



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR.86

Living labs for supporting part-time farmers

Living-lab process appears to be a suitable tool in supporting innovations' adoption within groups of part-time farmers. An experience developed in the last decade in the region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy) offers an example applied to commons management and the creation of a local food supply chain of flour and bread. "Classical" advisory services fail in similar cases due to the diversity of topics and the inclusion of the social dimension. The living lab approach offers the possibility to facilitate the involvement of multiple actors with different knowledge and needs, and to grant continuity to the supports of farmers, especially in the first years, when they feel more unsecure.

In the case under study, the innovation is adopted predominantly by non-professional farmers. Although they do not significantly benefit from it financially, they adopt the innovation because of its value in matters of social innovation and environmental sustainability.

The difficulties encountered relate mainly to the adoption of co-designed and interactive tools, due to farmers' age and educational background. The integration of part-time farmers in the management of common lands and in the creation of local food supply chains offered the chance to start innovative processes, which still need to fine tune their economic sustainability (and therefore become more attractive for professional farmers), but are already changing the approach of the community to local and sustainable food.

Information on the Agrilink case study:

<https://www.agrilink2020.eu/living-labs/rebuilding-a-local-food->

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COUNTRY/REGION:

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The aim of the Italian living lab was that of facilitating the creation of innovative advisory systems and tools able to provide support to a demographically and professionally diverse group of farmers (including part-time ones) and other stakeholders in the consolidation of a pre-existent wheat value chain initiative that is rooted in the cooperative management of common land. Since the Living Lab was established, the initiative has developed further and it now involves an increasing number of farmers, local bakers and citizens willing to support the initiative through the purchase of flour and bread. Also, schools in the area have joined the initiative by including the topics of local sustainable agriculture, nutrition and rural landscape preservation in the curriculum. To support the development of such a complex multi-actor initiative, a wide range of skills and knowledge was needed. Classical farming advisory services did not have the experience nor the right tools to support this initiative. On the other hand, the Living Lab methodology was effective in stimulating active participation, problem solving and involvement among actors and stakeholders, which are all essential factors for a fruitful innovation process.

More info on DES “Medio Friuli”: www.des-mediofriuli.it



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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All the Practice Abstracts prepared by the Agrilink project in the EIP-AGRI common format can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/agrilink-agricultural-knowledge-linking-farmers>