

# CONNECTING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE: AN EXAMPLE



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The logo for Xan features the word 'xan' in a stylized, lowercase green font. Above the 'a' is a green leaf-like shape, and above the 'n' is a purple flower-like shape. To the right of the 'n' is a registered trademark symbol (®).  
**XESTIÓN AGROGANDEIRA  
E NATUREZA SL**



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1. Who is Xestión Agrogandeira e Natureza SL?
2. Is connecting research and practice necessary?
3. Is there a connection actually?
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5. How to connect R & P

# 1. Who is XAN



# 1. Who is XAN

- A very small structure
  - 2-4 workers (agronomy, economy, veterinary)
  - + or - 50 farms (70% dairy farms; 30% vegetables)
- Farming and rural assessment:
  - Increase the farm profitability
  - Using ecologically sound techniques
- Organic farming promotion



PROMOTE INNOVATION

## 2. Is connecting research and practice necessary?



# Yes, it is!

- Constant changes within the social and economical background
- New environmental requirements and regulations
- Innovation as a competitive factor
- Need for a permanent evolution

# 3. Is there a connection actually?

Origin of RD  
Transfer



# Origins of RD+i

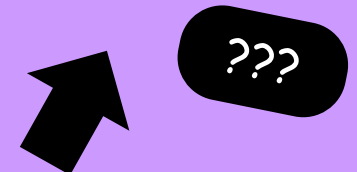
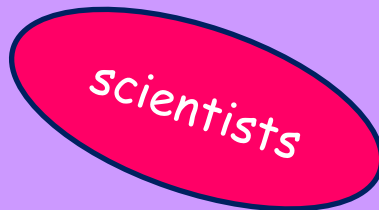
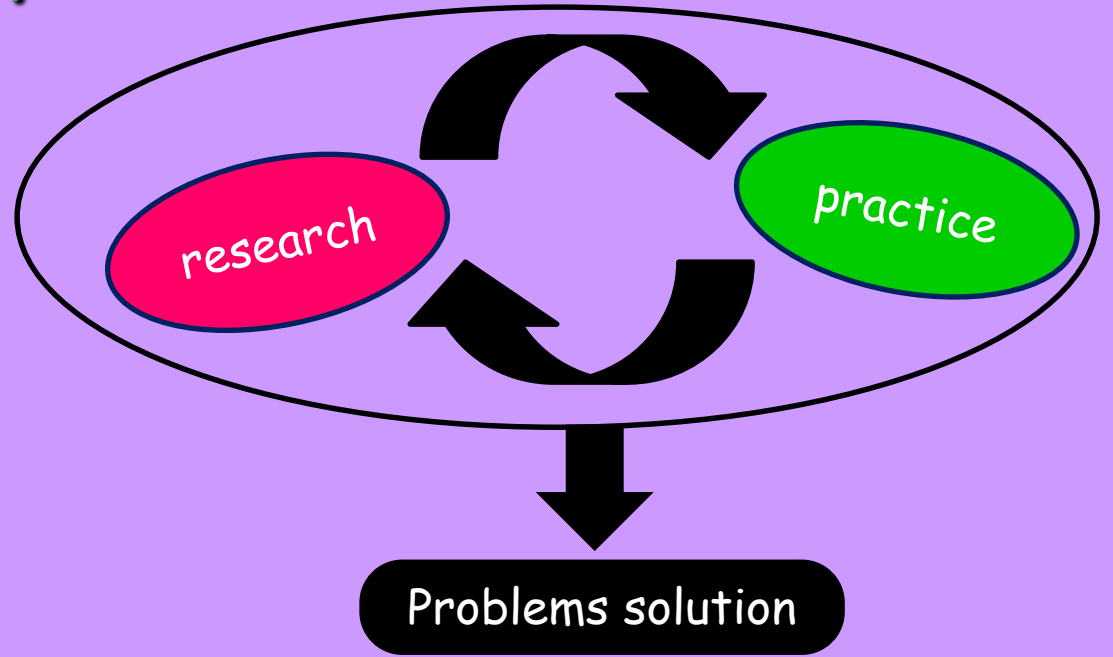
- Farmers
  - Less and less important in modern, high capitalized farms
  - Partial areas (observable variables)
- Public research
  - Less and less important: polity is oriented to favor private research
  - Co-financing
- Private research
  - More and more important knowledge source
- **BUSINESS COMPANIES**  
(input providers)
  - "THE" great source of farm innovation



# Where is the technology transfer?

- Lack of "rural extension" (rural sociology 1950')
- Difficulties for farmers to identify innovation needs:
  - New contexts (economic, social, environmental)
  - Each farm is different
  - Disappearance of social meeting points in the rural areas (more and more work, rural exodus...)
- Difficulties for researchers to transfer knowledge
  - Opposition to changes
  - Research results maybe not so interesting as they think
- Lack of common communication means and language

# Connections within RD+i process



# 4. Example 1: research looking for farmers





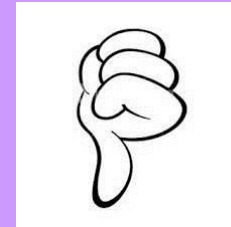
# Description of the project

- Origin: staff of a public agriculture research institute, researchers who think that they have a good idea
- Researchers problems to solve:
  - Fields to experiment in real conditions
  - Farmers to grow crops
  - Farmers to give opinion
  - Technical assistance to gather samples
  - Technical assistance is possible/labour cost isn't possible

# SOLUTION

- Collaboration with farmers
  - Seeding and growing clover
  - Recording technical practices
  - Giving opinions
- Collaboration with private "extension" company (XAN)
  - Find out farmers able to carry out the tasks
  - Seeds preparing and distribution
  - Global follow-up of the experiment (visits)
  - Registering data
  - Opinion query
  - Crop sampling
- Diffusion
  - Scientific publication
  - Publication in agriculture Galician magazines and TV
  - 1 day seminar, in the institute

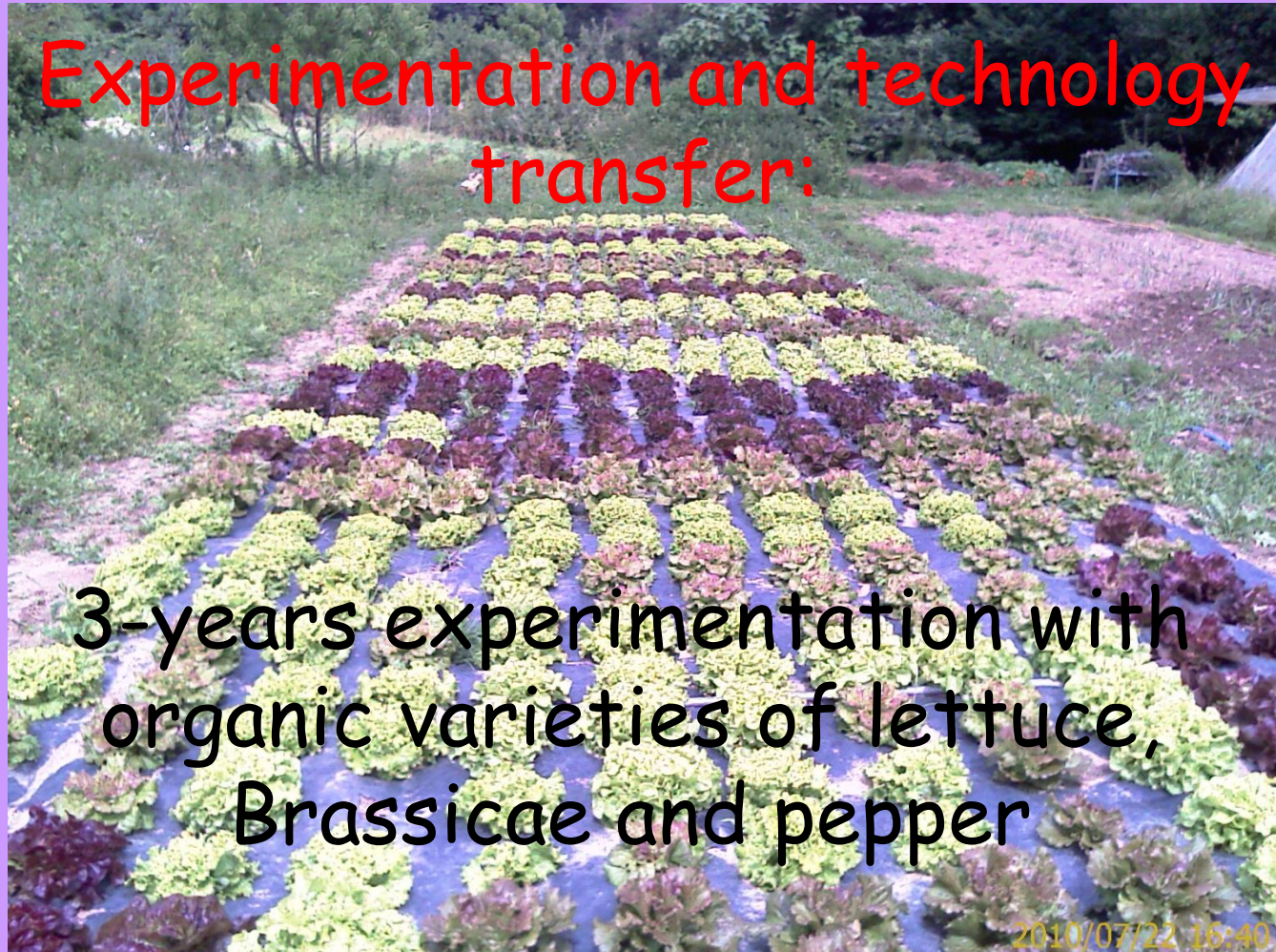
# Evaluation



research	Research has been carried out Real conditions Lower cost and better agility by the technical assistance	Experiment failure with some farmers Low diffusion
Farmers	Real experimentation of new crops	Where are the results?
XAN	New economical resources: contract Better use of resources: multi-purpose visits Update of my knowledge about the innovation, from farmers and scientists	Results are not in time at all Planning is not simple



# 4. Example 2: farmers looking for solutions



# Description of the project

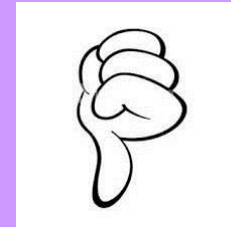
- Origin
  - XAN is advising a group of growers of organic vegetables
  - a need for RD+i is identified by the adviser through *conversations* with farmers
  - the regional government created a subsidy to carry out technology transfer; projects may include several partners (public researchers, farmers organizations); budget can include technical assistance
- Needs:
  - Certified organic seeds to correct the Spanish market lacks
  - Experiment with varieties which are not at disposal of farmers in small quantities
  - Assessment of new seeds (germination, growing, resistances...)
  - Euros!

# SOLUTION

- Apply for the subsidy
- Collaboration with a public research institution
  - Giving support as a partner: signature
  - No further implication
- Collaboration with private "extension" company: XAN
  - Subsidy application and management
  - Inputs purchase
  - Experiment design, planning and realization
- Collaboration with agricultural public school
  - Plants production (adequate means)
  - "scientific" experiment with repetitions
- Collaborations with a formal Association of farmers
  - Simplified experiment
  - Growing plants
  - Giving opinion



# Evaluation



Research	Helping a rural cause	Have to fight with paperwork
Farmers	New varieties not available in the market in small quantities Real experimentation in the farm	Technical problems
Public school	Activity in the school Mean to promote the organic practices, aim of the school Mean to promote the school through joint activities Help a rural cause	Additional work, unpaid by the subsidy
XAN	Response in front of a real concrete need New economical resources: contract New knowledge from farmers	Administrative requirements Not possible to involve public researchers Little dissemination of the results High cost

# 5. How to connect research and practice



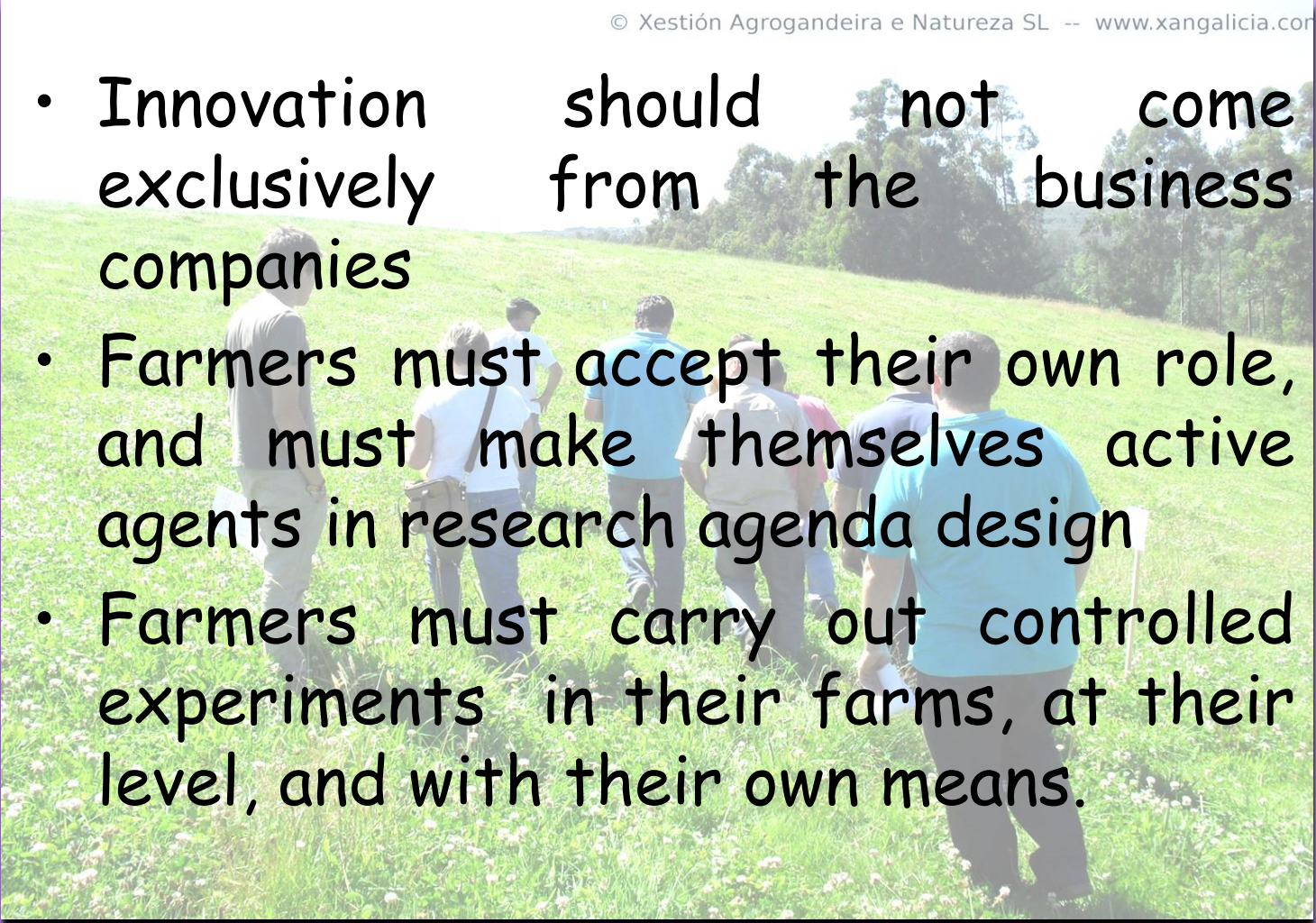
# What do we need?

- To make clear what are the farmers' needs
  - Organized producers, better than producer's organizations
  - Activate/create new farmers meeting points to define their own needs
- Negotiation research/farmers
  - Clarification of what is the aim of the RD+i project and process (environment protection? Better working conditions? Social recognizing?)
  - Interface between distinct registers: need to translate both farmers and researchers languages and approaches



# We need to change farmers attitude

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- Innovation should not come exclusively from the business companies
  - Farmers must accept their own role, and must make themselves active agents in research agenda design
  - Farmers must carry out controlled experiments in their farms, at their level, and with their own means.

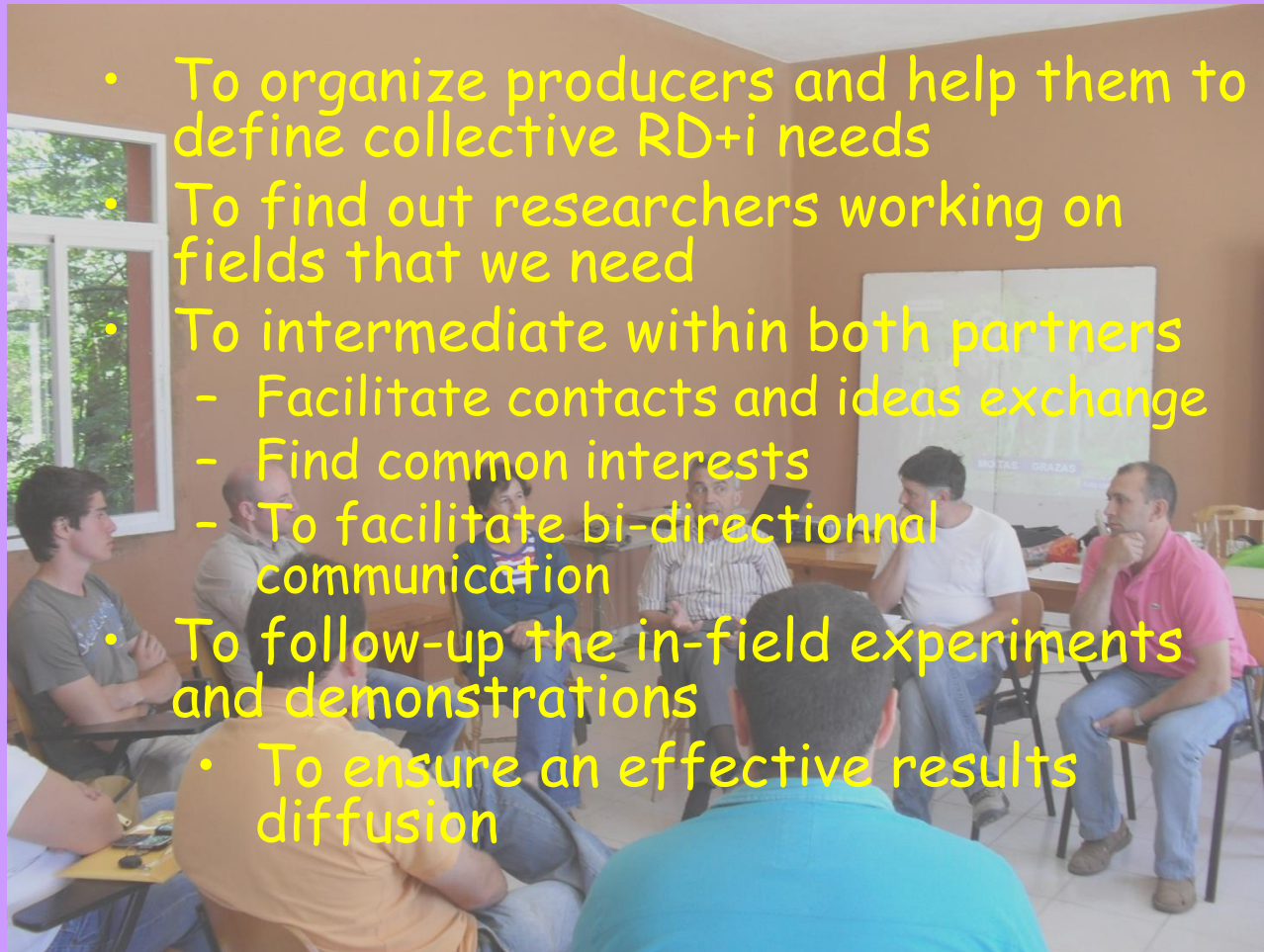


# We need to change scientists attitude

- Research must be attractive even if this research doesn't result in high impact publications . (different incentives for researchers)
- Research in the rural environment must be multi-disciplinar
- High weight of statistical analysis in methodology, under-use of systemic analysis or case studies
- Farmer's knowledge, experience and language are so valid as the scientific ones, and must be taken in account: this is the better way to an effective RD+i process
- Scientists may be able to enlarge their research area, and not to limit to their very very specific field
- Results must be conveniently extended



# We need to create/empower interfaces



# Risks and unwanted effects

- If there are no means to ensure participation of farmers in the definition of the RD+I, the projects probably will be focused on innovations more interesting for agro industrial business than for farmers
- Concurrency of big structures that act as "subsidies hunters". Participation of agricultural organizations as agrarian unions or cooperatives, BUT just to cover operating costs and other activities (i.e "advisory services" as business services)
- No real dissemination
- Little allocation of funds to farmers

# Proposal to avoid unwanted effects *in our conditions*

- Finance stable structures (per year, renewable)
  - Finance small structures (less than 100-200 farmers). May be done by a serious limitation of the total amounts (less than 50.000-80.000/year?)
  - Objects of this subsidy: organize farmers, energize groups, create social support able to express, collectively, their needs
  - Operating costs: labour costs and travel, better than material
  - Zero co-financing
  - Cash advance
- Finance projects
  - very small technology transfer projects and actions (less than 5.000€-10.000€ each one). Better to have small projects with big results than big projects with small results
  - Specifically favor demonstrative actions and in-field research, with flexible budget that allows to finance small seminars, visits, conferences with the better format of each area
  - Projects focused on innovation with collective interest
- Make the documental control easier, and multiply the cases control to make sure the actions come from and belong to farmers



Thank you for your attention !

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