



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 10

Types of knowledge and their role in providing agricultural advice

Knowledge is a key resource in any domain of human activity, including agriculture. Farmers are acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge from sources with varying status and credibility. There are power relations in any production, dissemination and application of knowledge represented by various kinds of individuals and organisations, which allow or restrict them from exerting influence on these processes. This bears implications for the type of knowledge that comes to be acknowledged or rejected as valid, credible and useful by farmers, advisors, scientists, policy-makers, and other actors in the agricultural knowledge and innovation system. The sociology of knowledge, being part of a broader field of science and technology studies, aims to reveal the relations between different kinds of knowledge possessed by various stakeholder groups and the way it is being validated, communicated and applied. For instance, science-based generalisable knowledge is frequently treated as superior to individual and local practice-based knowledge of a farmer. Yet, the scientific knowledge might also turn out not to be fully applicable on a given farm due to the farm's specific features. In providing agricultural advisory services it is therefore important not rely only on the knowledge produced by scientists and implement one-way transfer of information to farmers, but also take into account the daily observations and insights of farmers, thus facilitating mutual knowledge exchange and helping to arrive at efficient individual solutions. For more information see: <https://www.agrilink2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AgriLink-conceptual-framework.-Theory-Primers.24.pdf>.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

An important role in research carried out under the umbrella of social studies of science and technology (STS) nowadays is played by studies on public understanding of science and technology (incl. the relation between lay and expert knowledge) as well as public communication of science and technology, citizen engagement and governance of science and technology. There has been a gradual shift from the traditional positivist to the more critical interpretative approach in the treatment of science-society relations, which implies a move away from expert monopoly over what counts as valid and useful knowledge towards wider stakeholder engagement in setting the research agenda and contributing to the production of scientific knowledge. This reasoning has thus provided room for more interactive and dialogue-based practices of knowledge co-creating and more democratic forms of science governance. While the domain of agricultural research and practice has not been the primary focus area of STS scholars, the ideas developed in this interdisciplinary field can and have been successfully applied also in studying the role of different stakeholders in the agricultural knowledge and innovation system. Drawing on the vast insights from STS research can be highly valuable in assessing and developing efficient and inclusive communication tools in the domain of farm advisory services.



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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<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/agrilink-agricultural-knowledge-linking-farmers>