



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 16

Anchoring and scaling of innovations in agriculture

To spread an innovation to more farmers beyond the few who already adopt it, one needs to understand in which stage the innovation is. Two such stages are called ‘anchoring’ and ‘scaling’.

In the **Anchoring** stage an innovation is still under development and applied by a small number of ‘innovator-farmers’. The definition is:

“Anchoring is the process in which a novelty becomes newly connected, connected in a new way, or connected more firmly to a niche or a regime. The further the process of anchoring progresses, meaning that more new connections supporting the novelty develop, the larger the chances are that anchoring will eventually develop into durable links.”

Three different forms of anchoring are distinguished, notably technological, network and institutional anchoring. *Technological anchoring* takes place when the technical characteristics of a novelty (e.g. new technical concepts) become defined by the actors involved and, hence, become more specific to them. *Network anchoring* means that the network of actors that support the novelty changes, e.g. by enrolling new producers, users or developers. *Institutional anchoring* relates to the institutional characteristics of the novelty, i.e. the new rules that govern its further development and uptake. Institutional anchoring implies that developments within a niche or regime become translated into adapted or new rules that govern, at least temporarily, the activities of both niche and regime actors.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The **Scaling** stage addresses how an innovation, that has been demonstrated to work by a small number of farmers, can spread further. This is not simply a matter of copying because in agriculture, with a broad variety of farming practices, a novelty needs further adaptation to make it work in another location. Furthermore, and not least important, changes beyond the farm level may be needed to make it work on a larger scale, e.g. concerning policy incentives, consumption behaviour, values of various stakeholders, markets and value chains, etc.). The distinction between the anchoring phase and the scaling phase should also be taken into account by advisors when advising a farmer. Such an assessment is also of relevance for other stakeholders, including suppliers (to identify needs for further development), investors (to realise whether they invest primarily in 'learning and development' or in 'marketing'), and policy makers (as different policy instruments are needed to stimulate either anchoring or scaling). This Practice Abstract is derived from one of 27 Theory Primers that support the conceptual framework which underpins the AgriLink project. Each Theory Primer introduces a specific theoretical topic in the conceptual framework and is intended primarily for academic readers. The Practice Abstracts derived from each Theory Primer aim to make these topics more accessible and understandable to a wider non-academic audience. The AgriLink Conceptual Framework and all Theory Primers can be found [here](#).



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>