	21,00	27,59	1	17,62	23,18
2	14,91	19,61	2	14,63	19,24
3	12,12	15,93	3	11,56	15,21
4	11,74	15,42	4	10,00	13,16
5	9,23	12,47	5	9,73	12,8
* Se aplica la moda obtenida, para cada grupo profesional, en la muestra de datos de personal utilizados en el Análisis "Consultas GP_% SS".			* Se toma el coeficiente de SS más frecuente y que coincide con la media de los datos del Análisis "Consultas GP_% SS".		

Source: own elaboration based on Staff Costs review data of files of submeasure 16.2 of calls 2018, 2019 and 2020, and call 2022

Practical implications for replicability

Under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 the adoption of unit costs has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements still remain relevant:

- The maximum of 1,720 annual hours is maintained, applied in the 2014-2020 programming (in its last calls) or its proportional part in case of reductions in working hours, as well as your maximum monthly hours.
- Its application is proposed to all workers of the beneficiary member, whether they are employed or self-employed workers (provided they justify a relationship with the member beneficiary, for example, corporate self-employed or dependents). They will not be included those independent self-employed workers who provide subcontracted services.
- The Professional Groups that will determine the unit cost to be applied will be assigned by contribution group of the worker in employed workers (supporting document Quote Data Report-employed worker) and with an academic degree in self-employed workers, to avoid erroneous assignments and unify necessary information in a single document exhibit.
- The calculation may be carried out globally for the entire subsidized project or by activity blocks, if established in the new programming and depending on the options that are selected for other expenses

Benefits

- Reduction of the administrative burden.
- Simpler supporting documentation.
- Simplify cost moderation.
- Calculation and control that does not require technical profiles with training in labor issues.
- Efficiency improvement.
- Unit cost known in advance by the beneficiary, which makes it easier to establish more realistic budgets.
- Fewer involuntary errors due to ignorance of aspects of justification of expenses.
- Speeding up the administrative procedure.

Further information

- [Regulatory bases 7161 intervention for supra-regional operational groups \(2023-2027\) \(SP\)](#)
- [Call of 2023 for 7161 intervention for supra-regional operational groups \(2023\) \(SP\)](#)
- [MAPA associated electronic headquarters for 7161 intervention for supra-regional oprational groups \(SP\). Spain.](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1303/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1305/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1306/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 640/2014 of 11 March 2014](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2017/891 of 13 March 2017](#)
- [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046 of 18 July 2018](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060 of 24 June 2021](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2115 of 2 December 2021](#)
- [Commission notice guidelines on the use of simplified cost options within the european structural and investment funds \(esi\) – revised version \(2021/c 200/01\). \(En\) European Union](#)

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2.8 Simplified costs options trans-regional operational groups

Rationale

The implementation of multi-actor approaches (MAA) to cooperation for innovation is a challenge for many stakeholders, as they require certain commitment and the distraction from typical on-field farming activities which is due to their participation in interactions with the partners within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (e.g. participation in project meetings, European CAP Network).

This is a deterrent to workers' active participation in multi-actor project activities, so it is important to properly recognize the contribution of partners by establishing appropriate remuneration.

Solution

The Directorate-General for Rural Development, Innovation and Agri-Food Training, through the Subdirectorate-General for Innovation and Digitalisation; promoted a SCO study in order to address, on the one hand, the repeated recommendations of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), on the promotion and extension of the use of SCO, and on the other, to respond to the difficulties encountered during the management of EIP-AGRI aid, of the current cooperation measure in the 2014-2020 programming period.



Keywords

Administrative simplification, Simplified Cost Options, interactive innovation, Operational Groups



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Spain. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Aid for the establishment of operational groups of the EIP AGRI and the implementation of innovative projects by these groups have been programmed in 15 of the 17 regional Rural Development Programmes as well as in the NRDP, with a great reception by the agricultural sector, forestry and livestock.

Despite the differences in the implementation of these aids in the different programs, the managers agree on the complexity of their management (and justification by the beneficiaries); by the typology of the beneficiary (groups of beneficiaries of different legal nature), diversity of innovation projects, the multiannual nature of innovative projects, the wide variety of eligible costs, among others.

Given the example of use of Simplified Cost Options in other Member States and other regions of Spain, it was decided to seek their use; [this specifically concerns the determination and use of a standard hourly cost for staff employed in GOs.](#)

The Ministry of Agriculture decided to carry out a study to reduce the administrative burden of the procedure and to speed up the concession deadlines.

The data used in the SCO study, which will make it possible to identify SCO for the current programming, come from sub-grant payment files under coordination sub-measures 16.1 and 16.2. These are aid for the creation of supra-regional operational groups in relation to the EIP-Agri granted under the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) 2014-2020 and aid for the implementation of innovation projects of general interest by operational groups of the EIP-Agri granted under the NRDP 2014-2020, respectively. The data, provided by the paying agency (FEGA), responsible for the management and control of expenditure, at the request of the instructor body of aid (General Subdirectorate of Innovation and Digitalisation) have been from different calls for grants. The SCO study chosen, has been carried out by TRAGSATEC (MAPA's entity), following the work scheme drawn up by the Subdirectorate. Thus, to prepare the proposal for the implementation of SCO, in the next programming period of the CAP 2023-2027, in the aid for the cooperation of OGs of the EIP-AGRI, it has been necessary to identify different SCO alternatives, determined from the study of costs of aid files for the creation and operation of OG at supra-regional level, and for the execution of innovative projects of general interest to be executed by supra-regional OGs (submeasures 16.1 and 16.2 of the NRDP), observing in all phases of the study the applicable regulations, and selecting the proposal for the implementation of SCO, which guarantees compliance with the principle of sound financial management and in particular the principles of economy, efficiency and prohibition of double financing.

This SCO study with comparable data would be the key element to implement SCO in the intervention 7161.

In practice...

The data used in the study comes from payment files of submeasure 16.1, of aid for the creation of supra-autonomous operational groups in relation to the execution of innovation projects of general interest by operational groups of the European Association for Innovation in this field. of agricultural productivity and sustainability, granted within the framework of the NRDP 2014-2020 (2016 and 2018 calls).

These are the requested records of individual expenses, for each beneficiary member, reviewed in administrative control with determination of the admissible and non-admissible amount of each individual expense, without application of the discounts that may apply due to limits subsequent to the of the expenditure itself (that is, by concept of total expenditure, performance or aspects of the file itself).

In the activity of collecting data on requested/paid costs, provided by the managing body of these grants, a total of 15,857 records have been received, corresponding to the 2016 and 2018 calls. This information is collected in the files "Data Expenses 16.1 Call 2016.xlsx" and "Data Expenses 16.1 Call 2018.xlsx" respectively.

It is considered that the available data are valid for the study to be carried out, given the origin (General Subdirectorate of Innovation and Digitalization/FEGA), the controls to which they have been subjected and their belonging to operations equal to those in which they are intended to be used.

In the data evaluation and purification process carried out so that the universe of data on which the study is based offers the best quality guarantees, all data considered unsuitable are excluded (the details of the evaluation and data purification is included in section 4 of the Study of simplified cost options). In the final universe of data there is a total of 15,049 expense records with which to execute the analyses. These already purified expenses are available in the files corresponding to the corrected version: "Expense Data 16.1 Call 2016_VC.xlsx" and "Expense Data 16.2 Call 2018_VC.xlsx".

The proposed SCO consists of applying flat-rate financing. The amount to be applied if the aid expense is requested would be:

Project preparation expenses = 12,600 EUR

Expenditure concepts included:

1. Innovation broker subcontracting.
2. Services for the preparation of studies and diagnoses linked to the group's theme, business plans or equivalent, design and drafting of the project, or carrying out evaluations or analyzes aimed at defining and assessing the expected results and impacts.
3. Subcontracting for preparation and writing of the innovation project (which will include expenses related to the initial activities of the OG).

A. Definition of the calculation method.

The simplified cost option selected consists, as stated in the previous section, of applying a single lump sum amount for project preparation (considering the expenses included in the expense categories).

The calculation, both in aid and payment, will consist of applying the established fixed amount whenever this expense is charged.

Contracting expenses for project preparation (after rounding the value obtained) = 12,600.00 EUR.

This implies that this amount will be applied to both aid and payment, without other conditions or limitations being established.

B. Conditions of Application. Calculation and control in aid and payment.

This expense does have clear conditions of application, in payment, because it is subject to the delivery of the report of the innovation project to be subsidized.

Its application does not involve any calculation or selection. The amount of the eligible lump sum will be taken, both in aid and payment.

Example of application: justification of the execution of an innovation project in which project preparation costs have been requested.

Calculation: fill in the fixed lump sum amount of EUR 12,600.00 in the section for this expense.

Supporting documentation:

Request for help: it is essential to present the complete drafted innovation project, with its narrative report and its associated budget and its justification, as well as all additional documentation established in the call. The project must be selected for execution in the investigation process, so that the lump sum amount is eligible for subsidy.

Payment request: it is essential that the project executed is in accordance with that approved in the Concession Resolution or its modification. In any case, an attached supporting document will be requested that explains the minor changes that have occurred in the execution of the project that do not conform to the selected project.

Practical implications for replicability

Starting premises of the selected proposal:

- The justification alternative is applicable to the entire file. A flat-rate amount would be calculated for the total project preparation expenses (considering the expenses contemplated in the expense categories).
- The logical thing is that the allocation of this expense occurs in the first year, either by a single member who is responsible for this expense or distributed among several (aspect to be defined in the regulatory bases of the aid).

Benefits

- Reduction of the administrative burden.
- Simpler supporting documentation.
- Simplify cost moderation.
- Calculation and control that does not require technical profiles with training in labor issues.
- Efficiency improvement.
- Budget established according to a known expense that makes it easier to establish more realistic aid budgets.
- Fewer involuntary errors due to poor application of expense justification aspects.

Further information

- [Regulatory bases 7161 intervention for supra-regional operational groups \(2023-2027\) \(SP\)](#)
- [Call of 2023 for 7161 intervention for supra-regional operational groups \(2023\) \(SP\)](#)
- [MAPA associated electronic headquarters for 7161 intervention for supra-regional oprational groups \(SP\). Spain.](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1303/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1305/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1306/2013 of 17 december 2013](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 640/2014 of 11 March 2014](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2017/891 of 13 March 2017](#)
- [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046 of 18 July 2018](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060 of 24 June 2021](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2115 of 2 December 2021](#)
- [Commission notice guidelines on the use of simplified cost options within the european structural and investment funds \(esi\) – revised version \(2021/c 200/01\). \(En\) European Union](#)

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Theme n. 3

Training and knowledge exchange

Training and knowledge exchange





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Knowledge exchange and vocational training

Rationale

What competences for advisors?

Strengthening competencies is one of the two main paths to strengthen the agricultural advisory services within the AKIS.

Art. 15 Reg. (EC) 2021/2115 states that "*Member States shall include in their CAP Strategic Plans a system providing services for advising farmers and other beneficiaries of CAP support on land management and farm management ('farm advisory services'). Member States may build upon existing systems. The farm advisory services shall cover economic, environmental and social dimensions, taking into account existing farming practices, and deliver up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by means of research and innovation projects, including as regards the provision of public goods...*".

The aim of this provision is to support farm decision-making through a holistic approach, integrating the various sources of information and the farm context. The advisor should be able to consider all aspects of agriculture, from the overall effect on farm profitability to changing parts of production to specific technical advice. In short, the aim is to promote prompt, tailor-made, trusted advice.

To this aim, Member States must ensure adequate training and the integration of all advisors, public and private.

Since the challenges are becoming more and more complex, advisors should be ready for change. Linear advice (based on technical knowledge transfer) will always continue to play a role, but the future advisor should be more listening-oriented, able to act as an intermediary and to support the farmer by adapting information to the specific farm circumstances and farmer's needs. Moreover, more and more competences are needed to support multi-actor innovation processes.



Keywords

Training, advisors, integration



Potential users

Managing Authorities, trainers, advisors, farmers and other agricultural workers



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Acquiring soft skills, including cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve complex problems, asks for new training approaches based on experiential and transformative learning and interactive methods.

In this respect, the SWG SCAR-AKIS Policy Brief on New approaches on Agricultural Education Systems recommend focusing on multi-actor approaches (e.g., masterclasses that could be developed by researchers, teachers/education and advisors together with agricultural entrepreneurs) and peer to peer learning initiatives (e.g., study groups).

Four different training practices are presented in this section: the Field Peer Review, the Cross-visit, Train-the-trainer for innovation support and the AKIS academy course.

The strategic function of training

Article 15 goes on to state that “...Farm advisory services shall be integrated within the interrelated services of farm advisors, researchers, farmer organisations and other relevant stakeholders that form the AKIS. Member States shall ensure that the advice given is impartial and that advisors are suitably qualified, appropriately trained and have no conflict of interest. The farm advisory services shall be adapted to the various types of production and farms”.

Education programmes for advisors are generally defined by advisors, education centres (e.g., universities), and public institutions responsible for policies/programmes, resulting in different objectives and achievements.

To better connect advisors into the AKIS, there is the need of aligning advisors' 'skills and messages they deliver to farmers to policies objectives, programmes and strategies focusing on agricultural and rural development.

Advisory services should cover the needs of a variety of farmers, both small and large scale, as well as have a deeper understanding of agroecological & organic practices and production techniques and how these can be applied in the different farming systems.

This is the main reason why advisors' training should be publicly funded.

Moreover, in many cases, specific advisory competences are missing (e.g., new techniques, new crops, minor sectors, drones, etc.) and this undermines farmers' trust.

Therefore, it is important to keep impartial advisors up with the latest knowledge in order to be on an equal footing with staff from private firms which is paid for commercial goals.

In addition, public authorities have a responsibility to push the knowledge frontier even further, communicating research results in a format so that the advisors can incorporate the new knowledge in their advice.

Since agricultural higher education is more and more going away from practical applications and getting oriented to the most “publishable” research results, the need for a more holistic approach offered by advisory services becomes more urgent.



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First insights from practices

The practices reported in this "Compendium" show new training methods already tested successfully by some European projects (Field Peer Review, Cross Visit, Train-the-trainer for innovation support). In particular, they highlight that to qualify innovation advisors, new approaches are needed that also enables the advisors, as trainees, a) to experience interactive innovation creation methods, b) to reflect upon their effects and impacts and c) to provide a safe space for practicing to get enough self-confidence before applying the methods in collaborative learning and daily work situation. Only if advisors experience themselves how it feels using interactive methods and how other actors in the innovation process are able to contribute and develop own ideas and come to solutions, they can apply such methods practically. This insight is a critical step in the process of transforming prevailing attitudes and values of agents and of evolving one-directional training behaviour into a more interactive one. The shortage of trainers having a participant-oriented learning attitude, using interactive training methods, and applying an experiential learning approach is certainly an issue. In this respect, CAP Strategic Plans should first be addressed to train the trainers, eventually with the support of new Horizon projects sharing the same goals of National SP. Finally, from the AKIS Accademy course, two further insights emerge: (i) the opportunity to use incentives to attend courses, (ii) the opportunity to implement continuous training over a period of time, by including a pull of AKIS experts/actors in planning and implementing the course.

Food for thinking

Advisor training is much more than a regulatory requirement. Training is an opportunity to continuously improve individuals' competencies, giving them the chance to explore topics of public interest and discover new things that open up new horizons. It also keeps professionals up to date with the rapidly changing environment and profession, providing them with the necessary competencies. All this results in a guarantee for farmers and foresters: a curious advisor, who does not stop updating, will continue to offer a quality service, thus gaining the trust of his/her clients.

In this perspective, we could raise a few questions (not exhaustive) to help us reflect on training implementation:

- How to define training of trainers? How to find trainers? How to ensure training replication on the territory by the trained advisors?
- How to define an effective training plan?
- How to define curricula for advisors that take into account the latest results of research and innovation projects?



How to follow-up with the results of collection of AKIS-in-practice!

- CoPs' workshop aimed at defining a training plan. The workshop could be attended, for instance, by trainers from the i2connect and ATTRACTISS projects (concerning soft skills) and trainers from projects that are working on technical aspects related to sustainability (e.g., Climate Smart Advisors).
- Agreements for the implementation of training modules developed by European projects within the framework of CAP-supported interventions: the Member State provides the course and the trainers are paid by the project.

Further information

- Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council, art. 15 and art. 78
- EU SCAR AKIS (2019), Preparing for Future AKIS in Europe. Brussels, European Commission.
- SWG SCAR-AKIS Policy Brief on New approaches on Agricultural Education Systems <https://scar-europe.org/akis-documents>
- Knierim A., Gerster-Bentaya M., Birke F., Bae S., Kelly T., 2020. Innovation advisors for interactive innovation process: Conceptual grounds and common understandings. [Deliverable 1.1](#) i2Connect project
- Wielinga E., Obrist R., Fontaine G., Duhamel S., 2020. "Didactical concept and toolkit for advisors' trainings" [Deliverable 3.2](#) i2connect project



3.1 AKIS Academy: an holistic approach to professional development of the advisors

Rationale

All advisors must be integrated within AKIS in an inclusive way, to be able to cover the economic, environmental and social dimensions and provide up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by R&I (art. 15 Reg. EU 2021/2115). In fact, The role of agricultural advisors within AKIS is extremely important, as they are one of the main sources of information for farmers' decision-making and they can act as innovation support services.

In this view, Managing Authorities through their AKIS Strategies of the CAP SP 2023-2027, have the opportunity to fund a variety of interventions that can be appropriately defined, combined and well-tailored to address the specific needs of local advisors and innovation support services providers for professional development. On this regards, over the last years, there have been outbreking advancements in defining new and innovative vocational trainings that, by benefitting from the most recent research on interactive innovation models, help the acquisition of soft skills and functional capacities which are fundamental to support those multiactor processes and the functioning of the AKISs.

During the programming period 2014-2020, the need for strengthening the competencies and skills of advisors on AKIS and interactive innovation processes, to allow them contributing to reinforce the AKIS, fostering and facilitating knowledge flows between research and practice and the multiactor innovation projects (EIP-Agri OG), was arisen by regional programme partnership of the RDP 2014-2020 in Veneto Region.



Keywords

Peer-to-peer learning, training, Operational Groups, advisor's Groups, interactive innovation



Potential users

Advisors and advisory organizations, Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Vocational training bodies



Country

Italy: Veneto Region

Particularly,, in this context, where there's a wide representation of the plurality of the local AKIS actors, it was decided to boost the professional development of the advisory services by combining the updating of the technical skills and competencies, towards a better alignment to regional CAP objectives, with the acquisition of functional capacities, oriented to help the sharing of knowledge and innovations and strengthening of the relations within the AKIS.

In this view, the MA delegated Veneto Agricoltura (box 1) to design and realize some vocational training. This is regional Agency for innovation in agriculture, an in-house body of Region Veneto.

Solution

One of the vocational training designed by Veneto Agricoltura to apply its mandate is the "AKIS academy course", which goal is to support strengthening the local AKIS, through increasing the capacities and skills of local advisors in facilitating knowledge flows and innovation processes (e.g. OGs) (table 1).

Box 1: Veneto Agricoltura: the regional Agency for innovation in agriculture

Veneto Agricoltura is the Veneto Region's Agency for Innovation in the Primary Sector, supporting the Regional Committee in the development of policies concerning farming, agro-food, forestry and fisheries sectors. The Agency deals with applied research carrying out experimental trials aimed at testing and disseminating technological, organizational, process and product innovation both to improve competitiveness of farms and productive chains and to promote environmental sustainability. To this end it sometimes avails itself of the cooperation of private producers. The safeguarding and protection of animal and plant biodiversity of agricultural, naturalistic and fishing interest, as well as the management of the region's state owned forests are among the goals pursued by the Agency. Testing and demonstrative activities are carried out within European, national and regional projects. Veneto Agricoltura is accredited for continuing vocational training under the regional law and it is certified by ISO 9001 for its training activities.

For more information
<https://www.venetoagricoltura.org/>

Table 1: General overview on the AKIS Academy Course

Playing innovation: policies and initiatives	Disseminating innovations: Professionalism, methods and tools	Playing innovation: participatory experiences in Veneto, Italy and Europe
AGRI Start up day: Introduction to the course	Advisory beyond advisory: approaches, methods and tools Planning advisory services	Playing collaborative innovation: methodologies and experiences
Public policies and farm management strategies for innovation	The advisor and peers Communication advisor-farmer	
The role of advisors in European projects	The contribution for training to innovation processes	Experiences of innovation (focus): in Veneto
Strengthening the AKIS in Veneto	Innovation by training: communicating and disseminating innovations Managing dissemination on filed and demofarm events	Experiences of innovation (focus): in Italy
Agristage abroad	The advisor as a teacher The advisor as writer Old and new social media tools for innovation dissemination	Experiences of innovation (focus): in Europe

In practice...

The duration of this course is about 150 hours. It is realized across years 2023-2024 and it is funded under the framework of M2 of the RDP 2014-2020 of Veneto Region, since it is still on going.

In fact, AKIS Academy embraces an holistic approach to professional development, through including a mix of methods (in presence, remote, on field, stage abroad), contents and meetings with relevant actors.

The target groups of this course are the advisors who operate or intend to work in the field of farm advisory services in the primary sector and priority access is given to the ones already operating under M2 of the RDP 2014-2023. The course is organized in collaboration with the regional board of the professional order of agronomists and foresters, so that participants get credits that are valid for the required life long learning.

The delivery of the training benefits from the inclusion of a pull of AKIS experts that includes representatives of the national professional board of agronomists and foresters, researchers, policy makers, innovation support services and partners of OGs.

The release of a certificate of attendance is foreseen under the condition of a completion having successfully passed the learning test successful learning test. The learning test consists of a series of multiple-choice questions. It is considered passed upon obtaining at least 60% of the correct answers. Among the others, the AKIS academy course includes a specific module on "Playing collaborative innovation: methodologies and experiences" that was realized by some trainers of trainers (ToT) of the i2connect H2020 project (box 2).

Box 2: Interconnecting the CAP SP with i2connect H2020 project

Training of trainers "Playing collaborative innovation: methodologies and experiences"

One of the modules of AKIS Academy course is a training of trainers entitled "Playing collaborative innovation: methodologies and experiences" which is specifically designed for innovation support services under i2connect H2020 project. This module covers topics related to the conceptualization and support to the implementation of interactive innovation models, through the use of some methods and tools that are designed to be applied along the different stages of their development .

The module was carried out by 4 trainers of i2connect H2020 project and involved 20 local trainers of trainers, that were selected by Veneto Agricoltura on the basis of their current participation in collaborative innovation processes and their strong interconnections within AKIS, such that they have the abilities, in in turn, to act as trainers of other advisors.

The module lasted 16 hours in-presence and was characterized by the full involvement of the participants, through experiential, proactiveness and co-production of the lessons learnt. Participation was free of charge and a certificate of attendance was issued after compulsory attendance of at least 85% of the scheduled training hours, as well as after successfully passing the learning test.

For more information: <https://www.venetoagricoltura.org/evento/cosa-vuol-dire-fare-innovazione-collaborativa-metodologie-ed-esperienze/>

Practical implications for replicability

The learning agenda of AKIS Academy can be replicated without any particular burden. However, some implications have to be considered:

- Interconnections with i2connect H2020 project and presence of trainers of trainers are prerequisites for the inclusion of the specific training module on “Playing collaborative innovation: methodologies and experiences”.
- Interconnections with the CAP and other networks (e.g. modernAKIS) are helpful for the organization of study visits and stages abroad.
- The inclusion of stages and study visits implies the allocation of an adequate budget to cover travel and accommodation of the participants.
- The inclusion of incentives for advisors to participate (e.g. credits, priorities/premialties in case of accessing the CAP SP).

Benefits

- Synergies with other initiatives (H2020 project) that brought to enlarging the training offer of the Region under the CAP SP with new topics, methods and tools.
- The holistic and practice-based approach of this course help advisors acquiring competencies and capacities along with strengthening interconnections within the AKIS
- The inclusion of stages and stud visits across Italy and Europe enable the advisors engaging in peer-to-peer learning exercises and comparison of own experiences with other situations.
- Enhancing competencies on innovation processes and functional capacities for their support.
- Enlarging the network of the local advisors by promoting their interconnections at national and European level.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- <https://psrveneto.it/misure/misura-1-trasferimento-di-conoscenze-e-azioni-dinformazione/>
- <https://www.venetoagricoltura.org/evento/akis-startup-day/>
- <https://venetorurale.it/sviluppo-rurale-veneto-2023-2027/>
- <https://www.regione.veneto.it/web/agricoltura-e-foreste/sviluppo-rurale-2020>
- <http://www.pianetapsr.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2952>

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3.2 Train-the-trainers for innovation support

Rationale

Member States in their CAP Strategic Plans have to ensure that advisory services will provide innovation support, in particular for preparing and for implementing the projects of the EIP operational groups (art. 15 Reg. EU 2021/2115). This requires advisory services to enlarge their services from the process of transmitting technological innovation to a process of active listening and applying knowledge and know-how to solve complex problems.

The competence needed to comply with new roles and functions is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g., social or organizational skills) and ethical values.

To date, there is a low level of awareness among advisors, advisory managers and the authorities managing CAP interventions, about the skills and competencies necessary to improve innovation support service providing. Moreover, there is a lack of expertise on how to develop these skills and competencies.

Solution

Some European projects (AgriSpin, i2connect, ATTRACTISS) have explored what skills and competencies are needed to support interactive innovation processes.



Keywords

Advisor's training, interactive innovation, Operational Groups



Potential users

Advisors and advisory organizations, Coordinators of Ogs, Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans



Country

Croatia, Veneto region (Italy)



Particularly, within the [i2connect](#) project a training-the-trainers course has been provided with the aim of developing a thorough understanding for innovation processes and the advisors role in networks, and to increase their ability to reflect on what they do for assisting participants in such processes to become successful and how to spread innovation in agricultural systems.

Building further on CECRA module 16 on innovation support (<https://www.cecra.net/en/home/>), the i2connect offer consists of trainings with a duration of 3 days face-to-face (f2f) and half a year of coaching on the job.

The course is grounded on a set of analysis tools (a toolkit) designed to help advisors, or whoever is involved in innovation processes, to recognize patterns that are behind these complex systems, to understand their logic, and to see options to act effectively in the situation.

The main aim was to provide easy to use method for keeping a network vital so that co-creation could happen. The topics addressed by the tools are:

- a. Three modes of collaboration: transfer, exchange (negotiations), and cocreation.
- b. Warm and cold processes: how to distinguish basic elements of both processes?
- c. The Innovation Spiral: seven stages from early idea to embedding, each with their distinctive actions, actors to relate to and pitfalls to avoid.
- d. The Network Analysis: visualising actors in different positions regarding an initiative. What connections need to be strengthened and in what order for creating space for the initiative?
- e. The Circle of Coherence: visualising interaction patterns between actors in a process. How to recognise what interventions could help in a certain situation to reinforce motivation and nourish 'vital space'.
- f. The Triangle of Co-Creation: visualising positions of key actors in a process of change. Which positions contribute to co-creation, and which positions do not? What can be done to increase the chance that co-creation will take place?
- g. The Energy Timeline Method: a quick and effective method for assessment of the process with the participants involved. It strengthens co-ownership of participants of their joint endeavours.
- h. The Learning History: a method to report about the process, analysing the moments that appeared to matter most.
- i. Peer-to-peer consultation: a method to structure consultations among peers, in order to ask relevant questions, to analyse different assumptions and options, to respect the choices of storyteller for what (s)he does with the advice, and to avoid debates that do not contribute.

Didactical approach is the value added of the training and it is led by a few guiding principles:

- a. training courses are organised in such a way that participants are actors in their learning process. It is therefore excluded to give them pre-thought information that they should passively listen to and retain. This avoids the existing deviation of the trainers-experts, bringing a theoretical knowledge that is unquestionable and far from practical application.
- b. training courses start from the real problems expressed by the course participants. This supports learning transfers, because the more the training venue will have elements in common with the action venues, the easier it will be for the participant to transfer the knowledge into his or her practice.
- c. The trainer is careful to work on the training space and moderate the participants so that the training environment is stimulating and conducive to learning.

- d. Mutual coaching: after the training, participants are able of assisting each other in reflecting on situations they encounter. Joint reflection among peers is essential for integrating the contents of the course with everyday practice of the participants. Skills and methods for peer-to-peer coaching are part of the courses.

At the moment, 42 courses of training-the-trainers have been carried out under the i2connect project in 18 European countries (up to date in October 2023). Under Horizon Europe project [ATTRACTISS](#) (AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services, 2022-2028), the i2connect training module will be enlarged to include new competencies and more advisors will be trained in all the 27 MSs.

In practice...

The Managing Authority of Veneto Region RDP (IT) organized a training-the-training course under the Measure 2 (advisory training) of 2014-20 RDP as a part of the AKIS Academy course (see 4.1 AKIS-in-practice!). To realize the course, Veneto Region, through its operating agency Veneto Agricoltura, invited experts from i2connect project.

The two-days course was mainly focus on the following topics:

DAY 1	DAY 2
Introductory Training: Course Objectives and Rules	The Circle of Coherence
Icebreaker and Name Game	Theory of motivation
Interactive innovation theory: the innovation spiral	Learning styles/personality
Network analysis	Decision-making methods
Co-creation triangle	Peer consultation / Active listening
Hot and cold processes	
Review of first day's learning	

The training-the-trainers has already planned to be implemented in the Croatia AKIS Strategy in the CAP SPs 2023-2027.

Practical implications for replicability

The implementation of the training-the-trainers vocational course need to take into account some practical implication:

- availability of trained trainers to provide the training, also benefiting from the advisors already trained under the i2connect project;
- selection of participants to be trained in a maximum of 20 participants per course;
- definition of at list two days program to allow effective knowledge gain;
- provision of a coaching activity after training to follow up the results and use of the competences acquired.

Benefits

A possible implementation of the training-the-trainers within the CAP strategic plans would bring numerous benefits, such as:

- promote competence and skills development in innovation support;
- enhanced comprehension of innovation processes;
- provide an approach to investigate innovation practices and the involvement of support service providers;
- create a professional network of innovation support agents from all Europe.

Further information

- *CAP Strategic Plan – Croatia (HR)*
- *I2connect toolbox – (ENG)*
- *Wielinga E., Obrist R., Fontaine G., Duhamel S., 2020. "Didactical concept and toolkit for advisors' trainings" Deliverable 3.2 i2connect project*

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3.3 Peer Review: a peer-to-peer method of experiential learning

Rationale

An innovation advisor needs to possess a specific attitude and personality, as well as expertise regarding content, methods and management. Competencies concerning 'attitudes', are of a personal nature and, therefore, they prove to be difficult to be transmitted through a traditional training oriented to knowledge transfer. Often, these capacities are developed through experience on the field. Moreover, methods and tools for facilitating innovation processes are often new and result from the experiences of actors. Therefore, it is important to socialise these experiences and network them in order to benefit from their diversity and foster experiential learning.

Solution

Within the i2connect project the organisation and exchange of practices and experiences between advisors providing support services for innovation processes has been encouraged through the organisation of field peer reviews.

The Field Peer Review consists of the review of the interactive process of an operational group (OG) or another multi-actor innovation case, with a particular focus on innovation support functions, by colleagues (peers) from another OG/innovation case, with the purpose of observing and analysing practices and learning from the way how innovation has been realised by others, whilst providing recommendations to the reviewed case to improve the interactive process.



Keywords

Peer-to-peer learning, advisor's competences, Operational Groups, interactive innovation



Potential users

Advisors participating to Ogs, Farmers/Foresters participating to OGs, Coordinators of Ogs, Advisory organisations, Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, CAP networks



Country

Still non planned under CAP SPs



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Peers are people (advisors, farmers, researcher) that work in a similar context and/or institution with the persons whose performance is assessed and have specific professional experience and skills in the field. Consequently, they can bring into the process "direct" knowledge about the matter under review whilst providing the external vision of someone from a different organisation ("external insider").

The task of the Peers is to achieve an understanding of the subject/situation under assessment (learning function) and to provide critical feedback to their colleagues, thus allowing to improve their practices.

Therefore, the peer review combines assessment and learning approaches, allowing for more significant development of innovation practices by encouraging more critical reflection on innovation processes.

Considering these issues, peer review methodology can have significative practical implications, being able to be developed as:

- a strategy within public funded innovation programmes to foster partnerships' own development through the ideas obtained from watching colleagues, help improve innovation processes, and create a system of mutual accountability and learning within the AKISs,
- assessment tools for advisory services.

In practice...

The Field Peer Review is carried out through an onsite visit, observation and interviews with different actors' groups.

A peer review procedure and an analytical tool to be used for data gathering and assessment have been set up to allow the reviewers to focus on the interactive process, which generally is hardly addressed compared to innovation per se, going far beyond what may be considered a mere exchange of practices.

The analytical framework is based on a comprehensive body of literature concerning advisory functions and interactive innovation dynamics and includes more than 150 evaluation questions. In particular, the evaluation questions address three main issues:

- support services that are or should be offered, by whom and through which methods and tools,
- the effectiveness of innovation support and its contribution in helping the process to move on,
- the conditions, both internal (advisor's characteristics) and external (environment), that enable the specific actor(s) to support the innovation process.

The questions are included into a user-friendly tool and organised according to the phases of the innovation process. Information-gathering questions are complemented by other questions aimed at leading reflection on the collected information and their triangulation. This reflection activity is aimed at developing critical capacities, thus supporting a peer learning process

The peer review procedure of innovation cases consists of 4 main phases:

1. peer reviewers' selection and training,
2. organisation of the field visit,
3. field visit,
4. peer review recommendations and reporting



1. The composition of the field review team depends on the type of organization and coordination of the peer review. For instance, a peer review could be carried out by a team of peers chosen within one OG/innovation group who visit and review the innovation process carried out by another OG/innovation group. It is crucial that peers understand how to conduct the Field Peer Review properly: who to interview, how to use the questions, the desired outcome. Therefore, a short training is needed, to raise their awareness on the task to be played and provide them with the necessary instruments.
2. Before the visit, Peers are provided with preliminary information concerning the case under review, through documents or interviewing a key actor. The preliminary documents/interview aim to provide the Peers with an overview of the practical case in its complexity, including the activities carried out and the roles of each actor within the case. Through the interview all the information necessary for the preparation of the Peer Visit are collected. Based on the documents received and the preliminary interview, the Peers define: i) the subjects to be interviewed (specific actors or typologies); ii) the questions to be asked to each actor or group of actors (following the analytical tool); iii) the methods of collecting information (e.g., how many individual / group interviews, guided visits, etc.); iv) the estimated time for the visit
3. The Field Peer Visit is the core activity of the Peer Review procedure: Peers visit the practical case and carry out an assessment, which focuses on roles and function of advisors in supporting innovation processes, the effectiveness of this support and the enabling context.
The review approach is built on interviews (individual or group), focus groups and observations. Practical case actors and stakeholders are interviewed preferably in groups of about 5 people for 90 minutes, but individual interviews are also possible if they better fit the goals of the review. The questions for each group (not more than 7-8 questions, otherwise, due to time limits, not everyone will be able to answer each question) are chosen according to the analytical tool. At the end of the Visit the Peers provide feedback to the evaluated practical case.
The duration of the visit depends on the complexity of the reviewed practical case (type and number of involved actors, innovation typology, etc.) and accessibility of the location (in case of Peer Review on the Field). It is advisable to plan rather short visits because 1) a Peer Review upsets the routines of the actors in the practical case and 2) Peers cannot be absent from work for too long a period. Therefore, Peers' Visit should take no more than two-three days.

The core element of a Peer Review is the professional assessment provided by the Peers. During the Visit, Peers review and discuss the results of each activity immediately after its conclusion and organize peers' reflection meetings. They are asked to analyse, discuss and understand the information gathered, to evaluate its reliability and relevance, to discuss the different perspectives and opinions within the Peer Panel and to agree on common conclusions.

Peers share observations and try to understand the innovation processes. The analytical tool drives the reflection towards the final assessment.

4. At the end of the Peer Review, the Peers schedule a feedback session during which they share their results with the reviewed practice case. This allows for a communicative validation with direct comments from the reviewed case and a request for further explanation - as well as an exchange between the Peers and the reviewed case on crucial aspects of the process.

Finally, peers make recommendations. These are presented and discussed in an open exchange between the Peers and the Practical Case representatives, to allow the discussion should focus on exchange and mutual learning.

The Field Peer Review should conclude with a report, but given the nature of Peers, it is appropriate to think of simpler and more practical solutions, such as videos.

Practical implications for replicability

Field Peer Review is carried out through field visit, observation and interviews with different actors' groups of an interactive innovation case.

It can be organized in different ways, depending on the available networks, resources (staff and finances), and knowledge needs and requirements.

A single Field Peer Review can be run, for example, by an advisory body or innovation support service provider, who creates a network with other advisors/IIS providers spontaneously to review their own cases.

Reciprocal Field Peer Reviews could also be organized between two advisors/advisory bodies/ISS providers, looking for stronger and more constant cooperation.

More appropriately, Field Peer Reviews could be implemented at national or regional level within the CAP strategic plans, or be carried out in a network which already exists (e.g., CAP / EIP-Agri network) or has been created for the purpose of carrying out Field Peer Reviews. This allows for common preparatory activities such as peer selection, training, matching peers with the cases to be reviewed, etc. This requires the "appointment" of a coordinating body to ensure high quality Peer Reviews and effective coordination of the common process and procedures.

Benefits

A possible implementation of a national or regional Field Peer Review programme between operational groups within the CAP strategic plans would bring numerous benefits:

- engage OGs in a mutual learning process with Peers,
- create networks and cooperate with other OGs,
- promote competence and skills development,
- improving information on interactive innovation projects funded through the EAFRD,
- assessing the quality of interactive innovation processes and support services provided, at a relatively low cost,

- highlighting strengths and demonstrating good practice,
- increase accountability to stakeholders,
- identify shortcomings and weaknesses,
- receive advice to improve ongoing interactive innovation processes,
- promote the development and quality of co-creation approaches and quality assurance.

Therefore, this tool can support managing authorities and possibly evaluators during the design, monitoring and evaluation phases of policies and interventions supporting innovation.

Further information

- *[Guidelines and tools for decision makers and managing authorities, Deliverable 3.4 i2connect project](https://i2connect-h2020.eu/resources/communication-materials/reports-and-project-outputs/)*
<https://i2connect-h2020.eu/resources/communication-materials/reports-and-project-outputs/>

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3.4 Cross visits: increasing capacities of advisors through peer-to-peer learning on interactive innovations

Rationale

All advisors must be integrated within AKIS in an inclusive way, to be able to cover the economic, environmental and social dimensions and provide up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by R&I (art. 15 Reg. EU 2021/2115). To reach this goal, Managing Authorities had to define appropriate methods and approaches to better support advisors and innovation support services providers in their AKIS Strategies. Especially for innovation support services providers, in fact, there is a need for acquiring a set of capacities and skills that can be more effective if accompanied by experiential learning and exchanges. This kind of interaction seems to be much more productive in terms of learning than attending a seminar or a training course where lecturers try to transfer their wisdom.



Keywords

Peer-to-peer learning, advisor's training, Operational Groups, interactive innovation



Potential users

Advisors and advisory organizations, Coordinators of Ogs, Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans



Country

Europe

Solution

Within the [i2connect](#) project a collaborative way of training for innovation support services providers has been realized through the organization of Cross Visits (CVs).

The CVs consists of 2-3 days visit in which a group of advisors from different parts of Europe and with different backgrounds visit an interesting interactive innovation case with the aim to learn from how this has been developed and to assess each other contexts, practices and motivations. Visiting group consists of advisors, trained by i2connect training of trainers' courses (see 4.5 AKIS-in-practice!). The training course was focused on providing a set of analytical tools (e.g. the spiral of innovation; the triangle of co-creation; the circle of coherence; the network analysis) to help advisors, or whoever is involved in innovation processes, to recognize patterns that are behind these complex systems, to understand their logic, and to see options to act effectively in the situation.

The CVs approach promotes the exchange of experiences through peer-to-peer learning among trainees from diverse backgrounds. The primary objective is to comprehend the background of the innovation process and the role advisors play in it, with the overarching aim of transferring this knowledge to their professional settings and beyond. Essentially, CVs serve as a wellspring of inspiration, offering valuable insights, tools, and a shared language that prove beneficial when advisors resume their duties and confront challenges in the workplace.

At the moment, 42 courses of training of trainers have been carried on under the i2connect project, in 18 European countries (up-to-date at October 2023). Under [ATTRACTISS](#) (AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services) Horizon Europe project, more advisors will be trained and more European countries will be covered. This will allow to have a sufficient number of advisors trained to be involved in CVs.

From a practical perspective, each i2connect CVs is based on the following 8 steps, which can be adapted to the context of the hosting country and innovation cases:



Step 1: Kick-off (Day 1) The introduction session aims at knowing each other and create a space for team members to share experiences and discuss preconceptions.	Step 2: Field Visit - Demonstration of Innovation (Day 2) During the field visit the visiting team (10-12 advisors) studies a particular innovation case and analyze it using i2connect tools, learnt during the training of trainers. The main focus of the interviews are the following topics: Innovation, innovation process, innovation support, actors and networks, environment, critical incidents, dissemination and future perspectives.
Step 3: Workshop - Applying Tools (Day 2) The aim of the workshop is to give each participant the opportunity to ask questions about the innovation process to each of the key actors. During the in-depth participants analyze the case studies choosing one or more tools.	Step 4: Reflection on the Case (Day 2) After the visit, the team takes time to share observations, reflect on them and formulate pearls, puzzles and proposals, based on what has been observed.
Step 5: Social Activity (Day 1 and/or 2) During the CV there it is recommended to meet create a socializing setting for informal connections and exchanges.	Step 6: Feedback Session (Day 2) Visiting team presents results, observations, and engages in discussion with host team and key actors.
Step 7: Sharing Experiences between Participants (Day 3) During this step, participants spend time on short case analyses of practical cases from their home countries, to allow them to successfully transfer the knowledge they received.	Step 8: Wrap-up (Day 3) The final stage is the wrap-up and feedback from the host and the participants.

In practice...

The cross visits can be funded under the CAP SPs 2023-2027, particularly, as part the vocational training aiming at enhancing competencies and create chance for knowledge exchanges between advisors and innovation support services providers (art. 78 Reg. EU 2021/2115).

To support this type of intervention it is necessary to carry out the following actions:

- Define a budget for the cross visits' implementation under article 78 Reg. EU 2021/2115 interventions.
- Provide a specific training about tools and methods to facilitate interactive innovation processes to a pool of advisors at a national/regional level. Alternatively, it is possible to benefit from i2connect trained advisors to be involved in the Cross Visit.
- Select a number of 10/12 trained advisors to attend the cross visit from different regions/countries to guarantee an exchange. It is not recommended a larger number of participants in order to allow a high level of interaction within the group and to be able to manage the administrative procedure related to organize the visit. It is appropriate trying to balance participants provenience in terms of country, gender and background.

- Identify at list two Operational Group to be visited.
- Foreseen a budget dedicated for the expenses (travel costs, transfer, accommodation, boards).
- In case of foreign participants be sure to have a translation (especially for farmers) or involve in the interviews people with a good level of English.

Benefits

- Inspire for enhancing the services provided and reflecting about solutions to similar problems.
- Promote competence and skills development through a peer-to-peer learning approach.
- Enhanced comprehension of innovation processes.
- Provide an approach to investigate innovation practices and the involvement of support service providers.
- Create a professional network of innovation support agents from all Europe

Further information

- Wielinga E. and Paree P. (2016): The Cross Visit Method, Deliverable 2.4: An Improved Methodologic Approach, AgriSpin project (EN)
- Kroon J., Wielinga E. and Paree P. (2020): Deliverable Number 4.1: Integrated Training, CV and Pilot Plan, i2connect project (EN)
- Triste L., Kuegler M., Cordeiro M. and Guichaoua A. (2019): Cross visit guidelines to on-farm demonstrations, NEFERTITI project (EN)
- FAIRshare cross visits (EN)

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3.5 Training farmers on Environmental, climate and other management commitments

Rationale

Society but also the political agenda, e.g. the Farm2Fork and the Biodiversity strategy, put a strong focus on environmental protection and climate change mitigation measures in agriculture. The Austrian CAP Strategic Plan strives to support the achievement of these goals through different actions. One of them are the voluntary environmental, climate and other management commitments (Art. 70, EU Regulation 2115/2021).

Farmers receive payments if they voluntarily comply with one or more of the measures (cf. "Solution"). Some of those measures come along with a training requirement related to the content of the respective measure. So if they have to complete the trainings, which are part of the participation requirement of the respective measure, they receive all payments foreseen for the measure, otherwise the participating farmer will face sanctions. On the other hand, the amount of the payments for participating in this measure could have been increased based on the mandatory training requirement.

The aim of the mandatory trainings is to enable farmers to implement the management requirements of the respective measure correctly and properly, and to use state of the art knowledge taking into consideration applied research and expert advisory services, thereby contributing as much as possible to the achievement of the measure's objectives.



Keywords

Trainings for farmers, Trainings as an instrument to increase direct CAP payments, Biodiversity and climate mitigation measures



Potential users

Managing Authorities, Training providers



Country

Austria

Solution

The **legal (regulatory) basis/framework** for the measures is:

- Art. 70 of EU regulation 2115/2021 -> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02021R2115-20230101>
- § 6c (2) number 4 of Marktordnungsgesetz 2021 -> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20005399>
- Austrian CAP Strategic Plan Chapter 5.3 „ENVCLIM(70) - Umwelt-, Klima- und andere Bewirtschaftungsverpflichtungen“ -> <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/gsp-genehmigung.html>
- Sonderrichtlinie des Bundesministers für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Regionen und Wasserwirtschaft für das Österreichische Programm zur Förderung einer umweltgerechten, extensiven und den natürlichen Lebensraum schützenden Landwirtschaft -> <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/sonderrichtlinien-2023-2027/agrarumweltprogramm-oepul-ab-2023-inklusive-oekoregelungen.html>

The **measures** for which farmers can receive additional payments in the context of environmental, climate and other management commitments are:

- 70 – 01 Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting management
- 70 – 02 Organic farming
- 70 – 03 Limitation yield-increasing inputs
- 70 – 14 Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands
- 70 – 15 Humus preservation and soil protection on grassland eligible for conversion

Mandatory trainings for farmers for each measure include:

- Biodiversity training (3h) for the measure “Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting management”
- Biodiversity training (3h) and Organic management training (5h) for the measure “Organic farming”
- Adapted nitrogen fertilization and frequency of use in grassland training (3h) for the measure “Limitation yield-increasing inputs”
- Reduction of soil erosion and nutrient losses training (10h) for the measure “Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands”
- Fertilization planning and utilization methods taking into account the concept of graded meadow cultivation training (5h) for the measure “Humus preservation an soil protection on grassland eligible for conversion”

Farmers who participate in one of the previous listed AECMs with mandatory training requirements need to provide proof of completion of the training associated to the respective measure. Except for the measure “Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands”, the proof must be submitted by the end of 2025. For the groundwater measure proof can be delivered until the end of 2026.

Implementation (focus here exclusively on training measure):

- Participation in one of the measures above is voluntary for the farmer under the 2nd pillar of the CAP; the measures compensate farmers for lost revenue and additional costs they incur due to compliance to the measure(s) (so also for lost revenues and additional costs due to participation in the required training)The eligibility requirements for trainings allows farmers to claim a top-up on the payments

- The eligibility requirements for trainings generates a higher amount of payments
- If the farmer fails to provide proof of sufficient training hours in due time (see above) he will be sanctioned in the size of the adjudged payment.
- Trainings are recognized as eligible for the premium of the measure only if they have been attended with a training provider recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management as appropriate training provider

In practice...

The training provider:

- needs to obtain the recognition as a training provider by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (inter alia justification of competence in provision of training in field of agriculture, environment, climate, etc. as well as willingness to submit data on participants towards AMA, i.e. the paying agency, for administrative controls)
- prepares the course concept (detailed syllabus) for the different course units
- the recognition of hours to be awarded for the course is done in consultation with an expert of the Chambers of Agriculture or an expert of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management; there is no formal certification procedure for the course syllabus, however the training providers are expected to closely coordinate with the experts aforementioned
- the format of the courses can vary and be defined by the training providers; available formats vary from classroom courses but also to topic-specific field days/excursions, webinars, online courses etc.
- after completion of the training the training provider will issue a course certificate to the farmer; the certificate has no limit of valability
- the training provider is also responsible for transferring the complete lists of all course participants to the paying agency with the corresponding training measures finished for using them in administrative controls; three deadlines have been agreed upon for this purpose between the paying agency, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management and the training providers

In addition to the payment for farmers participation in previously mentioned AECMs training provider receive subsidies for course participants in possession of a farm ID. Training providers who are in the position to offer subsidized courses (with reduced participation fees) will display on their website, in their course catalogues etc. the price of the non-subsidized course as well as the price of the subsidized course including the eligibility criteria for becoming a beneficiary of the subsidy.

The farmer:

- Applies for AECM with training requirement in his single aid application and therefore commits himself to consume at least the amount of training foreseen in measure requirements (see list above)
- Receives the information from an accredited training provider about the trainings that can be used for fulfilling the training requirements as well as course offers or searches for this information himself/herself. The information is found at specific training providers and is not centralized.

- Registers for the cours(es).
Courses are completely independent of funding or funding approval for a measure; the course participation does not have to match the funding start or end date for the measure (has to take place between 1.1.2022 and 31.12.2025/2026) ; the payments for the measure are done on an annual basis independent of the course attendance; however if the farmer legally participates in an AECS with training requirements but fails to fulfill the foreseen minimum amount of training hours until the deadline (see above) the farmer is penalized; a course can be credited only once for one measure.

Practical implications for replicability

Under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 the EU Commission mandates Austria to have an administrative check in addition to the on the spot checks for the training courses. This means that 100% of farms, which receive the top-up of the measure, should be checked for compliance with the completion of the necessary training courses.

For this, the paying agency has created a databased where all checks can be completed automatically. Certified training providers are required to upload the data of all participants who have graduated the courses at three different points in time (deadlines).

Benefits

- For farmers: receive new/updated knowledge for biodiversity and environmental protection but also on how to comply with the criteria of funded measures.
- For farmers: higher amount of payment for respective measure compared to the same measure but without training requirement.
- For society: well-educated farmers who contribute to the objectives of environmental protection measures.
- For education providers: additional frequency and points of contact with farmers.
- For managing authorities: better fulfillment of CAP indicators.

Further information

- The measure is funded from CAP funds and about 2.800 farmers attended the trainings in 2022 with the Austrian Rural Training Institute (LFI).
- <https://www.ama.at/fachliche-informationen/oepul/formulare-merkblaetter>
- <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/gsp-genehmigung.html>
- <https://oe.lfi.at/weiterbildungen-%C3%B6pul-2023+2500+2673509>

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Theme n. 4

Organizing CAP networks

Organizing CAP networks





CAP Networks

Rationale

The AKIS perspective emphasizes the knowledge flows and diffusion based on exchange within heterogeneous and multi-stakeholder contexts, networks or platforms. This can lead to increasing access to knowledge, learning by interacting and by using it until innovation development. Besides, it is recognized that multistakeholder networks are fundamental levers of spreading and scaling of innovations processes along the agricultural sector and rural areas as they are likely to influence individual behaviours and practices towards social and technological change.

On this regard, multi stakeholder networks that effectively pursued knowledge exchange and spread of innovations have shown some common successful factors.

First, the bigger it is the size of the network, in terms of both numerosity and typologies of AKIS actors, the better is the outreach of its influence and effects on system change and transformation. This derives mostly from the potential of boosting a wider interconnectivity, by enabling the environment to start new and/or to consolidate interactions, and likely by including hard-to-reach people.

Second factor of success is the multitude of knowledge and innovations to share that networks can effectively help to emerge through empowering actors to deploy and recombine the different types of tacit and codified knowledge. So, that this should enable AKIS actors accessing, exchange and develop knowledge and practices to build upon leading to innovations.

Thirdly there's the regularity and continuity over time of stakeholders' inclusion in participatory engagement activities. These can lead maturing a wider sense of belonging to the system and trust among each other, that is fundamental to reinforce the potential of the network to enable the environment for knowledge exchange and to foster influence and emulation of experiences among stakeholders.

Consequently, continuity in funding schemes for networking activities is necessary.



Keywords

Governance, networking, knowledge sharing, social network, interaction



Potential users

Managing Authorities, AKIS coordination bodies, Other AKIS actors



All in all, the more the actors within the AKIS are well-interconnected and interact, the more effectively the knowledge is disseminated. In fact, innovation and change can be realised, as in any systemic approach, by networking processes which resources are mobilised and knowledge flows from different sources are channelled and used (Cristiano et al, 2023; D1.1; Annex 2).

To this effect, networking organization and action has become to all intents and purposes a matter of institutional functioning and embedding.

Box 1 – Brief overview on European and National Rural Networks under CAP policy

Building on the experience of LEADER networks (2000-2006), under the EU regulatory framework, National rural networks (NRNs) group administrations and organisations involved in rural development (art. 68 Reg. CE 1698/2005; art. 54 Reg. CE 1303/2013) and have been introduced since EU rural development policy 2007-2013 with the aim to support policies for the development of agricultural areas in a way that fosters exchanges of experience and knowledge between practitioners, institutions and all those who live and work in rural areas. In particular, in the programming period 2014-2022, networking by the National Rural Networks aimed to: (a) increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development; (b) improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes; (c) inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities; (d) foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas. Besides, the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) has been put in place (art. 67 Reg. CE 1698/2005; art. 52 Reg. CE 1303/2013) for the networking of national networks, organisations and administrations active in the field of rural development. Still at EU level, together with the ENRD, two additional networks/networking units were established: i) the [European Evaluation Helpdesk](#) having the purpose to ensure the effectiveness of CAP evaluations by specifically assisting managing authorities, national CAP networks, paying agencies, evaluators and the European Commission. It also analyses the implementation of CAP interventions by EU Member States and disseminates useful monitoring and evaluation practices among the EU CAP Network; ii) the [EIP-Agri Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange](#) (yet EIP-Agri network) which role is to facilitate cooperation between those with a keen interest in sharing knowledge and innovative ideas for sustainable agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

The action plan of the NRN should have included at least the following activities (art. 54 Reg. CE 1303/2013): (i) the collection of examples of projects covering all priorities of the rural development programmes; (ii) the facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between rural development stakeholders, sharing and dissemination of findings; (iii) the provision of training and networking for local action groups and in particular technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational co-operation, facilitation of co-operation among local action groups and the search of partners for the measure referred to “Co-operation”; (iv) the provision of networking for advisors and innovation support services; (v) the sharing and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings; (vi) a communication plan including publicity and information concerning the rural development programme in agreement with



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the Managing Authorities and information and communication activities aimed at a broader public; (vii) the participation in and contribution to the European network for rural development.

In fact, for the CAP programming period 2023-2027, networks as recognized by regulation (art. 126 UE Reg 2115/2021) as key tools to drive and steer policy and to promote stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing and capacity building for Member States and other actors.

On this regard, each Member State is called to establish a CAP network at national level ([National networks directory](#)) for the networking of organisations and administrations, advisors, researchers and other innovation actors in the field of agriculture and rural development.

Box 2 – European CAP Network 2023-2027

A fundamental point of reference for CAP networks is the European CAP Network (yet ERDN - European Rural Development Network) which since the 2007-2013 programming period has performed functions of guidance, sharing of experiences and knowledge among Member States, analyses, tools, and capacity building activities.

The Network is a forum through which National CAP Networks, organisations, administrations, researchers, entrepreneurs and practitioners can share knowledge and information (e.g. via peer-to-peer learning and good practices) about agriculture and rural policy ([CAP Network website](#)). The EU CAP Network has been set up by the European Commission in line with the European [Regulation](#) to support the achievement and implementation of specific objectives of the new EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), while optimising the flow of information about agriculture and rural policy within the EU ([CAP Network website](#)). The current CAP network 2023-2027 includes the previous European Network for Rural Development, the Evaluation Helpdesk and EIP-AGRI network by which it supports [design and implementation of CAP strategic plans](#), [innovation and knowledge exchange, including EIP-AGRI](#), and [evaluation and monitoring of the CAP](#).

Networking through the national CAP networks shall have the following objectives: (a) increase the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans and, where relevant, in their design; (b) accompany the Member States' administrations in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans and the transition to a performance-based delivery model; (c) contribute to improving the quality of implementation of CAP Strategic Plans; (d) contribute to the information of the public and potential beneficiaries on the CAP and funding opportunities; (e) foster innovation in agriculture and rural development and support peer-to-peer learning and the inclusion of, and the interaction between, all stakeholders in the knowledge-exchange and knowledge-building process; (f) contribute to monitoring and evaluation capacity and activities; (g) contribute to the dissemination of CAP Strategic Plans results.

The functions of the CAP National Networks in achieving the above-mentioned objectives encompass:





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Organizing CAP networks

- collection, analysis and dissemination of information on actions and good practices implemented or supported under CAP Strategic Plans as well as analysis on developments in agriculture and rural areas;
- contribution to capacity building for Member States administrations and of other actors involved in the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans, including as regards monitoring and evaluation processes;
- creation of platforms, fora and events to facilitate exchanges of experience between stakeholders and peer-to-peer learning, including where relevant exchanges with networks in third countries;
- collection of information and facilitation of its dissemination as well as networking of funded structures and projects, such as local action groups, EIP operational groups and equivalent structures and projects;
- support for cooperation projects between EIP operational groups, local action groups or similar local development structures, including transnational cooperation;
- creation of links to other Union-funded strategies or networks;
- contribution to the further development of the CAP and preparation of any subsequent CAP Strategic Plan period;
- dissemination of the summary of the plans of the EIP OGs and of the results of their projects;
- participating in, and contributing to, the activities of the European CAP network.

With respect to support the AKIS strengthening, CAP networks, through their National Supports Units (NSUs) for innovation networking, can help to smooth innovation and knowledge exchange concerning all 9 CAP objectives by bringing together all the resources they can access through the OGs, Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects, the EIP website and new knowledge reservoirs. Linking all these sources of information provides a wealth of material for local AKIS actors.

In this view, the NSUs have the task of supporting both (a) the strengthening of national agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) and (b) the development of links with research and innovation policy under Horizon Europe and other national instruments.

This role is feasible because Rural Networks already worked in synergy with a variety of actors (farming organisations, LAGs and their associations, rural NGOs, educational and research institutions, business clusters, etc.), linking them to the practical implementation of rural development policies and promoting information exchange between the EU, national and local levels, thus facilitating the development of existing potential and strengthens capacity building.

Interestingly, from a consultation of the former NRNs 2014-2020 that was conducted by European CAP network during July-September 2022 it came out that all the CAP Networks 2023-2027 aim to involve AKIS stakeholders in view to address the need to support innovation in agriculture and rural areas. In fact, in 27 out of 28 cases the Exchange knowledge and networking with AKIS stakeholders is a priority of the CAP networks, while the Support innovation in agriculture via EIP-AGRI Operational Groups is set 19 of the cases ([Network mapping surveys, 2023](#)).



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Box: 3 - CAP networks & innovation

During the meeting of [23rd NRN meeting](#) held on 20 and 21 September 2022, some ideas on CAP networks' role in strengthening innovation support emerged from the discussion among the 66 participants, as it follows.

The National Supports Units - of the national CAP Networks (hereby NSUs) - can help by providing "innovation networking", by bringing people together in groups, for instance by organising opportunities such as targeted events (online/in-person), study groups and workshops, which help interaction. These activities provide occasions for farmers to engage effectively with a diverse range of organisations within the AKIS, including with their peers, advisors, researchers, and others who may help generate ideas for EIP Operational group projects, thanks to the cross-fertilisation among the participants. Other opportunities lie in the provision of opportunities for farm businesses to tell their stories, the "innovation ambassadors", and to open their farms to others, including to their peers. Competitions can provide opportunities to socialise and celebrate the achievements of farm businesses and others in the innovation space. All this is very useful to create an innovation-attentive environment and supports the AKIS innovation ecosystem. Furthermore, the development and promotion of a digital Platform (innovation ideas hub) on the CAP NSU webpage for capturing ideas could be envisaged. A platform may take many forms, e.g. a portal where ideas can be submitted and displayed, and/or a vehicle to connect and share ideas between parties. The generation of innovative ideas may not come naturally to individuals: an experienced and supportive listener is often essential. The development of innovative ideas therefore often relies on advisers or innovation brokers, who analyse and help define the idea after capturing it. There may be significant opportunities for NSUs to work closely with such partners to further enhance opportunities around innovation support & networking.

[Highlights Report of the 23rd NRN meeting](#)

[Synthesis of session on CAP networks & innovation –
Lessons from the 23rd NRN Meeting](#)

Eventually, it is worth to consider that specific independent evaluations of CAP networks can be put in place by the managing authorities of the CAP strategic plans in view to support, preferably on on-going basis, timely melioration of the specific functions of promoting knowledge exchange, of enabling and spreading innovations, and of supporting the increase of system capacities of AKIS actors. On this regard, some evaluations of CAP networks implemented already in previous CAP programming periods can be inspirational to draw lessons on how to better configure their role, organization and functions and on how to adequately plan utilization focused evaluations ([Evaluation Helpdesk](#)).

The practices presented in this "Compendium" provide an overview on some functions that CAP networks can play in MSs, that beyond the EU regulatory requirements, shed the light on basilar and operational activities like stakeholder mapping, needs assessment and systematic realization of networking meetings.

Among the others:

- Clear identification, mapping and profiling of target groups of the CAP networks and their actual interactions is fundamental to assess needs and expectations, understanding behavioral and cultural features and the state of play of AKIS interconnectivity. This in view to better tailor networking activities.



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- Organising (thematic) knowledge events that include all AKIS actors (research, farmers and advisors in the knowledge exchange and knowledge building process: peer-to-peer events, on-farm demonstrations, website, e-learning, ISS etc.).
- Innovation brokerage events and digital tools for speed search of potential partners of innovation processes.
- Organisation of events and platforms where all AKIS actors can meet regularly to discuss problems and opportunities ("before" project life).
- Systematising of project results in order to exploit them through training and communication initiatives and to establish connections with other GO/MA projects ("after" the life of the project).
- Creating knowledge centres, platforms and digital knowledge reservoirs.
- Connect existing knowledge and innovation networks, within the country and across borders.
- Organising study trips for GOs to other Member States, supporting new thematic networks, disseminating research and innovation results and strengthening GO actions in all EU Member States.

Food for thinking

In this perspective, we could raise a few questions (not exhaustive) to help us reflecting and co-building new solutions on:

- How to develop an action plan for the NSUs?
- How many resources, which competencies and which governance for the NSUs?
- Which and how many stakeholders should be involved in networking activities and how to assess their actual connectivity? How to take advantage of the potential of some stakeholders to increase trust and interactions within the AKIS?
- What is it meant by knowledge flows, exchange and circulation?
- What is it meant by networking activities? what do they include, and which methodologies and tools can be applied?
- How to ensure continuity in participatory activities and funding?
- How to better develop synergic interconnectivity between modernAKIS network and EU/National CAP networks to benefit from differences and complementarities?
- How to differentiate networking activities of modernAKIS and the CAP Networks?
- What is the relation between the networking activities and the Community of Practices (CoPs) in modernAKIS?
- Which selection criteria, procedures, templates and timing for collecting relevant knowledge and innovations' materials to feed repositories/databases/digital networking platforms?



How to follow-up with the results of collection of AKIS-in-practice!

The overview on roles and functions of networks and the observation of the practices of CAP networks brings some reflections on the needs for capacity building and networking activities that can be certainly considered in modernAKIS:

- Inclusion of CAP networks in modernAKIS network that can enable taking advantage of the wider perspective and basin of.
- Joint development of material and organization of meetings with CAP networks.
- Follow -ups of activities and results through dissemination among the CAP networks and modernAKIS respective networks.
- CoPs events focused on CAP Networks.
- Compendium of methodologies and practices of multi-stakeholder networks.
- Systematization of results of evaluations on NRNs activities, good/bad practices supporting knowledge exchange and innovation.

Further information

- ADE S.A CCRI, OIR (2022), Study on the ENRD and the NRNs' contribution to the implementation of EU Rural Development policy - Final Report (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development - December 2022)
- EU SCAR AKIS (2019), Preparing for Future AKIS in Europe. Brussels, European Commission.
- European Commission – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit E.4 (2016): Guidelines Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020. Brussels
- RESR (2016), Connettere l'Europa rurale 2014-2020, ISBN 978-92-79-55135-2, febbraio 2016 <https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/sites/enrd/files/publi-enrd-booklet-2016-it.pdf>



4.1 Digital Knowledge platforms: the case of InnovaRurale

Rationale

One of the tasks of the CAP Networks is to promote and facilitate the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and innovations. Indeed, this became more and more necessary since the time of implementation of the EIP-Agri initiative that, already through the Rural development programmes 2014-2022 (RDPs), is boosting the cooperation for innovation projects run by the operational groups (OGs).

On this regard, digital knowledge platforms represent a powerful tool to combine data and information about actual research and innovation projects (e.g. databases/repositories) with up-to-date documents, capacity building and networking activities, communication through social media and other activities that are usually set in the sphere of action of CAP networks.

In fact, “digitalisation of knowledge and innovation in agriculture and forestry can play a major role in contributing to wide dissemination and the uptake of research and development results by the end-user, farmer, forester, advisors and other key actors and hence increase impact. As such, digitized knowledge which can be easily found in open access and a user-friendly system is receiving increased impact in stimulating innovation in several agricultural and forestry sectors.” (Gerling-Eiff et al., 2019).



Keywords

Digital knowledge platforms, knowledge sharing, CAP network



Potential users

Managing Authorities, AKIS coordination bodies, Other AKIS actors



Country

Italy

In the case of Italy, the systemisation of research activities and innovations funded under the CAP and by other funding schemes at national and regional/local levels has been set as one of the key actions to achieve the strategic priority of 'Promotion of Innovation' of the National Rural Network programme for 2014-2020.

In a regionalized country like it is Italy, this systematization was certainly crucial for enabling AKIS actors acquire up-to-date and relevant information and it was challenging due to the numerosity of knowledge and innovations to map and the different target groups to reach.

Solution

Under the framework of the NRN 2014-2022 and the 'Strategic Plan for Innovation and Research in Agriculture, Food and Forestry, a digital knowledge platform was established under the name of Innovarurale (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>). This was promoted by the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the NRN programme (Ministry of Agriculture), in agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and the MAs of the RDPs 2014-2020. This was designed to address the needs for information, knowledge and information of the main typologies of AKIS actors across Italy: farmers, researchers, academics, advisors, public administrations, media providers, ect.

The digital knowledge platform is particularly aimed at:

- encouraging the dissemination of innovation in agriculture;
- promoting a continuous flow of information between European, national and regional institutional actors and with regard to professionals and civil society, and to facilitate institutional and technical dialogue between AKIS actors;
- supporting decisions and human capital growth by providing knowledge and training tools and analysing regional knowledge and innovation systems within the wider national and European system to highlight their potential, deficiencies and possible upgrading processes.

In practice...

Developing the digital knowledge platform implied setting up a management organization as it follows:

- Editorial advisory board (16 experts), that includes researchers and experts of the two main partners of the NRN (CREA and ISMEA), representatives of the national and regional MAs of the NRN and of the RDPs, farmers unions, scientific boards and universities.
- Editorial management board (15 experts), that includes web designer and web editor and some NRN project managers having the tasks of contents design, update and development;
- Secretariate of the editorial management board (3 experts) that supports the on-going management of the digital platform.

Activities to design, develop and maintain the digital knowledge platform include:

- Assessment of the needs for information and knowledge by the AKIS actors that was carried out by the NRN for the purpose of own action plan;

- Contents definition by the editorial advisory board;
- Digital infrastructure design and development;
- Setting up of common procedures, tools and templates for the on-going collection of information on new projects (e.g. EIP-OGs), news and other relevant material.
- On-going collection of research and innovation projects and results, based on the already in place databased/repositories run by national research institutes (e.g. CREA), by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regions/Autonomous Provinces.

InnovaRurale website can be accessed directly (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>) and from the RRN website. CREA owns the hosting digital infrastructure, and this ensures its maintenance over the CAP programming periods.

The digital platform applies three main functions:

- **Information, monitoring, analyses and communication**, that includes collection of news about CAP implementation (e.g. calls for applications, statistics), R&I projects (e.g. databases of EIP-Agri OGs and of others, research), events (e.g. NRN, SCAR AKIS, EU CAP network) and thematic focus groups.
- **Provision of Practical Tools**, including guidelines, templates for OGs (e.g. Project Submission Guide, Information Collection Template, Partnership Agreement and Project Form), partners' search tool, video tutorials, business planning, ect.
- **Networking and capacity building activities**, including workshop, webinars, online courses, ect.



The screenshot displays the InnovaRurale website interface, which is organized into several main functional areas:

- Capacity building:** Includes sections for Workshops, Round tables, Technical meetings, Conferences, and Territorial labs. A central graphic features a lightbulb and the text "WORKSHOP INNOVAZIONE".
- Monitoring & Communication:** Features a "Gratifici - Banca dati dei Gruppi Operativi in Italia" section with a bar chart showing the percentage of groups by region. Other elements include a "Brochure", "Call for applications (DB)", and a "Meter of the OGs".
- Practical Tools:** Contains "Application forms", "Rur@Lab", a "Navigator for farmers", and "Tutorials".
- Monitoring guiding & templates:** Includes a "PEI-AGRI" section and a "Gruppi Operativi in Italia" section with a "Partner search tool".

The sections of Innovarurale are:

- **Home**, including the background information, objectives of the digital platform, glossary, FAQ section and useful links;
- **Europe**, dedicated to the dissemination of activities carried out at European level, including the Sub-Group of Innovation, SCAR AKIS, Focus Groups Network EIP-AGRI, the EU regulatory documentation, relevant research projects and databases (e.g. modernAKIS), news and events;
- **Italy**, dedicated to the dissemination of the news, legislation and notices, documents, news and events from around Italy;
- **European Innovation Partnership in Italy**, including the database of the OGs, statistics, news, tools, analysis and evaluation documents and events;
- **InnovalnAzione**, including sub-sections on the **Catalogue of Innovations**, and the tool "**AgroSemplice**", that supports agricultural and agri-food businesses in finding the most suitable benefits to support their investment projects;
- **Knowledge**, that includes:
 - Vocational training courses (**Farm advisor**; **Precision agriculture**), materials and tools (**Rur@Lab** - <https://www.innovarurale.it/it/conoscenza/ruralab>), for trainers, farmers, advisors and other operators of the agri-food sector.
 - Analysis and evaluation tools (**Ev@Lab** - <https://www.innovarurale.it/it/conoscenza/evalab>), including the following:
 - **APDecisio**, a decision support tool for evaluating the economic advantage associated with an investment in precision agriculture (PA);
 - **Evalnnova**, a tool for assessing the economic, financial, environmental and social sustainability of an innovative investment in agriculture at the service of technicians, consultants and entrepreneurs;
 - **GestInnova**, that makes it possible to identify regional areas of economic, environmental and social criticality through a series of indicators. The aim is to help understand whether it is appropriate to incentivise the adoption of specific innovations by companies and in which direction.

Over the years, InnovaRurale (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>) became a fundamental tool for knowledge and innovation transfer, dissemination and exchange.

At the end of 2022 it encountered over 450,000 visitors (on average 320 per day), with 692,831 pages viewed (500 per day) and 644 registered users.

Practical implications for replicability

The setting up and maintenance of this digital infrastructure can be funded by the technical assistance of the CAP SP.

A mix of scientific and technical competences, as well as supporting staff are needed all along the web-platform setting up and implementation. This specifically includes:

- for the IT infrastructure: web designers, web communication and graphic designer, IT systems developer, ICT technologist and data mining expert.
- for the maintenance web-platform

Functional organization includes management, technical, supporting and possibly advisory/steering bodies to run the different governing, executive and operational tasks.

The different sources of data and information need to be mapped at the very beginning and as well standardized procedures and formats serve the smooth collection of relevant materials.

Periodic meetings of the editorial board facilitate the decisions and flexibility that are needed about the contents and sections of the web-platform.

Interoperability with other digital platforms/databases is an asset in view to connect with other existing databases at European and/or national level (e.g. EUFARMBOOK).

Benefits

- Systematization of all the research and innovation projects' information and materials in one point of access for all the potential users.
- Monitoring of OGs at national level.
- Dissemination of up-to-date research results and innovations.
- Enabling and empowering access to RDPs/CAP Strategic plans.
- Strengthen linkages between digital infrastructures and exchanging of R&I knowledge and experiences.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

[InnovaRurale](#) website

[Programma Rete Rurale Nazionale 2014-2022](#)

[Presentation of innovarurale](#) web-platform

[innovarurale](#), nasce il nuovo portale della conoscenza e l'innovazione nel settore agricolo, alimentare e forestale

[Geerling-Eiff F., Bogaardt M.J., Burssens S., Kujáni K., Reszkető T., \(2019\) "Exploring digitalisation to enhance knowledge flows in EU AKIS" – SCAR AKIS, Brussels](#)

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4.2 Identifying AKIS actors for network organisation

Rationale

The CAP Strategy identifies the modernisation of the agri-food sectors as a horizontal objective, through the promotion of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as innovation and digitalisation in agricultural and rural areas. Since 2023, EU Member States are setting up the CAP Networks to promote the CAP Strategic Plans implementation, foster innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural development and ensure adequate knowledge flow between different actors.

In Hungary, the CAP Network is linked to the whole of the AKIS, and it aims at bridging the gap between farmers, advisors and researchers, through facilitating the interaction between these different AKIS actors and knowledge flows, along with creating synergies between the actors and the between knowledge transfer, innovation and digitalisation interventions.

In fact, the AKIS strategy of Hungary relies on a farmer at the centre approach that calls for organizing the AKIS in such a way that the different elements of the system work in synergy, with a particular focus on reducing the gap between farmers and researchers, and on integrating technological advances in innovation and digitisation into farmers' practices.

The CAP network will run specific innovation-oriented networking activities that involve and facilitate interaction between all stakeholders to increase knowledge flow within AKIS and to stimulate the creation of EIP operational groups and participation in international knowledge flows such as Horizon Europe (projects, missions and partnerships) and international EIP-AGRI activities.



Keywords

CAP Network, stakeholders mapping



Potential users

Managing Authority, CAP Networks



Country

Hungary

Solution

As well, the CAP Network will create synergies between the CAP and Horizon Europe through the definition of a formal agreement with Horizon Europe, the National Contact Point for Partnerships and the Soil Mission, the National Agency for Research, Development and Innovation and the Express Innovation Agency. This cooperation will be the basis for developing synergies.

The CAP network is set up around three units that support the implementation of the CAP SP on three complex and priority areas (box 1).

The CAP Network's was set up in 2022 under the responsibility of the managing authority of the CAP Strategic Plan. It is funded by the Technical Assistance of CAP SP for a total amount of EUR 224.657.534 EUR and over a seven-year plan which is applied by annual work plans.

The setting up of an effective CAP network implies the clear and comprehensive identification of the plurality of AKIS actors to engage in networking activities.

Box 1: Organization of the CAP Network

The CAP Network is organized around three support units:

Innovation and Digitalisation Support Unit.

The main tasks regard the support the EIP and digital switchover interventions of the CAP Strategic Plan, the implementation of the Digital Agricultural Strategy (DAS) and the Digital Food Industry Strategy and to facilitate the networking of actors involved in research, innovation and digitalisation, and to maintain the database of the green monitoring network to support the implementation of the DAS.

Rural and Regional Development Support Unit

The main tasks regard the support for the implementation of the LEADER and other rural development interventions of the CAP Strategic Plan, the Smart Village and Generation Renewal programmes, and to facilitate the networking of rural actors. This unit is run by the Hungarian National Rural Network already in place for the CAP programming period 2014-2022.

Green support unit

The main tasks regard the support for the implementation of the green interventions of Pillars I and II of the CAP Strategic Plan and the related national programmes, and to facilitate the networking of green actors. The support addresses the fragmentation of the institutional structure of its domestic climate change monitoring system, including the creation of a good database, for example to consolidate environmental knowledge bases.

Source: [CAP Strategic plan 2023-2027](#)

In Hungary, a preliminary stage for identifying relevant stakeholders to engage in CAP network's activities 2023-2027 was the mapping and assessing the current state of play of the Hungarian agricultural innovation and digitalisation ecosystem. This included the following information: i) identification of the organisations of the AKIS and of their activities; ii) identifying the intersections between AKIS sub-networks (advisory, education, research, other); defining the nodes of the national AKIS. The whole activity relied on the collection and analysis of secondary data. Particularly, a national survey was conducted by AKI (box 2) that had been delegated to set up the national CAP network 2023-2027.

In practice ...

The step-wise methodology was applied as it follows:

- 1) Definition of selection criteria for the stakeholders' groups (service providers, educational, research and consultancy organisations) identification in the domestic agricultural innovation and digitalisation ecosystem. This activity was based on literature (reference).
- 2) Identification of the actual stakeholders' groups. The data were obtained from public sources, policy and legislative resources and online sources (table 1). These sources include the list of the organisations of the different typologies of stakeholders and the respective most important traits characterisation. The actual stakeholders were then grouped in subsystems and categorized by typology. The research found that AKIS basically operates at the level of different subsystems, with 94% of the organisations being involved in only one type of activity.

Box 2: AKI - Agrárközgazdasági Intézet Nonprofit Kft

AKI is a Research Institute founded in 1954 and owned by the Ministry of Agriculture based on a state act.

The Institute has been Hungary's most significant agribusiness database and policy experience for many decades, performing public and state tasks. One of the most important tasks of the Institute is to develop proposals for the decision-makers of Hungarian agricultural and rural policy, to base the proposals with research based on modern methods, with particular regard to the application and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union in Hungary.

As a flagship of domestic agricultural digitalization, our institute operates and develops major EU and national information systems such as the test business information network, the market price information system and the agricultural information system. With our extensive data collection, data processing and information organization work, as well as our policy analysis and decision support activities, we help the success of Hungarian agriculture and rural areas.

Our aim is to continue to create a sufficient harmony between professional knowledge, domestic and international scientific research and policy decision support. Continuous contact with professional organizations and active professional involvement are integrated into our daily operations. In order to maintain a close relationship with the agricultural society, information and research results are published in a clear form and time.

Source: [CAP Strategic plan 2023-2027](#)

Particularly, within AKIS there are different sub-systems depending on the activities they contribute to the expansion of knowledge transfer and innovation processes in the agricultural economy. the national. Over 1300 organisations which are key players in the national AKIS were identified due to their core activities, linked to an AKIS sub-network. Of these 1300 organisations, 10% are nodes in several AKIS sub-networks.

3) Analysis of the key features of the different subsystems with the view to define adequate activities for supporting their better functioning within the AKIS and to carry out by the Innovation and Digitalisation Support Unit of the CAP Network. This study is the basis for defining thematic events to allow different actors to get to know each other along certain themes, with a view to

cooperation and knowledge exchange at a distance that will be conducted under the CAP network, by the innovation and digitalisation support unit, in cooperation with the National Chamber of Agriculture (NAK).

Table 1: Stakeholder groups, features and sources of their identification

Stakeholder groups	Features	Sources
Research Institutions and Universities	Universities are present in the national AKIS system mainly through their educational activities. They also have a significant research activity. Advisory services are limited to four research and educational institutions and to the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture being registered.	Felvi.hu, NKFIH, Opten, GINOP, Horizon Dashboard, other sources,
Agricultural research related companies		Opten,
Vocational Education Organisations	Vocational schools are the pillars of the education subsystem, providing students with the knowledge, competences and skills for agricultural and food professions. Some schools participate in Horizon 2020 or Erasmus+ projects to develop new learning and teaching methods and knowledge.	SZIR, Erasmus+
Agriculture and forestry, food enterprises participating in dual training	Three-quarters of the agricultural enterprises are narrowly defined as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have benefited from an innovation call for proposals (e.g. EIP calls). Only 2 percent of enterprises in agriculture, forestry and food processing were involved in dual training as a training provider. For years, the trend has been that involvement in dual training is more widespread among food businesses than in agriculture.	NAV database, other sources
Advisory Organisations	A national Register of Advisers is managed by the Chamber of Agriculture, that plays also activities relating to training and IT, networking and coordination of advisory services. The thematic specialisation of the advisers is adapted to the importance of each activity within the sector; while the higher proportion of organic advisers reflects the segment's increased need for practical knowledge transfer. Precision farming and digitalisation are reflected both in the thematic areas and in the training of advisors. Some advisory organisations are working on the development and deployment of digital solutions.	Advisory register
Farmers Food-industry enterprises	The 75 EIP-Agri OGs set up in the 2014-2020 period mobilised farmers, producer associations, food processors on the practical side, consultants in the role of knowledge brokers, and researchers. The OGs are mostly composed of 5-7 people, 88% of the partnerships have a research actor and one third have an expert advisor. Their leaders are equally divided between farmers and research organisations. Few organisations pull up the average number of individual and group-level contacts. The projects are located throughout the country and typically cover one or two counties, but in quite a few cases these are cross-regional or cross-country links. The OGs have essentially created a large national network, highlighting a few nodes. The knowledge-sharing of the practical results of the projects through the network should certainly be exploited in the next budget period.	GINOP, EIP
Digital service providers	The digital service providers and support organisations were collected from the register of the Digital Agricultural Academy, from the lists of companies linked to the digital solutions proposed by the Association of Information Technology Enterprises and the Regional Innovation Platforms, from Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme tenders and other online sources.	DAA, GINOP, NKFIH, other sources
Supporting organisations		
Financial organisations		

Source: prepared at the Sustainability Research Directorate of the AKI

Practical implications for replicability

In order to replicate the system adopted in Hungary:

- identify first the actors in the innovation ecosystem and national agricultural digitalization;
- identify specific groups of actors (service providers, training organisations, research and advice) on the basis of predetermined criteria and thus the actual actors;
- identify all available information sources (public data sources, political and legislative resources and online sources), capable of returning either a list of organisations that are part of a given group of actors, than the most important information that characterizes the groups of actors.
- once the available databases have been identified, the data found should be collected and put into a single information database;
- based on the information processed, it is possible to verify the correspondence and identify in a certain way the stakeholder groups actually operating in relation to the different types of activities carried out.

Benefits

- The context analysis carried out has made it possible to identify the different subsystems operating within the AKIS and to have an up-to-date picture of the innovation actors operating at national level and of the relations currently existing between them.
- The work carried out has made it possible to identify all available information sources (public data sources, political and legislative resources and online sources), and to identify 11 administrative databases, the data of which have been merged into a single database.
- The information found in the analysis should allow us to better understand how to make the networking of all actors in the AKIS system more effective and efficient.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- Hungary CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Ministry of Agriculture.
<https://kormany.hu/dokumentumtar/magyarorszag-kap-strategiai-terve-2023-2027>

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Theme n. 5

Back-office

Back-office





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Back-office

Rationale

What is the Back-office?

To support advisors in their job and integrate them within the AKIS, Reg. (CE) 2021/2115 introduces the "Back-office".

The "back-office" consists of specialised support and up-to-date knowledge to be offered to "on-field" advisors to help them in having a holistic approach to farm decisions.

Modern advisory approaches should help connecting advisors with research and CAP networks and support them to deliver qualitative advice and innovation support. Such actions may fund as intervention under the Strategic CAP AKIS plans. They help at the same time the integration of advisors within the AKIS, the provision of quality advice through knowledge flows and bridging between science and practice, as well as the emergence of interactive innovation projects. However, taking on new roles required personal attitudes and a huge variety of competences and knowledge that, hardly, may be owned by a single individual.

The lack of strong back-office processes (e.g., no internal process support, no time allocated for developing skills in innovation, not enough contact with researchers and other AKIS actors, etc.) is one of the main bottlenecks when trying to strengthen the AKIS. In order to compete effectively with sales representatives, public or private impartial agricultural advisory services require professional back-office support to gather information on innovative technologies, modern management and application of new ICT technologies.

However, specific attention needs to be given also to involve private advisors in the services provided, taking into account that their linkages with research and CAP/EIP networks on innovative knowledge are, usually, quite limited. It can be very helpful that private advisors get full information on a number of priority practices linked with tackling societal challenges, such as integrated pest management, climate change, environment, reducing water use etc.



Keywords

Innovation support services; advisory services; back office



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Regional development agencies

Back-office



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Which functions to ensure an efficient back-office support?

The functions of the “back-office” are aimed at supporting on-field advisors with competencies, up-to-date knowledge and linkages with actors that are relevant to help solving complex problems, thus supporting innovation processes based on farmers’ demands and co-construction of solutions.

To provide this support, “back-office” need to ensure a high degree of connectivity in the AKIS system, in particular with researchers, advisors, H2020 Multi-Actor Projects and EIP Operational Groups bringing in innovative knowledge, but also with suppliers of inputs, other parts of the chain, with policy makers and with the broader society. This enables “back-office” to reply to specific questions asked by on-field advisors and to provide them with regular training on the latest knowledge.

Besides managing the necessary knowledge for front-office use, back-offices can actively build networking activities for various purposes (e.g., rural development networking, dedicated innovation platforms, “agro-food communities”, etc.), allowing farmers and other stakeholders to meet and give a start to start-ups or innovative projects. Among these, back-offices should also help advisors in organising working groups (by linking research /advisory / SME / ecc.) to find a solution to a complex problem and, as a consequence, supporting the raise of EIP-AGRI operational groups.

Moreover, the ‘back-office’ could also be assigned to data collection and sharing, thus creating economies of scale.

Based on the practice knowledge reservoirs (e.g., database of EIP Practice Abstracts, EU-FarmBook) and further input from the CAP/EIP networks with a focus on innovation, back-office may also develop a number of digital tools to be put at free disposal of advisors (for instance, a Whatsapp group service for advisors to help solving problems; from the field Q&A; databases with IPM solutions for crops; info on pest and disease levels; data for sound nutrient and pest management; etc.).

Due to the tasks to be accomplished, the “back-office” needs to be built in strong collaboration between all researchers and impartial advisors, as well as with existing farmers' groups, organisations and the national and regional CAP/EIP networks who have a focus on spreading knowledge and innovation, in particular capturing the innovative knowledge from EIP OGs and Horizon 2020 MA projects.



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First insights from practices

The two practices reported in this "Compendium" show a similar approach to the implementation of back-office. In both cases, databases and digital tools represent the core of the service.

The cases of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia Regions raise the issue on how to tailor the service to the different contexts. The territorial coverage of the back-office is relevant, especially in large countries that are characterised by a diversity of farming systems.

Moreover, outsourcing services to an organisation that has been operating in the territory for decades offers the opportunity to take advantage of the relational heritage created over time, which is now fundamental in facilitating the connection of the various AKIS actors, and, above all, to benefit from the trust gained by the advisors.

Food for thinking

The back-office is a new intervention within the CAP, and it is interesting to see if and how it has been/will be implemented. Some questions:

- Have the functions of organisations already operating within advisory systems been expanded? (e.g., Veneto Agricoltura)
- Have new organisations been set up?
- Has a model in the form of a HUB been used (set up as a network of specialised and cross-sectoral expertise)?
- What functions have been/will be assigned? Are there the necessary skills to carry them out?

How to follow-up with the results of collection of AKIS-in-practice!

- Networking with ATTRACTISS to develop synergies on capacity building for ISS
- Short description of the key features of the back-office in the different MSs in view to share information for knowledge and further interaction.
- Practice workshops, aimed at sharing practices, reflecting on experiences and effectiveness on the models applied to integrate advisors within the AKISs and promote grassroots innovation

Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council, art. 15 and art. 78
EU SCAR AKIS (2019), Preparing for Future AKIS in Europe. Brussels, European Commission





5.1 Organizing back-office services to support up-to-date knowledge flows within the AKIS: the case of Veneto Region

Rationale

Under the 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plans, Managing Authorities planned a mix of interventions aiming at strengthening farm advice and fostering all advisors' interconnection within AKIS. One of the novelties of this set of interventions is the back office, that aims at providing information and specialized support for advisors and other AKIS actors on a wide range of issues, such as: use of natural resources (water, soil air); weather events and climate change; problems related to livestock, forestry and crop production (including crop protection); market conditions; business management. More in general, the goal of back office is to create an enabling environment to knowledge exchange for all AKIS actors, to develop faster innovation pathways and better exploitation of existing knowledge in order to achieve the specific objectives of the CAP.

In MSs, like Italy and its regions, that are characterized by a variety of farming systems and AKIS actors, defining a best-fitting model for the organization and the delivery of back-office services is challenging, due to the plurality of advisory services and competencies that are needed across the rural areas.

As well, trust and mutual recognition of roles and competencies is crucial to enable collaboration among researchers and advisors and cooperation for innovation.



Keywords

Innovation support services; advisory services; back office



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Regional development agencies



Country

Italy - Veneto region

Solution

Under the CAP strategic plan of Veneto Region, the back-office services have been delegated to Veneto Agricoltura, which is the regional Agency for Innovation in the Primary Sector, an in-house body which carries out support activities to the Regional Council in the field of policies for the agricultural, agri-food, forestry and fishing sectors [see the dedicated box in 4.1 AKIS-in-practice!].

Specifically, the tasks assigned to Veneto Agricoltura in the back-office role are:

- set up, strengthen and integrate monitoring networks for data collection, analysis (including laboratory analysis) and information, including those from experimental actions/projects;
- develop and make available regional/national/international databases to advisors and the general AKIS;
- develop and make available digital tools also for carrying out complex processing (DSS, AI, etc.);
- develop and make available to advisors and AKIS actors regional/national/international databases
- implement networking activities and virtual communities between AKIS actors and in particular between advisors, researchers and the CAP Network, at regional, national and international level.

Back-office services will be provided by experts in relation to the needs and topics of interest to AKIS actors working in rural areas and with farms.

All information will be accessible to all actors in the EU territory, since its purpose is to contribute to improving AKIS. The intervention also provides for the connection and participation in the activities of the CAP Networks

In practice...

A specific delegation act from the Managing Authority of the Complementary Rural Programme (CRP) 2023-2027 of Veneto Region identifies Veneto Agricoltura as the unique beneficiary of the back-office intervention.

To this aim, the Veneto Region published a call for proposals, by detailing topics, conditions and costs of back office activities.

Particularly, Veneto Agricoltura has presented a Project (according to a specific format) describing the planned activities, divided into work packages, the time schedule, as well as the quantitative (man/hours) and qualitative (qualification) information of the human resources to be employed in its implementation.

The eligible costs are:

- i. staff costs;
- ii. missions and assignment;
- iii. acquisition of services and advisory services;
- iv. purchase of software and licenses;
- v. purchase of consumables;
- vi. rental of classrooms and facilities;
- vii. other expenses necessary for the operation of activities, such as utilities, rent, overheads (indirect costs).

To monitor and evaluate the back-office project, a working group (AKIS Backoffice service Committee) between Veneto Region and Veneto Agricoltura is set up, to check its implementation on a quarterly basis. Expenditure related to indirect costs is calculated on a flat rate basis, based on 7% of eligible direct costs (ref. Art 54 of EU Reg. 2021/1060). The support rate is 100% of eligible expenditure.

Practical implications for replicability

Veneto Region established the back office upon the existing agency that has a with a strong background and longstanding competencies about AKIS that represent an advantage.

However, some provisions are needed along with:

- Dedicated budget to implement the back office under art. 78 Reg EU 2021/2015;
- Publication of a public call for proposals dedicated to select the best projects related to back office;
- Clear definition of functions and boundaries in relation to the activities provided under the daily agency activities.

Benefits

- The presence of Agencies at territorial level and their interconnections within the local AKIS represents an added value for the implementation of the AKIS strategy.
- This allows to maximize effectiveness and efficiency with respect to the purposes of public interest, also because of the operational flexibility guaranteed by the Agency, the streamlining of procedures, the lower impact of management costs of the rationalisation of services and transparency of expenditure.
- Less administrative burden to award the tender.

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Further information

- [Veneto Region Delegation act n. 1125 del 19 settembre 2023 \(IT\)](#)

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5.2 Organizing back-office services through digitalization: the case of Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region

Rationale

Under the 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plans, Managing Authorities planned a mix of interventions aiming at strengthening farm advice and fostering all advisors' interconnection within AKIS. One of the novelties of this set of interventions is the back office, that aims at providing innovation support and more competent advice to farm advisors and other AKIS actors on a wide range of issues (use of natural resources, weather events and climate change, livestock, forestry and crop production, market conditions, business management, etc.).

In MSs, like Italy and its regions, that are characterized by a variety of farming systems and AKIS actors, defining a best-fitting model for the organization and the delivery of back-office services is challenging, due to the plurality of advisory services and competencies that are needed across the rural areas, as well as different advisory services systems throughout the 21 regions and autonomous provinces.

Furthermore, such a service, to be effective, must ensure trust and mutual recognition of roles and competences and enable, first, the conditions for collaboration between researchers and advisors.



Keywords

Innovation support services; advisory services; back office



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Regional development agencies



Country

Italy – Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region

Solution

The agricultural and rural development services of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region are regulated in compliance with the EU common agricultural policy (CAP) through a regional law setting up the Integrated System of Services for Agricultural and Rural Development (SISSAR), dedicated to information actions aimed at promoting use of environmentally friendly techniques and means of production, also with particular regard to the principles of organic farming, the health of operators and consumers (SISSAR A) and to highly specialized advices for specific production sectors (SISSAR B). SISSAR includes 16 services providers delivering a variety of services. Among them, ERSA has a core role and, for this, it has many relationships and it is trusted by advisors, farmers and researchers.

ERSA is the Regional Agency for Rural Development of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy). The Agency's main tasks are technical and scientific advice, research and experimentation, training of farmers aimed at innovation and knowledge transfer, divulgation, promotion of the quality labels and certification in agriculture, fishing and aquaculture.

For many years ERSA has been undertaking research and experimentation activities, exploring new cultivation techniques and technologies, ensuring phytosanitary plant protection plans, carrying out land soil classification and studies, animal husbandry experimentation. It also carries out studies and investigations for characterization, recovery and conservation of local genetic material of different vegetable species, giving special regard to their sustainability and of the ecosystem services provided, as well as plants genetic breeding aimed at creating new varieties suitable for cultivations under local conditions (i.e. soil, climate conditions). ERSA promotes ICT and digitalization in agriculture, making use of emerging technologies such as IoT, modelling and data processing. The entire system is intended to provide advanced services and Decision Support Systems to farmers and technicians consistent with the current concept and expectations of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).

Other activities concerns: applied research and experimentation, phytosanitary monitoring, chemical and biotechnological lab assays and analyses, certification of plant propagating material, phytosanitary controls aimed at ensuring national and international marketing of plant materials and products, integrated pest management, promotion and valorization of regional agri-food productions, monitoring activities and regional lists of organic producers, agricultural statistics and dissemination of economic information on market trends concerning the primary sector, fields trials, ect. All these activities are carried out in collaboration with Universities and Research Centers.

The Agency organizes training courses for advisors and workshops addressed to farmers.

ERSA has developed DSS tools particularly an ICT tool aimed at transferring knowledge in agriculture, dissemination of research and experimentation results to farmers, technicians and stakeholders named AgriCS (i.e. agriculture, knowledge and development). AgriCS was developed as a pilot project under the RDP 2014-2020 (EU Reg. no. 1305/2013) of the Autonomus Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Measure 1.2 – Knowledge transfer and information.

Building on this and ERSA previous experiences and back-ground for knowledge transfer in agriculture through ICT and digitalisation, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region has decided to organize the Back-Office around DSS tools.

In practice...

According to the CAP Strategic Plan, the back-office Intervention has the aim to:

- realize, empower and integrate monitoring networks in order to collect data, analyses (lab assays also), information including results gathered through experimental projects/activities
- realize and make available regional/national/international data bases and data sets to advisors and to the AKIS system
- develop and make available digital tools aimed at processing data as well as carry out complex modelling analyses (e.g. DSS, A.I., etc.)
- networking and virtual communities among AKIS subjects, in particular: advisors, researchers, CAP Network at regional, national and international level

Grounding on this, AgriCS will be the core of the Back-office of Friuli Venezia Giulia region. This tool tackles different issues, like climate change, efficient use of resources at farm level, and includes:

- Phytosanitary prediction models
- Meteorological data and related agricultural scenarios in the short term (i.e. day by day simulation over 1 year). Meteorological data are provided and processed hourly or daily
- DSS tools dedicated to farm techniques consisting in simulations based on information or techniques adopted by the farm and provided by the users, combining informative layers provided directly by the ICT platform
- Mathematical models dealing with plants pests and diseases dynamics (regional areas or at farm level)
- Mathematical models dedicated to agronomic topics (at farm level)
- Agro-meteorological scenarios (at territorial level)
- Soil informative layers: information processed by ERSAs, data collected through studies and land classification surveys, implementation and conservation of a dedicated GIS system
- Farm data: information on techniques adopted by the farm, provided by the users

Models can be used as DSS by farmers and technicians. ERSAs technicians can take advantage of these DSS to plan different agricultural experimentations.

Practical implications for replicability

Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region established the back-office upon the existing agency that has a with a strong background and a previous experience for knowledge transfer in agriculture through ICT tools and digitalization.

However, some provisions are needed along with:

- Dedicated budget to implement the back-office under art. 78 Reg EU 2021/2015;
- Clear definition of functions and boundaries in relation to the activities provided under the daily agency activities.

Benefits

- The presence of Agencies at territorial level and their interconnections within the local AKIS represents an added value for the implementation of the AKIS strategy.
- The previous experiences and back-ground for knowledge transfer in agriculture through ICT and digitalisation has been important in the identification of the back-office model.
- Less administrative burden to award the tender.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

Resolution of the Regional Council 17 February 2023, no. 303 LR 5/2006. Programming of the Integrated System of Agricultural and of agricultural and rural development services for the period 2022-2024. Annual update for 2023 (IT)
AgriCS website: <https://agrics.regione.fvg.it/agricsweb/>

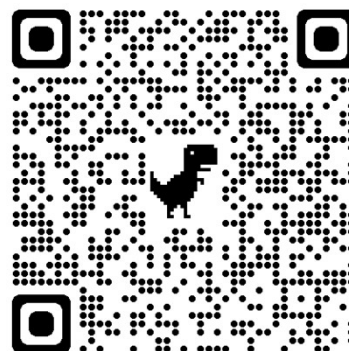
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