



**PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 87**

**AUTHOR(S):**

Raluca Barbu  
Highclere Consulting

**Importance of the access to clear information for small farmers**

The goal of the [AgriLink Living Lab \(LL\)](#) in Romania was to address the pressing need for a functional knowledge and information exchange system for small-scale farmers (see Practice Abstract No. 9). A multi-stage co-creation process was followed involving experts and end-users to: 1) identify local information needs, 2) draft simple guidance materials, and 3) valorise these materials via training and feedback. The LL started in the south of Romania (Vărăști Commune) with a cooperative of 100+ small farmers (mainly vegetable growers) aiming to professionalise their individual small-scale businesses. A series of meetings was organised with the cooperative leaders, representative members, and an external financial expert. The main need identified was “How can vegetable growers best complete their annual income and tax declaration?”. The financial expert drafted a step-by-step guide (with relevant ‘tips and tricks’) and we then organised two ‘training’ sessions of around 50 people to introduce the guide, get feedback, and valorise the applicability and perceived usefulness of the guide. Around four months later in March 2019, 80 of the 100 farmers participating in the LL submitted their annual fiscal declarations on-time! This was very important for the cooperative to continue its existing contract with a major multiple retailer (Carrefour), which will ultimately lead to increased incomes, better livelihoods, and generally higher levels of professionalism. This simple – but effective – approach has attracted interested from neighbouring villages and other cooperatives (via the CoopNET network) in Romania. The challenge now is to transfer this approach to another sector (e.g. livestock production) with another business model.

**CONTACTS:**

[raluca@highclere-consulting.com](mailto:raluca@highclere-consulting.com)  
[www.highclere-consulting.com](http://www.highclere-consulting.com)

**COUNTRY/REGION:**

Romania

**KEY WORDS:**

#livinglab, #co-creation,  
#cooperation, #creativity,  
#structure

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We base this work on extensive research showing these challenges are quite common throughout agricultural Romania. So, we have inquired among potential multipliers (LAGs, network of cooperatives etc) if the outcomes of this Lab is found being useful and replicable in other parts of the country. Supporting this, we want to adapt the financial guide to farmers that have cattle (meat or dairy products) and tourism services.

The novelty is the co-creative format through we deliver this project, as we filled in the gap generated by the dismantled former state extension services system, by multi-stakeholder engagement and co-creating the information and knowledge support (guideline). We stress on peer-to-peer interaction, expert support and fast access to necessary information.

The most important lessons that we can share from this experience are the **access to clear information** and **association and involvement**.

Small farms require clear information, delivered in simple language, as well as the possibility to discuss questions with advisers without the fear of being penalized for asking questions regarding the challenges they face.

Organized in cooperatives, small farmers can be more easily involved in innovative advisory services, and once they sense the usefulness of the information received, they also become willing to pay for these 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.

### DISCLAIMER:

"This practice abstract reflects only the author's view and the AgriLink project is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains".



[www.agrilink2020.eu](http://www.agrilink2020.eu)

[twitter.com/agrilink2020](https://twitter.com/agrilink2020)

[pierre.labarthe@inrae.fr](mailto:pierre.labarthe@inrae.fr)

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 727577.

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>