



modern **AKIS**

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AKIS in action: Modernization of Agriculture

Q&A Documentation

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Policies for the future of farming and food in the European Union: general overview and focus on innovation

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Q: What can the EU learn from other OECD Countries? Are there any best practice examples for innovation policy instruments, you can share with us?

Urszula Ziebninska: There is a huge diversity of agricultural innovation systems instruments across all countries of the world. We didn't have the chance to analyse all of them but there are certain similarities and certain differences. The first thing to notice is that the AKIS needs to be adapted to its setting context. Each country is different in its size, its capacity to innovate, and its mix of commodities produced. The European AKIS has – especially with Horizon Europe- good instruments to foster collaboration. The knowledge that is created in one country can be spilled over afterward to other ones. Not all countries need to do the same thing because there is already the framework, the structure of collaboration. The resources are pooled all over Europe to fight global challenges. At the same time, there is a possibility to specialize. Smaller countries can align and collaborate with other countries which have the same interest. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Solutions need to be adapted. There are instruments in place that can help in these processes.

Q: According to your findings the farming sector has a higher mismatch in education than other sectors. Why is this the case? How is this mismatch in education measured?

Urszula Ziebninska: We didn't analyse all sectors in detail. The analysis tried to compare the expectations for a given job and the available educational level of people exercising this job. It appears like a high share of farmers are under or overeducated. We analysed it on the global level for the OECD but every country can have different reasons and particularities behind that. But the image is clear, a little less than 70% of the European farmers have only practical experience. This leaves a space for improving education and in particular putting more stress and attention to advisory services, which can help fill in the gap and provide advice in the areas that are changing over time and that require to be up-to-date with all developments. Advisory services provide knowledge transfer from the place where it is developed to the place where it is needed.

Q: Based on your reviews and your international perspective, is the AKIS approach well-fitting the purpose of a significant sustainability transition of the agricultural systems in the EU or maybe at global level as well?

Urszula Ziebninska: AKIS is crucial for the transition to a more sustainable agriculture but it is not sufficient on its own. A sustainability transition requires a set of economic incentives as well as a favourable regulatory environment that creates the right incentives to set the right conditions and make innovation attractive to farmers and researchers. For instance the Netherlands has a well-developed AKIS but it puts the priority more on economic productivity



and less on sustainability. By definition, AKIS is a network of actors, including farmers, advisors, and so on. All of them promote knowledge and innovation. The interconnection and the collaborative nature of AKIS can help and ensure that innovative solutions both meet farmers' needs and serve sustainable productivity. Therefore it is important to make sure, that AKIS progressing in the right direction.

Jesus Antón: Just a few additional points on experiences from other countries, in terms of innovation initiatives in the agricultural sector that could be useful. In other countries, I think in particular the US or AUS, there is much more emphasis on the private sector. The private sector has a very strong leadership, this is due to many reasons, including some initiatives and regulatory frameworks. This does not mean that this approach is better than the European, but some lessons that can be learned from it. In AUS they have commodity boards that are particularly focused on innovation, this is a way of interacting between private and public money to find solutions that are identified by the own sector. The priorities are led by the sector themselves. Some countries in the EU- the Netherlands- have similar approaches. Another factor is the general innovation environment that is influenced by the regulatory framework. For example, the US has a less tightly regulatory net than the EU. The EU has a stronger focus on the precautionary principle – there can be of course good reasons for it- in research and technology, and this creates uncertainties when investing in innovation.

Q: Before joining the EU Malta had a free farmer's advisory service. After joining the EU, the agency focused mainly on administrative tasks. What do you think of this development?

Jesus Antón: We found that also in other accession countries. We recently conducted an accession review of Croatia. However, there is a tendency that public advisory services are to some extent reduced or they take over other administrative tasks that are required. This is a development we have to think about. The EU framework puts a lot of emphasis on compliance and administrative aspects of it. The private sector picks up on this and fills the gap in advisory services that arise. However, the private sector and public sector may have other objectives. There is a need to strengthen the advisory services.

Q: Are there inspiring best-practice examples of advisory services within the EU?

Urszula Ziebninska: Being well developed does not necessarily mean responding to the challenge and answering the questions. The agricultural services can be very active and performing but when they are more on the economic side of the equation there is a need to bring sustainability to the equation. There is a need to create strong well-functioning advisory services but at the same time, they need to answer multiple needs, questions, and expectations.



Q: To what extent are the research and innovation indicators under the OECD framework usable to provide evidence on the AKIS and the AKIS strategies in the European Member states? How long can we use this set of indicators? We at the modernAKIS project are working on a comprehensive framework for the AKIS and the AKIS strategies and we are therefore checking what is already in also on an international level.

Urszula Ziebninska: I will answer this question by explaining on collecting and analysing policy data. There are two most meaningful complementary databases in this context, the agricultural policy monitoring and the research and development statistics database, both available on the website of the OECD. The agricultural policy monitoring database covers market and budgetary transfers going into the agricultural sector, expenditures on research and development, and agricultural education and extension services constitute only a small part of that. The research and development statistics focus on general research and development with agriculture being one of the several socioeconomic objectives. The databases try to cover all OECD member states as well as key partner countries by applying the same standardised methodology. There are some limitations on the datasets that rely on the data that is coming from the member states. Indicators like public expenditures on R&D are available for most of the countries. However, getting more detailed data and information is challenging like the involvement of the business sector and the activities taking place. When it comes to AKIS, is a very complex concept and requires monitoring and evaluation. Thus it requires a multi-dimensional approach of quantitative and qualitative information, this is a common cross-country challenge. I will illustrate it with an example, increasing the share of organic farming to 25% within the EU is the well-known goal of the EU. If we want to rate now the share of investment of R&D in organic farming, that's not a simple question to answer, that kind of data comes from individual case studies, it's not systematic data collection. Similarly monitoring the uptake of innovative practices and solutions on the farm level is a challenge in data collection. Effective monitoring requires indicators that recognise the diverse aspects of AKIS, including the impact of knowledge and the adoption of innovation. Data and evidence collected cannot be separated from policy, they must be integrated in a way that benefits both, the policy monitoring and individual farmers and AKIS actors to make better decisions.