

Learning from peers (the monitor farm experience)

Key points from discussion/ lessons learnt

- **Background:** Scottish monitor farms – “self-help group” in response to crises – operating for 10 years in Scotland
- Farmers volunteer to host to host the self-improvement group – ‘community group’
- **Simple aim:** All work together to improve profitability of the Monitor Farm and hence improve profits of all farms in the area



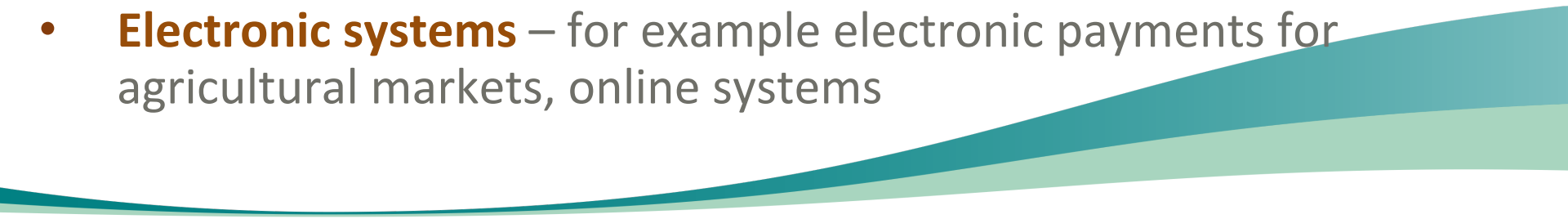
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Key points from discussion/ lessons learnt

- **Collective vs individual interest:** farmers are **open to share** their experience – they are a ‘community group’ – ideal size of group is 15... BUT...**in some MS it may not work** (lack of cooperation), e.g. sharing financial, etc. details about farms
- **What is the aim?** Competitiveness/profitability – sharing and peer-learning – In SE they focus on those who are willing to develop
- **Who benefits and what are the benefits?** On focus farms (Northern Ireland) the main beneficiary is the focus farm itself (financial support) – monitor farms support more collective interest (social aspects, peer-learning, etc.) – social benefits are key. There **has to be value in it** so that you come back
- **Transferability of the approach – one size does not fit all: More than one approach** can be identified – what suits best depends on context/culture...Different types of learning: (1) sharing/group model; (2) knowledge transfer; (3) entrepreneurial
- **Peer-to-peer exchange is good – farmers only?** What difference it makes in the **wider rural development context?** Link it to other stakeholders/wider rural community (tourism – village shops – **sustainable energy...**)

Food supply chains

Key points from discussion/ lessons learnt

- **Using networking** - for example preparing farmers for a tender
 - **Education** – working with children, and including local communities - **Pilot programmes** – creating cases that can be replicated (e.g. Rhone Alps school food procurement)
 - **Future farmers** – investing in young people through education and land access consideration
 - **Working on a fork-to-farm basis** – starting with the consumer to improve targeting
 - **Using research and innovation** to make a case (EIP work, health impacts, environmental benefit)
 - Public Procurement – Sharing best practice across the EU
 - **Electronic systems** – for example electronic payments for agricultural markets, online systems
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Engaging young farmers

Key points from discussion/ lessons learnt

- **Overcoming 'traditional' generational change constraints** (access to land, access to capital, facilitating succession) requires both multiple stakeholders and should be based on specific opportunities and business models
- **Not just farmer-to-farmer exchange, other stakeholders are vital** - marketing chain participants, finance, environmental organisations
- **Different countries have very different issues**: significant differences in challenges (e.g. access to land) – in some countries (e.g. Southern Europe) there is a **renewed interest in agriculture** (e.g. young people due to lack of jobs in cities, enthusiasm for healthy living, organic production, ecosystems) – often no farming background
- **Diversity of means/approaches required**: e.g. involvement of social sector stakeholders operating in urban areas
- **Generate positive attitude towards farming**: wide set of stakeholders, multipliers – special attention to schools