

Regional AKIS Stakeholders workshop: Southern Europe Greece AKIS – Brief context

Agricultural context

The agricultural sector in Greece is characterized by the fourth smallest average farm size in Europe (average 6.6 ha. vs. 15.2 ha. in EU-27), one of the highest proportions of small scale family farms (51.5% less than 2 ha.) and the second highest percentage of employment in agriculture (11.1% vs. 4% in EU-27). The average age of farmers is higher than in most European countries (33.5% over 65 years old vs. 32.8% in EU-27); the number of young managers less than 40 years old by 100 elderly managers (65 years and over) is among the lowest in the EU (24.9 vs. 32.5 in EU-27) while their education is the second lowest in the EU (93.2% of the farm managers have practical experience only vs. 68.3% in EU-27). Labour productivity in agriculture (EUR/AWU³) is well below (67.8%) the EU-27 average.

Main characteristics of the AKIS

At national level the main actors are: the Ministry of Rural Development and Food (MRDF/ ex-Ministry of Agriculture/MoA), ELGO DIMITRA, the National Rural Development Programme Managing Authorities (NRDP MA), Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), private input companies (branches of transnational companies) and Farmers Cooperatives' Unions. Other actors are the Ministry of Education, the General Secretary of Research and Technology (currently under the Ministry of Development) and the Geotechnical Chambers of Greece. The rising importance of the secondary and tertiary sector actors has to be underlined (esp. through contract farming arrangements). Finally a couple of bigger players are currently active in advice concerning smart farming.

The Greek AKIS is highly fragmented and ineffective. Decentralisation (late 1990s and early 2020s), the split up of research and (farmers') training from the Ministry of Rural Development and Food (now ELGO DIMITRA) and the inadequate or lacking coordination mechanisms between stakeholders have led, at best, in extremely weak linkages and thus cooperation among the main public AKIS components; cooperation with private actors is largely opportunistic. Given that, since the accession to the EEC/EU in 1981, the Greek Extension Service gradually got heavily involved in fulfilling the increasing administrative/ bureaucratic tasks of the State, advice to farmers is largely provided by private agronomists who run or work for input shops at the sub-regional/local level. On the other hand, private consultants (agronomists) serve those interested in having access to EU programmes and are thus severely restricted in terms of providing advice. An exception to this picture concerns producer groups, esp. the ones



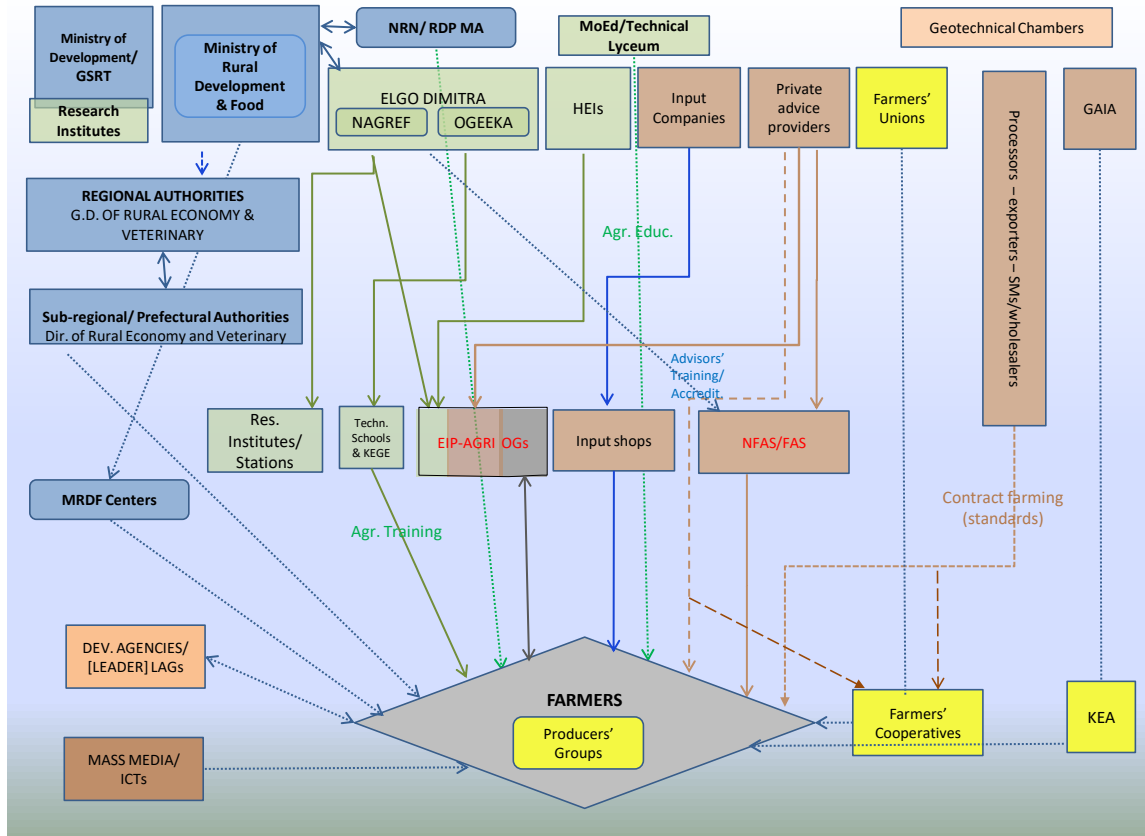
under Integrated Production Management. Despite continuous calls for the reorganisation and reorientation of extension/advisory service(s) in Greece, the system has been disrupted. The underway CAP Strategic Plan procedures are expected, through the appropriate utilization of the tools provided, to trigger the revival of advisory services in the country.

Advisory service provision

A key characteristic of the advisory services in Greece is the weakness of the public as well as of farm based organizations to provide efficient advisory services to farmers. This vacuum is covered, locally, by private agronomists - consultants and input suppliers. Private consultants mainly support farmers interested in having access to EU programmes so their scope is rather limited. Input suppliers/retailers (private agronomists) provide advice for free in the framework of their commercial activity. Their shops are the main points where farmers seek and obtain free information on inputs and technical requirements; shops, in turn, generate income from the trade of inputs. The potential conflict of interest arising from the involvement of private agronomists (input providers) in the provision of advice has been pointed out.



- AKIS diagram:



THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION' HORIZON 2020 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT N. 863039

