



AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE: LINKING FARMERS,  
ADVISORS AND RESEARCHERS TO BOOST INNOVATION

# AGRILINK'S MULTI-LEVEL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## GLOSSARY

Coordinated by **The James Hutton Institute**

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# AgriLink

**Agricultural Knowledge: Linking farmers, advisors and researchers to boost innovation.**

***AgriLink’s multi-level conceptual framework***  
***Glossary***

The elaboration of this Conceptual Framework has been coordinated by **The James Hutton Institute**, leader of AgriLink’s WP2.

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This document presents the multi-level conceptual framework of the research and innovation project AgriLink. It is a living document.

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It has gone through a transdisciplinary process, with implication of both practitioners and researchers in writing, editing or reviewing the manuscript. This participation has been organised within AgriLink’s consortium and beyond, with the involvement of members of the International Advisory Board of the project, including members of the Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research of the European Commission.





## Glossary

**AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System):** the collection of agricultural information providers, the flows of information between them, and the institutions regulating these relations. Alternative acronyms AKS and AIS are sometimes used to refer to variations of this definition.

**Back-Office/Front-Office:** Front office is where relationships between farmers and advisors are built; Back-office is where evidence and knowledge are accumulated and up-dated (e.g. training and networking of advisors, research and development)

**European Commission (EC):** the politically independent executive arm of the European Union (EU). It draws up proposals for new European legislation and implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

**E-Agriculture:** agriculture with substantial information and communications technology (ICT) involvement.

**European Innovation Partnership “Promoting Productivity and Sustainability” (EIP-Agri):** A European Commission-funded initiative to support interactive innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors that 'achieves more from less' input and works in harmony with the environment. It is one of five EIPs implemented in Europe.

**EU-FAS (European Union Farm Advisory Service):** the advisory services formally supported by the EU through national governments. This represents a subset of the Farm Advisory Services described below.

**Farm advisory services:** the set of organisations that enable farmers to develop farm-level solutions, enhance skills and coproduce knowledge with advisors. These organisations often combine front- and back-office activities. These organisations include traditional advice providers (chambers of agriculture, public bodies, etc.), farmer-based organisations (unions, associations, cooperatives, etc.), independent consultants, NGOs, upstream or downstream industries, and high-tech sectors.

**Farmer:** a producer of agricultural commodities. The term includes the full range of scales and land holding types (e.g. tenant farmers, contract farmers). Multiple household members can be farmers (e.g. spouses, successors, employees).

**Focus region:** an agricultural census region (NUTS3 or NUTS4) in which most of the data collection will be undertaken.

**Government:** the formal institutional structure and decision-making process of the modern State (Mantino, 2010: 4).

**Governance:** markets, policies, regulations, networks and social norms producing and enforcing rules for activities in specified contexts.

**Horizon 2020 (H2020):** the financial instrument for implementing the EU's Innovation Union, one of 7 flagship initiatives for the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. H2020 runs from 2014-2020.

**Information and Communications Technology (ICT):** technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications.

**Innovation:** the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations. Innovation activities are all scientific, technological, organisational, financial and commercial steps which actually, or are intended to, lead to the implementation of innovations (OECD 2009). Examples of innovations promoted by the EIP Agri include technological breakthroughs, new processes and business models, non-technological innovation and innovation in the services sector.



**Innovation areas:** eight innovations selected for empirical research in AgriLink WP2.

**Interactivity:** the degree of interactions between researchers and practitioners through the project

**Internet of Things (IoT):** A network of internet-connected objectives able to collect and exchange data using embedded sensors.

**Knowledge Intensive Business Services (KIBS):** businesses whose primary input and service output is knowledge

**Knowledge:** facts, information, understanding and skills acquired through experience or education or research; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject<sup>1</sup>

**Learning:** The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught<sup>2</sup>.

**LINSA (Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture):** Networks of producers, customers, experts, NGOs, SMEs, local administrations, as well as official researchers and extensionists, that are mutually engaged with common goals for sustainable agriculture and rural development - cooperating, sharing resources and co-producing new knowledge by creating conditions for communication (Brunori et al., 2013). LINSAs were the focus of the [SOLINSA](#) FP7 project.

**Living Labs:** a gathering of partnerships in which businesses, authorities, citizens and other relevant stakeholders work together to create, validate, and test new services, business ideas, markets and technologies in real-life-contexts.

**Micro-level Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (micro-AKIS):** the knowledge-system that farmers personally assemble, including the range of individuals and organisations from whom farmers seek services and exchange knowledge, the processes involved, and how they translate this into innovative activities (or not).

**Multi-level perspective (MLP):** a framework for analysing socio-technical transitions to sustainability.

**Operational Groups:** A group of people who come together to work on a concrete, practical solution or innovative opportunity, funded through the EU Rural Development Policy.

**Regional Farm Advisory System (R-FAS):** the full range of organisations providing advice to farms in a given region, and their connection to wider AKIS organisations.

**Regional multi-actor group:** 5 to 6 persons, representing farmers, advisory organisations researchers, policy makers, agricultural educators, and other relevant actors, such as industry representatives, members of operational groups, rural networks or local development associations

**SCAR:** the European Commission's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research. The committee advises the European Commission and member states on the coordination of research in agriculture, providing strategic policy advice, developing a strong foresight process, developing research agendas and mapping SCAR research capacities.

**SCAR AKIS Strategic Working Group (SCAR AKIS SWG):** The European Commission's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems. Since the first AKIS SWG in 2010, a succession of AKIS SWGs have been formed to address specific issues relating to AKIS in Europe. The fourth SCAR AKIS SWG is currently in progress, and has been focusing on the future of advisory services.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/knowledge>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



**Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)**: Enterprises with 10-49 staff and turnover or balance sheet total of €2-10 million. This definition is important for access to finance and EU support programmes; the definition is currently under review.

**Socio-technical scenarios**: transition pathways that describe how, starting from the present, a future, more sustainable farm advisory system configurations, may develop.

**Sustainable agriculture**: practices which are economically viable, environmentally beneficial, and yield appreciable benefits to society, while not limiting the potential of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Transdisciplinary**: approaches and methodologies that integrate as necessary (a) theories, concepts, knowledge, data, and techniques from two or more scientific disciplines, and (b) non-academic and non-formalized knowledge.