



Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability

10th meeting
22 February 2018

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09:00 – 10:00 Welcome & introduction by *Alberto D'Avino (DG AGRI)*

Session I “Ready, steady, go: launching new EIP-AGRI networking activities for 2018

- EIP-AGRI network work plan for 2018, *Koen Desimpelaere (EIP-AGRI Service Point)*
- New Focus Groups – Launch of calls for experts
 - FG 29 “New feed for livestock”
 - FG 30 “Protecting perennial crop production from frost damage”
 - FG 31 “Reducing food loss on the farm”
- Workshop “Innovative water management in agriculture”, *Anikó Seregélyi (DG AGRI)*
- Communicating the digital transformation in agriculture, *Fabio Cossu (DG AGRI)*



10:00 – 11:00 Interactive session II “Improving OG connection and upscaling their results”

- Introduction by *Rob Peters (DG AGRI)*
- Presentation of two H2020 Multi-Actor Projects involving OGs
 - LANDMARK, *Francesca Bampa*
 - EuroDairy, *Ray Keatinge*
- Recent and ongoing experiences connecting OGs
 - Flash presentations by members of the Subgroup*



11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

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11:30 – 13:00 **Interactive session II “Improving OG connection and upscaling their results” (cont.)**

- Introduction by *DG AGRI and EIP-AGRI Service Point*
- Forthcoming study assessing Operational Groups
- Discussion in groups: how to foster cooperation among OGs

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 15:00 **Session III “Evaluation innovation”**

- Presentation of the guidelines on evaluating innovation in RDPs
European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, *Hannes Wimmer*
- **Assessing Innovation, what’s going on?**

Flash presentations by members of the Subgroup

15:00 – 15:10 “Intermezzo”: AGROPOL Pilot Project

15:10 – 15:40 Coffee break

15:40 – 16:30 **Session IV “Can we do better?”**

- Results of the self-assessment of the EU Rural Networks up to 2017
DG AGRI and EIP-AGRI Service Point
- Discussion on the follow-up to the recommendations relevant for the EIP-AGRI network

16:30 – 16:45 Wrap-up / next steps

16:45 Closing



LEARNING THROUGH ON-GOING EVALUATION OF EIP-AGRI IN SWEDEN

The research team consists of:

**Katarina Eckerberg, professor and associate
professors Therese Bjärstig and Anna Zachrisson,
Dept. of Political Science, Umeå University**

SWEDEN



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

Nilla Nilsson-Linde, innovation broker, EIP-Agri, Sweden
Subgroup on innovation, Brussels, 22 February 2018

LEARNING THROUGH ON-GOING EVALUATION

- The research team conducts learning evaluation of the design/organisation and implementation of EIP-Agri in Sweden during the period 2016-2021
- The research results are regularly communicated with the relevant decision-makers with the aim to improve the process along the way, and have already resulted in some adjustments regarding the organisation and implementation of EIP-Agri
- also adapting the study to emerging issues in the ongoing implementation
- aiming to strike a healthy balance between the role as independent researchers and being constructive by assisting in improving the design/organisation of the policy-making process



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first stage of the evaluation research focuses on:

- perceived obstacles in the application process,
- the roles and assignments of different actors,
- how the actors interact,
- the need of information and support,
- potential tensions and challenges in the decision-making process,
- what can be learned from the process so far and how it might be improved



METHODS AND MATERIAL

- in-depth interviews with officials and participants,
- participant observation in decision-making meetings,
- analyses of documents (i.e. decision/meeting protocols, applications etc.),
- a web survey among the applicants in spring 2018,
- a screening of EIP-Agri programmes in some other European countries
- To date, we have studied several rounds of applications, attended several meetings with the support and decision-making staff for the programme, and interviewed eighteen key individuals from those groups through semi-structured telephone conversations



PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS (I)

- Administrative set-up of EIP-Agri took more time than was initially expected, setting up the two processes for the decision-making including funding criteria for group support and project support, respectively
- Innovation projects are first assessed by the Advisory Committee, consisting of an independent expert group headed by the responsible officer at the Swedish Board of Agriculture, which ranks the projects and makes evaluation statements. The final decision is then made by the head officer at the Swedish Board of Agriculture based on the Advisory Committee statements, but often complemented by further enquiries to the applicants
- Decisions about innovation groups were easier since these receive only small lump sums and the selection is made solely within the Swedish Board of Agriculture



PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS (II)

- The quality of applications has improved, but many still need complementary information before decision-making is possible – creating a heavy administrative burden
- 3 issues have frequently been in need for further clarification: the ‘innovativeness’ of the project as such, budgetary issues, and its market potential i.e. the plan on how the innovation will become spread and generally put to use
- Some concern about the relationship between the group and project support since the two processes are running in parallel
- How experts are appointed and used has been brought up by our participant observations and interviews, incl. the role of the support group (the innovation brokers)



RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF FROM THE RESEARCH TEAM SO FAR

- Further improve internal communication within and external communication about the programme
- Shorten administrative decision making routines and minimise the need to ask for complementary information to the applications
- Improve the e-application procedure in order to also obtain ongoing statistical information and be able to evaluate progress
- Need to urgently find routines for ongoing assessment and reliable data for future evaluation of projects including programme goal efficiency



FURTHER ISSUES TO STUDY

In the web survey with applicants and through further interviews, documentation and participant observation:

- Whether the rather difficult application process for projects refrains less resourced applicants from engaging in EIP-Agri,
- The distributional effects across different types of innovation projects, geographical scales and with regard to gender aspects
- The potential effects of the funded innovation projects and groups on mobilization for sustainability (together with a parallel evaluation)
- How the relations and division of authority between the decision-making group in the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Advisory Committee and the support group (innovation brokers) can be improved, incl. with the larger rural development network and international networking

