



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 70

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INNOVATIESTEUNPUNT

What roles do advisory services play in the Innovation decision-making in Flanders?

In Flanders, an environmental technology is introduced to the market for reducing the energy consumption on a farm, called a Pocket digester. The decision-making of a farmer for acquiring this technique had been studied in the H2020-project AgriLink. Farmers often read about the existence of the pocket digester in technical magazines or on websites from advisory organisations such as farmer-based cooperatives (e.g. Boerenbond). Besides those, individual contact with other farmers who had already implemented the innovation is another major source of information. Farmers would often go and visit the farms of colleagues who had recently installed their pocket digester. Furthermore, farmers also visit agricultural fairs to find out the latest innovations in agriculture. The pocket digester has won an innovation prize at the Agribex fair in 2011, sparking its publicity. At these fairs, farmers could also meet representatives from the installing firm who were final important actors during the awareness stage. During the assessment stage, farmers would talk to representatives from the installation firm and talk to peer farmers who had already installed a pocket digester. They also seek information from farmer organisations (e.g. Innovatiesteunpunt), where they could meet up with advisors individually or attend workshops.

These instances also provided additional services such as feasibility studies. The main (and often the only) supporting actors during the implementation stage clearly were representatives from the installation firm. So the role of independent advisory service in this case is small. However, farmers clearly stated that independent advise is needed to get an unbiased answer to their questions.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Extra

Small-scale or pocket digestion is a technology where the anaerobic digestion process is applied to proprietary biomass flows for the on-site production of renewable energy. After combustion of the biogas in a combined heat and power (CHP) installation, this energy is made available in the form of electricity and heat and is used to a maximum on-site. The popularity of pocket digestion has increased greatly in the last few years in the Flemish region of Belgium and a number of neighbouring countries. In Flanders there are about 120 sold pocket installations to this date and at first it was expected that this number would increase significantly. However, for reasons that will be explained during this report, this was not the case.

Links:



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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