



Inventory and analysis of exchange schemes for young farmers

Report II of the Pilot project: Exchange
programmes for young farmers

Final

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Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.	METHODOLOGY	6
2.1.	Inventory of exchange schemes in EU and some OECD countries	6
2.2.	Selecting case studies	6
2.3.	Analysis of the exchange schemes	8
3.	INVENTORY OF EXCHANGE SCHEMES IN EU-28 AND SOME OECD COUNTRIES	9
3.1.	Context	9
3.2.	Geography	9
3.3.	Types of exchange schemes	10
4.	ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDIES	17
4.1.	Design and size	17
4.2.	Management and efficiency	18
4.3.	Objectives and effectiveness	20
4.4.	Sustainability	21
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	23
5.1.	General conclusions	23
5.2.	Recommendations	24
	ANNEXES	26
	Annex II.1 Overview of the existing exchange schemes in EU-28 and third countries	26
	Annex II.2 Monographs for each of the 22 case studies	26
	Annex II.3 Methodology in more detail	26

1. Introduction

Objective of the Pilot project study on young farmers

The “Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers” has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) to identify the needs of young farmers, get an overview of the existing exchange schemes for young farmers and develop a guide to establish or improve exchange schemes for young farmers (DG AGRI, Tender No AGRI-2012-Eval-03). The study has been implemented by Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in 2014-2015.

The aims of this study were:

- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the specific needs of young farmers across the EU (this report);
- To describe and assess existing schemes and initiatives for the exchange of young farmers;
- To identify specific results of exchange schemes and specific support measures that have proved to be effective and efficient;
- To provide recommendations on the design, implementation and delivery of exchange programmes and schemes.

Some context

The background to the study is that the evolution and specialisation of agriculture and forestry and the particular challenges faced by micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas (e.g. farmers, forest producers, winegrowers, horticulturalists, etc.) require an appropriate level of technical and economic training (DG AGRI, Tender No AGRI-2012-Eval-03). The regulatory framework for EU rural development 2014-2020 has stipulated that knowledge transfer and information actions should not so much be provided in the form of traditional training courses, but rather be adapted to the needs of rural actors (European Commission, 2013).

Appropriate training is especially important for young farmers because it is this group specifically that can contribute the most to fostering the innovation and resource-efficiency needed to achieve the EU2020¹ objectives (Dellapasqua, 2010). Furthermore, young farmers face specific challenges linked to the high investments needed in the start-up phase, difficulties in accessing finance and low turnover in the first years of business. Combined with prolonged generational renewal and diminished access to land, this can reduce the interest of young farmers in entering the sector. Moreover, the decreasing number of young people in the agricultural sector creates specific difficulties for generational renewal and raises concerns regarding the loss of valuable skills and knowledge as older, but experienced people, leave the sector. According to the ‘Overview of CAP² reform 2014-2020’, only 14% of European farmers are aged under 40 (European Commission, 2013).

Throughout Europe and the world numerous exchange schemes exist that enable young (or potential) farmers to travel abroad and work on another farm. Exchange schemes are defined as initiatives to mobilise farmers to spend a certain amount of time on another farm in order to improve his/her knowledge and/or get acquainted with different technologies, methods, machinery, processes and for which an implementation structure is set up.

¹ EU2020 = Main European strategy for 2020.

² CAP = Common Agricultural Policy.

This inventory and analysis of exchange schemes for young farmers

In this report, the results from the *inventory and analysis of existing exchange schemes* are presented. It contains an analysis based on desk research, the inventory of exchange schemes for young farmers and a comprehensive analysis of 22 case studies. Interviews have been held with many scheme managers, participants and hosts.

This report is targeted at current or potential scheme managers, policy officers and other stakeholders interested in getting an overview of existing exchange schemes, their structure and how they function.

The methodology for the inventory and the analysis is briefly described in chapter two. Chapter three provides an overview of all exchange schemes and a classification is introduced. The complete list of the inventoried exchange schemes can be found in the annexes, with names and contact details. Chapter four contains an analysis of the 22 case studies. The conclusions and recommendations are provided in chapter five.

For each exchange scheme, contact details and further information are included in Annex II.1. The more detailed case studies of 22 exchange schemes for young farmers are included in Annex II.2. Lastly, a more comprehensive description of the methodology used for both the brief and full inventory, the case studies and the development of the guide for successful exchange schemes are included in Annex II.3.

Where to find more information

In total there are four main reports in the Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers:

0. Synthesis;
- I. Needs of young farmers (including 28 country reports);
- II. Analysis of existing exchange schemes for young farmers (this report) (including a description and contact details of all exchange schemes and 22 case studies);
- III. A guide to designing exchange schemes for young farmers, taking country-specific differences into account.

These are available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.



2. Methodology

2.1. *Inventory of exchange schemes in EU and some OECD countries*

In 2014, an inventory of existing exchange schemes for young farmers was carried out in all 28 EU Member States and the following OECD countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America.³

Country experts active in each country involved were asked to compile an inventory of all existing exchange schemes and other forms of knowledge transfer in their country. As sources of information, the country experts used:

- Basic data, collected in the project proposal;
- Groups of stakeholders that they consulted;
- Survey results;
- Focus group participants;
- The internet;
- Any other channels available.

In the inventory, the main characteristics of some 185 schemes are described, including contact information, objectives, communication strategies, size of the organisation and data on costs and funding (see Annex II.1). The results provide a broad impression of the occurrence and use of exchange schemes and whether they meet the needs of young farmers as identified in the survey and focus group discussions.

In combination with the inventory of exchange schemes, an inventory of other forms of knowledge transfer was developed in order to get a broader picture on knowledge exchange initiatives. The inventory is limited to those knowledge transfer and exchange schemes where (young) farmers were included and which were available in 2014 within the countries involved in this study. For these schemes, the same general data as for the exchange schemes has been collected. The principal sources of information on knowledge transfer and exchange schemes were literature, websites, national interviews and the answers to the developed questionnaire.

The inventory served in turn as base material for the selection of 22 case studies; the last step of the inventory of exchange schemes (see section below).

2.2. *Selecting case studies*

The selection of the 22 case studies was based on whether 1) the scheme had been active in the period from 2000 to 2012, 2) the scheme had facilitated at least 10 exchange participants and 3) there was at least one contact available and willing to cooperate. Schemes were selected from EU Member States (17) as well as OECD countries. Table 2.1 below shows the final selection of the 22 case studies.

³ During the inventory, partner organisations were identified also in other countries than the OECD countries listed here.

Table 2.1 Overview of the 22 selected case studies

	Scheme	Country*
EU Member States		
1	Internationales landwirtschaftliches Praktikum	Austria
2	Travel to Farm	Denmark
3	Odyssé Agri	France
4	Praktikantenaustausch	Germany
5	Rural Exchange Training Abroad (R-ETA Ltd)	Hungary
6	Equipeople Agricultural Work Experience	Ireland
7	EIFL	Italy
8	Slow Food	Italy
9	Development forum for Rural Youth 'Solis' (Step)	Latvia
10	NAJK - World Farmer Study tours	the Netherlands
11	Stichting Uitwisseling	the Netherlands
12	JUF // IRE - Rural International Exchange	Sweden
13	Get Mentoring in Farming	UK
14	World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms	UK
15	Tesco Future Farmer Foundation	UK
16	Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	EU-28
17	Nuffield Farming Scholarships	NZ/Australia/UK
OECD Countries		
18	IRE Agriculture Worldwide	Australia
19	Intercambio da Juventude Rural Brasileira (Brazilian Rural Youth Exchange)	Brazil
20	AgriVenture USA	USA
21	Communicating for Agriculture Education Programmes (CAEP)	USA
22	IFYE Association of the USA	USA

* The location of the headquarters of some schemes are known to change periodically, e.g. Nuffield.

For each scheme, interviews were held with the manager, a host farmer and two farmer participants. The findings were summarised in so-called monographs. The structure and content of these monographs consist of two main parts:

1. Covering factsheet presenting the key information and a short descriptive text on the scheme;
2. A second section containing detailed information on the exchange scheme.

2.3. Analysis of the exchange schemes

Framework for the analysis

The case studies enabled the identification of the main factors for success and failure in the design and implementation of exchange schemes. Best practices have been extracted to develop the Guide for successful exchange schemes.⁴ The analysis focused on four aspects (table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Framework for the analysis of the exchange schemes

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details</i>
Design and size (relevance) <i>why</i>	Design, size/number of participants, width (agricultural sectors and target groups), length (years), geographical spread, impact.
Management (efficiency) <i>how</i>	Management and organisational quality, costs versus results, communication approach.
Objectives (effectiveness) <i>what</i>	Intervention logic, objectives versus results, legal aspects, communication results (publicity).
Sustainability <i>for how long</i>	Availability of funds, fundraising quality/ability, strength of staff, long-term strategy, notoriety/ability to attract young entrepreneurs.

Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

Representativeness of this study

With some 185 exchange schemes, a significant proportion of all existing exchange schemes has been identified in this research in EU-28 and a selected number of OECD countries (not taking into account the educational exchange systems, run by e.g. universities). The share of all annual exchange participants passing through one of these 185 schemes is probably even higher. However, no official data are available for comparison. This research is the first attempt to assess the number, size and importance of such schemes in the EU.

Hosts, participants and managers of schemes participated in this research on a voluntary basis. Some scheme managers were reluctant to either share certain information or, more commonly, were concerned by the amount of time involved, particularly with respect to the case studies (where more in-depth interviews were undertaken). In the end however, all but one scheme manager cooperated.⁵ In other cases, it took a lot of effort to trace participating farmers (as some are now living in different countries, for example). Nevertheless, enough information could be gathered to draft the monographs.

In general, it has been difficult to gather comparable quantitative data. For example, the number of participants is calculated in very different ways from scheme to scheme. The funding and costs are also calculated differently. A quantitative evaluation of the efficiency is therefore not presented.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.

⁵ The only scheme where time restraints impeded the scheme manager's participation was IRE in Australia.

3. Inventory of exchange schemes in EU-28 and some OECD countries⁶

3.1. Context

As shown by our survey results (Needs of young farmers⁷), knowledge needs are not the most urgent needs of young farmers in the EU. According to our data, land to buy or rent is their most important need. Subsidies, credit and qualified labour come next as important general needs. Regarding knowledge needs, reading and looking for information on the internet, field days or excursions, individual advice, fairs or exhibitions, (agricultural) trainings or courses, farmers' journals and workshops, seminars or conferences are the most important knowledge sources for the interviewed young farmers. It is striking that participation in discussions on the internet, online training, e-learning and social media appear to not be very popular among the interviewed young farmers. Fellow farmers are their most important information source, followed by farmers' associations and agricultural consultants and advisors. The order of importance of these needs however strongly differs between Member States and depends largely on existing knowledge structures.

The participation rate in exchange schemes among the interviewed young farmers is rather low (17.5%), although most respondents do have a positive attitude towards them. Active participation is often hindered by problems such as lack of time or having no replacement on the farm.

3.2. Geography

As the demand for exchange schemes varies between countries (and over time), so does the related supply. As shown in this research, a wide range of exchange schemes has developed during the last century, starting in 1912 with Travel to Farm in Denmark. The inventory of this study has yielded a large (but not exhaustive) number of schemes in the 28 EU Member States and the selected OECD countries (see Table 3.1 below). Please note that many of the EU-based schemes are outbound-oriented, meaning they send out participants, particularly to countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

Table 3.1 Numbers of schemes identified per geographical area

Area	Number of schemes	Area	Number of schemes
Australia	9*	Mexico	1
Brazil	9	New Zealand	2 *
Canada	8*	Switzerland	4
Chile	1	Turkey	2
Israel	9	USA	30*
EU	112		

Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015 *many outbound schemes (see text).

Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 show the locations of the offices of the exchange schemes and partner organisations identified. Although the present location of any headquarters of a scheme may reflect (actual or past) national user needs, it is nowadays much more determined by administrative, logistical or other practical matters. Some headquarters even have a policy of moving periodically to different parts of the world (such as Nuffield International).

⁶ Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.

Figure 3.1 World map showing locations of exchange schemes (headquarters and partner organisations) for EU-28 and the selected OECD countries



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in this study. Map by Google Maps.

Figure 3.2 Headquarters and partner organisations of exchange schemes for young farmers in Europe



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in this study. Map by Google Maps.

3.3. Types of exchange schemes

The needs of young farmers change depending on the time and place. This fact is demonstrated by the wide array of different types of exchange schemes distinguished in this research, ranging from schemes for youngsters (17 and above) who want to travel for several months and get to know another (agri) culture, to schemes for fully employed entrepreneurs who struggle to leave their farm for more than a few days or weeks, to web-based schemes and schemes designed for groups of farmers.

Based on the inventory, we identified seven types of exchange schemes for young farmers:

1. Classic exchange schemes involving longer stays;
2. Classic exchange schemes for organic farming;
3. Leadership and mentoring schemes;
4. Schemes with a specific business focus;
5. Web-based exchange schemes;
6. Group-based exchange schemes;
7. EU-schemes.

Type 1. Classic exchange schemes involving longer stays

This type includes typical schemes where participants travel to another (part of the) country for periods of several weeks, although this can sometimes extend to 12 months. Over 55 of these schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.3 below and Annex II.1). The organisations running these schemes typically focus on only facilitating exchanges (e.g. Odyssée Agri in France, R-ETA in Hungary, SUSP in the Netherlands) with very few making specific efforts to promote the exchange of experiences afterwards. The organisation of meetings, seminars or other forms of (knowledge) exchange is much less common. However, the gathering of 'alumni' is quite important in some of these schemes (e.g. AgriVenture, Experience International and IFYE).

These exchange schemes were the first to emerge and are still the most numerous of all types distinguished in this research. The oldest scheme of this type is the Danish scheme Travel to Farm which was set up in 1912, over 100 years ago. Other large (in terms of number of participant-days per year) schemes of this type are CAEP and IFYE (both USA), Odyssée Agri (France), IRE (Australia) and SUSP (the Netherlands). The participants of these schemes typically have links to an agricultural education, but may also be young farmers looking to orient themselves before taking over parental farms. Acquiring technical, agricultural know-how, experiencing different production systems and, more recently, managerial aspects of farming are always among the exchange objectives. More general, cultural goals are however equally important, as participants travel far to have a once in a lifetime experience. Often, the goals of this type of scheme have hardly changed over the years. Their name and history makes them relatively well-known among young farmers and schools. The organisation is often run by volunteers and former participants. The size of such schemes, in annual number of participants, varies from less than a hundred to several thousand young farmers per year (seen Annex II.1). Therefore, these classic schemes are by no means 'schemes of the past'. They still fulfil a very important role and handle very large numbers of participants.



Some of these schemes struggle to survive. Funding poses a problem, as well as sudden changes in visa requirements and other legal restrictions (e.g. dealing with the legal stature of students versus foreign workers). Most schemes of this type (e.g. the German 'Praktikantenaustausch') do not have a specific communication and publicity strategy. When asked, scheme managers tend to say they do not have a strategy. However, they do in fact communicate with stakeholders and participants and produce publicity

materials, attend events, etc. The specific communication and publicity channels used are mostly based on habit or personal initiative (which is not perceived as a 'strategy').

As several private companies are active as well as NGOs, this type of exchange scheme seems to be developing on a supply-demand basis, including competing for participants. Examples of this type of exchange scheme studied in this research are Odyssee Agri, SUSP, IFYE and AgriVenture.

Figure 3.3 Location of headquarters of classic exchange schemes (type 1)



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 2. Classic exchange schemes involving longer stays with a focus on organic farming

These exchange schemes are in fact identical to the classic type mentioned above. However, they focus specifically on the exchange of young farmers (and sometimes students) interested in organic or ecological farming. Around 30 of these schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.4 below and Annex II.1). These schemes started appearing in the 1970s and are still very active. The largest example of this type of exchange scheme is WWOOF, with over 100 000 participants in 100 countries worldwide, making it the largest of all schemes inventoried (excluding student exchange schemes, see below). These exchange schemes do not solely aim to exchange knowledge and experiences on organic farming but also show a growing focus on contributing to a sustainable society and encouraging the participation of people who are physically or mentally disabled ('care-farming'). Another example besides WWOOF is MESA in the USA. Participants often already hold a degree qualification.

Figure 3.4 Location of headquarters of classic exchange schemes for organic farming (type 2)



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 3. Leadership & mentoring schemes

The 'future leader' type of exchange programme focuses on relatively small numbers of (young) farmers that receive very specific attention and 'training'. Some 30 of such schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.5 below and Annex II.1). The roles of the participants are often qualified as mentees and mentors, with mentees being the selected (young) farmers and mentors being experienced businesspeople, selected from industry. Sometimes, training classes are provided and, commonly, one-to-one contact between mentee and mentor provides the basis for the scheme.

Leadership and mentoring schemes started in the UK and other Anglophone countries. Although some of these schemes have a remarkably long history, they date back more recently than the classic exchange schemes discussed above. The rationale behind these schemes is that supporting and mentoring a small number of young farmers can produce leaders of the future.

The financial situation of these schemes is characterised by donations and sponsorship from the private sector. Well-known examples are Nuffield Farming Scholarship and Get Mentoring to Farming, both studied in this research. Other examples are Jovens de Lideranca (Brazil) and various leadership programmes in Canada and the USA.

Figure 3.5 Location of headquarters of leadership and mentoring schemes (type 3)



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 4. New style schemes with specific business focus

These exchange schemes specifically focus on a supply chain and are dominated (and funded) by a large retailer. The motivation behind their support is both corporate social responsibility, as well as the conviction that entrepreneurial experience is a missing skill they can offer young farmers. About 10 of these schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.6 below and Annex II.1).

They represent a new style of scheme, in which a specific business or supply chain is the central focus. An example is Tesco's Future Farmer Foundation. Similar organisations are run by Woolworths and Sainsbury's. Slow Food is also classified as such, being a network of local communities in which the supply chain from primary producers to consumers is considered. Typically, the kind of knowledge and experience that is exchanged relates to business and supply chain management and, to a much lesser extent, agricultural production itself.

Figure 3.6 Location of headquarters of schemes with a specific business focus (type 4)



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 5. Web-based exchange schemes

These knowledge exchange schemes provide young farmers with information on demand. About 10 such schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.7 below and Annex II.1). The technology used is strongly based on the internet, through which library services and even video farming are offered. Physical travel is virtually absent (besides scheme managers travelling to new projects). 'Classic' library facilities can also provide information and knowledge to large groups of users. They are not solely focused on (young) farmers, but also target other actors in the agricultural and rural sectors, as well as private and non-private. Open access of data is crucial. An example of a knowledge exchange scheme studied in this research is the Public Library Innovation Programme of EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries). Another example is ATTRA, supported by the U.S. Congress.

Figure 3.7 Location of headquarters of web-based exchange schemes (type 5)



Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 6. Group-based exchange schemes

In these exchange schemes, participation is only possible through group activities. Usually it involves travel and meetings of up to 15 young farmers, for periods of up to 2 weeks. Less than five of these schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Figure 3.8 below and Annex II.1). Examples are NAJK-Wereldboeren in the Netherlands, Solis in Latvia and BRYE in Brazil.

Figure 3.8 Location of headquarters of group-based exchange schemes (type 6)

Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte. Map by Google Maps.

Type 7. EU-schemes

This type of exchange scheme includes EU or governmental programmes, such as the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme, Grundtvig, Leonardo and other national programmes. Their main characteristic is the origin of their funding and/or the fact that they are run by governmental organisations. Some 30 of these schemes have been identified in the countries studied (see Annex II.1) although this is not an exhaustive list. It should also be noted that for many of these schemes, Brussels in Belgium has been indicated as the location of the headquarters.

Overview of the types

Table 3.2 shows some of the main ways in which the exchange schemes differ, aside from their exchange objectives and target groups. The classic exchange schemes are clearly designed to intermediate thousands of participants, inbound (persons coming to the country of the organisation) or outbound (persons travelling abroad, outside the country of the organising scheme), to more than 100 countries worldwide. They are also the most abundant, although the estimated numbers should be read with care as organisations cooperate extensively with each other ('partner organisations'), handling the same participant 'twice' (outbound and inbound). However, as indicated in the introduction, the inventory did not cover every country in the world but EU-28, plus a selection of OECD countries.

Leadership and business type schemes involve smaller numbers of participants but are increasingly common. The business and supply chain focused schemes originate mainly from large retailers in the UK. Group exchange schemes are relatively new, but have been identified in both Europe and Brazil.

The following table should be interpreted with care as the numbers do not imply any qualification in the sense of 'good' or 'bad'. The value (for a participant, a host, an exchange scheme and indeed for society) of an exchange event in one scheme (e.g. a visit of a mentor to a young farmer looking to improve his business) cannot easily be compared with that of another (e.g. an additional day abroad for a young farmer travelling overseas).

Table 3.2 Main features of types of exchange schemes distinguished in this research

Type	Estimated number of schemes	Average annual number of participants	Main focus	Sources of finance
1. Classic	>55	Thousands	Conventional production	Mixed*
2. Classic organic	± 30	Thousands	Organic production	Mixed
3. Leadership	± 30	Tens	Management	Private
4. Business	± 10	Tens	Management	Private
5. Web-based	± 10	Tens	Knowledge	Mixed
6. Group	± 5	Tens	Variable	Mixed
7. EU	± 30	Hundreds	Variable	EU

*mixed implies a mixture of contributions from participants, NGOs and governmental support.
Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

Other types of schemes not covered in this research

Two additional types of scheme were identified but not taken into consideration for further study as they were either too general (with little focus on agriculture) or too well-integrated into formal agricultural education:

General exchanges amongst young people

This type of exchange scheme was not the main focus of our study and has therefore been identified only sporadically. It concerns general exchange schemes for young people who are interested in learning about other cultures and countries. Although working on a farm is a frequently noted activity, it serves more as a means of getting to know the host country, than constituting a specific goal. Often, such schemes focus on acquiring language skills as well. The average age of a participant is, compared to all other types of exchange schemes, usually very young, at around 17 years old. These schemes were not taken into further consideration in this research.

Student exchange schemes

Several exchange schemes have been identified that are open to students of agricultural colleges or universities only. The total number of schemes of this type is potentially huge; in the inventory we have only described a few. These schemes exclusively serve students, as they provide the chance to gain experience abroad before they decide to take over their family farm. The exchange is part of an educational programme, supervised by lecturers or professors. These schemes were also not taken into further consideration in this research.



4. Analysis of the case studies

This chapter contains an analysis based on the 22 case studies of exchange schemes selected from the inventory (see chapter one and two above). The analysis is divided into four major categories: the design and relevance of the scheme, its management and efficiency, its objectives and effectiveness and, lastly, its sustainability.

4.1. Design and size

4.1.1. Context and sectoral circumstances

The design of an exchange scheme depends to a large degree on the context in which it was established. Often, young farmers' movements, agricultural colleges or associations of agronomists were (and still are) involved (e.g. ILP in Austria, SUSP in the Netherlands). Stand-alone initiatives of former exchange participants are also common (e.g. Odyssée Agri in France). The close ties with young farmers' movements and agricultural colleges seem to guarantee access to a pool of potential participants and up-to-date information on developments in young farmers' knowledge needs. Schemes specifically aimed at organic farming methods tend to have more links with consumer organisations (e.g. WWOOF in the UK).

More specialised schemes that select and exchange (or mentor) only limited numbers of exceptional individuals, have looser ties with educational institutes (e.g. Nuffield Farming Scholarships in the UK, Australia and New Zealand). For these schemes, young farmers' movements and informal networks are the most important. As indicated in Table 3.2, such schemes usually handle tens of participants per year, whereas the more general schemes such as WWOOF in the UK and CAEP in the USA may send out thousands of young farmers annually. Also, these specialised schemes have much shorter exchange periods (weeks instead of months).

4.1.2. Target groups and geographical coverage

The people targeted for participation are individual young farmers or young people interested in agriculture, aged between 18 and 35 – with some exceptions for very young (Equipeople) and slightly older people (up to 45 years old for Nuffield Scholarships). In some schemes, the exchange is organised for groups only (e.g. BRYE, NAJK, Solis), but the vast majority of the schemes targets individuals.

Some schemes mainly deal with outbound travelling participants, while partner organisations take care of the corresponding inbound procedures in the destination countries. This differentiation in tasks is partly caused by visa requirements in some countries, specifically in the European Union.

Geographically, the spread is very wide. WWOOF is active in some 100 countries and several other schemes such as CAEP, AgriVenture and IFYE in the USA, operate in dozens of countries. Outside the EU, countries like the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are very popular. Asian and African countries are seldom involved; the exceptions being Japan, China, Korea and South Africa. Participants usually come from the country where the (partner) organisation is located.

4.1.3. Selection criteria

Potential participants are selected on the basis of their motivation and affinity with agriculture. Increasingly, this is (partly) done through an online application process (e.g. Nuffield). A common requirement is practical experience on a farm and a completed formal agricultural education. Language skills also play an important role. In the business and leadership types of schemes, selection is much tougher, with business and leadership qualities playing a dominant role in the selection process.

Hosts are selected carefully. Even in the schemes where large numbers of young farmers are involved, the organising entities try to visit each individual host and assess the farmer and his family on their 'exchange capabilities'. Some schemes (e.g. Australian Experience) offer a short training seminar to support the hosts.

4.1.4. Size of the scheme and length of the exchange

The size, expressed as the number of participants, differs enormously among the identified schemes and follows the schemes objectives. Some schemes carefully select some 20 participants per year (e.g. Nuffield), whereas others are open to a wider public and facilitate travel for over 7 000 people each year (e.g. WWOOF).

The time frame of a single exchange activity varies from less than a day (in the leadership & mentoring schemes) to almost a year (in the classic types of schemes).

If the size of a scheme is expressed as the product of the number of participants and the average length of their stay abroad, the size then varies from several hundred exchange days per year for the smallest schemes (e.g. Solis in Latvia) to over 200 000 exchange days (an equivalent of 550 full years) for large schemes like WWOOF and CAEP.

4.1.5. Insurance

Health insurance is a compulsory step for participants to take part in some schemes (e.g. Agrimpuls in Switzerland, IRE in Australia, RENZ and New Zealand Dairy Careers and many others), but not for all (e.g. AALP in the USA). Even in situations where the intention is clearly to have longer stays abroad and work in rather risky, practical farming conditions, schemes do not always demand adequate health insurance. Instead, they leave it up to the participant, resulting in sub-optimal and risky travelling and working conditions. Insurance and liabilities are therefore a major area of improvement and risk.



4.2. Management and efficiency

4.2.1. Organisation

The organisations running and implementing the schemes differ from NGOs to semi-public (education) and private enterprises. Quite often, young farmers' associations are involved. There is a considerable level of cooperation among organisations that run the exchange schemes, the largest example being the Grow Abroad World Alliance. Quite often, schemes are implemented in the hosting countries by independent (semi-public or private) partner-entities that receive the participants and take care of the host's selection process. The size of the organisation varies with the number of exchanges it facilitates and ranges from a single volunteer, to a staff of more than 10 professionals.

The managerial quality of exchange schemes often depends on a very limited number of persons, who are often volunteers with little time available (e.g. IRE in Australia). Continued contact with national young farmers' organisations, agricultural education institutes and groups of agronomists gives the management additional support, backup and continuity.

A network of international partners strongly facilitates the various internal processes of an exchange scheme and enhances its efficiency. Cooperation with partner organisations speeds up the application process, allows quick responses to problems that may arise during exchanges and harmonises working procedures.

Online databases with search engines to find suitable matches between hosts and participants, as well as online application possibilities are found to be efficient and attractive management and selection tools (e.g. Tesco Future Farmer Foundation and Nuffield Farming Scholarships in the UK). However, not all potential applicants have the quality of internet needed to use these tools.

4.2.2. Communication approach

Most exchange schemes, especially smaller ones, do not have a concrete communication strategy, with specific and measurable targets (e.g. 10% increase in applications, 5 000 Facebook likes, five organised presentations, more than 200 participants at an event, etc.) and staff (trained and specialised communications staff) dedicating time to reaching them. Therefore, strategies are often based depending on the available human resources (e.g. scheme manager and assistant) and on two principles:

1. Habits developed over time or taken from the 'mother organisation': these are communication strategies which are simply continued after having once been introduced;
2. Ad hoc ideas or spotted evidence: new staff bring in new ideas or individual evidence of successful communication from other situations, or other schemes trigger the introduction of specific methods.

In addition, schemes follow general social trends, by increasingly using the internet (websites) and social media. These means are perceived as increasingly important by scheme managers. However, face-to-face meetings such as presentations in schools or at conferences remain very popular.

While for smaller exchange schemes communication is often a side activity carried out by managers (e.g. in the Austrian ILP scheme where the manager does presentations in schools and at other events), for larger schemes more professional communication staff are involved. The American IFYE scheme for example currently bases its communication strategy on the work of two to three volunteers, but is aiming to hire one full-time professional to be responsible for the communication and publicity activities. Consequently, larger schemes (e.g. the British WWOOF scheme which has set out a new communication strategy including clear targets in 2014) also develop clear communication strategies involving targets on outreach, means etc. Such targets can then be monitored and improve the existing communication strategy based on collected evidence.

4.3. Objectives and effectiveness

The objectives of the exchange schemes differ widely; hence the various types distinguished. The vast majority of the schemes aim to assist young farmers, male and female, in gaining experience and knowledge of farm management by facilitating travel to another country and learning about another culture. The intervention logic focuses on the assumption that offering a completely different set of agricultural living and working conditions enriches the participant, makes him/her 'world-wise' and helps him/her to strengthen (agricultural) decision making for the future. The hosts have their motives for participation as well. Often they support exchange schemes for years, receiving several exchange participants during that time, with a large degree of satisfaction (source: this research).

The schemes that aim to foster leadership skills or specific businesses do not have this geographical trait in their intervention logic. They aim to achieve the learning impact through direct contact between mentors and mentees (e.g. Get Mentoring in Farming in the UK).

All schemes use the internet. Websites, social media and newsletters are part of (almost) every exchange scheme, no matter what size. Online tools increase the ease with which young farmers can find out about exchange possibilities and therefore the number of potential applications. However, according to some focus groups, a suitable internet connection is sometimes lacking, especially in specific regions (for example in mountainous or remote areas) (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom). Fortunately traditional means of face-to-face contact through conferences, presentations (e.g. in schools), events and fairs, prove to still be very effective, especially when partner organisations and former participants are involved. There appears to be a certain trade-off in terms of reaching out to large numbers of people by using online channels, which enable young farmers to collect the information they are interested in, and the possibility of directly address smaller groups with presentations etc. Most schemes try to achieve a certain balance between both approaches. Improving language skills prior to departure increases the success rate of the exchanges. This is confirmed by several scheme managers and participants (e.g. Odyssée Agri in France).

The existence of an alumni organisation through which participants can meet and share experiences afterwards is much appreciated and appears to result in more lasting 'lessons learned'. Active alumni also may contribute significantly to the stability of the scheme and the organisation running it.

A relevant question is: are the scheme's outcomes significantly different from other related measures, such as farm advisory systems, farm relief services or overall training strategies? According to a large majority of the scheme managers (source: this research), such alternatives do not exist. In fact, it is exactly the lack of such practical training and learning opportunities elsewhere that gave birth to exchange schemes. Of course, they do not appeal to all farmers and many are not aware of their existence, but those who do take part are convinced that they have learned things they could never have learned elsewhere (source: this research).

4.4. Sustainability

4.4.1. History

The oldest exchange schemes date back to 1912 (Travel to Farm). In the years after World War I, exchange efforts were established on both sides of the Atlantic, specifically in Denmark and Sweden on one side and the USA and Canada on the other. After World War II, the Marshall Plan breathed new life into youth exchanges between the continents. Naturally, youth exchanges on farms were the major force, as food production was crucial.

The needs of participants have changed over the decades (and those of the hosts have remained relatively similar). The main reasons for these changes are the ease of travelling overseas and the arrival of the internet and new media. These developments have made the more general objectives of exchange schemes (cultural exchange, experiencing agricultural life, breaking out of your comfort zone) become relatively less important. Instead, acquiring purely technical or business development knowledge has again become, relatively speaking, a more prominent need that participants aim to fulfil.

At the end of the 20th century, leadership-focused programmes started to emerge, although the foundation of Nuffield International had already been established in the 1940s.

One of the latest developments dates from 2013 when Tesco launched its Tesco Future Farmer Foundation, a typical example of a new style exchange programme, which is based on integrating the entire value chain of primary production to retail and is funded by a large retailer. Important food-producing countries of the last century have the largest number of exchange schemes, especially outside the EU: USA, Canada, and Australia.

4.4.2. Sustainability

An important factor in the sustainability of a scheme and its resilience to, for example sudden changes in numbers of participants, is embedding the organisation in young farmers' movements or agricultural education institutes.

The sustainability also depends to a large degree on the dedication of the staff. Often, these are volunteers and former participants that spend many hours maintaining the organisation. The networking abilities of the staff are crucial, both for promoting the scheme and finding potential hosts and participants, as well as for funding (see below). Former participants, even when not being active within the exchange scheme, serve as multipliers of information. They share their experiences within their networks and thus attract new, interested persons.

A second important factor that determines the life span of a scheme is the availability of funds, or a stream of annual funds that cover the minimal expenditures of the scheme. Table 4.1 below gives a general classification of exchange schemes by their funding entities. It shows that the funding of exchange schemes is variable and often consists of mixed sources. Some funds are incidental (like the contributions of participating young farmers and their hosts), whereas others usually last several years (government grants and EU support).



Table 4.1 Funding sources of exchange schemes for young farmers.

Funding source	Number of schemes	Examples
Private (participating young farmers and their hosts)	50	Most classic exchange schemes such as CAEP, Odyssee Agri, Travel to Farm, SUSP, IRE, AgriVenture, IFYE etc.
Private (companies)	10	Nuffield, Tesco, Sainsbury, Agrostudies, BRYE et c.
Private, young farmers' associations, agricultural trusts and public sources	60	WWOOF, Solis, NAJK, Edge Apprentices, AALP, MESA, Farmers Apprentice etc.
EU, national governments, educational institutes etc.	50	ILP, EIFL, MAST, ATTRA, all Erasmus schemes etc.
Unclear	15	

Source: Ecorys, LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

Many participants of exchange schemes pay for their own expenses and also contribute to the organisational costs (roughly one-third of all schemes). In the majority of the schemes however, other actors, both private and public, are also financially involved.

Corporate, private sources that support a scheme, and preferably a group of sources, appear to finance the leader-focused exchange schemes, whereas governments and EU funds are usually behind the classic types of exchange schemes. The funds generated by the contributions of participants are more volatile and less reliable.

4.4.3. Notoriety

In general, the impact of exchange schemes goes beyond that of the host family alone. Especially some decades ago, the arrival of a foreigner to a small rural village would have a big impact. This impact has however decreased enormously. Publishing the experiences (or even reports) of participants contributes to the reputation of the exchange scheme and increases its appeal to future participants and sponsors. A good example is Nuffield in the UK (and elsewhere).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. General conclusions



Exchange schemes have existed for more than a century. They play an important role in offering young farmers the possibility of acquiring practical knowledge of farming and widening their personal horizons. For young people, the schemes fill a gap between theoretical learning (of mainly technological agricultural matters) and the reality of farming in another country. The schemes are easily accessed and offer young farmers the network and experiences needed to arrange stays abroad and match their needs with those of a host farmer.

The inventory of these schemes in EU-28 and selected OECD countries has yielded at least 185 schemes and is not exhaustive (Annex II.1). The geographical reach of the schemes' participants extends to over 100 countries worldwide. The numbers of young farmers involved should be read with care as schemes cooperate extensively with each other ('partner organisations'), handling the same participant 'twice' (outbound and inbound). Also, as indicated, the inventory did not cover every country in the world. The impact of a scheme cannot be assessed as they differ widely in design and objectives. The value (for a participant, a host, an exchange scheme and indeed for society) of an exchange event in one scheme (e.g. a visit of a mentor to a young farmer looking to improve his business) can not easily be compared with that of another (e.g. an additional day abroad for a young farmer travelling overseas).

According to this research, alternatives to exchange schemes do not exist. Scheme managers, participants and hosts are convinced that they have learned things they could never have learned elsewhere (source: this research). Their argument is based on a different approach to learning, in which competences are developed and knowledge is acquired through practice instead of theory. The value of learning in the classroom is then amplified by applying this knowledge to real-life situations on a farm.

Educational institutes and young farmers' associations play an important role in the start-up of an exchange scheme and the definition of the objectives. The schemes are often embedded in the agricultural (knowledge) infrastructure and network of a country.

The wide array of existing schemes seems to meet the different needs and demands for exchange: from culture, to agriculture, to supply chain; from single to group travel; from 1 day to 1 year; from EU to worldwide, etc. There is however no such thing as a transparent, open market in which supply and demand for exchange meet. This means that exchange schemes are often founded on an ad hoc, individual setting in a specific country and, given the diversity of countries and existing schemes, it is hard to assess if demand matches supply.

Young farmers feel an increasing need to arrange their exchanges themselves. This requires the schemes to offer flexibility in terms of specific knowledge needs, length of stay abroad and varying combinations of theory and practice.

Insurance for health and liabilities is a major area of improvement and risk. Several schemes have only very soft requirements towards participants in this respect. Only a few schemes handle it in a formal manner and require young farmers to insure themselves adequately or sign documents in which liabilities are clearly defined.

Despite the broad range of options, potential participants do not always seem to be aware of the schemes and options available, indicating a challenge for communication and publicity. The internet offers many options for communication, selection of candidates, matching with host farmers, etc. Only very few exchange schemes use these possibilities.

The variety of exchange schemes matches the widely differing needs of young farmers. The observed need (see Report 1 on the knowledge needs of young farmers, in particular the focus groups) for harmonisation of requirements for participation (age, education, language capabilities, driving licence, etc.) contrasts with the variety of exchange schemes and is therefore not realistic, at least not across the different types of schemes.

Language is a factor that limits the number of potential candidates; offering short (technical) language courses also increases the level of satisfaction of the participants.

Many participants of exchange schemes pay for their own expenses and also contribute to the organisational costs (roughly one-third of all schemes). In the majority of the schemes however, other actors, both private and public, are also financially involved.




The costs of participation, including the replacement costs back home, are a serious hindrance to entering an exchange scheme in some countries. This reduces the number of potential participants and the financial stability of exchange schemes.

Exchange schemes compete with each other. In relatively smaller countries, a gentlemen's agreement is not to accept outbound participants from foreign countries. In larger countries with more active schemes, such as the USA, inbound travelling is a market of competition. Regulation does not exist: anyone interested can start an exchange scheme.





The degree of success of the schemes (of any type) and the level of satisfaction of its participants and hosts varies enormously. Of course, the fact that some schemes still exist after many decades may indicate a certain degree of success. On the other hand, the emergence of new types of exchange schemes indicates a need for additional types of exchange. On the whole, exchange schemes appear to be hugely successful, both for participants and hosts.

5.2. Recommendations









General recommendations

-  Improve communication and publicity: there are large groups of young farmers who are unaware of exchange schemes and what they have to offer. This is both a challenge for the exchange scheme, as well as a possible action for national governments (present an overview of schemes available).
-  A transparent and complete overview, open to all and available on the internet, could serve as a 'market-place' where supply and demand for exchanges meet. Brokers or matchmakers could be deployed to assist young farmers in choosing a suitable exchange scheme.
-  Further research is needed to study the effects and impact of exchange schemes. It is recommended to further investigate and scientifically compare the outcomes of exchange activities with those of other related measures, such as farm advisory systems and farm relief services or training strategies. The results, if in favour of exchange schemes (which would be the hypothesis, based on this research), will strengthen the position of exchange schemes and improve support, sponsoring and recognition.

Recommendations for governments

-  Optimise the allocation of funds from National Development Programmes in EU Member States to allow the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs mechanisms to support exchange schemes, especially in countries with a low representation of (partner) organisations.
-  Facilitate initiatives to start up schemes for exchanges among (young) farmers, taking into account national and possibly regional specific circumstances. Even 'start-up accelerators' could be organised, aiming to help initiatives get ahead.
-  Strive to remove legal barriers, such as visa requirements and work permits. These barriers hinder the travel and permanence (for prolonged periods, up to a year) of (graduated) agricultural students, trainees and young farmers on hosts' farms.
-  Offer a reliable farm relieve or farm replacement service to overcome the main hindrance that young farmers feel with respect to joining an exchange scheme: the lack of time and replacement at their (parental) farm.

Recommendations for exchange schemes

-  Get to know and make use of the existing knowledge infrastructure before starting up an exchange mechanism yourself. Additionally, study the user needs well: this research supplies several conclusions and recommendations for EU Member States on the needs of young farmers.
-  Improve health and liability insurance standards and prevent cases of uncovered medical or legal costs to participants (and hosts).
-  Offer language courses prior to departure to raise the level of satisfaction with the exchange participants.
-  Offer more flexibility to participants in terms of specific technical and entrepreneurial knowledge needs, as well as varying combinations of theory and practice and differing lengths of stay.
-  Make replacements easily possible (from one host to another host) during the exchange period, in cases of clear mismatches between host and participant.
-  Be aware of the administrative 'burden' of working procedures and offer online options as an alternative registration procedure to reduce the administrative load. Keep in mind however that not all potential participants have suitable internet access.
-  Expectation management is important to make sure that the chosen exchange scheme fits the knowledge needs of the young farmer and hosts are satisfied.
-  Pay (more) attention to organising your alumni and use their positive energy to recruit new participants, bring in additional sponsors and possibly take up managerial tasks.

Annexes

There are three Annexes to this report:

Annex II.1 Overview of the existing exchange schemes in EU-28 and third countries

This Annex contains an overview of the contact details of the 300 exchange schemes that exist in EU-28 and in the OECD countries Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America.

Annex II.2 Monographs for each of the 22 case studies

For each case study a monograph has been drafted in which the design, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability has been described on basis of desk research and interviews with scheme managers, participants and hosts of the exchange scheme.

Annex II.3 Methodology in more detail

The used methodology is described in more detail in this Annex.

These Annexes can be found on the DG AGRI website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.

