

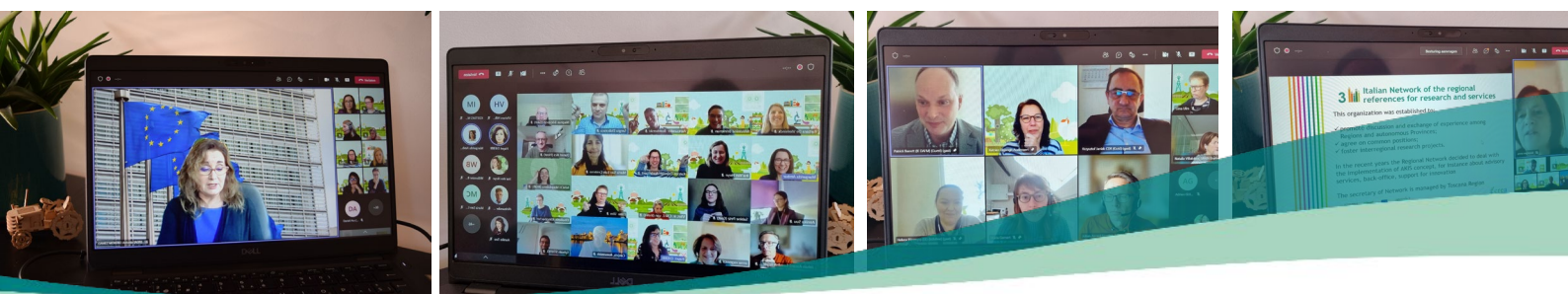


# Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability

21<sup>st</sup> Meeting  
Online meeting

*10 March 2022*

**REPORT**



The Subgroup on Innovation (Sol) met for the twenty first time – online – on 10 March 2022.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- a) To present the action plan for the development of organic production in the EU and the concept of the EIP-AGRI workshop on conversion to organic farming planned for the first half of 2022;
- b) To present an update on the work programme of the EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe, and the related planned EIP-AGRI brokerage activity;
- c) To share and discuss examples of AKIS and knowledge flows in CAP Strategic Plans' interventions.

## Welcome, introduction and networking

### *Introduction by DG AGRI*

#### ***Introduction by Antonia Gamez Moreno***

Antonia Gamez Moreno, Head of 'Unit D1 - Rural areas and networks' DG AGRI opened the meeting and welcomed the SOI members to the meeting. You can find her [presentation here](#).

She informed the Subgroup members about the internal reorganisation process in DG AGRI, needed to better adapt its structure to the new CAP. On 16 January 2022 the reorganisation of DG AGRI entered into effect.

Unit D1 is a newly created Unit, dealing with the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the EIP-AGRI network and the European Broadband Competence Offices Network. The first two networks will be incorporated in a single EU CAP Network, that is being developed by Unit D1 and will be launched in September-October 2022. Unit D1 is also responsible for implementing and communicating on the Long-term vision for EU's Rural Areas and its action plan, and for the horizontal coordination of the Broadband Competence Offices in Member States (MSs). Additionally, Unit D1 continues working very closely with research colleagues who are now in "Unit F2 - Research and Innovation". Kerstin Rosenow is the Head of Unit F2.

Regarding the preparation of CAP Strategic Plans (SPs), DG AGRI is currently focusing on assessing them. Most of the draft versions have been already submitted by MSs. The aim is to have all CAP SPs approved by the end of this year, so that the implementation of the CAP SPs can enter into force as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. Observation letters from DG AGRI will be sent to MSs by the end of the month. Then, bi-lateral meetings with MSs will start. The observation letters will be published by the Commission, as a means to foster transparency.

In many MSs a lot of work is still needed to further strengthen the AKIS and to improve the coherence between the various AKIS interventions. DG AGRI would also like to see more structural bridges between research and practice in relation to AKIS. However, the increased number of Operational Groups (OGs) is remarkable: ca. 6000 OGs are planned so far (in the CAP SPs submitted to DG AGRI up

to now) for the next period of 5 years. This number has more than doubled compared to the previous CAP 2014-2020.

Antonia Gamez Moreno then shared some statistics about OGs: to date, 2183 OGs out of the 3200 planned, are effectively registered in the System for Fund Management in the European Union - SFC. Since the last Subgroup on Innovation meeting in December 2021, 69 new OGs have been added to the database. An overview for the period 2014-2020 shows that many MSs are getting closer to their OG target number and some MSs have already exceeded it.

Antonia Gamez Moreno also highlighted 3 parallel transitions currently taking place: transition to the new CAP, to the EU CAP Network and to the National CAP Networks (these need to be established in 12 months after the approval of the CAP SP). DG AGRI is creating a governance structure for the new EU CAP Network and preparing its visual identity and website. The current governance structure of the EU networks will continue to work without any interruption until the new one is established.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session:

- **Q:** Will the logo for EIP-AGRI stay the same in the next period?
- **A:** DG AGRI is looking for a different identity and logo, since the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and EIP-AGRI will merge together to form a single CAP Network at EU level.
- **Q:** Will the EIP-AGRI network at national level be mentioned as such in the new CAP Network?
- **A:** The legislation is very straightforward. There will be one name. It will be called the CAP Network, both at EU, and at national level.
- **Q:** Following the transition, will there be changes to this Subgroup?
- **A:** DG AGRI is preparing the transition to a single CAP network. This requires an implementing act that will define the governance structure. The need for changes in the governance structure or composition will be assessed. This is an ongoing process, however the Subgroup will continue to exist.
- **Q:** Is the European Commission planning to push countries lagging behind in the establishment of OGs compared to their current plans? How?
- **A:** Unit D1 in DG AGRI is currently assessing all the CAP SPs. The observation letters will soon be sent to MSs (a packet of 19 letters is planned to be sent before the end of the month) and the discussions with the MSs will soon be starting. Unit D1 is looking at different elements: the number of OGs, how AKIS will be implemented, national CAP networks, the broadband capacity, how MSs identify and address the needs of rural areas, etc. For OGs there are obligations for MSs in terms of capacities and objectives. DG AGRI will assess if the needs are properly addressed. If necessary, the observation letters will invite MSs to modify their CAP SPs to become more ambitious.

### ***Introduction by Kerstin Rosenow***

Kerstin Rosenow, Head of 'Unit F2 - Research and Innovation' in DG AGRI presented an update on the latest developments in the Horizon Programme. You can find her [presentation here](#).

DG AGRI will make sure that the bridge between Horizon Europe and EIP-AGRI will be sustained and that the Innovation and Research results will be of use for the actors on the ground (farmers, OGs, etc.) and vice-versa.

Unit F2 will continue to follow up on the Subgroup on Innovation and research colleagues will continue to be involved in EIP-AGRI networking activities. For example, research colleagues will provide input for the stand-alone brokerage activity related to the “EU Mission: A Soil deal for Europe” call.

Kerstin Rosenow elaborated on the work programme (WP) 2023-2024 for Horizon Europe Cluster 6. For 2023 one billion euro is allocated within this WP. There is a focus on all the Green Deal relevant topics (organic, climate, carbon storage, biodiversity, etc.). The WP aims to position R&I as key enabler to achieve the different Green Deal goals. The main intervention area for Unit F2 is Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Areas.

In the framework of the WP, many research projects will be implemented. Unit F2 continues to foster the multi-actor approach, ensuring that the OGs are involved from the start, in the setting up of the project. This approach will be extended and colleagues from the Commission’s Directorate-General for Research and Innovation will also adopt this approach for other intervention areas and even across clusters. It will ensure that end-users will be involved in projects from the start.

The publication of the new WP is foreseen for December 2022. A number of related information days are already planned.

Three new research initiatives are taken up under Horizon Europe in the form of co-funded partnerships with the Member States:

- 1- Accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology, living labs and research infrastructures;
- 2- Animal health: fighting infectious diseases;
- 3- Agriculture of data.

Most of the research funding goes on at MS level. Unit F2 only programmes about 10-15% of all EU research, but it caters for European gaps and provides for coordinated research actions between MSs in the research and innovation fields.

Kerstin Rosenow elaborated on the WP 2022 for the EU Mission “A soil deal for Europe”. She pointed out that a lot of topics in this WP will not be long-term research initiatives but rather more immediate innovation actions. This will directly support the setting up of the network of living labs. Through the EU Mission programme, DG AGRI is expecting that a large number of living labs will be created. It will be interesting to see how it ties in with the expected increasing number of OGs, and how the two will relate to each other. The next generation of soil advisors is also being prepared. The calls of the WP 2022 will open on 12 May 2022.

DG AGRI is working on building synergies between the Soil Mission and the CAP. Kerstin Rosenow announced that a Soil Law will be proposed in 2023 to significantly improve the state of soils by 2050 and to protect soils on the same legal basis as air and water. She also mentioned that during the creation of the Soil Mission, Unit F2 worked together closely with policy colleagues for the Soil Strategy. Research and innovation results from the Soil Mission will enable progress with the Soil Strategy. The Soil Mission will engage with farmers and foresters in living labs and lighthouses to co-create tests and demonstrate solutions. It will also try and improve methods to assess and monitor soil health.

The Soil Mission will also engage with other policies, like the CAP. Hence, OGs will be able to replicate soil solutions in regions where there are no living labs and lighthouses.

Advisory services will support the deployment of best available soil management practices. The innovations tested under the EU Mission, can be upscaled through investments. Information and good practices of successful Mission projects can be promoted by the EIP-AGRI network. The Mission is a flagship initiative of the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas. In this sense, the different initiatives are integrated.

Living labs will become an important feature in DG AGRI's work. For the Soil Mission alone, the plan is to have a network of 2000 testing sites all over Europe. Living labs will also be implemented in the European Partnership on Agro-ecology (provisionally entitled "Accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures"). This means that several thousands of testing sites will be set up all over Europe. When adding this to the number of OGs, there will be a huge array of various sites testing, implementing and promoting innovations.

The topics for Horizon Europe are set (soil and agro-ecology). For EIP-AGRI however, there is a more bottom-up approach to define the topics. Kerstin Rosenow suggested that in the next Subgroup on Innovation (SOI) the synergies between the Horizon programme and the EIP-AGRI programme can be discussed and developed.

Regarding R&I in the Organic Action Plan, Unit F2 also provides research in this policy area. 30% of the budget will go to agriculture, forestry and rural areas for topics specifically linked to the organic sector. The aim is to reach the Green Deal target, so a significant part of the budget will be invested in this. R&I in organic farming is key for several actions in the Action Plan (e.g. plant protection, preventing fraud, digital technologies, etc.).

Kerstin Rosenow provided some highlights on international cooperation. Climate is at the forefront of the political agendas. The European Commission is joining forces with international partners, an example being the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate which was launched at COP26 in November 2021. Unit F2 is steering this process of international cooperation and is also active in international consortia on soil, animal health etc., to make sure the topics are not only tackled in the EU but also on the international scene.

Lastly, Kerstin Rosenow informed the Subgroup about some interesting dates in 2022. There will be a general communication on innovation policy to scale up innovative ideas. It will cover the following aspects: access to finance, legal framework, innovative talent etc. On 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 the info day for the WP 2022 of the EU Mission "A Soil deal for Europe" will be organised. Horizon Europe R&I days will take place on 28-29 September 2022. The EIP-AGRI promotion will be on the agenda.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A:

- **Q:** Will all Member States be involved in co-funded EU partnerships, e.g. agroecology?
- **A:** No, it depends on the interest of the MS. MSs will have to mobilise their own funds, the partnership is co-funded. The rules in Horizon changed, MSs will have to come with more own support. Not all MSs will necessarily be involved in all partnerships, as they will have to contribute their own resources. Agroecology is a key issue for all the MSs, so almost all the MSs are involved in this partnership.
- **Q:** Will the R&I days be a live event?

- **A:** For the time being, it is planned as a virtual event. We expect there will be more than 6000 participants.

Because of the limited time, some questions were answered after the meeting:

- **Q:** Will there be any consultation on the EC communication re. innovation policy?
- **A:** Yes, through the usual consultation channels.
- **Q:** MSs rules for public procurement is killing Innovation policy. Any solution there?
- **A:** This would have to be addressed at Member State level.
- **Q:** Will there be capacity to discuss the increasing pressure on rural areas and food production from future housing and commercial developments?
- **A:** R&I on this issue especially on socio-economic developments can help managing the pressures.

## Session I: Organic farming – the broader EU context and the planned EIP-AGRI workshop

### 1.1. Action Plan for the development of organic production

Henri Delanghe (DG AGRI), Deputy Head of 'Unit B4 – Organics' presented the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production. You can find his presentation [here](#).

Under the European Green Deal's Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the European Commission has set a target of achieving 'at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030'. This is an ambitious target since it is up to 10% higher than what would be reached when extrapolating current trends.

The Commission attaches great importance to organic farming, because it has direct positive effects on environment, climate, biodiversity, animal welfare, etc. Any increase in organic farming will also have immediate positive effects on the achievement of other targets of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies (e.g. reductions in the use of fertilisers, pesticides, antimicrobials).

MSs are at very different starting points in terms of organic production. For instance, Austria is quite advanced in terms of the share of agricultural land under organic farming (already above 25%).

There is a conducive context for the Action Plan: there is the new organic legislation entering into application in 2022, substantial financial incentives (CAP policy, Horizon Europe, agricultural promotion policy), a high level of public trust in organics and the wide recognition by the public of the organic logo, wide support of the Commission's analysis and proposed actions by stakeholders and the broader public.

Henri Delanghe mentioned the horizontal characteristics of the Organic Action Plan's approach:

- It is comprehensive: the consumption and production of organic products as well as the sustainability of organic production are taken in consideration;

- It is demand-driven: there will not be a sustainable increase in organic production unless all the actors along the value chain see that there is a growing consumer demand for organic products;
- It covers the entire value chain: from farmers to restaurants;
- It will involve a wide range of public stakeholders at all levels of governance: EU, Member States, regions and cities;
- It assigns prime importance to research and innovation: 30% of the budget for R&I on agriculture, forestry and rural areas for topics specific to/relevant for the organic sector;
- It mobilises the CAP but also other programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe, agricultural promotion policy) and tools (e.g. Green Public Procurement).

The Commission is asking MSs to develop a comprehensive approach towards organic production. The CAP SPs are key, but they cannot cover everything. Therefore, MSs are invited in addition to develop or update a National Organic Action Plan, covering measures beyond the CAP. For instance, Green Public Procurement would not necessarily appear in a CAP SP but could appear in a National Organic Action Plan. Additionally, there should also be a focus on delivery, and a comprehensive monitoring system should be put in place, to monitor and evaluate the results.

The Organic Action Plan has 3 axes and 23 actions. The 3 axes (including their respective actions) are:

- **Organic food and products for all: stimulate demand and ensure consumer trust;**
  - Information and communication - this entails several elements, such as the need to inform consumers about the benefits of organic products and to measure consumers' awareness of the EU organic logo.
  - Promotion – allocate an ambitious part of the budget to promoting the consumption of organic products (e.g. via the creation of EU organic awards).
  - Stimulate a greater uptake of organics in public canteens - Green Public Procurement (GPP) is an important tool for increasing demand. There is a need to boost awareness of the criteria for GPP issued in 2019. Integrate organic products into the minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food public procurement (to be developed as part of the legislative framework for sustainable food systems).
  - Review the EU school scheme framework in accordance with the Farm to Fork strategy and the beating cancer plan (increasing the share of organic products).
  - The Action Plan will also aim at strengthening the fight against fraudulent practices via control systems and prevention policies, in cooperation with Europol and the EU Food Fraud Network and with competent authorities and law enforcement bodies in third countries.
  - Improve traceability - closely related to fraud, is traceability. Horizon Europe is helping to launch projects on this issue.
  - Reinforce the role of retailers, wholesalers, catering services, restaurants and other businesses - the private sector is an important stakeholder to consider in this context and so the Commission is aiming at obtaining clear commitments from relevant stakeholders and establishing partnerships with businesses as part of their corporate sustainability policy.

- **On the way to 2030: stimulating conversion and reinforcing the entire value chain;**
  - In the framework of the new CAP and CFP: the key tools for conversion are the CAP SPs, where EC is looking at the level of ambition for organic production that each MS has, and if the planned interventions are sufficiently ambitious and mutually consistent. Advisory services, exchange of best practices on education and training at EU and national level, EIP-AGRI (with the workshop on organic conversion, for instance) among others, will encourage farmers to convert and invest on organic farming.
  - Provide a comprehensive overview of the sector and develop sector analysis: stakeholders are demanding enhanced transparency of the sector. In view of assuring this transparency, more statistics on production, trade, prices etc. should be provided.
  - Supporting the organisation of the food chain: maintaining a strong position for farmers in the value chain is one of the actions that the EC is working on. While supporting the organisation of the food chain, the EC will explore the establishment of dedicated organic producer organisations. Intervention is also needed whenever there is evidence of unfair trading practices penalising organic producers. In the new Regulation on organic production, there is the possibility to have a 'group certification' allowing small farmers to share the costs and administrative burden of certification and so farms don't have to apply for individual certification.
  - Reinforcing local and small-volume processing and fostering short trade circuits: stimulating the creation of short supply chains with environmental benefits and a fair income for farmers. DG AGRI plans to promote bio districts, common initiatives that are bringing together organic producers, public authorities and tourism initiatives.
  - Enhance social inclusion in rural areas while promoting decent working and living conditions: DG AGRI will also provide guidance on gender equality and young farmers.
  - Improving animal nutrition: the EC will support research and innovation under Horizon Europe to improve animal nutrition.
  - Reinforcing organic aquaculture.

**Organics leading by example: improving the contribution of organic farming to sustainability;**

- Reducing climate and environmental footprint.
- Enhance biodiversity and increase yields: the exchange on best practices will be important within this context, research projects will contribute to it.
- Alternatives to contentious inputs and other plant protection products: DG AGRI is also trying to find alternatives for farmers with support from Horizon Europe (e.g. the use of copper in organic farming).
- Animal Welfare Platform: organic farming is already leading in terms of animal welfare, but DG AGRI aims to further improve it.
- Making more efficient use of resources: DG AGRI wants to reduce the use of plastics, especially at retailer end and it is establishing a framework on bio-based, compostable and biodegradable plastic.
- Making more efficient use of resources: further steps towards sustainability include the sustainable use of water, increased use of renewable energy, clean transport and the reduction of nutrient release.



The presentation was followed by a Q&A session:

- **Q:** What are the main financing instruments for the Organic Action Plan?
- **A:** At EU level, mainly the next CAP including the agricultural promotion budget, and Horizon Europe. In addition, MSs are invited to develop National Organic Action Plans and to identify national funding.
- **A comment from Sweden:** In Sweden the organic area is almost 20% but unfortunately it is now decreasing due to greater demand for locally produced food. The new rules for e.g. organic seeds will make it even more difficult especially for vegetable growers.

### **1.2. EIP-AGRI Workshop: “Innovative approaches for conversion to organic farming”**

Elisabeth Klingbacher (EIP-AGRI SF) presented the concept note for the EIP-AGRI Workshop “Innovative approaches for conversion to organic farming: from planning to action” (provisional title). You can find her presentation [here](#).

The workshop will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 in Florence, Italy. The workshop will create a platform for exchanging knowledge and sharing innovative, inspirational practices that can support farmers in successful conversion to organic agriculture. This will help building a solid foundation of knowledge, skills and motivation for farmers on the path to conversion, and will thus support the implementation of the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production in the EU, and contribute to the European Green Deal’s target of “at least 25% of the EU’s agricultural land under organic farming by 2030”.

The specific objectives of the workshop are to exchange knowledge on successful practices, opportunities and tools, identify challenges and explore potential solutions, identify needs from practice and possible knowledge gaps, and promote networking. The target audience are farmers in conversion or considering converting to organic farming, organic farmers providing advice and inspiration, advisors, researchers, etc.

Elisabeth Klingbacher invited Subgroup members to share information on projects that may be relevant for the workshop.

An open call for expression of interest to participate in the workshop was launched and is open until 11 April 2022, 23:59 CET. SOI members were invited to spread the word about the call. Further info on the workshop will be published on the EIP-AGRI website. The final concept note will soon be made available in the collaborative area of the SOI.

The presentation was followed by a short Q&A session:

- **Q:** Are you only looking for EU innovative examples? The work of the Innovative Farmers Network in the UK (<https://www.innovativefarmers.org/>) could also provide some inspiration.
- **A:** EIP-AGRI is primarily focusing on the EU. Nevertheless, there are some interesting initiatives in the UK that may be relevant to take in consideration.

## Session II: A Soil Deal for Europe and the planned EIP-AGRI brokerage activity

### *2.1. A Soil Deal for Europe: 100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030*

Annette Schneegans, Unit F2 – ‘Research and Innovation’ in DG AGRI, presented the Work Programme of the ‘EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe’. You can find her presentation [here](#).

Missions are novel instruments under Horizon Europe. They are meant to create long lasting impact, amongst others by connecting with other policies and instruments. As such, the Soil Deal Mission is not a stand-alone initiative, but integrated in a number of Green Deal strategies. The Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas for example identifies the Soil Deal Mission as a flagship initiative and the new EU Soil Strategy, adopted by the end of 2021, relies on the Soil Deal Mission to progress on various of its objectives. The Mission, the Strategy and the Soil Observatory altogether form an effective framework for improving soils in the EU.

The Mission has 8 specific objectives: the first 6 objectives focus on particular soil health challenges and objectives 7 and 8 are about reducing the EU global footprint on soils and improving soil literacy in society, the latter one being particularly relevant for the EIP-AGRI.

The Mission will be implemented through 4 building blocks: (1) R&I programme, (2) living labs and lighthouses, (3) soil monitoring and soil literacy, (4) communication and citizen engagement.

The Mission was launched at the end of September 2021. Since then, DG AGRI has published the first R&I Work Program (WP) and has been drafting the WP 2022, which will be published on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Sixty-five million € were allocated to the WP 2021 and 92 million € to the WP 2022. DG AGRI is just starting to discuss the WP 2023 with MSs, the plan is to allocate about 140 million € to it.

The Project PREPSOIL will start in summer 2022 to identify regional “soil needs”, create an interactive map of Living Labs (LLs) and enhance access to soil information in MSs. The ‘soil needs’ will be identified through a participatory approach involving regional stakeholders. It will be the starting point for Living Labs, Lighthouses and can also benefit OGs working in the area of soil health. In 2023, engagement sessions will be held in MSs to further promote Living Labs and Lighthouses. In 2024, the first Living Labs and Lighthouses to be created under the EU Soil Mission will be set up. It is important that stakeholders understand the concept of the Living Labs well, so that good quality proposals are submitted.

There will be joint activities with other Missions (Oceans and Climate adaptation) in the WP 2023. DG AGRI will gradually scale up the international collaboration outside of the EU.

Annette Schneegans elaborated on the topics in the [WP 2021-2022](#). As a first step, the WP dealt with setting up structures and a platform for the implementation of the Mission. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) will be entrusted with overseeing the Mission’s activities and the cooperation with MSs on soil monitoring. Other than that the WP 2021 includes topics addressing the various building blocks of the

Mission, promoting the training of specialised soil advisors and developing business models for soil health.

The Mission is a major tool to generate further knowledge and to engage with stakeholders. EIP-AGRI OGs can use that knowledge and test it out in regions where Living Labs are not operating. Advisory services can use the knowledge from the Mission and provide feedback on what is needed on the ground. The EIP-AGRI network can actively disseminate knowledge and organise networking activities.

Annette Schneegans thanked the EIP-AGRI for spreading the info on the Mission call. Links to documents on the Soil Mission can be found in the last slides of her presentation.

The presentation was followed by a short Q&A session:

- **Q:** How can bottom-up initiatives from farmers and rural communities be integrated in the Soil Mission, only through Horizon calls?
- **A:** Official participation in a Living Lab is only possible via a consortium, or associated to a consortium which submits a proposal under Horizon Europe. Farmers can be involved in different ways: for instance, they do not need to be formal partners in the consortium, but can be formally associated to partners (as subcontractors or 3rd parties). Hopefully, with the help of EIP-AGRI, different types of actors will join. The upcoming Mission implementation platform is there as a kind of helpdesk, a one-stop-shop where information can be gathered, and activities can be found. The aim is to have an open network. Also, through the TRAMI project<sup>1</sup> and national Horizon Europe contact points there should be a central contact for potential applicants and other interested parties for each Mission in each MS.
- **A (by Inge VAN OOST, DG AGRI):** This way of being involved in a consortium (subcontracted) is the same as for any other Horizon multi-actor project of the Horizon programme, which you already know. Actors can also join as a partner in the consortium, of course.
- **Q:** Can you give us more details about Living Labs and Lighthouses?
- **A:** There is a list of criteria in the Mission's Implementation Plan<sup>2</sup> on what qualifies as a Living Lab. A Living Lab is a place where participatory, interdisciplinary work takes place (similar to an Operational Group). A Living Lab is supposed to include partners from 10 to 20 sites (can be farms) that group themselves around a common problem. So, when funding 5 Living Labs, we can be funding 100 sites in 5 regional settings, for instance. Lighthouses can be located inside or outside the area of a Living Lab. They are places for demonstration that are exemplary in their performance in terms of soil health improvement. A network of Living Labs will be gradually created, starting with 20 living labs in 2024 and expanding exponentially (factsheet available [here](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.trami5missions.eu/>

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[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/funding/documents/soil\\_mission\\_implementation\\_plan\\_final\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/documents/soil_mission_implementation_plan_final_for_publication.pdf)

## 2.2. EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe and EIP-AGRI first stand-alone brokerage activity

Aleksander Bomberski (EIP-AGRI SF) presented the rough methodology for stand-alone brokerage activities and the initial ideas for the first one to be organised. You can find his presentation [here](#).

A stand-alone brokerage activity is a new type of event to be organised by the EIP-AGRI Support Facility for EU stakeholders. The general aim is to create an exchange forum for innovative projects and actors to meet each other and discuss potential project ideas or other forms of cooperation.

A brokerage activity can be integrated in another event, like a seminar or a workshop, or it can be organised separately as a stand-alone brokerage activity. The stand-alone brokerage activity will have the duration of one day.

The general objectives are:

- to create opportunities for new potential partnerships for EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) or Horizon projects;
- to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange between innovation actors;
- to foster transnational and cross-border collaboration.

The target audience depends on the topic of the brokerage activity, but most participants will be stakeholders who are preparing to present an application for an OG or Horizon project, partners in innovative projects, and experts on relevant topics.

The stand-alone brokerage activity will have around 100 participants, these will be selected from an open call for participation, but some participants may be addressed by direct invitation. The call will be disseminated through the newsletter. National CAP networks can also help to disseminate calls.

The first stand-alone brokerage activity will be organised within the frame of the upcoming Horizon call for the EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe. Specific objectives include creating awareness on the Mission and the opportunities offered under the call, supporting future applicants in finding potential partners, and sharing further information on the call and its topics. The stand-alone brokerage activity will be organised after the opening of the Horizon call, by mid-May 2022. The concept note of the stand-alone brokerage activity will be uploaded in the Subgroup collaborative area soon after this meeting.

## Session III: Exchange of experiences on AKIS and knowledge flows in CAP Strategic Plans' interventions

Margarida Ambar (EIP-AGRI SF) gave a short introduction to the third session of the meeting. Three speakers, from Ireland, Netherlands and Italy shared inspiring examples of AKIS-related interventions in their respective countries:

### 3.1. Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation System (AKIS) in Ireland

Patrick Barrett, from the Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, presented the most relevant interventions related to AKIS in the Irish CAP Strategic Plan (CAP SP). You can find his presentation [here](#).

The New Food Systems Strategy was published in August 2021 introducing the Food Vision for 2030. Ireland should take a leading role in developing sustainable food systems. Within this strategy, there is a mission fostering an innovative, competitive and resilient agri-food sector, where the aim is to develop a dynamic knowledge exchange environment through research, which fits very well within the CAP objectives. The strategy seeks to address key societal challenges, while the AKIS must also be directed towards societal challenges.

One of the key issues is to get science, technology, innovation and knowledge to the end-user as quickly as possible and in a form that is useable. At the starting point of their AKIS Strategic Development Process, Ireland elaborated an AKIS & Agri-Digitalisation description, transposing these concepts into their own context. This info was brought forward in the draft CAP AKIS SWOT. In consultation with stakeholders, they identified the intervention logic, ultimately leading to the CAP SP. The background papers to this process defined AKIS and reflected on how AKIS should evolve.

The Irish CAP SP is published and submitted to the Commission. It includes a number of interventions/elements that are specific for developing AKIS in Ireland:

- **The first intervention is to develop a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for advisors**, to provide support and resources for the public and the private advisory systems and to support their knowledge needs in a rapidly changing agricultural context. The approach includes several aspects such as incorporating mixed learning processes with online and in-person learning, and an online platform.

In the period 2023-2027, there will be an allocation of 1.9m € to the programme.

The Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine wants to ensure that CPD for advisors can take the latest research and innovation developments on board and create useful outputs for advisors. The Ministry also wants to help develop the interactive innovation skillset and agri-digitalisation skills of advisors.

- **The second intervention is to ensure knowledge transfer (KT)**; the aim is to provide farmers with a platform to share knowledge and to engage in peer-to-peer learning and to give high quality and targeted advice to farmers, delivered by professional agricultural advisors who will have undergone the CPD training and with appropriate FAS training, experience and expertise. The total financial allocation is 71,1m €, for the period 2023-2027.

There will be KT Groups with meetings from a list of 'Priority KT Topics' and meetings on topics decided by the groups themselves. Each KT facilitator will hold a meeting with each farmer in order to set goals for the programme and report on progress. The Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine wants to help the KT Groups develop the latest R&I and develop an interactive innovation and agri-digitalisation skillset, leading the groups to a point where

they can look for opportunities in EIP-AGRI and OGs, so they will undertake place-based innovation and data driven decision making.

- **The third intervention refers to Cooperation / EIP-AGRI;** building on the previous CAP programming period, calls will be set up to support a range of actors in the sector with a provisional financial allocation of 36.12m € for the period 2023-2027. This intervention integrates built-in AKIS development requirements, either on specific themes (such as generational renewal or environmental challenges, for instance) or to CPD and KT developments.
- **The fourth intervention is on Cooperation / LEADER;** it includes elements related to AKIS, such as Living Labs, CPD and development of interactive innovation skillsets.
- **National CAP Network (NCN);** the aim is to foster innovation and support the inclusion and the interaction between all stakeholders in the knowledge-exchange and knowledge-building process. The new NCN is planned to coincide with the start of the new programming period in 2023. It will integrate several AKIS-related aspects, such as the translation of research outcomes into practice-oriented guides and supporting the creation of cross-border Operational Group projects.
- **Research Programme;** building on validated knowledge transfer methodologies, it will support the inclusion and the interaction between all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange and building process, including farmers/farmers' groups and advisors.
- **AKIS Coordination Group;** the aim is to ensure AKIS coordination, creating the necessary conditions to support modernisation, innovation and knowledge flows and to speed up knowledge exchange, bringing all the relevant actors together on a planned and regular basis. This consistent actors' engagement will create the conditions to establish a strategic work programme and to identify CAP interventions that need further work.  
Some considerations to take on board include issues such as: how to better use the already funded national activities on AKIS, how to better integrate the public and private advisory systems, etc.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session:

- **Q:** Could you provide some examples of topics addressed in the Knowledge Transfer Groups?
- **A:** Examples of topics addressed in the KT groups are still to be defined. The intervention will not start until 2024.
- **Q:** What would be the differences and also the links between the AKIS Coordination Group and the current National Rural Network?
- **A:** Differences: The AKIS coordination group will examine the integration of AKIS across all related areas of CAP and other relevant policies (e.g., research). The National CAP Network is expected to contribute to AKIS through specific activities. Links: The National CAP Network will be part of the AKIS Coordination Group.
- **Q:** Are the background documents you mentioned available online? They look very useful / interesting.
- **A:** The documents are available through this link: [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [CAP Post 2020 Consultative Committee \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

### 3.2. Advisory-related interventions in the Dutch CAP Strategic Plan

Annemiek Canjels, representing the Association of the Dutch Provinces, presented the advisory-related interventions in the Dutch CAP Strategic Plan (SP). You can find her presentation [here](#).

The Dutch CAP SP is a result of the joint work of the Ministry with the Provinces. A SWOT analysis on the existing advisory systems was done and farmers were surveyed. As a result, a need for varied kinds of advisory services was identified, and issues regarding the current advisory services were noted: advisors are expensive, there is a limited choice, and they are not independent. Dutch farmers lack a range of new skills and competences, but there are no courses or trainings available to address this need. In the past, there were Product Boards that made sure that knowledge was transferred to farmers, but they have been abolished. This gap in the system needs to be addressed.

Based on these points, the Dutch CAP SP was drafted. The Dutch Ministry wants to create a new system of agriculture advisors, where the existing Association of Agriculture Advisors will take the lead. A Committee has been created to admit advisors into the new system, based on their CV analysis and an interview. Applicants will also need to provide proof of satisfied customers. This new system of agriculture advisors will include permanent education for advisors. A public list of impartial advisors will be published and available to farmers.

Nationally funded measures have been put in place since 2021, which will become EU-funded interventions in 2022. These measures are as follows:

- Knowledge vouchers (1.500 €) for one-on-one advice for individual farmers; it can only be spent on an advisor from the public list of impartial advisors;
- Knowledge vouchers (800 €) for farmers for participation in a training by a listed advisor or institute;
- Vouchers (6.000 €) for a farm business model switch plan; it can only be spent on a listed advisor;
- Vouchers (6.000 €) for coaching and training of listed advisors on new aspects of sustainable agriculture;
- A multi-actor/farmers' group developing and implementing a training, workshop or demonstration programme (from 20.000 – 200.000 €); the maximum duration is 3 years and topics must concern one or more aspects of sustainable agriculture.

Besides the national interventions, also regional interventions will be included in the Dutch CAP SP. These refer to projects or vouchers that do not fit in the national programme but have additional relevance or target a specific regional challenge.

In terms of national interventions, EIP-AGRI Operational Groups will continue to be funded, though the Dutch ministry will be looking particularly for projects with a focus on Short Food Supply systems, Farm2Fork digital systems, sustainable food chains and fair prices. Funding per project will vary from 250 to 1.000.000 €, on a total budget of 32 million €.

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups will also be part of regional interventions, with the objective of fostering farm innovation. In this case, main topics will be production systems, new products, technologies, etc. Funding per project will go from 100 to 250.000 €, on a total budget of 82 million €.

Other issues to tackle within the Dutch CAP SP include the creation of the National CAP Network, cross-border exchange for instance.

The presentation was followed by a short Q&A session:

- **Q:** How many advisors will there be on the advisors' list? Is there a list of eligible advisory topics for the vouchers, or is it open to all services that an advisor from the list can offer?
- **A:** There is no limit on the number of advisors - as long as an advisor meets the requirements, he or she is welcome. The list of topics for the vouchers is determined per call and is published. It is generally quite broad, linked to a number of aspects of sustainable farming.

### **3.3. AKIS and knowledge flows in the Italian CAP Strategic Plan**

Anna Vagnozzi, from the Italian NSU / NRN, presented the interventions in the Italian CAP Strategic Plan (SP) designed to foster knowledge flows among AKIS actors. You can find her presentation [here](#).

Italy has 21 regions or autonomous provinces so the national Ministry of Agricultural, Forestry and Food Policy and the regional Managing Authorities worked together on the strategy and general issues in the national CAP SP.

Additionally, working groups were organised to work on more specific issues in the CAP SP. One of these groups worked on AKIS. The NRN supported this work proposing themes consistent to the Italian agriculture's SWOT analysis and with EC support documents.

This complex process was facilitated by:

- The Network of the Regional References for research and services, its members are the regional officials/directors (who are experts in AKIS);
- The existence of a regular dialogue between regions and autonomous provinces.

The Italian Network of the Regional References for research and services was established to promote discussions, agree on common positions and to foster interregional projects. In recent years, this network decided to help with the implementation of the AKIS concept on various aspects such as advisory services, back-office and support for innovation. The secretary of the Network is now the Tuscany Region.

The Network of the Regional References organised several working groups as part of the preparations of the Italian CAP SP, one for each planned intervention, collected the different needs from the regions and autonomous provinces, and presented them in plenary meetings with regional officials/directors, officials of the national Ministry of Agriculture and representatives of the NRN.

One of the most critical weaknesses in the Italian AKIS is the difficult communication between different AKIS actors, which leads to low knowledge flows. EIP-AGRI has been a useful learning ground to improve this situation: 638 Operational Groups have been established in Italy.

In view of improving knowledge flows and collaboration among AKIS actors, the focus will be on:



- Coordinating the implementation of interventions;
- Ensuring the cooperation among the different components of AKIS to offer more consistent tools and enable synergies between farming systems;
- Re-designing EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in a more participatory way, so as to better involve the different AKIS actors, especially advisors and farmers;
- Offering training for AKIS operators.
- Consistent with these objectives, some AKIS interventions are planned to provide support to the coordination, cooperation and to the exchange of information, data and experiences.

### 3.4. Discussion in breakout groups and reporting back in plenary

Margarida Ambar (EIP-AGRI SF) introduced the interactive session, presenting the aim of the discussions and explaining the overall process.

Subgroup members were divided into **3 breakout groups**, based on the three topics of the above-mentioned presentations:

- 1- [AKIS implementation in MS](#) - inspired by the presentation from Ireland
- 2- [Advisors in AKIS](#) - inspired by the presentation from the Netherlands
- 3- [Knowledge flows among AKIS actors](#) - inspired by the presentation from Italy

The three speakers joined the respective breakout groups to answer any questions addressed to them.

A rapporteur from each breakout group was invited to bring the main highlights from the discussions to plenary, and Subgroup members were invited to further share relevant additions or initiatives linked to any of the three topics.

The following highlights were shared during the reporting back session:

#### 1- **AKIS implementation in MSs - inspired by the presentation from Ireland**

The group discussed a number of challenges related to advisors: how to continuously update advisors (for instance by providing an online platform), new skills for advisors, how to ensure impartiality (for instance in France by separating selling from pure advisory services, or, as in Poland, having a compulsory training and examination, and one list of advisors).

Several MSs experience challenges related to the coordination between different actors, such as public and private actors, or national and regional actors. In Spain, for instance, the AKIS coordination is national, but advisory competences lie in the regions. In addition, coordination on funding and funding streams is needed.

Finally, it was also mentioned that in order to make it more interesting for researchers to participate, the merit system needs to be modified so that advisory activities and multi actor approaches become more relevant to their careers. In the Irish approach they are trying to make the “knowledge transfer” packages attractive to researchers and interventions are included to motivate researchers to co-create knowledge and research.

## 2- Advisors in AKIS - inspired by the presentation from the Netherlands

In group 2, Subgroup members continued their reflections on the presentation of Annemiek Canjels. The debate revolved around two main questions:

- Who ensures that the advisors have the necessary skills and knowledge?
- How are the interventions financed?

Annemiek Canjels replied to both questions saying that the Netherlands is putting together a book on training measures and practices for advisors. These are collected at national level and can be reused. Stakeholders in regions and countries should ensure that the knowledge measures are being implemented as soon as possible, from the first year, to make sure that they are effective. There is a need for managing authorities to exchange on how to implement knowledge and advisory interventions. National budget is complemented by EU budget. Provinces pay 57%, EU 43%. Participants also shared details on the implementation, training and accreditation in their respective countries. There is a need for an effective “quality/accreditation” system for advisors, to make sure the advice is up to standard, especially in countries where free advisory service is offered at national level.

Regional implementation in Germany and France was mentioned; here advisory services are offered at national level and regions have the possibility to choose from the menu based on their priorities. In many cases, the interventions in the CAP SP have been built on the previous structures, but there are some differences, for instance, the links to other interventions are better described.

### Comments following the report of group 2 to the plenary:

Subgroup members highlighted the challenge of interoperability between various databases (I2Connect, advisors lists, Farmbook, EIP-AGRI OG database). This is currently being discussed between the i2connect team and the EUREKA/EU FarmBook team.

In Finland, a national platform of agriculture competence and knowledge was just set up. Efforts are ongoing to connect all the actors in one single hub. It is a challenging task since farmers are very busy running their own farms. Furthermore, transnational cooperation is a big threshold for farmers, national hubs are already a challenge. It will be a long-term process.

DG AGRI also sees the creation of a network of interconnected advisors as a significant challenge. The first important step is to make a list of advisors and make it visible to everybody. There are Horizon projects to support this and a database for advisors at EU level will be created and will be operational in several years. This innovative and interactive advisory database will be expandable and can be used by cross-border OGs or other projects.

DG AGRI informed the SOI members about the progress of the EUREKA pilot project “Farmbook” that will start summer 2022 and run for 7 years. This project will connect with all AKIS coordination bodies and platforms to implement their pilot at an EU level. But EUREKA already has guidelines for all MSs on how to make their national knowledge databases interoperable with the EU level CAP network/EIP database to automatically get in all information from the EU level to the national level.

The information on the development of this first EU-level 'knowledge reservoir' was shared during the meeting. The SOI members were invited to register to the closing event of the EUREKA project on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The issue of better connecting researchers with practitioners was also mentioned in breakout group 2: researchers should have time to produce resources that are understandable/usable for farmers and advisors and be rewarded for that new type of work.

### **3- Knowledge flows among AKIS actors inspired by the presentation from Italy**

Breakout group 3 reported that for regionalised countries it is both difficult and crucial to create a coordinating structure. They have a huge number of stakeholders and creating one national CAP network (NCN) is a big task. In addition, the role of NCN will be a part of the coordinating structure, and it is not limited to coordination.

The Commission has described what should be achieved but not how it should be done.

The role of education in AKIS was pointed out during the discussion. The educational organisations are quite independent. The new CAP gives education a bigger role in the AKIS and to effectively integrate education into the AKIS is a challenging task.

Portugal has 22 Competence Centres (CC) covering different sectors. Each Competence Centre must create a research and innovation agenda that identifies priorities for the sector, thus contributing to the orientation of public policies in a bottom-up process. When creating the national agenda for research and innovation, the CCs were taken into consideration.

The need for especially some of the newer MSs to thoroughly think about their AKIS needs, and include lessons from the past in their AKIS planning and activities was pointed out. The example of the very different AKIS needs of small-scale farmers compared to very large-scale farmers in Romania illustrated the point.

#### **Comments following the report of group 3 to the plenary:**

In Sweden, the Swedish Board of Agriculture is working hard on implementing AKIS. Some good examples of collaboration between different AKIS actors already exist, such as the private initiative 'Sweden Food Arena'. In Sweden the CAP SP is rolled out at national level. However, the Swedish Board of Agriculture is working on designating an important role for regional actors.

All Subgroup members agreed that there is a need to increase the involvement of researchers in the coordination working groups and competence centres.

More details on AKIS interventions examples, ideas and suggestions discussed in the breakout groups can be found in [Annex 1](#).

## Next steps and closing

Magdalena Mach (DG AGRI) closed the meeting by thanking all Subgroup members for their active participation and for sharing their experiences and ideas.

As the EC and MSs are working on the CAP Strategic Plans, it is important to keep discussing ways of improving knowledge flows within national and EU AKISs. AKIS interventions are being designed by MSs to ensure that all AKIS actors will effectively work together. The evaluation of the meeting showed that AKIS was the right topic for the meeting as it created the opportunity to exchange different examples of AKIS interventions.

Magdalena Mach reminded that the concept notes of the workshop on organic conversion and the stand-alone brokerage activity on soil will soon be available in the Subgroup collaborative area: all members were invited to add their comments and ideas for these 2 activities.

The next SOI will be on 2 June 2022.

**The detailed agenda of the meeting and all presentations can be found on the [EIP-AGRI website](#).**

## ANNEX 1

### Results of discussions in breakout groups on AKIS implementation, advisors' positioning and knowledge flows in CAP Strategic Plans' interventions

Subgroup members were divided into three breakout groups according to the three presentations and topics from the introductory session in plenary, respectively:

- Room 1: **AKIS implementation in MSs - inspired by the presentation from Ireland**
- Room 2: **Advisors in AKIS - inspired by the presentation from the Netherlands**
- Room 3: **Knowledge flows among AKIS actors - inspired by the presentation from Italy**

The aim of the breakout session was to discuss these examples and further reflect on AKIS-related interventions and knowledge flows in CAP Strategic Plans. The main questions for the discussions were:

1. Taking into consideration the example you just heard, what can be the challenges / bottlenecks that may come up in the implementation of these interventions?
2. What do related interventions look like in your country? What related issues need to be taken into consideration for a well-functioning AKIS in your country?

#### 1. AKIS implementation in MSs - inspired by the presentation from Ireland

The first part of the breakout session allowed Subgroup members to ask clarifying questions to the speaker, Patrick Barret.

The group discussion started with a question regarding the future complementarity between the Irish CAP network and the AKIS coordination group. Patrick Barret explained that the AKIS coordination group will be focusing on strategic development, bringing together all relevant actors within the AKIS. Thus, while the AKIS coordination group will be dealing with the strategic steering, the Irish CAP network will focus more on the AKIS animation.

Then Subgroup members discussed some challenges regarding the Irish approach, and exchanged ideas related to the approaches in their own Member States (MSs).

The Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has decided to provide Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to all advisors and to target some priority areas. Training will be both on soft and hard skills. One of the innovative elements that Ireland has established is an online learning platform which is managed by the Ministry and aligned with the best e-learning practices. This platform is expected to become part of the advisory system. The Ministry wants the CDP to become part of the advisors' business offer, so that they can profile themselves as good professionals with the most updated knowledge.

Spain is also addressing the challenge on how to keep advisors continuously updated in a rapidly changing context, and so a platform is being planned, which will bring together all impartial advisors.

Additionally, the Spanish CAP SP is planning training for advisors on digital skills.

In Poland both public and private advisors have to participate in a training and pass an examination to obtain the certification. Poland has more than 3000 agricultural advisors: 10-15% are private, the majority is public. It is a good system.

The specialisation of advisors was also addressed during the breakout discussion, associated to the variety of vocational titles: advisors, farm advisors, field advisors, soil advisors, technology advisors, etc. Nevertheless, specialised advisors are not common in MSs, although some advisors are more specialised in a few specific areas.

Concerning the involvement of researchers in the AKIS and the various possibilities to make it more attractive to them, the Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has tried to motivate researchers to become more engaged in the transfer of knowledge. Within H2020-funded projects a proportional knowledge transfer package is included - generating future multi-actor project leaders, or future EIP-AGRI OG leaders. Advisors may well take up this role with their new knowledge.

In Sweden, there have been some efforts to attract researchers to participate in EIP-AGRI activities. The modification of the merit system at the universities makes advisory-related activities and the multi-actor approach more attractive for researchers' career development. There are continuous conversations between different parties that aim to change the current merit system at universities, but the whole process seems to be difficult.

Also in Spain, the professional career of researchers is being discussed in view of ensuring that advisory-related work will benefit their career.

Furthermore, Subgroup members referred to the need to ensure advisors' impartiality by separating the commercialisation of farms' inputs from the advisory role.

## 2. Advisors in AKIS - inspired by the presentation from the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, a book on advisors' training and advisory practices is being prepared. The practices are collected at national level, and they can be reused for various trainings.

The training of advisors should start from the very first year of implementation of the new CAP. Advisory interventions are not difficult to kick-off, while Managing Authorities would benefit from exchanging experiences regarding the implementation of this type of interventions. Moreover, there is a special programme for advisors' training provided by IALB (International Academy of Rural Advisors) and EUFRAS (European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services), so countries can take these up if they do not have their own training programmes.

In Austria advisors are officially accredited, and there is also an academic programme to train the agricultural advisors.

One problem that was raised was that if the farmer is using online or telephone advisory services then it is still required to provide a signature which renders the telephone service ineffective. Advice is

confidential and should stay confidential also in the future - providing a short summary about it should be sufficient for controlling agencies.

In Finland, there is an AGRI-Hub (Farm Business Competence Network) which is more research-based but brings together research, advice and training. It has a working programme until 2030 and includes training on smart farming, on digitalisation and makes a link with innovation activities.

In Germany, advisors can benefit from investment in IT infrastructure, classical farm advisory training, cooperation, EIP-AGRI and education: there is a broad range of interventions for regions to choose from. Some regions try to find other options, for example by providing advisory services free of charge. There are 29 interventions available in the German CAP SP but it is not certain if there will be enough money available to implement all of them.

In France there is a similar situation to the one described for Germany: the decision on what is being financed is taken by the regions.

In Austria, the advisory-related support is built on already existing measures. What is new is that links to other interventions are stronger. There will be an agri-hub within the CAP network. There is an intervention in Austria to create an AKIS platform and the AKIS coordination group.

### 3. Knowledge flows among AKIS actors - inspired by the presentation from Italy

According to Anna Vagnozzi, the most difficult task is to bring together all Italian regions: each one of them has its own advisory service, researchers, etc., so it is crucial to create links between the regions. Italy is creating a coordinating structure to make the knowledge flows work.

Regionalised countries are experiencing somewhat similar problems, but their governance systems are quite different. Regions are not used to having one single plan (CAP Strategic Plan) at national level. Some interventions will be more efficiently provided at national level, especially the AKIS-related interventions.

In Finland, the AKIS coordination is a big task that the national CAP network cannot take on. There is another network, the AgriHub Network, which will likely join the AKIS coordination.

Portugal has three regions and one National Rural Network (NRN). There are 22 Competence Centres (CCs) covering different sectors (gathering various types of actors). The CCs work regionally and within sectors. They were created three years ago because Portugal had too many research and innovation agendas, and besides a bottom-up process was needed (which is now done by the CCs). When creating a national research and innovation agenda, the agendas from CCs were taken into consideration.

In Romania, 50% of the agricultural land is owned by a handful of farmers and the other 50% is owned by a huge number of small farmers. This could indicate a need for two AKISs as the needs of the two types of farmers are completely different. A publicly funded advisory service was dismantled several years ago so now there is a need to first (re)build an advisory service and only then integrate it into the AKIS.