



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 67

AUTHOR(S):

Lívia Madureira

Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

How a farmer-based advisory organisation (FBO) boosted smart irrigation in Northern Lezíria do Tejo

Smart irrigation is spreading across Northern Lezíria do Tejo, converting it into Portuguese leading region regarding irrigation eco-efficiency and farmers' engagement in digitalisation. AGROMAIS (<http://agromais.pt>) pioneered the introduction of soil moisture probes in the region in 1998. Founded in 1987, this cooperative launched a private, farmer-owned advisory company, AGROMAIS PLUS, in 1998, that encompasses both front- and back-office advisory activities. Its success in disseminating smart irrigation in the region lies on its covering the entire chain of the advisory process. Front-office activities comprise the supply of one-to-one advice to farmers together with selling inputs and /or irrigation equipment.

Closeness to farmers and supply of high-quality advisory services earned them farmers' trust and willingness to testing and experimenting activities when challenged. Therefore, FBO successfully launched trial campaigns offering free or reduced fee rental of probes, enabling farmers to test the technology without risks and free-of-charge or at reduced costs. AGROMAIS is currently developing training actions directed at adopters with autonomy difficulties, aiming at overcoming digitalisation aversion. Back-office activities, underpinning high quality front-office advice, include highly qualified advisors and a long-term pro-active interaction with the hi-tech companies developing the software and apps to the probes. By working together with the hi-tech companies, it is possible to co-develop solutions best-fitted to local agroecological conditions and farmers' limited digital skills.

CONTACTS:

UTAD, Quinta de Prados,
5000 801, Vila Real,
Portugal

Email: lmadurei@utad.pt

COUNTRY/REGION:

PORTUGAL

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AGROMAIS itself is an example of an innovative farm advisory business model. Launched by and integrating AGROTEJO, a larger regional farmer association, it shares their innovation vision and focus on farmers' competitiveness by investing in their productivity gains (e.g. awarding farmers with higher performance), while influencing the agrarian and rural development policies. Besides, in recent years, it has been engaged in safeguarding biodiversity and implementing a social responsibility strategy focussed on local social problems.

AGROTEJO (União Agrícola do Norte do Vale do Tejo) was founded in 1986 by a group of 600 farmers of Northern Ribatejo. This FBO led the dissemination of irrigated corn in the region when Portugal entered the EEC (European Economic Community). Over the years they have been able to adjust to CAP reforms by being innovative. The proof of its successful innovation strategy is the vitality of their own "start-ups", comprising AGROMAIS, AGROMAIS PLUS, HORTEJO and ONGATEJO, to face specific challenges (e.g., quality advisory, farmers' competitiveness and eco-efficiency, biodiversity safeguard).

Learn more about AGROTEJO, AGROMAIS, AGROMAIS PLUS, HORTEJO AND ONGATEJO <http://www.agrotejo.pt/> | <http://agromais.pt/> | <https://www.pauldoboquilobo.pt/unidade-de-gesto>



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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pierre.labarthe@inrae.fr

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