

eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



# EIP-AGRI Seminar CAP Strategic Plans: the key role of AKIS in Member States

## SEMINAR REPORT

### 16-18 September 2020

cover picture: Teagasc advisor Karen Dukelow in discussion with Joe Farrell and his son Pdraig who farm near Castledermot in Ireland. - copyright Mark Moore, Teagasc



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# 1. Summary

The European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, and the European Innovation Partnership EIP-AGRI Service Point organised a seminar dedicated to the development of national Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) as part of the CAP Strategic Plans post 2020.

Knowledge and innovation fostering and sharing are part of the post 2020 CAP cross-cutting objective on modernisation. They have a key role to play in helping farmers and rural communities to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. There is an increasing demand for innovative solutions through continuous renewal of products, processes and services. For quicker impact, such solutions are best co-created by people with complementary knowledge, together with farmers and foresters who are often the most relevant partners and end-users of the project results: they bring in the necessary practical knowledge to make the results applicable in practice. This successful “interactive innovation model”, based on co-ownership thanks to innovation co-creation, with a big focus on sharing broadly projects results, was established in the current EU funding period 2014-2020. It links research, innovation and knowledge sharing under Horizon 2020 and the CAP, with the EIP-AGRI and its growing numbers of Operational Groups (OGs), currently over 2000. EIP-AGRI will be continued and further developed in the next programming period post 2020.

The main challenge that this seminar focused on is that the existing national and regional AKISs are not sufficiently developed nor interconnected within each Member State to effectively support interactive innovation. There is already a substantial amount of knowledge available, but it is fragmented all over Europe and insufficiently applied in practice. Well-functioning AKISs will help speed up innovation throughout the EU, avoid duplication of efforts, save costs, and strengthen the impact of EU and national/regional research and innovation funding providing cross-border spill-overs.

## Objectives of the seminar

The overall aim of this seminar was to support the Member States in the preparation of their AKIS Strategic Plans and to promote efficient agricultural knowledge flows within the country and region as well as across the whole EU. This event enabled CAP Strategic planners and other essential actors to come together whilst still in the process of developing their AKIS strategies. As such, it provided opportunities to:

- Support CAP strategic planners and RDP managing and programming authorities in designing their AKIS strategic plans and related interventions for their country or region;
- Explore the regulatory changes for EU farm advice post 2020, and how to integrate all advisors into the AKIS system;
- Learn from a set of good practices and specific instruments and interventions that are effective for a well-functioning AKIS;
- Assist in preparing the CAP networks for their future role in AKIS related to innovation and knowledge; and,
- Understand and exchange experiences on how to promote knowledge flows within countries and across borders.

With a total of 279 registrations, the seminar participants represented all EU Member States and the various AKIS actors and competent administrations. The online event took place from Wednesday 16th to Friday 18th September. There was a strong representation from all relevant types of actors involved in the AKIS process: RDP Managing / Programming Authorities (national & regional), network support units of NRN / EIP networks, advisory coordinating entities, innovation support services / innovation brokers, farm advisers / advisory organisations, some farmers or their organisations, researchers, besides DG AGRI and the EIP-AGRI Service Point staff.

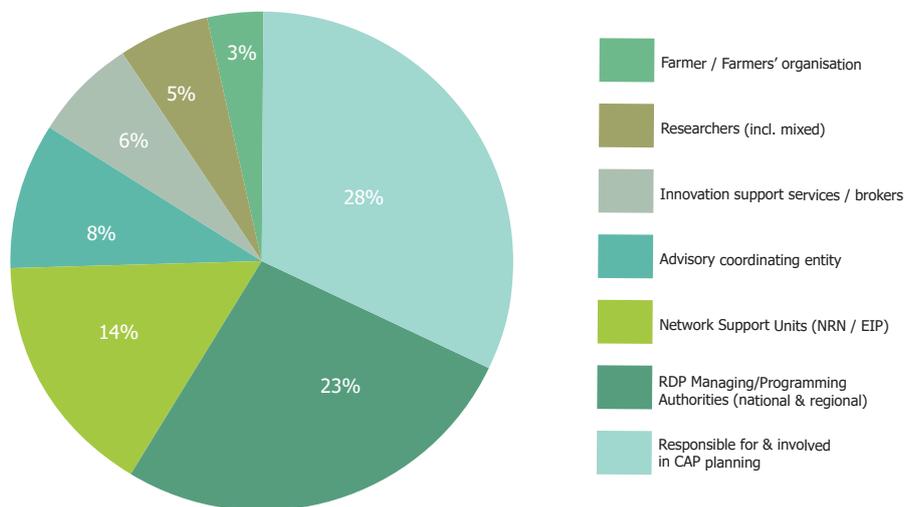


Figure 1: registrations per stakeholdertype



Figure 2: registrations per country

## 2. Brief description of the process

Taking in consideration the topic addressed at the seminar and its objectives, it was important to make sure that many different voices and sources of expertise were involved and a variety of voices could be heard. All key components of AKIS were explored, whilst ensuring that participants were still able to spend time getting to know each other and have informal conversations despite the virtual format of the event.

### EIP-AGRI seminar on CAP Strategic Plans - AKIS

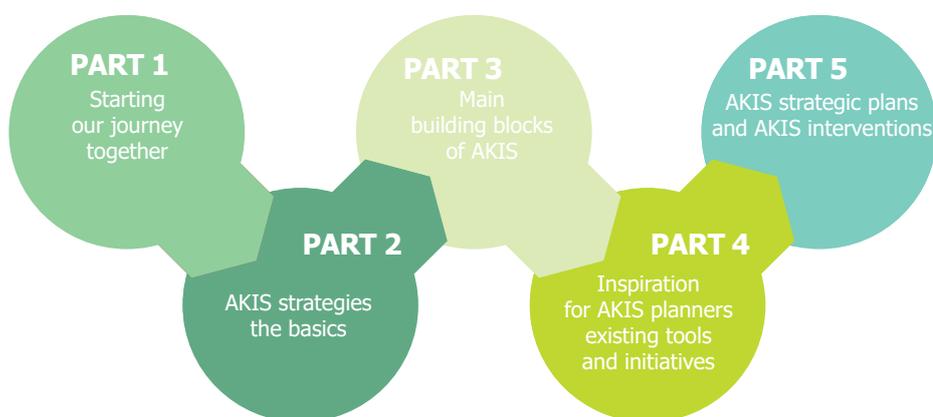


Figure 3: journey of the seminar

### Day 1

The event kicked off by **setting the scene** with an official opening, a look at the key elements of AKIS, inspiration and debate. This was followed by an informal, interactive session **starting a new AKIS community**, getting to know each other and learning more about the bigger AKIS family.

### Day 2

Day 2 started with the **understanding of AKIS essentials** including an opening address by the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, inspirational examples from Poland and Spain, and a session to explore the elements of a well-functioning AKIS.

In the afternoon, participants looked at the main building blocks of AKIS and so explored further inspiring examples of **integrating advisors into the AKIS**, including a rich summary of inputs collected before the event.

The day finished with inspiration, further ideas, inputs and discussion on **preparing the role of CAP networks in strengthening the AKIS** by promoting innovation and knowledge flows within the country and across the EU. All afternoon, good examples accompanied the themes.

Inspiration came from the 4 week online discussion between participants in preparation of the event: key questions and good ideas for more interactive advising and advice organisation, the new roles of advisors related to innovation, the structuring of the interconnection between AKIS actors were the result of the 4 week long online discussion. An extremely interesting summary of this debate was presented at the end of day 2.

## Day 3

The morning of the final day focused on participants **getting inspiration from a wide set of existing tools and initiatives** that can support a well-functioning AKIS, with a variety of excellent examples discussed from across the EU. A number of MS also presented their draft AKIS plans. In the afternoon further inspirational speakers and input from participants explored the task of **preparing the AKIS strategic plans and choosing the right interventions** for the different contexts in countries and regions and **designing AKIS interventions** that could work.

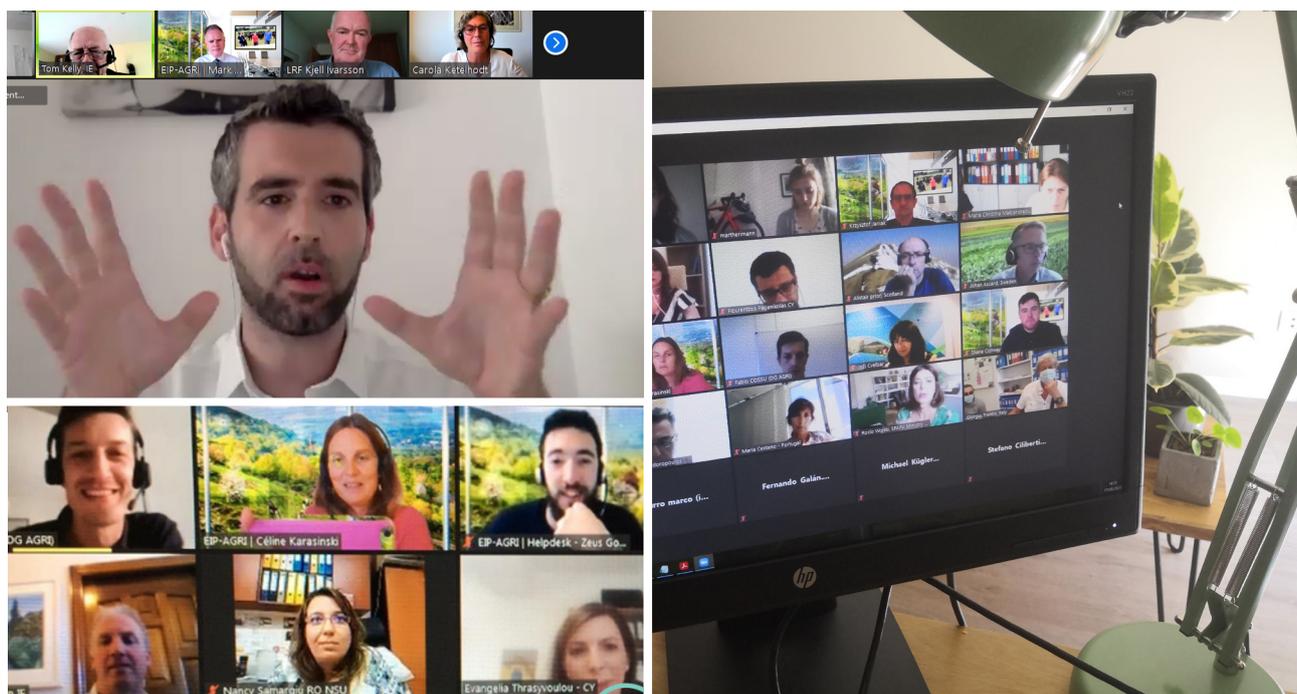
The seminar was then closed through reflection and an engaging conclusion from Mr. Wolfgang Burtscher, Director-General DG AGRI.



You can watch the full event in half-day recordings, find the links below:

- Day 1 (afternoon) - [video](#)
- Day 2 (morning) - [video](#)
- Day 2 (afternoon) - [video](#)
- Day 3 (morning) - [video](#)
- Day 3 (afternoon) - [video](#)

It is also possible to take a specific focus and watch the presentation(s) in which interest you most (<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-cap-strategic-plans-key-role-akis>)



## 3. Welcoming and setting the scene

### Welcome by DG AGRI and introduction to the topics at stake



**Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Unit B2 “Research and Innovation”, DG AGRI, European Commission** started the seminar officially. She welcomed the participants, expressing her delight to see people representing all parts of AKIS, describing the group as an AKIS ecosystem that would work together to bring benefits to all. She highlighted that business as usual for knowledge exchange, innovation and research is no longer an option, particularly in light of the impact of COVID.

Kerstin then looked at what has been already achieved in particular through the EIP-AGRI, and what we’ll be looking at achieving in the future through AKIS. Support for advice, training, interactive innovation projects, knowledge exchange opportunities, linking with research will be key for this within CAP Strategic Plans, and adequate budgets will need to be foreseen for this. She reiterated the importance of farmers and foresters being at the heart of knowledge exchange, innovation and research, and commended the work of EIP-AGRI in enabling this. EIP-AGRI has been connecting the CAP and research policy with much success. In 27 Member States, 98 rural development programmes are implementing EIP in the current programming period. The OGs sit at the heart of this approach, over 2000 completed or running and we still have five years to go. There were also 190 multi-actor projects under Horizon 2020, accounting for about 2/3rds of all projects.

Focusing on the importance of AKIS, Kerstin highlighted the need for all actors within a system to be part of that system for it to truly function. A reinforced AKIS will integrate all these actors, in a structured and regular way, ensuring more effective knowledge flows and exchange inside Member States and across borders. In the future, all 9 specific objectives of the CAP will be supported by Member States’ AKIS and the EIP. The AKIS toolbox should develop a knowledge-based agriculture through the EIP, inclusion of knowledge exchange actions and innovation sharing and the development of digital technologies in CAP strategic plans, advice, training, innovation and knowledge support in rural development, and a substantial budget within Horizon Europe. Kerstin then asked the participants to spend time during the event to reflect on what could be main action points in the context of the AKISs of the future and consider:

- How can advisors and innovation support services become more involved in OGs and in AKIS than they are today, where they are only involved in 9% of OG innovative projects? They have excellent abilities to play a key role in interactive innovation processes by capturing practice needs, innovation brokering to prepare OG projects (which will be an obligation in the CAP post 2020), facilitating interactive innovation projects (also an obligation post 2020), disseminating new knowledge and bridging between CAP and Horizon projects. All this are issues where advisors can be particularly helpful.
- What are the best ways to develop a culture of lifelong learning training for advisors, particularly in economic, environmental and social issues, and up-to-date knowledge sharing and co-creating innovation?
- How can researchers be better rewarded for working directly with farmers and on farmers needs?
- How can CAP networks:
  - o support more learning and knowledge exchange within and between countries and regions,
  - o build better links between OGs and Horizon Europe projects,
  - o Foster innovation and support all stakeholders to become involved.

Kerstin reiterated that the main focus is how to use AKIS to interlink people, projects and policies to create benefit for all people forming part of the AKIS .

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200916\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_kerstin\\_rosenow\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200916_eip-agri_sem_akis_kerstin_rosenow_0.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-noBHfYJu8>

## Welcome by the EIP-AGRI Service Point



Pacôme Eyenga, team leader of the EIP-AGRI Service Point, welcomed all participants and explained this was the first online event that the team was organising, guaranteeing that all efforts had been made to ensure the good quality of the event, as well as to enhance interactivity between participants. Pacôme highlighted that AKIS is a very important concept for the Service Point because the whole team has been working, since the very start about 8 years ago, to promote and support knowledge exchange and to facilitate the EIP-AGRI network. He concluded that the Service Point is delighted to be involved at the start of this new phase in the EU CAP.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XFX-WWXBAY>

## Inspirational Speech: Innovation Support Services - the glue in AKIS

**Wim Ceulemans from Innovatiesteunpunt** was invited to inspire participants by highlighting the role that an innovation support service has in the agricultural and rural innovation context. It is not easy for individual innovation actors to find partners and start OG projects. Multi-actor co-creation usually does not start spontaneously. Connecting relevant actors, linking related projects, raising awareness and facilitating innovation actions are needed to foster, speed up and to oil knowledge flows generating innovative ideas. Innovation support services have an increasingly important role, leading initiatives that bring stakeholders and projects together, so that AKISs get better in their connecting function.



For more on Innovation Support Services, see the brochure '[EIP-AGRI Brochure on Innovation support services](#)' and related infographic. You can also access the [EIP-AGRI video on innovation support services](#).

Wim Ceulemans described the mission, composition and work of the Flemish innovation support service ("Innovatiesteunpunt"), a service both for agriculture and rural development. It is an NGO set up 20 years ago by two organisations, one representing 15.000 farmers and the other 65.000 rural families. Today, the majority of their 30 persons' team are innovation experts, but they also have dedicated support from project management and communication specialists in their service. When Innovatiesteunpunt was created, it had a very specific goal: to bridge the gap between researchers and entrepreneurs so that research becomes more demand driven, and knowledge gained through research can be used on farm. Nowadays, they evolved and take their role much further: they also facilitate multi-actor co-creation and help to find funding for their farmers to invest in innovation.

They inspire and support both agricultural entrepreneurs (farmers are their main target group) and rural communities - the neighbours of farmers can be very important to help farmers to innovate, and farmers can have a relevant role in making rural areas more vibrant. Innovatiesteunpunt has a double mission. On the one hand, they inspire farmers and local communities on new challenges and opportunities. This is where communication plays a very important role. On the other hand, they support people in their innovative projects, where project management and innovation expertise are required. Their business model is based around the "Power Flower" where they **detect** useful and inspiring ideas (they are constantly on the watch to capture new innovative ideas from the whole society) and **inform** their members and stakeholders of those novel ideas. When farmers want to start innovating, they then support them to **connect to** the right people and also **facilitate** co-creation. This process enables to **develop** new ideas through **advice** and **training**.

Innovation is very broad and so, although being a relatively small organisation, they focus on all three main areas: economic, environmental and social issues (the main areas of sustainability). Their biggest area of work is being cross cutting catalyst between these issues and across sectors. To deliver this activity as effectively as possible, they work with a long standing and active network of approximately 60 organisations across their region with whom they collaborate almost on daily basis – their 'own little AKIS'. In this network, Innovatiesteunpunt works as a communication hub that allows innovation actors to connect to that vast network, allowing individual farmers to access all the information that exists in the whole network, as well at the European level.

About one third of Innovatiesteunpunt's funding is sourced through its structural partners, nearly 70% comes from the many projects it is involved in (EU and national/regional programmes). The 5% income from their own activities allows them to invest in and deliver free advice, training and other services to farmers. Being involved in a large number of projects helps them to stay updated and cutting-edge. This also means that a significant part of their staff is doing project management from which they learn and can apply the outcomes when directly supporting farmers.

Wim highlighted the wide scala of projects in which Innovatiesteunpunt participates. These include projects funded under Horizon 2020 such as Thematic Networks like SKIN and LIAISON, EIP-AGRI OGs, INTERREG projects, among others, in more than 20 different EU and national funding programmes. The role of Innovatiesteunpunt in these projects varies, from providing and peer reviewing good practices, developing and disseminating knowledge, facilitating co-creation, business development etc.

Wim finalised explaining that they being creative with the way they work in their activities is absolutely key.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200916\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_wim\\_ceulemans.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200916_eip-agri_sem_akis_wim_ceulemans.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FBi7Z410GE>



## Panel discussion on the AKIS policy post 2020

The panel discussion was chaired by **Mark Gibson, EIP-AGRI Service Point** with the following participants:

- Aniko Juhasz – Deputy State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and co-chair of the Strategic Working Group of the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research (SCAR) on AKIS
- Victor Falguera – AKIS International, advisory service, Spain
- Tom Kelly – Director of the Knowledge Transfer department in Teagasc, Ireland
- Kjell Ivarsson – Senior policy advisor of the Federation of Swedish Farmers and vice-chair of the research and innovation Working Party of COPA-COGECA
- Carola Ketelhodt – Innovation Officer EIP-AGRI at the Chamber of Agriculture in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

The panel had a very lively debate on what was needed to help support the development for AKIS strategies, with participants asking a variety of probing questions. The highlights of the debate are laid out below, for full view on this session, watch the recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz5bvEk1NTY>.



### What needs to be considered in this transitional phase to a better functioning AKIS system?

Tom Kelly began the debate by highlighting the requirement for both upskilling advisors and motivating them by using metrics which are aligned to CAP objectives. He also suggested that in many cases the hearts and minds of management bodies within advisory organisations still needed to be won over in favour of this new approach. Carola shared her experience of working with OGs and identified the need to give advisors the time, resources and space they need to be able to work in this new holistic way with their clients. This requires a new, robust network to share ideas and create innovations. She again reiterated the need to find ways to motivate advisors to embrace these changes: advisors need new incentives and need to feel like a valued part of the AKIS. Victor shared his experience from Spain and the challenges of identifying and engaging with the far broader range of stakeholders to deliver the AKIS approach. He also inspired on how the barriers to their engagement can be overcome. He recognised the need to enable everyone's working practices to change to a more collaborative model. Kjell focused on the need for developing solutions to complex challenges through collaboration. He felt this could be best achieved by developing knowledge sharing across borders as part of a robust AKIS strategy in each country. Aniko highlighted that the current farm advisory service approach is so different to advisors' role in AKIS, which is much broader, and for instance may include a focus on aspects such as digitalisation to help gain knowledge from abroad.

## How important is it to have all the stakeholders involved in the development of an AKIS strategy?

Carola pointed to the necessity for political support and the complexities of bringing together all those currently involved in delivering advice and innovation support and integrating them into a long term, stable network. Tom reiterated the importance of political support and the need for a co-ordinated effort to engage with all the AKIS actors. This is a process which requires funding support. In Spain integration was also seen as key and Victor recognised the need for different actors to take responsibility for developing a strong AKIS. Aniko added not to forget encouraging farmers to also work in this new way and identifying appropriate ways of providing them with the skills needed to participate in a meaningful way. She saw peer to peer learning as key to this and highlighted the value in actions such as demonstration farms and on-farm learning.

## How important is a well-functioning AKIS for the future of the farming sector in the EU?

Kjell highlighted the need for effective education and training to improve all areas of collaborative actions that should form part of an AKIS. Carola shared her positive experiences from the OGs and the practical results they are delivering and should be shared broadly. The innovation support service was absolutely key to supporting these OGs, including with the administrative burden. She would like to see this burden minimised in the next CAP period to enable farmer groups to develop more organically. The need for cross-border projects was highlighted again, particularly the challenges to develop these with existing administrative procedures. There needs to be better coordination across borders especially as concerns the timing of calls as well as frequent exchanges. Tom shared already positive cross-border experiences from Ireland and noted the need for AKIS to support a more bottom-up approach to create more demand from farmers and their communities. In Spain OGs had also been a fantastic tool for fostering the engagement of all AKIS actors in the innovation process, notwithstanding the challenging administrative load. Victor hoped that there would be a greater recognition of the time required to develop activities in this way. Aniko mentioned the need for policy makers to be patient with EIP and AKIS as these are new approaches, in order to ensure they are implemented successfully and create a stable environment for AKIS processes to become embedded.

### Participants questions

**How do you convince practitioners to move to an AKIS approach?** Tom felt that if the mechanisms were in place practitioners would respond positively to them through both monetary reward and also through the benefits of working in this more collaborative way (peer-to-peer effects are always top). It was mentioned that it is important to get the balance right between all the different actors to ensure it becomes a mutually beneficial approach, with the various actors truly respecting each other.



## 4. Starting the AKIS community

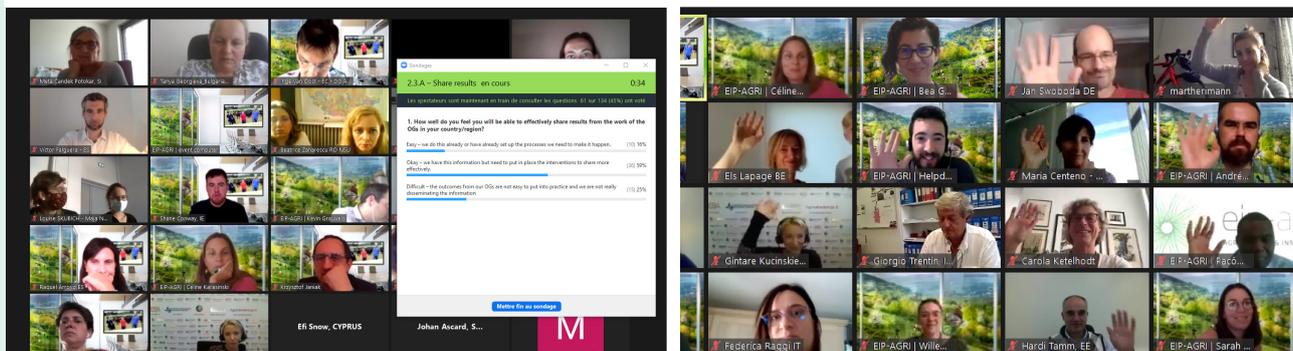
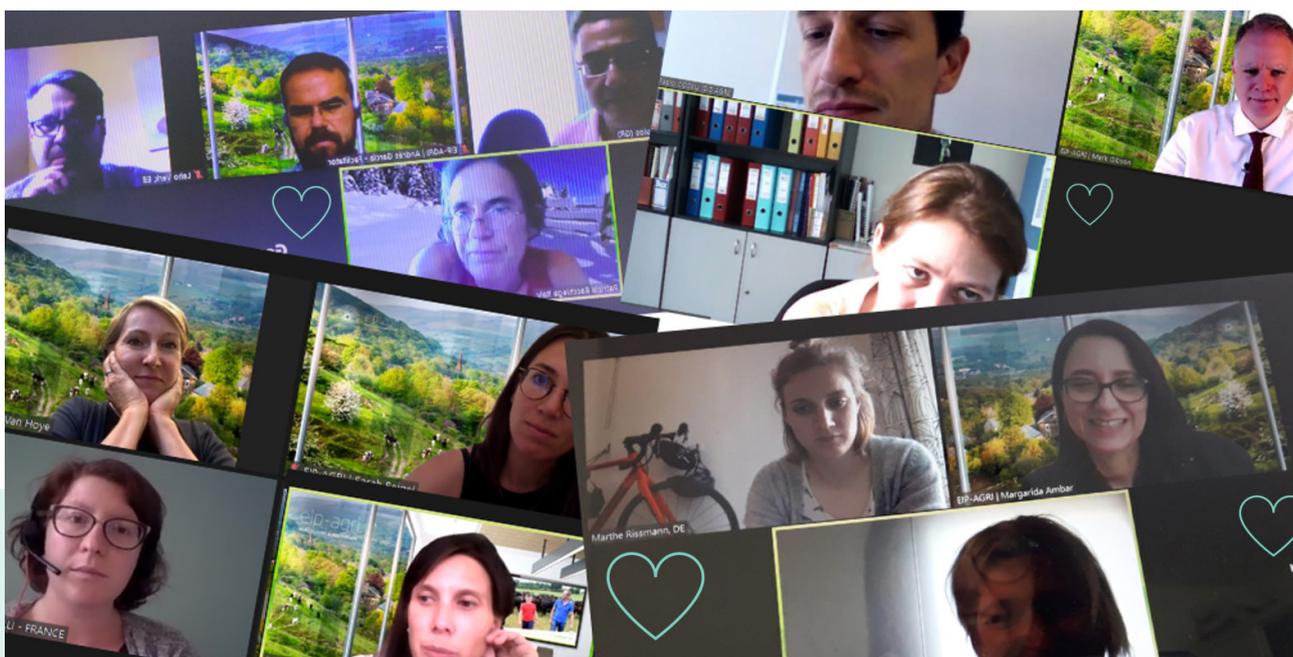


Participants, hosted by **Sarah Watson from EIP-AGRI Service Point** ended the day getting to know each other, practising with the different tools that would be used throughout the event and sharing messages from the wider AKIS community.

There was learning through camera use, raising hands and sharing experiences through polls. Questions at this point were 'Have you participated in an online seminar before?', 'How well do you feel you understand AKIS right now?' and 'How have you coped in lockdown?' – 89% of respondents indicated that they know a little about AKIS and hope they can learn more over the next two days.

Speed dating activities which randomly matched a small group of participants to have a speedy 'getting-to-know-you' conversation continued throughout the event, and participants also made excellent use of the chat function to debate the presentations and ask questions to the speakers.

The session ended with participants toasting in their own language to a glass of their favourite local beverage.



## 5. Understanding AKIS' essential elements



Day two of the AKIS Seminar was officially opened by **Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development**. He referred to the challenge of producing more with less - such as in the Green Deal - and said that the national policies need to be further developed to support this. Innovation and knowledge are key enablers for change and will definitely have a major role to play. He felt that despite the many advances achieved during the last years thanks to the EIP-AGRI, the overall linkage between researchers, farmers, advisers and business should further be strengthened in many countries. AKIS needs to be efficient and interactive to become a successful vehicle for the exchange of knowledge amongst actors and provide support to the 9 new CAP objectives.

Mr. Wojciechowski expected significant progress over the next seven years through the national and regional AKIS systems, which will improve the linkages amongst all who produce and use knowledge and information. With the EIP Operational Group projects, a strong foundation has already been laid for this approach. Many actors are already very motivated to use it, with advisors spreading this new way of working and encouraging more farmers to use it. He recognised that at national level key challenges remain in encouraging AKIS actors to collaborate but hoped that the many examples presented at the seminar would provide inspiration for the much needed collaboration.

### Inspirational Speakers

#### The Polish AKIS

Both **Minister Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski and Undersecretary of State Ryszard Kamiński, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Poland**, addressed participants providing an insight into the development of AKIS in Poland. Minister Ardanowski outlined the nature of the agricultural sector in his country that has both small-scale and very large farms. Poland already relies on the advisory services and the interaction with agricultural colleges and research institutes. However, he believes that connections need to be further improved to ensure all actors recognise their own responsibility in the AKIS. In Poland agriculture has an important role in the future and improving the AKIS demands a change of priorities, to satisfy societal needs as well.



Mr Kamiński explained AKIS in Poland as a system of cooperation between people, institutions and companies which should be built step by step with farmers in the middle. A range of supporting activities are then created around them, providing connections with different actors and so creating greater communication and support. An AKIS system is already present in Poland so the key question is how to make this system work as effectively as possible? There are many well respected and trusted advisors working with farmers: in Poland, agriculture advisory services are provided by public advisory centres (reaching a total of about 3.000 agricultural advisors), agricultural chambers and private advisory companies, in a quite well-balanced system between public and private services. A wide range of training and advisory services for farmers is offered by experienced public advisory staff, but many of these are ageing so new people must be attracted into these services and trained. There is a growing network of contacts and cooperation amongst AKIS partners, including more involvement by researchers and advisors.

The Polish AKIS can however still be improved by upskilling staff involved in knowledge exchange and co-innovation, ensuring they are available to farmers, and strengthening cooperation between AKIS partners. ICT platforms and tools have emerged, but their use needs to increase to take full advantage of the potential of digitalisation for the exchange of knowledge and innovation. Many actors are engaging in the development of the Polish AKIS, providing useful insight into what is needed to drive this new system forward.

Mr Kamiński then highlighted the key achievements through the current policy period, namely in respect to the 35 OGs which are actively working. Several further OG calls are planned, training for advisors and for farmers, and more support to advising farmers because advice needs to be delivered according to the specific needs of the individual farm and also cover newly emerging needs, such as short supply chain approaches as a form of diversification.

He detailed how the new Polish CAP strategic plan will build upon this by:

- Fostering cooperation, not only with OGs but also having EIP innovative projects as a means to start new forms of advice supporting the whole AKIS concept;
  - Building more comprehensive advisory programmes
  - Providing holistic training and information for farmers and rural residents which addresses specific (new) needs;
  - Improving the skills of agricultural advisors, teachers and researchers, adapted to current challenges and technologies;
  - Creating a CAP network which supports the AKIS system through networking and collaboration.
- Recording (Jan Ardanowski): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5cFqrY8BSI>
  - Presentation (Ryszard Kamiński): [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_ryszard\\_kaminski.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_ryszard_kaminski.pdf)
  - Recording (Ryszard Kamiński): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfdAqahL4uM>

## Participants questions

**What's the specific role of Agriculture chambers in the Polish AKIS?** Mr. Kamiński explained that their key role was representing farmers views at different levels, but they also run small advisory services, farmer training, and many provide more specialised services such as legal support. Public advisors work very closely with the agricultural chambers and this support is provided for free.

## EIP-AGRI Operational Group 'ECOPIONET'

EIP-AGRI OGs can play an active role in supporting the development of local AKIS. To showcase this, a concrete project was presented at the seminar, where a knowledge exchange system was put together in the form of an Operational Group to foster the transition to organic farming in a Spanish region where climate change is creating major challenges to the agricultural sector. This group was nominated for the Rural Inspiration Awards 2020.



**Raquel Arroyo, from the Institute of Natural Resources and Agrobiology of Salamanca (IRNASA)** in Spain shared her experiences with the EIP-AGRI OG Ecopionet which is working on enhancing knowledge exchange to build an organic farming sector in the region thanks to networking. Rainfed farming in the cereal producing area of Spain has many challenges to overcome including very low efficiency rates. Organic farming offers an opportunity to become more resilient and increase incomes. In addition, there was a lack of cooperation amongst producers, which was also reducing profitability. The existing knowledge flow systems were still linear and therefore not very effective. Local technicians/advisors had no competence on organic farming.

The Ecopionet project involved a wide range of partners, each with a clearly defined role to encourage a switch to organic farming and to improve collaboration and knowledge flows. The solution tested was a knowledge exchange system based on networking ("Innovative and Transcendent Knowledge Exchange Methodology" - ITKEM). The OG included applied researchers and other experts who had the capacity to share their knowledge. It also had technical advisors in, many of whom were originally sceptical about organic farming but changed their mind after their involvement in the OG and the training received, and in particular by watching the good outcomes from the project. Well-experienced organic farmers acted as tutors for the 'pioneers', farmers wanting to convert to organic production during the project with the support of the other OG members. The pioneers were receiving personal technical advice and training in productive, administrative and commercial aspects. All OG partners created a knowledge exchange network using a digital platform. The project also involved the so-called 'neighbours', farmers who were sceptical in adopting organic farming. Ecopionet hosted several field and technical workshops for these farmers who were not convinced about organic farming and created demonstration fields in the farms of the 'pioneers'.

The results of the project include:

- Development of effective peer-to-peer learning leading to more efficient and faster knowledge exchange;
  - An increase in farmer income of 20-30%;
  - The development of a new producer organisation;
  - Improvements in advisory services; and,
  - Better projects developed at the research centres as they were enabled to tap in to the farmers' network to better understand their needs.
- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_raquel\\_arroyo.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_raquel_arroyo.pdf)
  - Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6YYNPfSVZI>

## Participants questions:

**What hasn't gone so well in ECOPIONET?** What would you do differently now? Raquel said the group would have liked more time and greater resources as they had to leave some farmers out, despite their interest. They also had to be very flexible; initially they focused on herbaceous crops but then had requests from livestock farmers, so had to enlarge the scope of the project. Finally, they created a dedicated chat for all the actors but at the end moved this to WhatsApp which was much more widely used.

## The elements of a well-functioning AKIS



**Inge Van Oost, DG AGRI**, was invited to share her insights and understanding as one of the principal architects of the AKIS policy. Inge started by clarifying AKIS, defined as “the **organisation and interaction** of actors, organisations and institutions who **use** and **produce** knowledge and innovation for agriculture and interrelated fields”(f Art 3k). The aim of a good AKIS is to create an innovation ecosystem by enhancing knowledge flows between all AKIS actors, including also strengthening links between research and practice. She highlighted that through its definition AKIS is not limited to supporting agriculture but also rural areas, value chains, environment, climate, biodiversity, society, consumers, etc. In this presentation she explained the rationale and basis of the

AKIS policy, including the obligations embedded in the post 2020 CAP related to the AKIS strategic organisation approach and the AKIS components.

There is a high diversity of AKIS systems across the EU, some requiring far more development than others. The new, developing models are based on interactive innovation that has so far been successfully delivered through EIP-AGRI with its OGs and network, Horizon 2020 and the synergies created between them. However, as agriculture becomes more and more knowledge intensive, collaborative networks for knowledge and innovation will be essential to its success and AKIS will play a key role in essential transitions and the survival of a number of farms.

The CAP Strategic Plans will contain details on **how advisors, researchers and CAP networks will work together** within the framework of AKIS and how advice and innovation support are provided. Inge talked participants through the various articles involved and how they fit together, as well as showing an example of an AKIS overview and SWOT analysis. Then she focused on the key elements required within an effective AKIS:

- All advisors should be integrated into the AKIS. They should be impartial, take a holistic advisory approach on the farm, have up to date knowledge, and be able to support the development of OGs. They should tailor their advice to the farm and the farmer’s context;
- Advisors’ should trained, on innovation methods as well as on a number of technical and sustainability themes. Investments should be made in tools and networks which support their work (for instance a back office, an innovation support service). They must also have access to regular knowledge exchange opportunities and advisory networks to ensure their qualification;
- CAP networks should collect and share knowledge from innovation projects and networks, connect the related actors together and disseminate project outcomes and materials to all AKIS actors;
- Knowledge reservoirs are being created at EU level as a complimentary resource, but also have a role to play at national or regional level; and,
- Researchers should be incentivised to create positive impact for practice, beyond academia only. Research policy and research institutes should make this possible

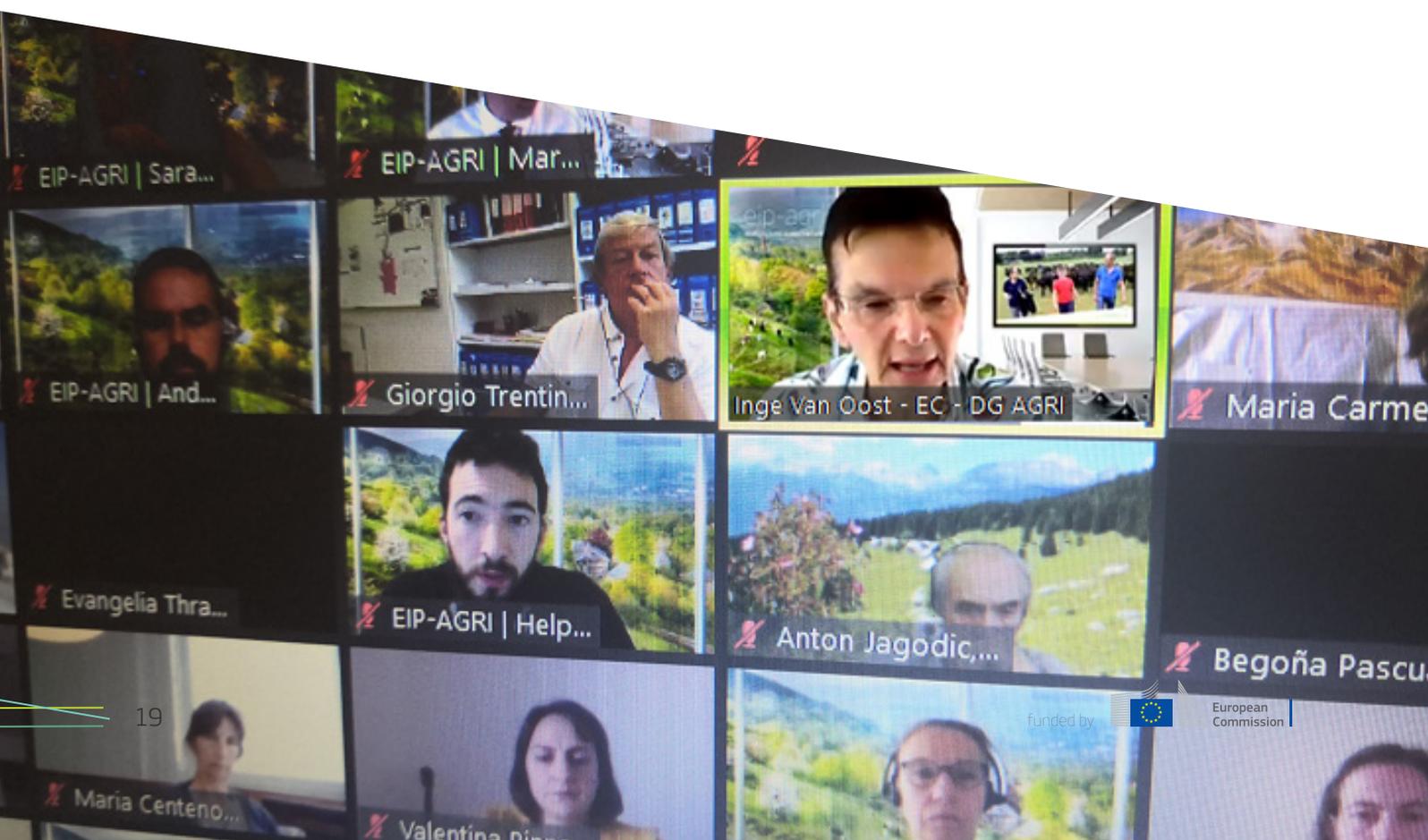
Inge then explored a range of examples of the type of actions that could deliver the key elements of AKIS. She discussed the importance of incentivising interactive innovation projects including enabling cross-border OGs and involving young people and women. Supporting peer-to-peer learning on the interactive approach is essential, as well for farmers as for advisors and researchers. Finally, Inge focused on how to support the digital transition in agriculture including how to make all knowledge accessible and the tools that could support this.

## Participants questions

**Do you need a lead coordinating body to achieve a good AKIS?** Member States will need to nominate an AKIS coordination body as the contact point for all AKIS related issues towards the European Commission and within the Member State. It should cooperate with AKIS multi-actor platforms across the geographical levels in the country, following day-to-day AKIS interventions and actions, asking for modification of the CAP plan if needed, while continuously supporting interaction and implementation of the AKIS strategic plan. The body should keep an overview on the progress foreseen in the CAP plan.

**How do you support Members States with weak AKISs to meet the new CAP strategic objectives and build a strong AKIS system?** Inge considered that time and taking smaller steps in the right direction would help. Networking with countries with a stronger AKIS, exchanging good practices, and regular networking will also support this. A dedicated Horizon Europe project has been planned to make this happen. Regular contacts with the SWG SCAR AKIS working group could also be helpful.

**In Spain we are piloting a “transfer payment” to reward researchers, professors and teachers which has been well received. Are there other examples in other countries of mechanisms like this to foster involvement?** Inge highlighted IRTA, an example being presented later at the seminar where researchers are compensated for working with farmers. Research policy and institutes should allow or even oblige researchers to spend time to interact, and make use of opportunities to connect with farmers and advisors, or other AKIS actors. For instance, Teagasc – the Irish advisory organisation - connects researchers with practitioners very well since many years. The key issue is that knowledge flows are difficult to measure so some metrics would be useful to reward researchers for making this happen.



## 6. Integrating advisors in the AKIS to foster the sharing of knowledge and innovation for agriculture and rural areas

Having spent the morning exploring the essential elements of AKIS, participants were welcomed to the afternoon session focused on advisors and how they can best be integrated into AKIS, and the role of CAP networks. As with all the focused sessions, **Inge Van Oost of DG AGRI** provided an overview of each topic area, followed by inspirational speakers with practical knowledge and various inputs from the participants themselves.

### Introductory presentation: Farm advisory services organised within the AKIS and CAP

Inge Van Oost explained how the integration of advisors was an essential part of the AKIS. This requires a different way of working both with them, between them and with other AKIS actors. She signposted participants to Art.72 for funding advice and Art. 13 explaining their role and obligations. Inge reiterated that all advisors need to be integrated within the AKIS in an inclusive way, and be able to provide advice on economic, environmental and social dimensions. This should be possible thanks to having up-to-date technological and scientific information through the AKIS. Advisors must be impartial and able to provide innovation support, particularly to prepare and help implement EIP OGs. This will at the same time be a way to upskill the advisors and to promote the project outcomes to the advisors' clients.

She recognised that this change could be challenging for many. The switch from a linear knowledge transfer model to a knowledge mobilisation approach that encourages innovation, would require a listening attitude, facilitation enablement, and for many advisors to learn new skills and different ways of working. This upskilling needed to be made attractive and qualitative to be successful, delivered alongside new tools that would support advisors to work effectively in the field.

It was also be an exciting time for advisors, with their role becoming broader and deeper, with freedom to explore new advisory themes, and networks for learning both within country and across border. Inge highlighted the two key instruments for achieving this, an Innovation Hub providing innovation focused support through advisors, and a Knowledge Hub providing specialist back office support for them. She clarified the role of advisors throughout the lifetime of an innovative project from capturing bottom up ideas at a grassroots level through to disseminating the knowledge gained through the project.

#### Participants questions

**How do we reduce the risk of forgetting cross-border cooperation when developing the national AKIS? How do we up-scale and connect AKIS beyond our borders?** Thematic networks can help, for example EU projects under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe are a useful instruments to work across countries. The future EU knowledge reservoir will also include national data and results, but the main thing is to plan and consider specific interventions within the national CAP strategic plans including such cross-border cooperation. There is a great example from Austria, currently providing a specific fund for advisors to travel abroad to learn and see what other countries are doing. The funding needed for this is not that much and the impact can be very high.

## Participants questions

**What about national funds for training advisers and how do we include professional advisers in all the different categories – public, private, big, small?** Training is already funded in the current CAP; but not enough used and with too limited funding. Now we want to support this more through the individual strategic CAP Plans which national authorities are preparing. So now is the time to talk with politicians. Engaging advisors needs time but first you need to know who and where the advisers are. Currently one project (I2Connect) is making an inventory of advisers as many are not known. All advisers should be invited to join the national inventory, present themselves on the website and profit from the benefits. At a national or regional level you could launch a call for advisers to come forward, but make sure that what you are offering is attractive (e.g. when organising a course or meeting). It should meet their expectations and compensate their efforts (they are losing time to make money through advising). To connect them at EU level Horizon projects may help but clear efforts are also required at country level. Those responsible for well-functioning AKISs should be able to find the advisers and organise events and activities suitable and attractive for them, and to connect them all.

## Inspirational Speakers

### Integration of Slovenian advisers in the AKIS

Different types of advisers can play a relevant role in AKISs and so the seminar brought the experience of public advisers from Slovenia, an NGO from Romania that is providing regional advisory service aiming with a specific purpose (to protect the High Nature Value Farmed Landscapes of Transylvania) and another NGO that is providing a broad range of services.



The first inspirational speaker in the afternoon was **Anton Jagodic from the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia** who provided an overview of their approach to integrate advisers. In Slovenia the Agricultural Advisory Service is a public body under the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, whose 315 advisers cover the whole of the country offering a diverse range of advice to all types of farmers and all farmers' needs, broken down into field advisers, specialist advisers and coordination advisers working together. These advisers provide several different types of tasks, including technical advice, assisting in the preparation of farm plans, supporting farmers' organisations, technological and methodological training of advisers (in connection with researchers) and AKIS stakeholders' connection among others. Their funding is 80% public.

Knowledge flows are currently working well within the traditional agricultural sectors as well as in respect to OGs, but need to be strengthened with greater inclusion from research and training organisations, agrifood industries and the media. Advisers are compulsory included in all EIP-AGRI OGs, while specialist rural development advisers support farms to integrate their projects within their local communities and are involved in the processes of preparation and implementation of the Rural Development Plan, help to promote measures and share all relevant information in real time. Advisers also have a back-office function, where they link the different public services and bring together AKIS actors by managing expert groups, they organise advisor training and they also prepare educational materials for producers, instructions, forms, data, protocols, educational materials, etc. The way the Slovenian advisers are organised within the AKIS is a very good example to many countries.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_anton\\_jagodic.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_anton_jagodic.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTBwA4PPXbk>

## Experience from an NGO delivering advice and much more



Advice is provided through many different types of bodies and organisations, as shown by **Razvan Popa from the ADEPT Foundation**, a small NGO based in Romania. ADEPT is focused on protecting Transylvania's unique High Nature Value Farmed Landscapes and their small-scale farming communities, through an integrated approach, including advisory services. They work in this integrated way to provide long term monitoring and design of measures to conserve biodiversity, support farmers to access grants to help maintain these special areas, provide marketing support and adding value advice. They link farmers to diversified markets such as agro-tourism, embed these aspects in local communities and use these outputs to influence policy.

ADEPT is keenly aware of the importance of the relationship between advisors and farmers, and the need to keep the balance required in any integrated approach between the economic, environmental and social needs. They hope to connect all advisors, private or public, in small or big structures, for the benefit of all. They understand that, to achieve ADEPT's aims, they need to connect and include all advisors in their AKIS since advisors are the ones who farmers most trust.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_razvan\\_popa.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_razvan_popa.pdf)
- Recording: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tz9T5b\\_4st8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tz9T5b_4st8)

## Participants questions

**How and in what way do you think that a small size farm coming from a marginal agricultural area can be integrated into the AKIS?** Ultimately it is the responsibility of local advisors. Small farmers do not come to ask for help, so many rely on broader diversified activities at a local level, including social activities, to get them to know and ask for help.



## Develop innovation support services including innovation brokering, facilitation and innovation tools and much more

**Marleen Gysen, from the Innovatiesteunpunt in Belgium-Flanders**, shared some practical tools that this NGO has been using as part of their advisory service. Carrying on from Wim Ceuleman's presentation the previous day, Marleen outlined the focus of Innovatiesteunpunt. The service designs and facilitates **multi-actor co-creation** by bringing people from different backgrounds together to work on innovative solutions. Marleen illustrated some of the initiatives they regularly bring up. Through their '**Academy on Tour**' they take farmers on bus tours to look for new concepts, pitch ideas to experts and learn from each other. Their '**Farmers with Power!**' tool is a step-by-step plan to support farmers to become more energy efficient on farm. Finally, Marleen shared the '**Innovation Prize**' contest that runs every 2 years through an open call for farmers to submit their innovative ideas, in a bottom-up approach. There are cash prizes and free advice provided by Innovatiesteunpunt for the winners. To foster further innovation, all the participants ideas are shared through the main weekly agricultural magazine. This magazine covers every week innovation stories since more than 20 years, which has the effect that in the end, farmers think they are not normal if they do not innovate.



- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_marleen\\_gysen.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_marleen_gysen.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Btua8oNeLo>

## Summary of participants inputs



Prior to the seminar, participants had been invited to share their thoughts, experiences and questions on several of the topics being discussed in the seminar. **Mark Gibson from the EIP-AGRI Service Point** provided a brief overview of the inputs received on 'Integrating all advisors into AKIS to support farmer decision-making':

- **How to identify impartial advisers?** There's a need to define what we mean by 'impartial adviser' - e.g., private (for-profit) advisers must be accepted as "impartial" only if their activity does not include inputs selling. There is (a need for) a register of advisors that are trained to a minimum standard. It will be more efficient to ask advisers to identify themselves. Criteria of what it means to be an 'impartial adviser' could be developed, or simply a declaration on honour, possibly combined with a sanction in case of non-compliance. An online rating system to rate the quality of service provided by the advisor could be an option (booking.com approach). There is a need to deliver coherent messages going on to farms from all parties visiting farms;
- **How to attract and integrate advisers in the AKIS system?** There needs to be a good working environment, clear purposes and aims, career opportunities, appropriate remuneration, recognition of the advisory roles, etc. The feeling of belonging to a group or a network is important and supportive, and also skill building (in opposition to the current fragmentation of advisory services). An AKIS coordinator/

national service point should be responsible for explaining a very clear message of AKIS system benefits, rules (advisors), financial support and what concrete additional value can be expected. Provide training for them and have them recognize the benefits of 'belonging to that club'. A possibility is that the NRN organises camps and info days for all advisors where researchers, innovation brokers, advisors share their activities. Another tool could be to publish a regular newsletter for advisors and other organisations, and a common website with interesting updating on novelties and even changes in regulation. The need to provide further support to advisory activities should be taken into consideration, such as sufficient budget for meetings (traveling and time). Interaction with OGs and other national networks should be fostered;

- **How to create transparency for farmers on the available advisors and their competencies, specialist knowledge and training completed?** Creating a searchable database of advisors showing lifelong learning credits, their areas of expertise and rating of advisers by farmer clients (use of block-chain). There may also be an EU-wide voluntary certification using similar principles to CECRA. Farmer buy-in is crucial to this.
- **How to empower farmers to choose the advisor of his/her choice which can help them best? How to articulate and promote the benefits of using an adviser?** Provide a 'neutral' party that can help farmers with choosing the right advisor. Advisers have to be visible, leading for instance national thematic networks collecting practice knowledge, demonstration activities or being partner in OGs. Promote the benefits of advisory already during agricultural college and have internships of the students in real life advisory context (e.g.the "Master of Innovation" study of UCD in cooperation with Teagasc). Obtaining some subsidies (for innovative investments, for agri-environmental-climate measures, etc) can be linked to the contracting of an advisor which accompanies the farmer into the new aspects and helps his confidence. In such cases, advisory fees would be included into the plan presented for obtaining the subsidy;
- **How can advisers act as innovation support services and, in particular, work with OGs?** Make 'innovation support' a specifically recognized discipline of advice, preferably even an organisationally separate branch of the advisory service with their own set of requirements concerning training and experience. Innovation support skills can be trained but funding is needed. Experience from innovation support services tells us that there is the need to have expertise in both the subject matter and in brokerage/facilitation;
- **With regard to preparing CAP plans, what kind of supporting interventions are most useful to integrate existing and new advisors into the AKIS?** The cost of advisory services should not be a financial burden for farmers. Consider training budget to help existing and new advisors to stay up to date on hot topics. Set up a range of well-defined set of enabling arrangements: inclusion of advisors in stakeholders' consultation in CAP planning, assessment of the specific needs for advice from farmers, identification/definition of the relevant training courses to increase the skills and competencies of the advisers.

When asked whether participants already had **concrete plans on how to make the transition from FAS to AKIS**, responses included:

- Preparation of a totally new setup of the advisory system within AKIS, with new registration system, new instruments such as using vouchers, implementing learning networks, better networking between AKIS members and the promotion of the AKIS system;
- Creation of incentives to support advisors working together and the measurement of the effort made by researchers and technology transfer specialists to support field advisors with information;
- Increase of resources for training advisers.
- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_mark\\_gibson\\_doc\\_b.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_mark_gibson_doc_b.pdf)

## 7. Preparing the role of CAP networks in strengthening the AKIS by promoting innovation and knowledge flows within the country and across the EU

The last session of the day was once again opened by Inge Van Oost providing an overview of the role of CAP networks in strengthening AKIS and introducing the inspirational speakers providing motivation from their own experiences.

### Introductory presentation: Preparing the role of CAP networks

Inge made an overview on how CAP networks help strengthen innovation and knowledge exchange on all 9 CAP objectives by using all the existing resources they have through the OGs, Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects, the EIP website and new knowledge reservoirs. Connecting these groups and information provides a wealth of material for local AKIS actors. This can be utilised for training, peer-to-peer events, demonstrations, websites and other dissemination activities. Inge's advice was to start as quick as possible. CAP networks should make the most of the already existing material and start building connections between the different actors. The synergies between OGs and Horizon groups need to be intensified to get the most out of innovation networking. Members States should be more proactive, promoting OGs and their work, exploring Horizon topics with them and inviting them to collaborate around specific topics.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_inge\\_van\\_oost\\_11e\\_role\\_of\\_mss\\_cap\\_networks.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_inge_van_oost_11e_role_of_mss_cap_networks.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-MOmD3bFKg>

#### Participants questions:

**Could we explore the relationship between FAS and AKIS in a little more detail? Will funding be shifted? Will they be integrated?** In the current CAP it was mandatory to have a separate Farm Advisory Service where each member state was free to organise it. This meant mostly using the existing central advising services, research stations or even just a question and answer website or a telephone helpdesk; added value was often missing. In the future this obligation is deleted, but there is an obligation to have an AKIS which supports all advisors to become more competent and more funding to do so. Each member state may choose how to organise it, with support from the Commission, and taking into account the current context in each Member State. It will include new types of support, for example on digitalization. There is an obligation to train advisors but again no fixed criteria so that it can be developed to meet individual Member States' needs.

**Are there further details on the social dimensions that advisors integrated within AKIS have to cover? Do you see any links with the CLLD actions?** The LEADER groups are definitely part of the AKIS, with examples of them acting as brokers and helping implement actions at a local level. OGs are also a big success, seem to be even more to be utilised and administrative arrangements further improved. The obligation for AKIS and advisors to include social dimensions makes both groups as well as advisors equally important in this regard, but does not exclude each other nor other actors.

## Inspirational Speakers

Two speakers were invited to share their experience with the work that network support units of the National EIP-AGRI Network / National Rural Network have been doing to foster knowledge exchange and innovation.

### The Polish advisory service and EIP network



The Polish advisory system and its EIP networking approach were shared by **Krzysztof Janiak from the Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów**. Even if advice in Poland is provided by different types of organizations - public services, farmers' associations and private sectors companies, the public agricultural advisory service is playing a dominating role. The public service is national with 16 regional branches covering the whole of the country and they also coordinate the EIP-AGRI network. They offer a wide range of tools and services that facilitate networking activities and the exchange information, through online and face to face activities and tools. The benefits of creating the Polish EIP-AGRI network based on the agricultural advisory public services is that they can provide the network with a bigger organisational potential and nationwide structure, experienced and impartial staff, and contacts with relevant stakeholders. The network is delivered through innovation brokers and network coordinators at national level and in each region. Innovation brokers are playing a relatively recent role in advisory services, promoting and supporting the creation of interactive innovation processes which support partnership building, capturing new ideas, bringing actors together and facilitating the process of the preparation of projects, and networking and disseminating knowledge.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_krzysztof\\_janiak.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_krzysztof_janiak.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkoQTH9Q5J8>

#### Participants questions:

**How are the 16 regional agricultural advisory centres and agricultural advisory centre connected? Do they meet several times a year? Are they also involved in the design of the next CAP?** Advisors do not attend all meetings as there are just too many. Meetings are organised between representatives on a regular basis, and thematic meetings for exchange of information, at policy making level. The central advisory centre sees every advisor at least once per year to provide training. This approach works in theory but in reality, there is room for improvement to make the trainings more professional.

### Networking meetings with Operational Groups

#### Erika Frankhuizen, from the National Rural Network Unit in the Netherlands

was then invited to present her experience of bringing OGs together to share knowledge. The power of the advisory service comes from the diversity of those involved. There are over 300 OG projects in the Netherlands, all uploaded in an innovation database which is openly available. This database will also include other types of innovation projects in the future. The high number of OG projects creates a huge amount of information, which can then become fragmented and difficult to access, thus the relevance of networking and a database. The NRN delivers a range of activities and tools to support innovation actors to access the knowledge they need, such as online



thematic publications, network meetings (many of which are thematic and aim at connecting people and projects, particularly to connect OGs across borders), social media and the innovation database. They also hold follow-up activities after meetings to identify bottlenecks and connect farmers with advisors, researchers and policy makers. Erika's key message was on lessons learned: to understand the needs of the network, do it together and keep it simple.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_erika\\_frankhuizen.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_erika_frankhuizen.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO9o0EMPhOk>

## Summary of participants inputs

**Mark Gibson, EIP-AGRI Service Point** once again provided an overview of the online inputs provided by participants prior to the event, exploring 'How can CAP networks boost knowledge exchange and connect actors?':

- **CAP networks creating an innovation enabling environment:** Many networks which have developed through projects originated directly from farmers' and advisors' needs, so should be supported once the project has ended. The CAP network should include a focus on innovation, for instance by supporting AKIS governance, overall collection, translation and exchange of knowledge, strengthening innovation and dissemination of the results of it;
- **CAP networks supporting knowledge flows across borders:** Language can be a barrier, so CAP Networks should promote the use and test of automatic translation technologies even if they are not perfect. Human interaction and discussion is an important vehicle to improve understanding and motivate people to use knowledge. Connect existing networks. The CAP network should be playing a key role in connecting existing knowledge and innovation networks, organising study trips abroad, supporting new thematic networks, disseminating research and innovation outcomes and reinforcing OG actions in all EU Member States. Thematic events organized by the EIP-AGRI, including national EIP networking as already being done in several Member States such as Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, etc, are very useful.
- **CAP networks supporting farmers and advisors to engage with knowledge and innovation:** Public researchers, farmers and advisors should be enabled to work together for testing and other ways to validate available knowledge. Establish innovation subgroups at national level, to the example of the EU Subgroup on Innovation, setting out the to do's for the national CAP networks. CAP networks should focus on dissemination and on creating better connections between OGs and H2020 / Horizon Europe projects, and on creating stronger connections with Horizon National Contact Points. Organise field trips in other Member States. Working on joint research projects (farm associations/ advisors and researchers). Introduce criteria linked with innovation engagement when selecting the projects financed by RDPs.
- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_mark\\_gibson\\_doc\\_c.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200917_eip-agri_sem_akis_mark_gibson_doc_c.pdf)

## 8. Inspiration for AKIS planners from existing tools and initiatives

The morning session of day three was focused on exploring existing tools and initiatives that can effectively support a well-functioning AKIS and that planners may find relevant to consider for the development of their specific AKISs.

### Introduction to the topic

Inge Van Oost from DG AGRI provided an overview on the session, encouraging participants to sit back, relax and feel inspired by the examples the presenters were going to share.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_inge\\_van\\_oost\\_11g\\_akis\\_strategic\\_plans\\_and\\_akis\\_interventions.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_inge_van_oost_11g_akis_strategic_plans_and_akis_interventions.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNywSWNYWQ>

### Getting inspiration from existing tools and initiatives Inspirational speakers

#### Establish knowledge centres and digital knowledge reservoirs

**Pieter Spanoghe, from Ghent University**, began the inspirational presentations by sharing the experience gained with the EURAKNOS and EUREKA projects and the efforts to create an EU wide digital knowledge reservoir. One of the biggest challenges with European projects is to translate data into practical knowledge that directly benefits end-users. It is important to collect and co-create knowledge with targeted users, experts and facilitators to develop practical outputs and solutions with a clear focus on the problem.



A knowledge reservoir collects information of high relevance to the main user groups (i.e. farmers, foresters, and advisors, educators) and makes it easy and understandable to access, making use of technologies that allow to search for data that is relevant to the end-user. The use of local language is important and information is more accessible in video form. The first prototype of the platform is currently being tested, the next step is to build a community of practice to enhance the impact of this work and to develop ways of utilising this knowledge through peer-to-peer learning and training events. Pieter finished his speech with the message that if we want to be sustainable on the long term, an EU wide open source knowledge reservoir needs to be used, fed and promoted by all.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_piet\\_er\\_spanoghe.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_piet_er_spanoghe.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9VlwGprzKk>

#### Participants questions

**Do you already have a beta version of the digital platform? How can the knowledge reservoir be supported in the long term?** The beta version should be ready early next year, so we can start implementing it and helping projects to start up their website, using the interoperable standards and IT language that can also fit into the EIP-AGRI website or national knowledge reservoirs. To make EUREKA sustainable we need everyone to input into it, use it and – importantly - provide feedback so we can continuously improve it. In this way, the costs for each Member State to build a knowledge reservoir themselves, could be greatly reduced.



The theme of knowledge reservoirs was continued by **Gintarė Kučinskienė from the Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service** who is developing TITRIS, a national digital knowledge reservoir which is linked to various thematic networks, national OGs, and other multi-actor initiatives in Lithuania. AKIS and the new CAP has been the catalyst for recognising the need to have digital tools that are easy to use to support innovation. Gintarė highlighted that, to assist innovation support services, we need to have digital tools that are easy to use, and that provide knowledge that is understandable and ready to implement in practice. TITRIS has been developed to collect all

the non-commercial scientific research and examples of practical innovation that can support sustainable agricultural production. It is free to use, available in Lithuanian and English, and there is no requirement to register to use it. The system is searchable using keywords and short abstracts and enables users to access a range of information from technical documents to case study videos. As the system is brand new, there are still some challenges to overcome, such as the amount of administrative time required to ensure the quality of the information uploaded and the challenge of engaging researchers to provide information. Work is also required to ensure the system continues to develop in line with the needs of end-users, whilst on-going funding remains a challenge in the long term.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_gintare\\_kucinskiene.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_gintare_kucinskiene.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6JMN92Lc0k>

## Organise farmer to farmer exchanges including on farm demonstrations and experimentation

The focus of the morning session then moved to organising exchanges within the farming sector with **Tom Kelly from Teagasc** sharing his experience of managing large-scale peer-to-peer exchange programmes. He explained that organising peer-to-peer learning in Ireland has four critical components: experienced facilitators; credible and detailed farm data; research, media and industry back-up; and branding. Tom then emphasised the need for support by **experienced facilitators** who can guide the process, encourage and involve participants and develop a sense of ownership of the group. It is also vital to ensure **that if farm data and information** are being used, that



they are detailed enough, current, verifiable and comparable. **Research, media and industry backup** is needed for consistency and complementarity of information and to support a clear message getting to farmers. Mainly in this way they will be influenced to really change their practices. The message should be clear, consistent and repeated throughout the wider AKIS. **Branding of initiatives** is also important as it differentiates them, creating a profile for the activity and for the farmers and all actors involved.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_tom\\_kelly.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_tom_kelly.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9ycYsCiKX0>

## Participants questions

**Can you elaborate on the importance of branding?** Branding of a programme is really important for the participants, it gives them a collective identity, it also gives the advisors visibility on a large scale programme.

**You mentioned the role of industry in demo activities. Could you add more details about this backup? How have you integrated this kind of actor without losing impartiality in advisory services?** One has to be clear with the industry not to use the platform or the programme to promote their commercial products. It is important to discuss and agree this at national level with all advisors to ensure coherent messaging.

## Reward researchers beyond academic purposes



Participants now looked at the opportunities to reward researchers for their involvement in farming sector research, firstly from **Mugurel Jitea of the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine** in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Almost all universities and research institutes across Europe are financed based on scientific performance, generally through simple counting the number of publications and journal entries published. This does not encourage researchers to respond to individual farmers' needs. Mugurel then presented three cases where researchers can find different sorts of rewards when working closer to practice. The AgroTransilvania Cluster is a public

private partnership established to respond to the increased demand for local agri-food products, carrying out research linked to the needs of its members. Funded nationally and through the EU, this structure provides monetary and non-monetary incentives for researchers, such as societal recognition and personal satisfaction, curriculum update, practical training for students and the opportunity to lobby for alternative public policies for farmers. A second example comes from a H2020 Thematic Network (TN) named HNV-Link (<http://www.hnmlink.eu/>) which is dealing with innovations that support farming systems in areas of exceptional natural values through a multi-actor approach. In the case of this TN, the most valuable reward comes from the preservation of local identity and traditions. Third very interesting case is the AgroConsulting Club, a volunteer-based agro consulting group giving agricultural students an opportunity to connect with local farmers. Each year selected students develop a professional project supported by practitioners. In this case, the reward of becoming involved in it comes from the opportunities for curriculum update and to develop extra-curricular activities to become future innovation catalysts.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_mugur\\_jitea.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_mugur_jitea.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx7lVaMrM0Q>



Another example of engaging with and rewarding researchers was presented by **Agustí Fonts from the Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology (IRTA)** in Spain.

IRTA delivers an average of 800 activities focused on practice knowledge transfer to farmers and advisors, attended by 40.000 people a year. They believe that things that cannot be measured cannot be managed. Thus, based on the three pillars of IRTA's mission, they have developed an index and IT tool which measures and rewards staff for the effort in knowledge transfer/exchange activities, where they link technological advances to final beneficiaries (farmers and advisors). The metrics take in consideration:

(1) seminars and workshops, meetings with advisors, publications in technical magazines; (2) knowledge transfer activities appearing in a mass media, publications or broadcast, and (3) the cases where the effort has contributed to bring an innovation to the market. Feedback for satisfaction from attendees at events is also taken into account. This system enables researchers to see how they are performing in real-time. The index also allows IRTA to manage the AKIS strategy of their institute and to objectively reward their best knowledge transfer staff and to assess the impact of their work in knowledge transfer to farmers.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_agusti\\_fonts.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_agusti_fonts.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw3Ly5X1ijo>

### Participants questions:

**Does the T-index also take into account efforts towards supporting innovation that are not focused on dissemination like cooperative research, and are not actually successful within the timeframe?** There is a component in the T index to measure the success in bringing innovation to the market, linked to the success of this innovation. Other indexes are R (research) and E (economic), the commercial success is a factor for this one.

## Support and facilitate increased engagement with Horizon Europe projects

The next set of AKIS tools explored options for increasing engagement between projects and experts supported by the CAP and the Horizon Europe programme.

The first of these was presented by **Jean-Marc Gautier from IDELE** in France discussing their farmer-led knowledge reservoir created by farmers for farmers. This H2020 Thematic Network (TN) comes from two OGs in France and UK which were tackling the same issue, so they decided to interlink their activities. The challenge was to ensure long-term interaction and include more countries to capitalise and share the knowledge further. A TN seemed to be the perfect solution to achieve these objectives and so the two OGs started SheepNet ([www.sheepnet.network](http://www.sheepnet.network)). This TN connected 14 countries, 19 national networks and 5 OGs, and collected 42 practical innovative solutions (available online).



On the one hand OGs involve AKIS actors at national level while, on the other hand, TNs create links between OGs and the EU level, which makes it an excellent instrument for AKISs.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_jean-marc\\_gautier.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_jean-marc_gautier.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gv5fqGnKtmI>



**Jan Swoboda of the German National Rural Network (NRN)** then shared their experiences in bridging EIP-AGRI and the Horizon programme. There are over 200 OGs in Germany to date and the NRN started bringing them together in annual meetings from 2016. The following year they invited speakers from abroad, and had H2020 projects presented there as well. In the following years, they continued with the same format. During these events, questions were raised on how can EIP-AGRI actors better communicate cross-border and learn from each other. So, the NRN started organising field visits to other countries (physical and now virtual), where participants are OGs,

innovation brokers, researchers, advisers, administration and others, in groups of 50-60 people. When there were more OGs in Germany, they also started organising thematic workshops. These events are on demand, so the OGs have to bring forward the idea themselves and it needs to be a group with no less than 4 OGs from at least two Länder. The EIP network provides the funding, takes care of the organization and invites H2020 projects to participate as well. Jan reflected then on the lessons learned so far in respect to the relation between EIP-AGRI and Horizon: in practice, mostly researchers look for opportunities to bridge these two policies, as they are looking for funding and expanding their activities. OGs are also interested but often they would need additional funding and they would need more flexibility to incorporate unforeseen activities as part of the project development. For the NRN, the most interesting aspect of linking the two policies are the thematic relations combining all relevant actors.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_jan\\_swoboda.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_jan_swoboda.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NF5H7RR8MPU>

## Capture the creativity of young farmers to act as catalysts of innovation

**Jannes Maes, CEJA president**, then shared their experience of working with young farmers as innovation catalysts. The first highlight presented was that farmers need knowledge to be tailor made, they need to feel that their interest is what is at stake. CEJA carried out a SWOT analysis on access to education and knowledge in an internal consultation to help target their work. This analysis identified the bridges between the farming community and research as an opportunity: if these bridges are built, farmers then have a role in creating the knowledge and advice they will rely on. Important is that farmers need a place at the very start of the process, even if it is not always easy for individual farmers to be involved in projects and they may have difficulties to grasp the immediate value. As it can be very time intensive, such issues need to be taken into account (good accompaniment for instance by the trusted advisor, peer-to-peer effects, other incentives). Jannes finalised highlighting that innovation has three main pillars - research, development and implementation - but the two first are useless if not implemented and this is why farmers need to be involved from the start, to make sure that research and development results are applicable in farms.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_jannes\\_maes.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_jannes_maes.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGvDziYcmHg>

## Prepare interesting calls for Operational Groups



The session then focused on the use of well-designed call approaches to better engage OGs and actors within them. **Åsa Broberg from the Swedish RDP Managing Authority** started by telling us that there is good support for OGs in Sweden but it should not be forgotten that it takes a lot of brains to develop innovation. Sweden has a two-step system in place for OG calls (support for preparing group projects and project support) and they currently have 211 ongoing OGs. The first step enables actors to receive a lump sum of €5.000 or €8.000 for the preparation of the project, engaging a group around a joint objective and to write the OG project plan. The group must include a variety of actors, at least two of the following types: advisors, researchers and entrepreneurs. The applications at this stage are simple and there's a continuous process of decisions on these grants, with several cut-off dates per year. The second step is more selective, only about 25% of applications are successful, and 100% funding is provided. If the OGs finds that there is already an existing solution to their challenge, then they may keep €1500 out of the lump sum from step 1. They have a dedicated innovation support service within the EIP network that plays a relevant role as it helps groups develop their ideas and find group members. Some points for reflection were mentioned by Åsa, such as that perhaps 25% success at the second step is too low, and that maybe the two-steps process is a good way to reduce the feeling of the administrative burden.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_asa\\_wolgast\\_broberg.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_asa_wolgast_broberg.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPkXbiVupgg>

### Participants questions:

**How integrated is agriculture within the Swedish Ministries?** In Sweden agriculture and forestry is now housed within the Ministry of Enterprises. It takes time to link this with other economic activities but it makes sense for it to be there.

**What is the status of Innovation Support Services in Sweden?** There is one coordinating person from the NRN, plus a variety of people with skills in farming techniques who come from different places such as Universities as well as specially skilled farmers who also provide innovation support under the framework of the network coordinator.

## Using Operational Groups to test new CAP measures

**Shane Conway from the Irish National Rural Network** was then invited to share his experiences with OGs testing new CAP measures. There are two large thematic OG projects, complemented by two open non-thematic calls for OGs: one for environment and a general one. These calls are bottom-up and designed to be accessible to all. As a result, Ireland has granted support to 23 OGs so far, but the budgets per group, in particular the nation wide thematic OGs are high. Ireland's approach leads to locally-led, farmer-centered and result-based OG projects, rewarding farmers for improving biodiversity and other public goods. The Department of Agriculture and the NRN held several knowledge transfer and exchange workshops with all actors to prepare for the calls



and also later on. Projects are not just about species' conservation but also about habitat protection, where OGs are testing future CAP agri-environment-climate measures, adapting theoretical potential measures to local conditions and entrepreneurial ideas of the farmers and their advisors. This prepares farmers, the future beneficiaries, to believe in the measure and to be proud on helping the develop it. This kind of call to test out future CAP measures is also an early promotion for the future beneficiaries, who get to know what the measure will bring from a very early stage, maybe years before the measure is available. Time enough to change their mind-set and get enthusiast on environmental issues before they join in.

The NRN has been very active in disseminating the projects and inspiring people to maximize the success of the objectives set out in Ireland's RDP 2014-2020. They inspire people in order to maximize the projects' impact, for instance they have prepared a booklet and an interactive database with all Irish OGs, and a video blog for OGs to share how they are working on the ground.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_shane\\_conway.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_shane_conway.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaxZ1IE608k>

## Developing cross-border Operational Groups



Opportunities to develop cross border collaboration through OGs will be further supported in the coming programming period, so **Hardi Tamm from the Estonian Dairy Cluster** was invited to share his current experience. He is leading a cross-border OG with a Finnish OG as partner. There have been some challenges in OG cross-border cooperation mostly due to the fact that Member States have different interests, differences in OG conditions and the lack of synchronised calls. Hardi finalised with some ideas to foster cross-border cooperation, starting with the timing which is crucial (calls need to be synchronised), the need to invest in OGs' capability building (such as managerial skills, for instance) and to help them contacting other OGs.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_hardi\\_tamm.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_hardi_tamm.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibvX0-ZyohY>

## Participants questions

**Is there something we can learn from LEADER co-operation - in terms of alignment of rules etc?** It depends on the groups, for groups contributing at a regional level it does work, but larger groups with topics at a national level may not cooperate so well. Solving managerial issues in the next program would also help involve farmers. Inge suggested that OG calls were initially inspired by LEADER, but then they observed the need for a specific different OG approach, which focused on the subject (problem or opportunity), rather than being limited to a geographical area and the organisations/people present there. OGs can get experts from anywhere to join their group, even from outside the country, as long as they bring relevant and competences to help solve the problem or develop the opportunity. It is also up to the managing authorities to work together and enable the coordination of calls and here there is still work to do. The advices of Hardi concerning harmonising the timing and the OG requirements are useful, maybe even essential. Cross-border OGs could in the future certainly be supported through networking events to collect the right knowledge and bring together actors with similar interests, so international connections will be key.

## Promote collaboration and knowledge flows among OGs



**Johanna Rohrhofer from the Austrian National Rural Network** then joined participants to share her experience as innovation broker, in promoting collaboration and linking OGs, also across borders. In her perspective, an innovation support service is an enabler and so they are supporting the OGs at different phases of their projects. Then Johanna made the support more concrete by referring to some activities they have been pursuing. To foster knowledge flows and collaborations, the NRN searches in different databases for OGs working on similar topics and then tries to link them together. They also organise meetings for OGs from different Member States and other stakeholders, with the main goal of exploring possibilities for collaboration. Johanna finalised

referring to some challenges they face in this line of work. She said that it can be hard to find up to date information for the OGs (including valid contact details), and relevant information about the projects in English. They also had a survey where some OGs said that there are too many networking events, so they try to focus their events on a common interest and/or topic. OGs also report that they need support to find possibilities to collaborate and don't have enough resources to attend meetings, especially after the project ends. These may be important points to take into account when designing AKIS measures.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_johanna\\_rohrhofer.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_johanna_rohrhofer.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjivPs5dRew>

## Added value of thematic networks at national level

Exploring the added value of networking was **Pascal Bergeret, CIHEAM-IAMM, the Mediterranean Intergovernmental Agronomic Institute** from Montpellier in France. The French 'Mixed Technological Networks' (RMT) were established to enhance collaboration between researchers, education and advisors, to anticipate changes within the context of sustainable agri-food systems. Each network must contain at least three technical institutes or agricultural chambers, one agricultural school, one research organisation or higher education organisation, but other stakeholders are welcome in the network. The RMTs have been funded by the Ministry and by their members since 2006. They always include an educational dimension and are in connection to H2020 Thematic Networks. They often act as incubators for innovative projects and create repositories of knowledge and practices and communities of expertise. However, emerging themes and cross cutting themes are underrepresented, and it is challenging to include the private sector (for instance farmers). These networks are hoping to better connect to the European dimension including with OGs and reaching advisors and farmers, and also to have more impact on education and curricula and improve farmers' involvement.



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- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_pascal\\_bergeret\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_pascal_bergeret_0.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPsVbkmnp9w>

## 9. AKIS strategic plans and AKIS interventions

The final theme of the seminar focused on developing AKIS strategic plans and selecting and designing the right AKIS interventions.

### Introduction to the topic

Inge Van Oost from DG AGRI introduced the final theme of the seminar with an overview focused on the need for a financial envelope to enable funding to be spent on the various necessary ways to improve AKIS. This is vital in ensuring that knowledge becomes (again) a public good, accessible to all, as we see that knowledge becomes more and more privatised in big companies (SSWG SCAR AKIS report 3). Developing the AKIS plan needs to be a new and transformative process, engaging and listening to different stakeholders and developing a sense of ownership for this new AKIS approach. An AKIS coordination body and platform could be developed to support working across ministries and institutions, to push the process and to provide day-to-day support to AKIS measures and initiatives.

Inge presented the CAP plan template, demonstrating how it will foster and share knowledge and innovation. Through this template the CAP plan will turn the needs identified in the AKIS SWOT into measures (“interventions”) to deliver the organisational set up of a better functioning. The CAP plan will also include the planned AKIS actions to improve knowledge flow and to foster innovation. The EIP OGs and the EIP networking will stay an essential part of an effective AKIS. The AKIS will follow the same principles of complementary actors, co-creation and co-ownership. It will describe the organisation of advice to be provided and how all the services and networks will work together to deliver advice and innovation support, and improve knowledge flows. Inge then provided a series of top tips for participants to take away with them

### 10 top tips for participants



1. Make all advisors, researchers and CAP networks cooperate regularly and intensively.
2. Use advisor’s integration in AKIS to build their competencies to enable them to give broader advice.
3. Ask advisors to take a more interactive role providing innovation support to understand farmers needs and facilitate EIP OGs.
4. Use AKIS and OGs as a testing ground for CAP interventions so engaging future beneficiaries through co-design.
5. Include all types of advisors in the new advisory service.
6. Promote investment in the innovation strand of the CAP network to ensure knowledge and innovation can be sufficiently supported.
7. Make the most of all cross-border opportunities.
8. Find out about the opportunities for simplification within the CAP policy and make good use of them.
9. Empower the end-users of the services to receive support which best fits their needs.
10. Instead of certification, use online interactive ways of discovering and supporting the best advisors, trusting that the market will work.

## Inspirational speakers

### Preparing the Spanish AKIS strategy



Spain was the first to share the preparations it had undertaken for its AKIS, presented by **Rocio Wojski from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Andres Montero from the University Carlos 3 of Madrid**. To start the AKIS strategy building process, the Ministry brought together technical staff from the different Spanish Regions that will work on the set-up of AKIS, to openly discuss what was happening and raise awareness. This led to a realisation that they needed to map the AKIS, better understand the role of advisors and continue the process of bringing different stakeholders together. Based on the information collected and lessons learned from innovation support services, a National Focus Group was established to advise on how to set up the CAP strategic plan to make AKIS and advisory services meet CAP objectives. At the same time, they followed the methodology set up by the Ministry and so have now analysed the current situation (looking at four elements: training, innovation, digitalisation and AKIS structures), carried out a SWOT analysis and delivered a needs' assessment. This implied an extensive process of meetings and consultations with all relevant stakeholders at national and regional level.

They're working now on drafting the interventions for the Spanish Strategic Plan according to the needs identified through this process, such as the ones focusing on the integration of advisors within the AKIS establishing the minimum requirements for advisors (e.g. continuous training and participation in innovation activities, etc.). Interventions focusing on training and exchange of knowledge are also very important. They are also working to empower innovation ecosystems (such as thematic multi-actor meetings).

Notable is that the governance of AKIS will include the Ministry of Science and Innovation: it will use existing structures and bodies, and the Ministries will have a coordination unit at national level.

The Agricultural Ministry will now continue with the creation of an advisors' platform to support them in the transition to delivering wider services and new role. It will include a database of registered advisers, a search engine for farmers to find the perfect advisers for their needs, provide training and opportunities for exchange of experiences, and create a system for monitoring their activity by administration, among other aspects.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_rocio\\_wojski\\_-\\_andres\\_montero.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_rocio_wojski_-_andres_montero.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9YIDhmDCM>

### The Slovenian AKIS strategy

**Joži Cvelbar from the Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food** then shared their progress and the approach they have taken. The structure of the institutions that form AKIS in Slovenia is diverse and quite fragmented, thus the AKIS structure needs to be improved and strengthened. The SWOT analysis of their AKIS has identified as one of the strengths the fact that education is free of charge, as well as advisory and public services. However, there is a lack of coordinated actions among Ministries, insufficient funding for research projects and little identification of farmers' needs, weak transfer of knowledge and innovation into practice, among other weaknesses.



The Slovenian Strategic Plan has three pillars: knowledge exchange, research and innovation, and digitalization of agriculture and rural areas.

Based on the analysis, they have defined the needs or interventions in respect to these three pillars. For instance, in respect to knowledge exchange: the need to establish an AKIS Platform, make agricultural education programmes more attractive in cooperation with Ministry of Education, strengthen cooperation among AKIS stakeholders, improve farmers knowledge and knowledge flows among them (e.g. through OGs and demonstration) and strengthen the farm advisory service and other public services.

For research and innovation, there's the need to strengthen innovation brokering and financing of innovation in agriculture, the development of cooperation between research institutions and agricultural practice, improving the knowledge transfer into practice, among others. They also wish to support digitalization of processes, interlink all public data, publicly available data, digital advisory tool and investments.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_jozicvelbar.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_jozicvelbar.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03palnG0coE>

## AKIS interventions in the Estonian CAP plan



**Helena Pärenson, from the Ministry of Rural Affairs in Estonia** then shared the development of their CAP plan, in particular for their AKIS interventions. In Estonia they are working on a range of interventions co-designed with stakeholders, encouraging an evolution rather than revolution approach to be more flexible and functional.

They have chosen fewer but broader and more flexible interventions. Advisors will be the backbone of the new AKIS era. There are not enough advisors in Estonia so a new generation of advisors is needed and a support scheme for new advisors using the older generation as mentors is being planned. They also looked at how to keep and improve the motivation of the existing advisory staff, including more topics, more diverse formats and varied roles for advisors. In respect to cooperation on innovation, the plans include the use of universal AKIS vouchers to be used for one or more AKIS interventions according to how the user decides to use them (to get advice, training, information, expertise, etc.). To foster knowledge exchange, interventions Slovenia will include an online knowledge reservoir, the organisation of study trips for groups of mixed types of actors to share information, to gain new knowledge and build closer contacts and special attention to new entrants.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_helena\\_parenson.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_helena_parenson.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0VXA85oEQ4>

## The Dutch AKIS interventions in the new CAP plan



The final approach to be shared was by **Jan van Esch from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality** in the Netherlands. They completed their SWOT analysis on AKIS which highlighted a big number of active and innovative farmers as a key strength but regretted that the advisory service had been fully left to the market. Based on this, several needs were identified such as stronger connections within AKIS, a new system for impartial advice and increased emphasis on networking and digital tools. Some examples of interventions they are planning include a stronger support to OGs as well as making EIP OGs more easily accessible (higher speed in OG selection, more quality of information and help for applicants). They are looking to create a completely new register of impartial advisors and a voucher system for advisory services to empower farmers. Other examples of interventions refer to farmers' discussion groups, creation of a freely accessible website collecting all agricultural knowledge, and masterclasses for OG project leaders to help them to overcome the administrative burden. There remain a number of areas which are still unclear such as how to manage the transition period, how to connect to 'hard to reach' farmers or how to measure progress in AKIS.

- Presentation: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918\\_eip-agri\\_sem\\_akis\\_jan\\_van\\_esch.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/20200918_eip-agri_sem_akis_jan_van_esch.pdf)
- Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd4YQgkh2gs>

### Participants questions

**Rocio, who will be funding the platform for training and how is cooperation with other ministries organised?** This will come through national CAP funds, but there is a public procurement process happening now to find the institutions to deliver it. Building and running the platform will be a part of the CAP plan.

Besides the Ministry of Science and Innovation, there are two different ministries involved, one in charge of University Education and another is the Ministry of Economy, both of which relate to digital skills.

**Helena, what do you see as the main barriers for the voucher systems?** It is a how, when and who question mainly. Who is giving them out? What are the criteria, not to limit access? And how to get the timing and procedures right.

**Jan, how do you ensure the knowledge platform will be accessible for all?** Two ways, firstly asking researchers to contribute information that in a way that ensures it is easy to find and easy to understand and get help from the institution to 'translate' documents from academic language.



## Designing AKIS interventions

### Summary of participants inputs

As an introduction to the session dedicated to the design of AKIS interventions, **Mark Gibson, EIP-AGRI Service Point**, once again provided an overview of the online inputs from participants prior to the event, exploring how to draft post 2020 CAP plans with effective AKIS interventions.

- **Involving stakeholders in preparing your AKIS strategy and collecting good ideas:** It is fundamental to use participatory methodologies that are able to empower all the potential actors to develop a common understanding of the AKIS concept and on their respective roles and functions. Many good ideas have been collected via workshops, meetings or surveys. (Web) Exchange between Member States could be very fruitful. Involve new stakeholders, old traditional actors are not always the most innovative.
- The key AKIS-related priorities and needs for your country: advisors' enhanced capacity to be better able to address farmers' needs. This could be supported by creating a strong knowledge exchange system where advisors are properly remunerated in order to attract the best experts. Promoting peer-to-peer exchanges among the different AKIS actors will enhance their relationships and facilitate mutual learning and knowledge loops, perhaps also improving the participation of young farmers, women and small farmers. Better communication on AKIS and simplified administrative procedures help. Researchers remain focused on scientific results, so incentives need to be developed such as the modification of their merit system, where work carried out in field experiments and collaboration with farmers and advisors as well as research information will become more rewarding.
- **Incentivising and rewarding researchers to tackle farmers' needs and exchange knowledge:** creating incentives for carrying out field work and to work together with farmers and advisors, and modifying the merit system while promoting collaboration with those practitioners are needed. At the moment, researchers are orientated to scientific results only, while they need to develop approaches, methods and tools to assess farmers' needs and to co-develop the project ideas together with them and advisors. Calls for project funding that require the involvement of farmers and advisors already at the project planning stage in research and innovation projects are beneficial, while getting extra scoring in the project evaluation when the producer sector participates, and to those that promote the knowledge exchange can surely play a role. In addition, proper funding for dissemination and communication activities is needed.
- **Who should form part of the "AKIS coordination body":** several ideas already exist, from one single public institution in the Ministry of Agriculture, or an AKIS Council for thematic cooperation, to the creation of an AKIS Steering Committee consisting of different types of actors (universities, NGOs, research institutes, advisors, the EIP network and NRN) organized in working groups. Each working group should include representatives of the Ministry for a more efficient exchange of information.
- **Tips that worked well to strengthen the organization of knowledge flows between AKIS actors:** funding for the work of facilitators and mediators and for the dissemination of project results, and support for the use of suitable digital tools and processes for knowledge exchange. Reducing bureaucracy and simplifying processes was again highlighted. Organising activities (meetings, field exhibitions, study tours, conferences, workshops, etc.) where researchers, farmers, advisors and other AKIS actors meet, inspire each other, discover needs from practice and share good practices and research results. Supporting the establishment and networking of demonstration farms and use them to connect researchers and advisors.

## Interactive session in breakouts

Participants were then invited to work in smaller, facilitated groups to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the AKIS in their country / region, and to explore potential interventions that could help overcome those AKIS weaknesses that were selected by the groups. The strengths and weaknesses identified most frequently across the breakout rooms are laid out below.

AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An existing multi-actor approach, with farmers at the centre, involved at every stage.</li> <li>• Expertise in stakeholder dialogue - bottom up approach.</li> <li>• A large integrated research, advice and education system.</li> <li>• Free advisory services.</li> <li>• Database of advisors.</li> <li>• An extensive range of options for professional training in agriculture, environment and food.</li> <li>• A high level of trust between farmers and advisors.</li> <li>• A sector that is already very diverse and innovative, with aspirations to work across borders.</li> <li>• Public demonstration farms to disseminate innovation and also private farms that will do the same.</li> <li>• Strong agricultural ministry staff understanding the needs of AKIS and are committed to it.</li> <li>• Well established NRN and EIP-AGRI networks, with high innovation efforts.</li> <li>• OGs implemented in all regions.</li> <li>• Innovation Support Service(s) enabling collaborative innovation.</li> <li>• Multi-actor approach and cross-border EIP cooperation experience.</li> <li>• Growing interest from newcomers bringing in new ideas and views</li> <li>• Strong pressure from and connectivity to consumers.</li> <li>• A very strong farming media, both in traditional press and more recently in digital form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor communication between actors.</li> <li>• Farmers needs are not well identified and there is a lack of mentorship or specialised advisers.</li> <li>• Poor transfer of knowledge from researchers to farmers.</li> <li>• A proportion of farmers do not engage or have very limited engagement with advisors.</li> <li>• Farmers are not oriented towards consumers.</li> <li>• Many family farmers are ageing and have little resources.</li> <li>• Few younger farmers, which limits the uptake of innovation and adoption of digital tools.</li> <li>• There is a divide between organic and innovative farmers and non-innovative traditional farmers.</li> <li>• AKIS organisations are not incentivised to provide the necessary help and support for practice.</li> <li>• Traditional AKIS institutions not easily willing to innovate</li> <li>• Smaller AKIS actors are not involved.</li> <li>• No overview of advisor's interactions nor an advisors' platform to share their ideas and experiences.</li> <li>• Not easy to find advisors with the required knowledge (e.g. specific/novel themes).</li> <li>• A private sector advisory system.</li> <li>• Regionalised countries can experience fragmentation of knowledge.</li> <li>• Cross-border actions are difficult to implement and lack incentives to do so.</li> <li>• Lack of known innovation leaders.</li> <li>• Advisors have no experience in facilitation and moderation.</li> <li>• Very few young advisers as little motivation to join the sector.</li> <li>• Low level of digitalisation.</li> </ul>

Participants were then asked to work together to develop interventions they thought would help overcome these challenges, organised within four themes:

1. Enhancing knowledge flows and strengthening links between research and practice;
2. Strengthening all farm advisory services and fostering interconnection with AKIS;
3. Enhancing cross thematic and cross border interactive innovation;
4. Supporting the digital transition in agriculture.

A number of creative suggestions were explored in the groups, themes 1 and 2 being the most discussed and including:

**Under theme 1:**

- Capturing farmers' research needs and transferring them to research centres.
- Supportive online platforms for AKIS interaction.
- Open access (solving the legal issues to support open knowledge transfer).
- Creating and supporting spaces for cooperation and open innovation.

**Under theme 2:**

- Vouchers for advisors' international knowledge acquisition (voucher system for advisors to look for a knowledge provider outside the country).
- Strengthening all farm advisors competences and fostering interconnection with AKIS.
- Better integrating advisors, particularly from the private sector.
- Framework to ensure advisors are qualified into the AKIS.
- Focus on the new generation of advisors.
- Set up a toolkit (training and tools to make AKIS and agriculture attractive to all advisers/consultants, EIP-AGRI facilitators, etc.)
- Upskilling of advisors in innovation support.
- Agricultural education (e.g., train the directors of agricultural colleges to manage AKIS-related programmes, train the trainers, etc.).

Under the other two themes a few more ideas came up such as the 'Foreign value' under theme 3 (selecting and visiting already-working newly developed cross-sector value chains and business models in Europe), and digital tutors (to empower advisers and farmers to use digital technology) and the involvement of farmers and advisors in international exchange projects/programmes under theme 4.

For a full overview of all inputs collected, see [Annex 1](#).

## Conclusions of the Seminar



The seminar was concluded by **Wolfgang Burtscher, Director-General DG AGRI** who thanked the 40 speakers while sharing his thoughts and closing remarks on the challenges ahead.

The future of agriculture will be based on knowledge and innovation, therefore ensuring a well-functioning AKIS to be a cornerstone for the new CAP and make farmers a true part of the green economy. Key is combining the knowledge from research with the insights and tacit knowledge from the people in the field, to make farms more resilient and guarantee decent farm incomes, supporting competitiveness in agricultural communities. The CAP has sustainability built in many aspects, from social sustainability, to producing food at affordable prices, and economically and ecological sustainability. It can be

difficult to balance all these demands, but innovation and research will support it all. To achieve this, it is vital that farmers and other practitioners are involved in designing the projects and shaping the calls.

Member States will need to further promote one of the key elements of AKIS, the EIP networking and its Operational Groups. We have seen an example of a very successful OG, tackling farmers' needs and co-creating solutions in a networked way. OG calls should be made attractive, more regular and easy to start up. We now need to create efficient innovation support services in each MS, which will be close to agriculture and have a broad network. Advisors are those who easily pick up grassroots ideas or problems from their farmers and can help to put the right actors together. We envisage cross-border OGs and expect that there will be more and more collaboration across Member States, linking up actors and projects inside and outside their country. We strongly encourage these exchanges as they will bring together valuable information and will strengthen the AKISs.

Mr. Burtscher also highlighted the crucial and modernised role of advisors within the CAP and within AKIS. Transparent advisory registers are more suitable than too stringent certification criteria. To enable new expert advisors to come in easily seems a good solution as indeed, we will need new people with new competences to advise our farmers, in emerging fields such as short supply chains, new bio-based or medicinal crops, care farming and all kinds of other diversification. We also need impartial advice on digital applications. For all these reasons, we need to train advisors regularly and sufficiently within the AKIS to ensure their qualification. The quality and focus on usefulness of such training are key. The training should be qualitative and attractive, to also get in the most trusted private advisors. This training obligation should be an important criterion to allow advisors to form part of the national advisors' register, exactly as is already usual for other professions in many countries. Also advisory networks, peer-to-peer learning, in particular across borders, can bring real EU added value.

Guardians of public knowledge, such as the specialist-advisors in the back-offices, will need databases to collect practice-oriented information for their country. Translation, filtering and promoting the most useful elements for the specific country are essential. Therefore, in all this innovation work, the CAP networks in the Member States will be another cornerstone. They should be well connected to advisors and researchers and bring all practice-oriented material from the whole EU to their country, in support of the back-offices. They must continue to be the glue between all innovation actors and initiators of events to share knowledge and to connect people forming part of the AKIS. The CAP networks' importance for innovation should be reflected in sufficient budget for their work.

Mr Burtscher hoped the seminar brought plenty of inspiration for preparing the national AKIS strategy, the list of potential AKIS interventions was just a top of the iceberg: from knowledge centres, farmer-to-farmer exchanges, rewarding of researchers, the power of the Operational Groups, connecting with European Thematic Networks under Horizon Europe or active CAP networks. He finished by hoping all participants felt enthusiastic and able to return to their home countries ready to develop strong and interconnected, as well as inclusive and innovative AKISs.

All presentations, both in pdf and videoformat and background documents are available on the EIP-AGRI website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-cap-strategic-plans-key-role-akis>



## Annex 1: Results of the interactive session

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-actor approach, with farmers at the centre, involved at every stage.</li> <li>• A large integrated research, advice and education provider which has a strong influence.</li> <li>• Scholarship funding for research and practical postgraduate training which achieves an internationally acclaimed standard.</li> <li>• An extensive range of options for professional training in agriculture, the environment and food.</li> <li>• A very strong farming media both in traditional press and more recently in digital form, to disseminate the benefits of AKIS.</li> <li>• Young farmer education is strongly supported.</li> <li>• Teagasc have established supportive relationships with commercial stakeholders, higher education institutions and Government officials.</li> <li>• There is a high level of trust between farmers and advisors based in independence and a culture of support services.</li> <li>• Teagasc directly supports and is responsive to national and regional policies and issues.</li> <li>• Farmers rewarded for providing public services such as water quality.</li> <li>• Additional income for farmers who participate in projects and this acts as an additional incentive as it helps maintain farm viability.</li> <li>• Good commitment from Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proportion of farmers do not engage or have very limited engagement with advisors.</li> <li>• Farmers are more orientated to processors than consumers.</li> <li>• Farmers who are diversifying are frustrated by the support provided for developing commercial strategies.</li> <li>• AKIS organisations are not incentivised to provide the necessary help and support which reciprocates the flow of information from a diversifying farmer.</li> <li>• The current structure and scale of farming limits the number of younger farmers which also limits uptake of innovation, adoption of digital tools and diversification.</li> <li>• Rural development advisors are not seen to support opportunities which create the number of jobs that diversified enterprises might provide.</li> <li>• Social Network analysis indicates there are some strong connections within AKIS but also some areas that could be improved.</li> <li>• A specialised innovation support unit would be helpful.</li> <li>• Appears to be a lack of focus on the broader needs of rural dwellers/communities not involved in farming.</li> <li>• Top down rather than bottom up.</li> <li>• Driven by a strong technical agenda and not enough on diverse farming enterprises.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sector that is already very diverse and innovative, with aspirations to work across borders.</li> <li>• A long tradition of effective advisory services, agricultural colleges, a strong NGO community, farmer's union and a thriving organic sector.</li> <li>• Strong pressure from and connectivity to consumers.</li> <li>• Good innovation brokers within EIP.</li> <li>• Working groups in EAFRD are mostly running.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture has less than a 1% contribution to GDP.</li> <li>• It's strongly fragmented into federated states and regions.</li> <li>• There is a divide between organic and innovative farmers and non-innovative angry traditional farmers.</li> <li>• An increasing gap between the interest of farmers to innovate and a monopolistic food industry.</li> <li>• Traditional AKIS institutions not easily willing to innovate and smaller AKIS actors are beyond the radar.</li> <li>• Advisors are all from the private sector and not connected to the AKIS.</li> <li>• Lack of data between the AKIS partners.</li> <li>• Communication challenges with farmers, researchers and the broader public.</li> <li>• Much greater exchange is needed.</li> </ul>
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good connections to other advisory services and diverse stakeholders.</li> <li>• These connections are also with non agricultural issues.</li> <li>• Advisory services are free of charge.</li> <li>• Strong tradition of advisory service plus strong research programme for agriculture.</li> <li>• Good advisory service with a good geographical spread.</li> <li>• Good education system.</li> <li>• Strong level of research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperations could be improved in future.</li> <li>• More work is required on farm family health issues and the relationship between farm family members.</li> <li>• Communication between Ministries and different institutions in AKIS is weak.</li> <li>• Farmers needs' not well identified and a lack of mentorship for specialised advisers.</li> <li>• Poor transfer of knowledge from research to farmer.</li> <li>• Small farms with little capacity – no economic incentive.</li> <li>• Research is fragmented across many institutions with a very restricted budget.</li> <li>• Little research interest in agriculture – where are the future experts?</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An advisory system with good advisors and good research.</li> <li>• Farmers organizations are already working within the AKIS System.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many family farmers are ageing and have little resource.</li> <li>• There can be too many actors so very difficult to engage.</li> <li>• Researchers and advisors are not linked.</li> <li>• It is more difficult for small farmers to access advisors or the AKIS system.</li> </ul>
Belgium Flanders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all farmers receive training.</li> <li>• Innovative spirit thanks to the longstanding efforts of strong and central innovation support services.</li> <li>• Strong universities and applied research centres working together on practical issues close to farmers' needs.</li> <li>• Good advisor-researcher links, in particular on the applied (sectoral) research stations</li> <li>• Strong agricultural ministry staff understanding the needs of AKIS.</li> <li>• Well educated farmers, obligation to take training if they want investment and advice.</li> <li>• Effective EIP calls.</li> <li>• All AKIS actors know each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality in public funded agricultural institutions and applied research stations, the latter too reliant on project money.</li> <li>• No overview of advisor's interactions or platform to share their ideas and experiences.</li> <li>• The RD advisory measure misses the trusted advisors, as they are too small for public procurement process.</li> <li>• EIP OGs too small (currently 30.000 euro budget), plans to increase the budget per project.</li> <li>• Currently we do not have a lot of advisors due to the public procurement procedures.</li> <li>• We do not reach all our hard to reach farmers.</li> <li>• Less focus by researchers to translate the knowledge into practical understandable information for farmers.</li> <li>• AKIS is less well known.</li> <li>• Communication and dissemination, particularly around the education of young people.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long established Advisory Service.</li> <li>• Other support mechanisms available to farmers that are not part of Advisory Service.</li> <li>• National rural leaders programme.</li> <li>• Innovation Support Service enabling collaborative innovation.</li> <li>• National industry led body for the food &amp; drink supply chain involving influential organisations and individuals with many strong networks.</li> <li>• National agriculture college, which also hosts much of the current advisory service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented institutional landscape.</li> <li>• Dominance of marginal farming in areas of natural constraint - as much concerned with need to diversify, limited opportunities to add value.</li> <li>• Tendency to separate agriculture from the downstream supply chain, including consumers.</li> <li>• Not looking to other sectors and seeing how they are succeeding.</li> <li>• Advisory service focus can be too generic - not necessarily tailored/targeted to needs of business.</li> <li>• Research outcomes not necessarily informing business decisions. e.g. H2020 awareness low - they stay within the research community.</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from different backgrounds with appropriate skills already cooperating</li> <li>• Interest of the Ministry.</li> <li>• Existing networks are operating.</li> <li>• OGs implemented in all regions.</li> <li>• Strong sectoral organisation.</li> <li>• Big concentration of knowledge development entities, both public and private.</li> <li>• The existing infrastructure that can be used to promote the impact of the AKIS system.</li> <li>• Good practice expertise.</li> <li>• Many tools and institutions to promote AKIS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regionalisation can lead to fragmentation of knowledge.</li> <li>• Researchers with other interests than farmers' needs.</li> <li>• Need to increase the interest of farmers, particularly in innovation.</li> <li>• Missing on-farm advice.</li> <li>• Communication between actors.</li> <li>• Not easy to find advisers with all the required knowledge.</li> <li>• Cross border actions are difficult to implement.</li> <li>• Lack of professional recognition in advisory services.</li> <li>• Lack of recognition of knowledge transfer by researchers.</li> <li>• Need to coordinate among regions that have their own competencies.</li> <li>• Sectoral organisations reluctant to change to a cross-sectoral approach.</li> <li>• Difficulties in sharing knowledge in an open way.</li> <li>• The difficulty in adapting the current systems to the different agricultural scenarios in the country.</li> <li>• Lack of connection with H2020 Multi-actor projects as well as with thematic networks.</li> <li>• Institutions and public administrations reactive rather than proactive.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large diversity of farming systems and geographical conditions.</li> <li>• Advisory services and training in traditional agriculture are relatively well established.</li> <li>• Farmers are relatively well educated and innovation is supported by good farming organisations.</li> <li>• Education and training is provided by several organisations.</li> <li>• Well established NRN and EIP-Agri network with high innovation levels.</li> <li>• Good access to impartial advisors in most areas.</li> <li>• About 80-90 EIP Agri Operational Groups so far.</li> <li>• A few regional collaboration hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory service needs to be further developed, especially in less popular farming types.</li> <li>• The large gap between research and practice with no current incentives to bridge it.</li> <li>• Too much administration in EIP-AGRI and other EU-projects.</li> <li>• Coordination and cooperation within EU can be improved.</li> <li>• Fragmented AKIS - many actors involved so increased collaboration is needed.</li> <li>• Weak incentives for different actors to cooperate.</li> <li>• Lack of advisors and competence to cover all geographical regions.</li> </ul>
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory services, NRN, and high quality EIP projects.</li> <li>• Universities and institutes of higher education engaged in rural development matters and running projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution and coordination of knowledge, as links between farmers and research in general are weak and lack of coordination.</li> <li>• Finding the right advisor is hard.</li> <li>• No proper system linking EIP-AGRI OGs with e.g. Horizon projects.</li> <li>• Need for a smaller scale innovation project funding.</li> <li>• No innovation broker or ISS operation apart from the NRN.</li> <li>• Research needs to be more practical</li> </ul>
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant research centres participating in EU programmes.</li> <li>• AKIS is already incorporated in Ministerial Decision provisions.</li> <li>• The AKIS SWOT analysis is ready and will be a catalyst for conversations.</li> <li>• A lot of research centres and training centres</li> <li>• Good understanding of the challenge but need to connect better with policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AKIS design is still at an early stage.</li> <li>• Low level of innovation integration and specific knowledge in the primary sector.</li> <li>• The main parts of AKIS are fragmented, operated by different units.</li> <li>• Advisory system and measure 2 implementation is late, knowledge &amp; transfer measure is limited to only classroom training.</li> <li>• Training centres require modernisation.</li> <li>• No integrated advisory services.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
the Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of knowledge and innovation by farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak connection between AKIS partners.</li> <li>• A private sector advisory system.</li> </ul>
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing system of agricultural research, education and agriculture.</li> <li>• A wide range of training and advisory services for farmers</li> <li>• Relatively high farmers' trust in advisers.</li> <li>• High level of advisor knowledge and training, good structure of advisory services and good communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange of information between advisers, scientists and farmers could be improved.</li> <li>• A high number of farmers so challenging to include them all.</li> <li>• Lack of known innovation leaders</li> </ul>
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory service within the Ministry which understands both farmers and policy needs.</li> <li>• Expertise in stakeholder dialogue - bottom up approach.</li> <li>• Huge potential for AKIS.</li> <li>• Huge number of education providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AKIS actors are not well-connected so not operating as they should.</li> <li>• OGs not yet working, so not yet involved in AKIS.</li> <li>• Lack of trust among farmers towards MA.</li> <li>• Still no clear picture of how it will work at national level.</li> <li>• Lack of cooperation at all levels (farmers to farmers, farmers to advisors etc.)</li> <li>• Advisors have no experience in facilitation and moderation.</li> </ul>
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well developed scientific, University and private professional organisations.</li> <li>• Free advice available for farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap between researchers, advisors and farmers.</li> <li>• Communication and engagement between relevant Ministries.</li> <li>• Research in agriculture is separate from other scientific research bodies.</li> <li>• No analysis yet or examples of OGs.</li> <li>• Lack of financial resources.</li> </ul>
Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good links between agriculture advisory and rural networks.</li> <li>• Active agricultural NGOs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University innovation hub connection with advisors.</li> <li>• Fragmented vocational education.</li> <li>• Few independent advisors.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many existing actors who would be strong participants in the future AKIS.</li> <li>• A well developed and mature system.</li> <li>• Well structured - working with farmers to capture innovation from the field.</li> <li>• Good advisory service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just beginning AKIS brainstorming so no clear vision yet.</li> <li>• Insufficient resources allocated.</li> <li>• Difficulty covering relevant issues for the whole country.</li> <li>• A lack of focus on education.</li> <li>• Not enough knowledge flow between research and advisors on many subjects.</li> <li>• Not enough resources dedicated to knowledge flow and exchanging ideas between AKIS actors.</li> </ul>
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and relatively modern farms that are motivated to be up to date with the newest and most effective systems.</li> <li>• Some successful OGs and EIP-AGRI groups with strong managerial skills.</li> <li>• Multi-actor approach and cross-border EIP cooperation experience.</li> <li>• Dedicated authorities where the level of bureaucracy is low</li> <li>• Strong paying agency with well-developed IT solutions.</li> <li>• EIP-AGRI Rural network works well.</li> <li>• Advisory services have history - knowledge of what works</li> <li>• Everybody knows everybody - easy to get in touch</li> <li>• Knowledge transfer programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of specialist advisors.</li> <li>• Very few young advisors as little motivation to join the sector.</li> <li>• Too few native language data/information/training tools.</li> <li>• EIP OGs and advisors seldom connect.</li> <li>• Lack of time for reading, listening to others, including international examples.</li> <li>• Lack of time means lack of time for collaborating with others.</li> </ul>
Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is already a strong public Agricultural Extension Service in operation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AKIS can be underestimated and undervalued as advice does not show immediate results.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good infrastructure - training</li> <li>• Good structure to find advisors.</li> <li>• Good internet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough funding for training.</li> <li>• Some advisory services are too expensive for farmers.</li> <li>• Not always easy to find out what's going on amongst different AKIS stakeholders.</li> </ul>
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for projects.</li> <li>• Involvement from Universities.</li> <li>• Updating curricula.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory service is no longer running.</li> <li>• No national register and so no clear picture of state of advisory services.</li> <li>• Advisors need training.</li> </ul>
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear legal background and nationally organized advisory services, including all advisors not just supported ones.</li> <li>• Free training for advisors on communication skills.</li> <li>• On-line platform of all advisors.</li> <li>• National Digital Agricultural Strategy, implementation starting end of this year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural Universities and research institutions are under reorganization, decreasing the number of agricultural students.</li> <li>• EIP groups started late so are still maturing.</li> <li>• Comparatively low budget on R &amp; I, and knowledge transfer measures.</li> </ul>

Country/ region	AKIS strengths	AKIS weaknesses
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several Universities and research institutes working on agriculture and environment issues.</li> <li>• Private advisors are obliged to take training courses, so it might be easy to integrate them into AKIS.</li> <li>• There are registers of private advisors.</li> <li>• Growing interest from sector newcomers such as digital.</li> <li>• Renewal of roles for regional agencies, reinvigorated by RDP, bringing people together, defining projects and priorities.</li> <li>• Strength of farmer unions in connecting with academia.</li> <li>• Many OGs to learn from.</li> <li>• Public demonstration farms to disseminate innovation and others private ones that will do the same.</li> <li>• Presence of pioneering sectors and farmers in innovation.</li> <li>• National Coordination of regional structures for both advisory and AKIS.</li> <li>• Council for agricultural research.</li> <li>• Tradition of one to one support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of data on private advisors.</li> <li>• Lack of coordination among AKIS actors.</li> <li>• High average age of farmers + small average size of farms.</li> <li>• Low level of digitalisation.</li> <li>• No common vision or common objectives among AKIS actors.</li> <li>• Vocational bodies not yet fully integrated.</li> <li>• Lack of financial resources and too much bureaucratic restrictions.</li> <li>• No easy place for farmers to find solutions.</li> <li>• Advisory services intervention not linked to other interventions.</li> <li>• Lack of data at farm level that is relevant for advisory services.</li> <li>• Because of the evaluation system in research, sometimes the “problem solving” aim is missed.</li> <li>• Regions are dedicating insufficient resources to AKIS or its components.</li> <li>• Relevant differences between regions and subregional areas.</li> <li>• Lack of training for advisors.</li> </ul>

**Themes for interventions (left column in the table below: you can choose more than one):**

1. Enhancing knowledge flows and strengthening links between research and practice.
2. Strengthening all farm advisory services and fostering interconnection with AKIS.
3. Enhancing cross thematic and cross border interactive innovation.
4. Supporting the digital transition in agriculture.

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
1	Utilise target groups shared experience to design programmes, instead of experts.	Share best practice in digitisation by engaging other agencies in Europe - help farmers capitalize on the digital evolution.		NGO Farmers Citizens	
1	Capture farmers' research needs and transfer them to research centres.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organise meetings (online or in person, depending on the circumstances) for knowledge exchange by NRN.</li> <li>2. Have meetings on farm between researchers, farmers, advisors and administration (to provide funding)</li> <li>3. Field days to bring researchers to farms so that they can learn about farmers' problems</li> <li>4. Funding programmes should consider farmer's need.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better links between research and practice.</li> </ul>	All stakeholders	Funding

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
1	Supportive online platforms for AKIS interaction.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote networks of advisers and trainers to improve their work, and make them feel less like competitors</li> <li>2. Link this to vocational institutions, on the job training and research.</li> <li>3. Create an online platform to enable people to interact from all over the country and across borders.</li> <li>4. Build in functionality so farmers can also talk with each other.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration and better interactions between advisers, increasing their capacity to deliver advice and reach more farmers.</li> <li>• Better connections and better interaction between all AKIS actors</li> </ul>	<p>Advisers Vocational training Re- searchers Farmers</p>	
1	Coordination	A coordination body which discusses and steers activities, included in the CAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demo activities.</li> <li>• Focus on topics to be developed in AKIS.</li> </ul>	<p>Scientists Farmers NGOs</p>	Seminars, work-groups and IT platforms

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
1	Access to knowledge for all	Solving the potential legal issues to support open knowledge transfer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolve intellectual property rights challenges.</li> <li>Spread knowledge across EU - possibility through a central store.</li> <li>Translate into practical knowledge in own language with the right format.</li> </ul>	Legal people Government Researchers Farmers	IP expertise. Open access experts.
1	Creating and supporting spaces for cooperation and open innovation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of opportunities.</li> <li>Definition of a shared vision (and a shared agenda).</li> <li>Identification of barriers to engagement (for each kind of actor) and the barriers to achieve the shared vision.</li> <li>Cocreation of solutions to overcome the barriers.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment of all the AKIS actors.</li> <li>"Roadmap" at a territorial level.</li> </ul>	Faculty, researcher Public administration Farmers Private companies Consumers / society Territorial managers Advisors	Facilitators Skills Education

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
1	Stakeholder communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Balance the strength of diversity against many differing opinions. Employ coordinators/facilitators to work with stakeholder groups to manage discussions and find common ground.</li> <li>2. Face to face meetings, digital platform including database of all contacts to share problems, solutions, arrange meetings etc. Regular conferences to present new, issues, progress and solutions.</li> <li>3. Social media.</li> <li>4. Engagement comes from interest in content and relevance to their situation. Communications need to be valued for people to take advantage</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These will be long term and difficult to measure. Results take a long time and are difficult to directly track back to the intervention.</li> </ul>	Ministry Private sector Researchers Industry/farmers Politicians and others involved in the political system.	Funding
1	Involvement in international exchange projects/ programmes	Engagement of farmers and advisors in international exchange projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-pollination of knowledge and ideas.</li> </ul>	Farmers Advisors	

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
2	Vouchers for advisor's international knowledge acquisition.	Voucher system for advisors to look for a knowledge provider outside the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve advisor's knowledge.</li> <li>• Support advisors to be up to date with the latest knowledge.</li> </ul>	Own advisors Advisors in other countries Researchers Farmers	RDP or pilot project
2	Strengthening all farm advisory services and fostering interconnection with AKIS.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide support to farmers on using OGs to systematically bring in advisors and researchers.</li> <li>2. NRN to structurally link advice, research and knowledge actors: eg platform for advisors and information.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoother and faster transition from FAS to AKIS.</li> <li>• Better functioning AKIS</li> </ul>	All stakeholders	Possible use of Art 72 to achieve this.

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
2	Better integrating advisors, particularly private sector ones.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incentivise advisors to engage in the AKIS, for example through a platform which summarizes the latest knowledge and organised meetings and demonstrations specifically for them.</li> <li>2. Pay advisors with public funds to avoid commercial bias and erode trust.</li> <li>3. Compulsory training to obtain advisor registration.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A higher quality advisory service. Registration legitimises their ability to fulfill the role and develops trust with farmers.</li> <li>• Access to new ideas, innovations.</li> <li>• Better flow of knowledge through platforms, dedicated events, etc.</li> </ul>	Farming media Advisors	Research synopsis Summary reports Content for the farming media
2	Focus on the new generation of advisors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a programme that includes finding the advisor type of people and provide them with training to have the necessary skills to act as an advisor.</li> <li>2. Promoting the profession of advisor.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New generation of enthusiastic and well trained advisors.</li> </ul>	Retired advisors as mentors Universities Vocational schools	Funding - for coordination Training Mentors

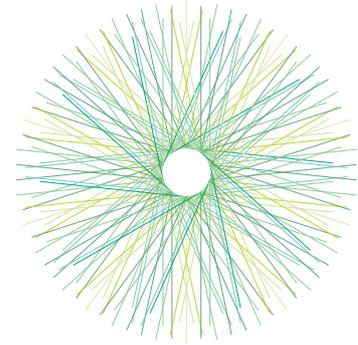
Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
2	Set up a toolkit	1. Create training + tools (materials, examples) for making the AKIS and agriculture attractive to all advisors/consultants, EIP-OG facilitators etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation with different people, as "innovation" has become an attractive term.</li> </ul>	Agricultural advisors NRN professionals Forestry advisors Professional consultants Rural NGO leaders	Funding for organising the training and ensuring the connections between people are fruitful.
2	Upskilling of advisors in innovation support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous professional development programme to develop skills.</li> <li>Identifiable group of innovation support advisors.</li> <li>Include farm advisors and other animators.</li> <li>Areas to be covered are broader than agriculture.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused and managed groups.</li> <li>Delivery of farmer focused advisory initiatives.</li> </ul>	Farm advisors Vets Food safety Marketing experts Farmers with a track record in networks. eg. Local heroes Government Agricultural Chambers	Pool of trainers Funding Interactive tools

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
2	Agricultural education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Link the objectives of various EU programmes.</li> <li>2. Train the directors of agricultural colleges to manage AKIS related programmes.</li> <li>3. Train the trainers</li> <li>4. Encourage schools to aim for higher targets.</li> <li>5. Address the lack of interest from new students.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better coordination from EU level.</li> <li>• Better coordination at national level.</li> <li>• Education helps to improve national AKIS.</li> </ul>	<p>Agricultural educators from schools &amp; Universities</p> <p>Trainers</p> <p>Trainers of trainers</p>	<p>Use art 71 and 72 to incorporate educational activities in projects.</p>
2	"Foreign value"	Taking the reference stakeholders and visiting already-working newly developed cross-sector value chains and business models in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of the opportunities.</li> <li>• New cross-sector value chains and business models development and implementation.</li> <li>• New production techniques.</li> </ul>	<p>Farmers</p> <p>Sector specific advisors</p>	<p>Incentives?</p> <p>Support for direct involvement of farmers</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Facilitators</p>
4	Digital tutors	Empower advisors and farms to use digital technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation of the level of digital competences in society</li> </ul>	<p>Knowledge and skills owners</p>	

Themes	Intervention title	Description of intervention	Expected outcomes	Stakeholders that need to be involved and how	Types of resources required to support
4	Involvement in international exchange projects/ programmes	Engagement of farmers and advisors in international exchange projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crosspollination of knowledge and ideas.</li> </ul>	Farmers Advisors	
4	National platform supporting crop services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking CAP requirements for farms.</li> <li>• Monitoring how are crops performing in the field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less advisory time wasted with CC.</li> <li>• Reduced penalties.</li> <li>• Easier communications with farmers.</li> <li>• Easier compliance.</li> </ul>	Ministry Industry Farmers Advisory Service Regional Managing Authorities Funding agencies	Budget for development & maintenance. Codesign with end users of project outcomes. Software development & maintenance.



[Watch the EIP-AGRI animated video](#) to see what **AKIS** stands for, and how it can help to tackle current and future challenges for farmers, foresters, rural communities and many others.



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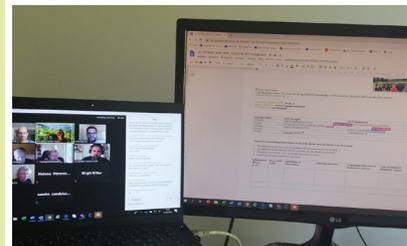
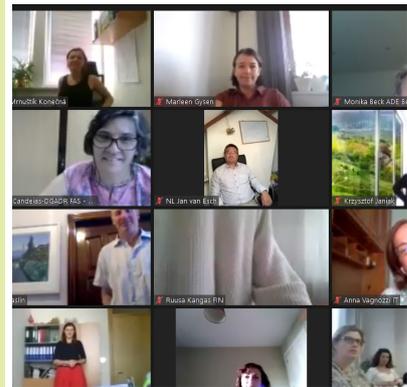


**The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'** (EIP-AGRI) is one of five EIPs launched by the European Commission in a bid to promote rapid modernisation by stepping up innovation efforts.

The **EIP-AGRI** aims to catalyse the innovation process in the **agricultural and forestry sectors** by bringing **research and practice closer together** – in research and innovation projects as well as through the EIP-AGRI network.

**EIPs aim** to streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives and complement them with actions where necessary. Two specific funding sources are particularly important for the EIP-AGRI:

- the EU Research and Innovation framework, Horizon 2020
- the EU Rural Development Policy



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Join the EIP-AGRI network &  
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