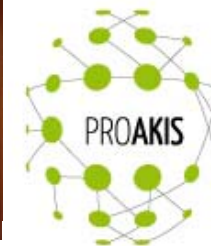


# PRO AKIS regional workshop – Copenhagen: Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems for an inclusive Europe - Feb, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> 2014

*Countries Covered:*

*Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom*



## *Background and objectives*

Pro-AKIS is an EU FP 7 project that investigates agricultural advisory services within the context of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS). During the first year, the project team compiled an inventory of AKIS institutions in 27 EU member states with a focus on the functions of advisory services. This newsletter reports on one of three workshops which took place in Copenhagen which aimed at:

1. Presenting, evaluating and complementing findings on AKIS and advisory systems in selected countries
2. Confirming results; identifying controversies and discussing challenges for AKIS and advisory systems with AKIS stakeholders from the respective countries.
3. Discussing and developing policy recommendations.

## Workshop Agenda

### Session 1: 18 February

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 12:30pm - 01:30pm | Registration and lunch  |
| 01:30pm           | Welcome to the Workshop   |
| 01:30pm - 03:30pm | AKIS and Advisory services – results from the PRO AKIS inventory<br>Presentations and discussion  |
| 03:30pm - 04:00pm | Break   |
| 04:00pm - 05:15pm | AKIS and advisory services in specific countries<br>Poster presentations and group discussions to provide feedback on national AKIS results and identify transnational questions and issues |
| 05:15pm - 06:00pm | Challenges and controversies with regards to AKIS and advisory services<br>Plenary: gathering of group results and defining the topics for the working groups                               |

### Session 2: 19 February

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 09:00am - 10:30am | Recent challenges and controversies<br>Working groups on selected topics  |
| 10:30am - 11:00am | Break   |
| 11:00am - 11:45am | Reporting and taking stock – insights and highlights from the working groups<br>Plenary: presentation of workshop results and discussion with results to the PRO AKIS inventories |
| 11:45am – 12:30pm | Conclusions and recommendations for advisory services and AKIS in the addressed member states<br>Plenary discussion<br>Outlook on follow-up, lunch                                |

## Key issues raised and discussed during the workshop

1. **Quality of advisory service**
2. **Innovation**
3. **New actors/users**
4. **Private/public delivery**
5. **The role of sector industry**

# 1 *Quality of advice*

- *How do we know that AKIS is doing a good job? Who decides what is good?*
- *How do we ensure good quality?*



## *The performance of AKIS can be observed through:*

- satisfaction amongst users farmers highlighted through surveys
- competitiveness in global markets
- successful farmers (economic terms)
- changes in farm situation and comparisons
- case studies of success: concrete results of advisory action
- the actual practices of farmers (not simply receiving new information)
- provision of public goods in and by farming (impact on soil degradation, social inclusion)
- flow: research -> advice -> farming.
- progress of the farming sector
- external peer reviews of AKIS.

## *The actors' who decide what is good AKIS include:*

- providers (other rural actors)
- farmers
- funders (profit, public goods)
- the general public
- however, such a diverse range of actors might lead to numerous different opinions.

## *For a well-functioning AKIS is known through:*

- performance of farming sector
- advice being put into practice (or not for

## *Good quality advice can be ensured through:*

- qualification of farmers (long term)
- peer review process
- seeing to it that farmers' needs are accounted for in research and innovation
- working with knowledge providers – capacities
- constant update of knowledge and adjustment of methodology to the needs of clients and users (e.g. young farmers)
- dedicating time and money to the positive impacts and results on public good (not simply based on the amount of money spent)

# 2 *Innovation*

- *What are the ideal connections between actors for innovation*
- *How to get knowledge/innovation implemented in practice?*
- *What is the best way of bridging the gap between research and farmers?*



- discouraging top down approach (research -> advisers -> farmers) as it doesn't work
- improving and maintaining better communication
- ensuring a secure and steady means of funding as the mode of funding is connected to the priorities
- recognising and making use of the services of innovation brokers

# 3 *New actors/users*

- *Who are new the actors/users?*
- *How can AKIS adjust to these in the future*
- *How can AKIS contribute to succession? (i.e. users and advisers)*



## *New actors/users*

- conditions which lead to emerging new users include: changing policies, market conditions, and/or viewing AKIS from a wider perspective.
- such new users/actors include amongst others: migrants to rural areas, family members, new small scale farmers and users in emerging sectors as well as part time farmers.

## *How to adjust to the incoming new actors/users*

- need for adopting a wide perspective on AKIS
- need for continuous and improving education and training e.g. vocational schools, learning modules, web based learning.
- need for constant improvement in methodologies
- need for coordination in the system e.g. role of government

### How to contribute to succession (for advisers/farmers)

- Constant awareness creation on issue of succession
- Support to young farmers encouraging them towards business oriented farming approaches/not as parents did
- providing career steps for advisers
- constantly updating and improving on new methods to address young farmers

#### Private - public delivery

- How can the private and public sector complement each other?
- What are the roles?
- How can tension/competition be avoided?

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- Funding provided by private sector increases financial diversities though this sometimes causes tension.
- The conclusion is that there should be regular assessments of private/independent advisory services in cases where they are pushed to cooperate with the public sector (e.g. Universities) or with regional governments?

- The public sector on the other hand is seen to be good at creating publicity, pro-active development, public goods ICT tools etc.
- The question remains as to what happens in cases where public advice is insufficient?.
- This gives room for private advice, hence the need for either of them to complement each other.
- Knowledge flows often take place between the public and private.
- While the state on the one hand can induce cooperation through projects to attract private entrepreneurs to join with public services for new clients and methods, the question as to how to get private actors to share knowledge remains.

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#### Role of sector industry

- How is industry included in AKIS?
- What are the roles?
- What is the strength of industry coordination? And the weaknesses?

- The first question has been how the industry is included in AKIS?.
- General agreement has been that this takes place in different areas or under different functions e.g. through advisory functions, research, influential/lobbying organisations etc.
- Other important sectors include the different positions/roles performed by the upstream vs. downstream industries while sectors such as the agro-food sector are also predominantly seen to be industry driven.
- The roles of industries predominantly include, amongst others, offering advice, research (own) collaborative with R&D, lobbying, funding and sometimes defining trends.

- The strength of industry is mostly seen in enhancing completion in advisory services for (instance), and innovation.
- Nevertheless, weaknesses of industries include too much sector or product orientation and conflicting interests.
- The challenges which are still observed includes possibilities of how to enhance collaboration between industry and other AKIS actors (mainly public and public funded

## 6 Reflections and conclusions from Workshop

The poster presentations in the walking teams was very inclusive of the participants and offered room for clarifying questions and serious discussions. The approach created high energy and involvement in the walking teams



The most important findings of the workshop are presumably the identification of 5 areas where serious attention and development in the future will contribute to the improvement of the AKIS system and its efficiency.

- 1 The private-public relations established were important for efficiently working together.

- 2 The role of the agri-industry should be examined and clarified
- 3 Quality of advisory services should be monitored.
- 4 New actors and users should have more attention and their interests and development supported.
- 5 Innovation should be further developed and the gap between farmers and researchers should be closed.



Also the linkages and co-operation between them is diverse – in some cases more strong and formal, in other weak or informal.

Regarding the type of advisory organisation, it can be noticed, there are different types of organisations and institutions present - public, private, FBOs, NGOs, as well as free lancers. The dominant type of public (fully and semi-public) advisory organisation is in: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany (in 6 states), Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, UK (Scotland and North Ireland); private (non-profit and profit) in: Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Finland, Germany (in 4 states), The Netherlands, UK (England and Wales); FBOs (chambers of agriculture, farmer unions, farmer associations, farmer co-operatives) in: Austria, Belgium (Wallonia), Cyprus, France, Germany (in 7 states), Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Regarding the major target groups for dominant types of advisory organisations, there are in general the following clients: (a) for public advisory organisations – medium and small commercial farms, and young farmers; (b) for private (profit and not profit) organisations – large, medium and small commercial farms; (c) for FBOs – medium, large and small commercial farms and producers' groups.

## 7 *Reflection and conclusions based on inventory reports*

PRO AKIS inventory reports give a general overview of the AKIS organisations in surveyed EU countries covered during this workshop. The reports stress that there is no homogeneity in terms of policy, funding, number and type of institutions and organisations within AKIS, ownership, type of clients, type of advices and advisory methods used. In some countries there is a wide range of institutions and organisations involved in AKIS (e.g. public sector, research and education, private sector, FBOs, and NGOs), in some countries the number of institutions and organisations involved is much lower (some sectors are not present).



## 8 *Participating countries and institutions*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Institution</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Agriculture University Plovdiv
<b>Denmark</b>	Knowledge Centre for Agriculture
<b>Denmark</b>	Green Academy Aarhus
<b>Denmark</b>	University of Southern Denmark
<b>Denmark</b>	Danish Agriculture and Food Council
<b>Estonia</b>	Baltic Studies Center
<b>Estonia</b>	Rural Development Foundation Estonia
<b>Estonia</b>	Ministry of Agriculture , Estonia
<b>Finland</b>	Association of ProAgria Centres
<b>France</b>	Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA)
<b>France</b>	French Chamber of Agriculture
<b>France</b>	Association de Coordination Technique Agricole (ACTA)
<b>Germany</b>	University of Hohenheim
<b>Germany</b>	Leibniz-Zentrum für Agrarlandschaftsforschung (ZALF) e.V

<b>Country</b>	<b>Institution</b>
<b>Germany</b>	Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen
<b>Germany</b>	Landwirtschaftliche Familienberatungen
<b>Ireland</b>	College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise
<b>Ireland</b>	The Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc)
<b>Lithuania</b>	Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service
<b>Lithuania</b>	Lithuanian Agricultural Adviosry Service (LAAS)
<b>Lithuania</b>	Aleksandras Stulginskis University
<b>Latvia</b>	Latvian Rural and Training Centre
<b>Portugal</b>	Universidade de Tràs-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)
<b>Poland</b>	University of Agriculture in Krakow
<b>Slovakia</b>	Slovak University of Agriculture
<b>Sweden</b>	Swedish University of Agricultural Science
<b>UK</b>	James Hutton Institute