



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 65

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The KIS-based enhancement of ecological infrastructures (EIs) strategies in the vineyards of upper Douro valley in Portugal

Winegrowers' strategies to enhance ecological infrastructures (EIs) consist of agroecological farm practices combining vineyards and slopes green cover with recovery of traditional features of the landscape like hedgerows and schist walls. Although farm-unique and time-evolving, these strategies can be replicated in other wine regions across Europe and worldwide by exploiting the agroecological specificities and agrarian structure of each place. A successful replication relies on a locally-based KIS (Knowledge and Innovation System) deeply networked with applied research. EIs are a knowledge-intensive innovation entailing cognitively demanding activities, such as in-field testing, experimenting, monitoring and registering, and the farmer's engagement in informal peer-to-peer learning intensive routines. It must be based on a strong interaction with R&D players, as observed in the Douro KIS-based enhancement of ecological infrastructures. A key player is a farmer-based advisory organisation (ADVID) defined by a strong back-office, comprising intense networking with research institutions and worldwide experts, and enabled by highly qualified advisors, including PhDs, who can directly engage in research activities and co-create applied scientific knowledge with researchers and winegrowers. This tripartite partnership is crucial to disseminate EIs, despite limitations, such as the scarcity of public funding to applied research and demonstration activities. Making available funding to continuously develop these activities would enhance agro-ecological transitions at the regional landscape level by bringing farmers on board and enlarging peer-to-peer learning networks.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This KIS highlights the importance of innovation brokers to boost complex and knowledge demanding new initiatives, such as EIs. It also shows how farmer-based advisory organisations (FBO) can play a leading role as skilled bridges builders. How can it be replicated by other FBO? By investing strongly in advisory back-office activities: supporting their advisors advanced training (e.g. PhD level) and skilling them by facilitating their engagement in local and international knowledge and innovation networks. How can FBO be buoyed by public policy to invest in back-office activities? Supporting multi-actors knowledge and innovation networks, along with the funding of long-term in-field experimenting, testing and demonstrating projects. Why is public policy support so important? Because it will allow these bridge builders to engage innovation pioneers, who can break the path-dependency by introducing disruptive innovation into the development of strong local-based KIS.

Learn more about the case:

<https://www.advid.pt/&codIdioma=2> (Website of the FBO ADVID)

<https://www.advid.pt/ecovitis> (EcoVitis: In-field E&T&D multi-actor project)



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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