



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 79

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Agricultural advice addressing the challenges of going online

In Latvia, as in other EU member states, interaction between farmers, small food businesses and agricultural advisors frequently takes place in person. Furthermore, some farmers are used to consulting with their local advisors, with whom they have established a strong personal relationship over many years of professional collaboration. Attempts to integrate digital or online tools into such established patterns of interaction and knowledge exchange may face hurdles. The aim of the [Latvian living lab](#) in the AgriLink project is to create an online platform that will aggregate all the publicly available online resources regarding horticultural processing and assist farmers in their attempts to quickly find the appropriate information. While this can seem like a (simple) technological solution that could benefit its potential users, the platform approaches the relationship between advisor and farmer in a less personal manner than farmers are used to. This, along with a lack of proficiency with digital tools, may deter some farmers and businesses from making use of the platform and, consequently, limit the tool from making a positive contribution. The living lab, therefore, has actively involved advisors in the creation process to ensure that the tool is fit for purpose (e.g. the information is structured intuitively). This experience suggests that an appreciation of the way farmers generally engage the advisory system in the country in question can contribute to developing a solution that builds upon the strengths of online systems whilst circumventing the need to introduce disruptions with unclear consequences for the advisor-farmer relationship.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The living lab in Latvia attempted to involve the potential users, and stakeholders more broadly, in the development of the online platform to make sure that the final product is fit for purpose. To create chances for the intended end-users to express their opinions, the idea for the online platform was presented at several public events (August and October 2018, March, April and June 2019). The aim of these interactive presentations was to encourage feedback on what the platform should contain, and stimulate reflection of the advisory needs that are currently not being met. The feedback we received from the participants was useful and we have moved ahead with building the actual platform, which is currently being set up under the guidance of the Latvian Orchardman Association.

The creation of the platform was not the only purpose of the living lab. In this regard, the reputation and experience of the facilitator Dalija Segliņa has been crucial for building relationships and identifying key stakeholders that should be engaged at specific points in the project. This allowed the Latvian living lab to build new connections among key players in the Latvian advisory landscape and encourage the development of new innovation support services to address existing knowledge gaps.

Updates on the living lab in Latvia 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>