



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 58

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**Advisory challenges in being an innovative farmer in Greece:
struggling for verified knowledge**

Three innovations from Greece that were examined in the framework of the AgriLink project, concerning the mating disruption of insects and the new crops of avocado and stevia, show the central role of peer farmers in information and knowledge dissemination throughout the innovation processes. Exchanges among peer-farmers are integrated in everyday life and often cannot be separated from their social life. Moving beyond learning from everyday interactions, the stevia growers were locally self-organised, carrying out experiments on cultivation practices and sharing experiences on a regular/systematic basis.

Nevertheless, farmers understand that the knowledge gained from peers' exchanges is not always valid. Lacking a public-funded advisory system, they rely on private input suppliers for professional advice, though they recognise that suppliers are not sufficiently reliable advice providers. Many farmers realise that critical thinking skills govern their ability to innovate, and that the lack of sufficient public educational structures and impartial advisory services of quality does not allow for optimism. On their part, advice suppliers recognise the need for valid and easily accessible knowledge for both farmers and themselves and the need for tools, such as digital knowledge platforms to support their role. The study points out the weak links among AKIS actors, making the successful adoption of innovations harder and undermining the farming sector potentials. This makes some actors put expectations on the implementation of the Farm Advisory Systems under the EU policy for setting procedures that will help the emergence of qualified advisors able to boost innovations in rural areas (<https://www.agrilink2020.eu>).

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The study shows that experiential, peer-to-peer learning took place among the farmers in all cases and among the advisors especially involved in the case of avocado. Moreover, many advice suppliers involved in the innovations identify farmers as valuable sources of knowledge. These facts support actors' potential for future sustained collaboration through sharing of knowledge.

However, the dissemination of non-evidence based information and opinion exchange without scientific verification drove in many cases producers to successive failures. Such evidence highlights apart of the potential benefits of peer-to-peer learning the urgent need for structured advisory services and better linking research with farming practice.



ABOUT AGRILINK

Agrilink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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