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Report on the main outcomes of the 2nd Regional Stakeholders' Workshop: Southern Europe



August 2022



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Dissemination Level

PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Summary

Project number: 863039

Project title: Connecting advisers to boost interactive innovation in agriculture and forestry

Duration: 5 years

Start date of project: 1/11/2019

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List of acronyms

AKIS - Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System

CDA France - French Chambers of Agriculture

CAP - Common Agricultural Policy

DG AGRI - The Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural

EIP-AGRI -European Innovation Partnership "Agricultural Productivity and
Sustainability"

EAFRD - European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EUFRAS - European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services Development

FiBL - Research Institute of Organic Agriculture

MAPA - Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain

MOFA - Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia

SCAR - Standing Committee of Agricultural Research

SEASN - South Eastern Europe Advisory Service Network

UHOH - University of Hohenheim, Germany

INTRODUCTION

The i2connect project's overall objective is to strengthen the advisors, their organisations in the tools and knowledge needed to support interactive innovation processes, to co-create with farmers and foresters in their multi-actor groups.

To reach this goal, our three specific objectives are:

1. To strengthen the skills, competencies and attitudes of advisors to support interactive innovation, by: identifying and sharing best practices, developing tools and methods, training, and organising peer to peer learning & networking.
2. To enhance and profile the role of advisors in interactive innovation processes, at different scales: by a better understanding of the AKIS at country level, by identifying providers of advisory services across Europe, by creating an enabling environment within advisory services, by better connecting and embedding advisory services within the AKIS and by appropriate public policies.
3. To create a social support network and a networking culture among advisors facilitating innovative innovation processes. In particular, emphasis will be given to ensure that advisors in Central and Eastern European countries make use of the opportunities being created in the project.

The strategic approach of i2connect is networking into the wider AKIS in order to leverage the established networks of advisory services e.g. EUFRAS, SEASN, IALB and FiBL. To achieve this, at the beginning of the project, i2connect produced an updated AKIS inventory building upon and expanding the PRO AKIS project's inventory, and set up a user friendly Advisory Services (AS) database, suitable to set the structural bases for a balanced network of innovation advisors in the EU. At the end of the project, the national AKIS will be inventoried once again and assessment of potential changes will be provided.

In addition to the aforementioned activities, a series of international events will be organized with the aim of promoting i2connect and to embed the project in the AKIS systems and beyond. Outputs of the events will be communicated with researchers and other professionals and stakeholders during a Midterm Conference which will be organised by ÖMKi in Hungary in November 2022. The second and final conference with the same target groups will be organized by SEASN in another country represented in the project in July 2024.

The Regional Stakeholders' Workshops are part of Task 5.9 "Promote and embed i2connect in the wider AKIS". The overall plan is to organise four workshops in order to broader disseminate the i2connect outputs and exchange with stakeholders the validity and usefulness of the AKIS inventory, building on positive experiences made in PRO AKIS and Smart-AKIS projects.

The organisation was provided by SEASN, EUFRAS, IALB, MAPA with the collaboration of UHOH and CDA France. The 1st Workshop was organised by EUFRAS on the 23rd of March 2022 with stakeholders from Northern Europe.

General information on the 2nd Workshop, Southern Europe

Date, Place	8 th of June 2022, online (Zoom meeting)
Name of project partners organization	MAPA, SEASN
Duration of the workshop	3,30 hours
*Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered people – 161 with a maximum number of participants reached during the workshop of around 100. • Participants from AKIS strategic bodies and managing authorities; public and private advisory organisations; research and education institutions, farmer based organisations, NGOs, Professional associations; DG AGRI European Commission.

** The detailed list of participants (Annex 2) can be provided, upon request, by the project coordinator.*

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

08:45 (CET) Technical “Check in”

9:00 (CET) Agenda and Welcome and introduction to i2connect *Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación de España (MAPA) / Carmen Avellaner, APCA (10’)*

9:10 The role of AKIS and preliminary results from the AKIS cross-country analysis
Andrea Knierim & Sangeun Bae, UHOH (20’)

9:30 Q&A (10’)

09:40 How to better integrate advisors in the AKIS thanks to the new CAP?
Inge Van Oost, DG-AGRI (25’)

10:05 Q&A (5’ and written answers)

10:10 Presentation and discussion about five AKIS country reports 1: (30’)

- *France*
- *Portugal*
- *Greece & Cyprus*

10:40 Short Break: (15’)

10:55: Presentation and discussion about five AKIS country reports 2: (20’)

- *Spain*
- *Italy & Malta*

11:15 Break-out groups: Discussion on the AKIS country reports presented (identifying communalities and differences, lessons and insight to take, synergies to explore) (35’)

11:50 Feedback from the breakout groups in plenary session and discussion (20’)

12:10 Summary of main insights and lessons from the presentations and discussions
Andrea Knierim, UHOH (10’)

12:20 Closing words (10’)

María Teresa Ambrós Mendioroz, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación de España (MAPA)

***Recording of the workshop is available on YouTube link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHPWHLRDj1M&t=7662s>

***Visit the i2connect web page:**

<https://i2connect-h2020.eu/>

***All presentations of the Regional Workshop are available in the i2connect website:** <https://i2connect-h2020.eu/the-second-regional-akis-stakeholders-workshop-organized-with-a-focus-on-southern-europe-countries/>

Opening

The meeting was opened and moderated by Iratxe Díez Delgado on behalf of MAPA, the leading organiser of the 2nd Regional Stakeholders' workshop covering the Southern European countries. Participants received a few technical instructions after the welcome words.

The workshop was opened with an introduction to the i2connect project, by Carmen Avellaner de Santos, CDA France. She presented the general objective of i2connect of fostering the role of advisors in interactive innovation to support the transition to a productive, sustainable and resilient agriculture and forestry. The specific tasks (e.g. strengthen the skills of individual advisors, the role of advisors in the wider AKIS and the creation of a European network of innovation advisors) were briefly introduced followed by the details on the task T5.9 "Promote and embed i2connect in the wider AKIS".

The objective of the Stakeholder Workshop' and their role in the project was explained and an overview of the activities was given. The 2nd Stakeholder's Workshop focused the following countries: France, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy and Malta.

The Workshop followed by the plenary session.

Workshop sessions

Plenary session

In the plenary sessions two topics were presented: 'The role of AKIS and preliminary results from the AKIS cross-country analysis' by Andrea Knierim and Sangeun Bae (UHOH) and 'How to better integrate advisors in the AKIS thanks to the new CAP?', by Inge Van Oost, DG AGRI.

'The role of AKIS and preliminary results from the AKIS cross-country analysis '

For this session, the UHOH team which has coordinated the AKIS inventory, represented by Professor Dr. Andrea Knierim, presented the preliminary results from a cross-cutting analysis of the 27 AKIS reports. She gave a brief introduction to the AKIS concept and its history. AKIS as a concept is a mental model of an idea about what happens when we exchange knowledge and when we promote and disseminate that first, of course, develop innovations to support voluntary change in agriculture. Because it is a complex model, involving many people and the ways people interact, but also it involves institutions, regulations, policies, infrastructures, organisations, etc. In order to have a clearer picture of what happens we use systems approach.

Result: The i2connect AKIS inventory

27 AKIS country reports updated or written for first time based on information from

- More than **100** AKIS expert interviews
- Survey results from **515** respondents in advisory service provision
- Diverse published and grey literature

Reports available on <https://i2connect-h2020.eu/resources/akis-country-reports/>

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY REPORTS



Figure 1. Presentation of cross-country AKIS analysis

This was then followed by a presentation about the first results from the cross-cutting analysis of AKIS reports. Through i2connect activities, each country produced its own national AKIS report, and new countries were added to the previous knowledge on national AKISs (e.g. Croatia, Serbia, and Switzerland). The analysis of national reports was directed towards the identification of the axis actors in each country and on the linkages between them. Secondly, the main actors were also analysed, their diversity and the links between them. As a first feature, it was reported that AKIS governance in most partner countries is centralized, whereas a few countries like Spain, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Italy have a decentralized AKIS; i.e. where the AKIS governance or part of it, is within the jurisdiction of the regional authorities. Both decentralization and centralization can be seen in some countries, e.g. Austria where in regards to agriculture and forestry, the legislation is within the national government. However, the state still have a lot of say with regards to education and advisory services.

When analysing actors of AKIS we focused on five categories, public authorities, research and education, Farmer based organisation, NGOs and the private companies.

Next, the presence and diversity of AKIS actors were discussed in more detail. For example, in the cross-cutting analysis it was found that public authorities, research and farmer-based organisations are featured prominently in many countries, whereas the presence of third sector NGOs and commercial/private companies are more varied across the partner countries. It was also reported that in most countries, public advisory organisations and farmer-based organisations played an indispensable role in providing advisory services to farmers. The type or mix of advisory service providers however varied greatly across the countries. In terms of policy and resources supporting AKIS, many were related to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). In some countries, other national policies and funds were available but in most cases were mainly oriented towards research and innovation or focused only on one AKIS subsystem. At the end, a few

insights from the survey on advisory service providers in the 27 partner countries were presented.

As a summary, the main highlights from the presentation were as follows:

- Good resonance of the AKIS concept among the interviewees in the partner countries.
- Evidence of great institutional diversity of AKIS actors was found.
- Growing presence of coordination mechanisms aimed at facilitating collaboration of AKIS actors.
- Differences among the different categories of advisory service provider were detected.

‘How to better integrate advisors in the AKIS thanks to the new CAP? ‘

Inge Van Oost defined what an “Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System” is and emphasised what is essential for the functioning of the AKIS.

National and regional innovation ecosystems require function knowledge flow. She emphasised that it dates back to 2008 where the researchers themselves, in a declaration in the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research (SCAR) said that their classical linear model of research that gives the outcomes to the advisor, and then the adviser gives the outcome to the farmer doesn't function anymore. Complexity of the challenges disrupts the linear approach. Strategic plants of the Member states must include the AKIS coordination bodies, which will be in the lead and in very close contact with the many organizations that play a role in national AKISs. Also, topics are much broader than agriculture itself, but farming and rural activities automatically are in relation with. So, it includes environment, climate, biodiversity, landscape as well as consumers and citizens and the whole food and non-food systems, including also the processing and the distribution chains and anything else that you can imagine that has some kind of connection with the so-called narrow agriculture. Differences between states exist with some AKISs being very fragmented (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Romania, even Netherlands) and some more connected but it is evident that no one size fits all.

EIP AGRI initiative together an overview of Horizon 2020 projects and future Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe were presented. Involvement of advisors in OGs was emphasized. Legal basis for the role of advisors in the future of the CAP was explained. First of all, there must be advisory services in every country. Second, they should be integrated in the case in an inclusive way and cover all the dimensions economic, environmental and social and deliver up to date technology, be impartial and be able to provide advice on innovation support for operational groups.

Future goals must include improvement of the functioning of AKIS, to enhance the role of advisors and to improve knowledge flows within AKIS.

Finally, the value of networks to improve knowledge flows was highlighted as well as their ability to improve the linkages between science and practice.

Presentation and discussion about four AKIS country reports

Seven countries presented their AKIS country reports – Portugal, France, Greece and Cyprus, Spain, Italy and Malta.



Figure 2. Overview of the selected EU countries AKIS systems (ProAKIS Report, 2015)

Portugal

Francisca Viveiros, from CONSULAI presented a short overview of the Portuguese AKIS.

In Portugal, more than 70% of agricultural holdings are specialized and that the most common use are herbivores and permanent crops, both together. Analyses showed, that forestry is the main business component of agricultural holdings, with many of the farmers tend to have some forestry in the middle of the permanent crops as cork trees is a very big sector in Portugal. But however, since 2013, there has been an increase of unused forest lands throughout this time.

Our results show that the average age of Portuguese farmers is 65 years, one of the oldest in the EU. As farmers are getting older and older, they lose their ability to manage their land, and the land is starting to be unused. Regarding the distribution by gender, 34% of our farmers are actually women and the rest of them are men. And we can also see that the academic backgrounds of almost 72% of farmers was only elementary school, but is also a reflection of the age of the farmers with many of elder farmers that did not have access to as many opportunities in terms of education as the younger ones. Younger farmers are much more specialised but they are still a very low percentage of the Portuguese farmers.

After the description of the farmers' population the AKIS structure of Portugal was presented (figure 3).

The AKIS diagram



Figure 3. Presentation on AKIS in Portugal, Francisca Viveiros

Portuguese AKIS diagram is divided into four groups, the farming and forestry based associations, the national and regional directorates, the research and education and the knowledge and information providers while having the farmers and forestry always at the centre.

A lot of different interactions between these different groups was identified, some being stronger and some weaker.

The technical support comes mainly from institutions and services. A lot of cooperatives and farmers associations are responsible for this technical advice. However, in Portugal there is not one central entity that manages all the advisory services, and they are very fragmented throughout Portugal. It presents a challenge for the farmers, because sometimes it is hard for them to get good advisory services and to know who to ask for help.

France

Currently, there are a bit more than 400,000 farms in France covering about 27 million hectares. The average sales size of farms is 65 hectares now. In the previous period there has been a very strong decrease in the number of farms in the also in the land area. But also, what happened was increase of the economic size of farms in France. And this had been going on for decades. Very strong specialisation of farms is also occurring, e.g. farm specialized in the viticulture and wine, etc. Livestock farm number has decreased more than the other farm types.

Another trend that can be seen is decrease of family labour, with wage labours increasing. Age is also an issue, with 25% of French farmers being more than 60 years old. Overall share of agriculture in the GDP is about 2% of the total GDP. The agriculture and agri-food sector still represent the third sector, contributing to the French trade balance. Type of production is based on the location of the farms, with more arable crops in the north and the centre of France, more intensive livestock

production in the west, less intensive livestock production in mountain ranges and in other areas of France.

Structure of French AKIS was presented in the diagram with the main sectors clearly pointed out: public sector, private actors and farmers-based organisations. Public sector includes the Ministry of Agriculture, other ministries and the agencies as well as regional councils. Education institutions also play a role, both the secondary education in agriculture and the higher education in agriculture. Lastly, strong public research institutes in agriculture.

In the centre of the AKIS diagram are the farmers-based organisation, which include the four main farmers unions in France and a lot of specialised farmers organisations, for example, the, the union for organic farming, veterinarians and several private advisors and private consultants.

Regarding to the advisory services provision, there are a lot of advisory services providers. The main ones are the chambers of agriculture. There are farmers, cooperatives and private traders providing advice. Also, there are different farmers-based organizations, especially a group of farmers-based organizations private companies providing advisory services and companies specialised in advisory services in the livestock sector. Regained interest can be seen in n the holistic approach of advisory services and farms and also to the group approaches, especially to support innovation and to support environmentally friendly practices.

It can be concluded that in France, there is a very strong diversity of AKIS actors. Strong national policies are in place and institutional arrangements to encourage cooperation and knowledge flows between actors. Although France is still a very centralized country compared to other countries, there is a shift to more decentralisation and to more power, which is which is involving the regional councils, especially for the implementation of CAP measures. The main challenge now is to work together to support the transition to a multi performing farm and forestry systems.

Regional AKIS Stakeholders workshop Southern Europe

i2connect
INTERACTIVE INNOVATION

Main characteristics of the AKIS: key policy programs/coordination

- National thematic programmes:** framework and priorities for public funding
 - Ecophyto: plant protection products
 - Ecoantibio: antibiotics
 - Agroecology: "multi-performance" of farms
 - Recovery plan (after COVID-19 crisis)
- Public funding**
 - National level: 28% of the Ministry's budget targeting AKIS organisations
 - Direct funding to public research & education organisations
 - Funding of applied research and knowledge transfer: CasDAR
 - European & regional funding:
 - CAP measures for knowledge, advice & innovation: 3% of CAP budget (2014-2020)
 - Specific programmes at regional or département level
- Coordination structures**
 - CasDAR coordination body (national & regional levels)
 - Representatives in advisory boards of other organisations, etc.
- Knowledge flows: encouraged by multi-actor networks**
 - mixed technological networks (RMT), scientific interest groups (GIS)

Figure 4. Presentation on AKIS in France, Sylvain Sturel, CDA France

Greece and Cyprus

The AKIS in Greece and Cyprus was presented by Eleni Zarokosta, AUA.

Greece has a total area of around 130,000 square kilometers, of which 35% is farming land. Among the main characteristics of the agricultural sector in Greece is the domination of family small, very small family farms, the aging farming population, and the low rate of farmers with full agricultural training, which is about 15 times less than the average in the European Union.

The main actors in Greece are the Ministry of Rural Development and Food and the Hellenic Agricultural Organization. Dimitra AI Gore has four branches concerning research, vocational education, training, product certification and the supervision at the milk at MIT. What characterises AI Gore is weak internal and external connections, and especially the research branch is not well connected to both farmers and the other actors. The same situation is also for the higher education institutes, which overall in general are appearing to be not well connected with the other sectors. Farmers' cooperatives in Greece are in general very quick to develop independently. However, there are variations and a number of very dynamic producer groups and the cooperatives that are very active in providing in facilitating their membership access to knowledge.

In general, the main characteristic of the Greek AKIS is that it is highly fragmented with uncoordinated and often ineffective actors. Cooperation when it arises is rather opportunistic. Representation of imported EU policies is delayed, for example. Operational groups have not been activated so far in Greece, and the establishment of a national advisory system is still in progress. Only the accreditation of a number of about 3,000 advisers has been obtained so far.

Another interesting point is the rising importance of process actors like from processors, industry exporters, wholesalers, actors from the secondary and tertiary sectors which is not a surprise given that they set the standards of agricultural production and the quality standards.

In Greece, there is no public advisory service and in general there is no public commitment in the provision of advice to farmers. The main advice providers are the input salesmen and the private independent consultants. Only a small number of consultants are active at a national level and they offer specialised advice on several issues like product certification, smart farming, etc.

Advice providers

- ❖ No public extension service
- ❖ Private agronomists:
 - **Input shops: 4000** ➤
700 direct clients of input industry
 - **Private independent consultants, active at:**
 - ❑ local level ➤ access EU Programmes
 - ❑ national level ➤ specialized services on
 - ✓ products' certification
 - ✓ marketing,
 - ✓ smart farming
 - ✓ integrated production management



Figure 5. Presentation on AKIS in Greece and Cyprus, Helena Zarokosta, AUA

In the agricultural sector in Cyprus small family farms dominate. The same as in Greece, an ageing farm population and the very low rate of farmers with full agricultural training. The main player is the Department of Agriculture, which includes an extension service which provides advice for free to farmers and which is the main coordination mechanism of the system. The Department of Agriculture includes also research grants, agricultural research institute and the extension service. The Department of Agriculture has a close collaboration with farmers, cooperatives and producer groups. However, they have no links with input companies, private consultants. What is problematic is the functioning of the extension service in Cyprus is the ever increasing bureaucracy and the lack of personnel.

Researchers also struggle to respond to the farmers' needs. Although the Department of Agriculture Education Service has a positive coordination role in Cyprus there is a need for more focus on farmers needs for collaborative research, increase farmers involvement in interactive initiatives.

Spain

In Spain there are 17 regions which have the competence and the responsibilities and the decision making powers. And that's one of the main points of it is because of the last Spanish constitution in 1978 and the 17 autonomy statutes. This resulted in Spain being a very much decentralized country.

Agricultural area of Spain is 23.84 million hectares, added to the 28 million of hectares of forest/wooded land. Only about 16% of total Spain population lives in rural areas. The agri-food sector is a very important piece, a key part of the Spanish economy, because there is 9.7 % of the GDP. It's a strategic sector with a solid multiplier effect. And there is also a positive trade balance because the super is around 18 000 000 million €.

Background. Numbers and statistics:

- **Area:** 505.983 km²
 - Agricultural area: 23,84 Mha.
 - Forest/wooded land: 28 Mha.
 - Forests. 36,3%.
 - Other Wooded Lands. 19%.
- **Rural area:** 84% of the land but only 16% of the population.
- **Agri-food sector:** 9,7 % GDP → Strategic sector with a multiplier effect.
- **Positive trade balance:** 18 M €.
- **914.871 holdings** (2020).



Figure 6. Presentation of AKIS in Spain, Juan Pedro Romero Trueba, MAPA

In the Spanish AKIS, the core and the center of the system are the farmers and foresters. A constellation of ministries is involved in the system with the most important ones being the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Of course, many more are involved and all are connected with the public, researchers and scientists.

Regarding the education, there are universities with a large academic offer, but also completely decentralized vocational training centres. Also, no formal public training centres exist, with some of them subsidised with public funds, but also private or semi-private.

One of the most important parts of the systems is the agrifood cooperatives, and linked to these cooperatives several agrifood industries. Several NGOs with environmentalists, women associations, organic associations, etc., are also actors and in addition, public and private partnerships exist.

The governance of AKIS is very complex, nevertheless new possibilities are offered by the new period of the CAP for the strengthening of the AKIS with the creation of an *AKIS Coordination Body*.

Italy

In Italy a wide variety of formal systems exist. Also, a lot of different farming system widening from mountainous hills to the very intensive agriculture are also present, the small farms, organic farm, conventional farms. A lot of different crops are being produces as well, vegetables, grapes, etc. So, not only a single agricultural model exists in Italy. Also, the knowledge and innovation systems exist: agricultural and the forestry knowledge innovation system, with differences between sectors and also different stakeholders involved.

The Italian AKIS is a complex, multi-actor and multilevel system that is characterised by a large number of entities and governance levels. The roles are divided between the national and the state level, the national government and the regional governments. Also due to this, Italy has at least 21 regional AKIS with different degrees of cohesion and globalization and also the development of system thinking. Common vision and commitment of the actors is very much influenced by the cultural and relational specificities of each regional territory. They are shaping the farming system, policy delivery, social community background, environmental or graphic features, etc. One can say that these different regions are really strongly interconnected between them, and also to the national level. This is because, the actors that are represented at regional level, are also at national level.

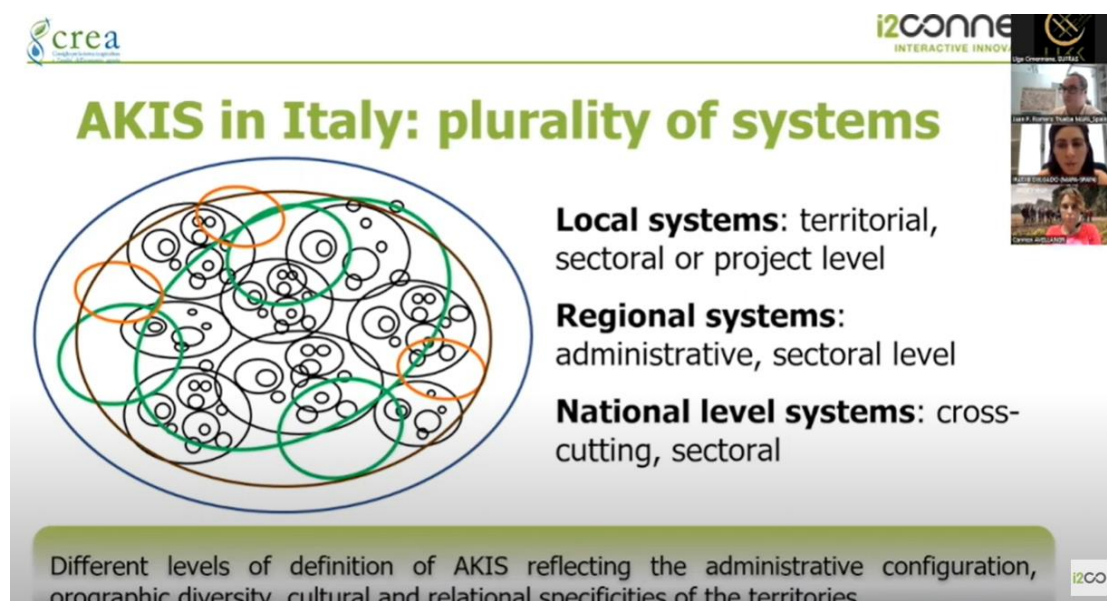


Figure 7. Presentation of AKIS in Italy, Patrizia Proietti, CREA

A stronger relationship between different sectors and local learning and innovation networks exist. Existing networks are also shaped by the recent European policies, specially about the cooperation measure, in Italian AKIS an interactive knowledge transfer model between these sectors can be found, and also very strong linkages in many cases beyond the local dimension. At the national level, Italy has institutionalised relations, often found weak. Also, on a national level, prevalence of traditional knowledge can be found, e.g. some universities are more related with the research institutes. On the other side, advisory services relate to farmers union, agri-food industry, etc. The overall coordination structure of AKIS is articulated by knowledge. Research, innovation, education and extension services (regional and national level) are set up to address these inter-institutional collaboration and dialogue, to ensure consistency of policies, programmes and project design.

In the Italian AKIS two main coordination bodies can be identified: the inter-regional networks for agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fishery institutions and the national rural networks. Both of this networks that are strongly inter-related play an important role in defining common vision and supporting the implementation of research, innovation policies and programs, mediating different positions and also

articulating demand. A large number of bodies are responsible for research in the agricultural sector, 153 agriculture institutes, 24 departments of Agriculture, Science, 13 departments of Veterinary, Medical Science, and each of them have a high degree of autonomy. This is a very strong advantage for them.

Italian AKIS is currently going through a system transition that is characterized by the emergence of new actors and with concessional services and a slow but progressive awareness about new possibilities for innovation and knowledge sharing.

Malta

Malta is a small island country located in the central Mediterranean Sea and has an effect on strong identity value for all the local communities, but unfortunately also a little relevance for the country's economy. However, the agriculture production is self-sufficiency in certain key products such as milk, fruit and vegetables. But the local food sector is mainly depended on imports and this is reflected in the gross value added of agriculture which is only the 0.9% of the total gross value added and the same percentage also in the workforce involved in agriculture, forestry and fishery (0.9% of the workers in Malta). Agricultural production is also characterised by the small farms with rather scattered land parcels. All this makes the innovation adoption is quite difficult in Malta at the moment. Forestry itself has no economic meaning in Malta and a forest related industry doesn't exist. So few of the key characteristics of the AKIS in Malta is characterised by a little number of factors and this is also coherent with the dimension of the island itself. These sectors have a low level of coordination and interaction in this moment and the lack of systemic vision. This is caused mostly by the lack of effective guidance and of strategic vision of the research and innovation bodies.

The relationship between members of AKIS, the government bodies and the agriculture community are only defined around the Rural Development Programme implementation activities and in general the knowledge flows are driven by the traditional methods of knowledge transfers while the interactive models are being implemented. The governance of the Maltese AKIS is fragmented into a relatively large number of ministries and the ministerial body with designing methods and implementation tools that still have sectoral approach. In the last years, consultative and participatory methods were also endorsed. The research, education and vocational training actors are mainly concentrated within two public bodies: the Malta College of Arts and Technology and the University of Malta. Also the Ministry of Education provides services of adult education and t specific professional training. The farmer based organization have a a significant role in fostering knowledge and the skills of the members in Malta.

Within the AKIS of Malta in the last two decades, new formal based organization have been set up that include young farmers or farmers that want to improve agricultural sustainability. Malta Youth in Agriculture Foundation and Marine Rural Network are an example of this new formal based organization. Input providers are well connected, especially with the farmer based organization. And lastly, new actors

such as LAX private companies, local action groups have emerged providing a range of technical advisors. Also, a characteristic of the Maltese case is the presence of some foreign players coming mainly from the Mediterranean area, internalized actors of the local AKIS because they are strongly integrated within each and within the actors. For the advisory service provision, in Malta a few private, mostly farm based organization exists. Currently, two main types of advisory services supplier have emerged in the AKIS of Malta. Innovation support functions and specialists with activities related to brokering and digitalisation are emerging; the topics and methods are clearly defined by the policy framework on the Farm Advisory Suppliers. Individual advice (face to face) remains the most used advisory methods, but it is also improved with desk advice, and using digital tools like Skype, WhatsApp, etc.


The government organisation, in addition, provides also mass media advice using internet (information provided by their website, the blogs, forums) and also through the National Rural Network, which provides information to farmers using mass media, organising seminars and meetings about advisory topics or group advisors and peer to peer learning. The pandemic also didn't change the advisory methods in the public providers, while private organisation has shifted to the digital advisory methods.

Maltese AKIS is characterized by a number of actors with the overall, low level of coordination. National model advisory services are combined with a low relevance of the sector itself. The private advisory services are at the basis of the current state of the agricultural services in Malta. However, within the private and farmers based advisory organisation, there is a certain dynamism and pluralism of providers (methods) and topics. The new actors can bring systemic thinking and vision and can be seen as a good perspective for the future of Malta's AKIS.

Main characteristics of the AKIS

- AKIS in Malta is characterized by a **little number of actors** with a **low level of coordination and a lack of systemic vision**
- This AKIS is still far from being defined an ecosystem of innovation but it is somehow **resilient**, since it is able to compensate the gap of key local capacities and skills within the **external relations**
- Relationships between government bodies and the agricultural community are only defined around the RDP implementation activities. In general, knowledge flows are mainly driven by **traditional methods** of knowledge transfer, while circular and interactive models of knowledge flows are hardly implemented

INTERACTIVE INNOVATION






Figure 8. Presentation of AKIS in Malta, Valentina Carta, CREA

Break-out groups: Discussion on the AKIS country reports presented

After the presentation of the seven country AKISs – Portugal, France, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy and Malta further discussion was carried out in two break-out groups.

Break-out group discussions were focused on the main strengths and weaknesses/challenges among countries and were facilitated by SEASN members from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia. Emphasis in the discussions was given on the commonalities between the countries.

Sub-group 1: AKIS in France, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus

Moderator: Silvio Šimon (MofA)

Note taker: Domagoj Gorup (SEASN)

Sub-group 2: AKIS of Spain, Italy and Malta

Moderator: Ozren Hrsto (MofA)

Note taker: Mirela Matičević (MofA)

Break-out group 1: Discussion on the AKIS country reports presented, Communalities and differences, lessons and insight to take, synergies to explore France, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus

The first group discussion led to a conclusion that AKISs function better in France and Portugal, while in Greece and Cyprus is a bit less functional, due to a complex mix of reasons.

In France, the long continuity in the public policies regarding the AKIS are a real strength and results can be seen in the current system, which is very diverse, with a strong public funding and high connections and a lot of involvement of different stakeholders directly with the farmers and farmers organisations. The weaknesses currently identified are also related to farmers. Not every one of them, namely smaller farmers, new farmers and the very big ones are addressed equally. The multinational companies are not a part of the AKIS but only the mainstream groups are a part.

The participants in the discussion agreed that management of the knowledge flow is an important part of the AKIS of Portugal at the moment, with maybe too much knowledge available and created. Challenge is how to select and disseminate what is really necessary for the farmers with the Portugal. One of the main strengths is the national database of advisors, which enables every other stakeholder to identify the proper context person to create its own network, to find a solution to the problem. And also, that resulted in a strong link between farming and forestry associations and the knowledge information providers, while at the same time having a relatively negative structure of the whole agriculture system.

A lot of similarities were found between Greece and Cyprus AKIS systems and the discussion concluded that the level of centralization is quite big, while Greece doesn't basically have in the last years the advisory system, due to the lack of support of high authorities. This latter resulted in a low connection to the farmers and highly fragmented and basically ineffective system, while in Cyprus, the main challenge is the administrative burden becoming more and more part of the advisory work of the public advisory service, which disconnects advisors the needs of farmers and transforming them into bureaucratic officers.

Commonalities identified between systems were a certain level of centralization, but with the different levels of diverse actors and their involvement in them. Farmer based organisation, forest-based organizations are important part of the functioning of all discussed AKIS systems. Time has an influence on the function of AKIS as can be seen in the case of France which can be a positive motivation factor for the countries just starting to develop their AKIS systems. Some specifics in AKIS systems can correlated to the geographically / historical contexts as well. Similarities between Portugal and France are greater than Greece and Cyprus (which are more similar compared one to another) and that can be explained to the geographical proximity.

	France	Portugal
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuity in public policies - National concept already in 1960 (similar to AKIS) - Strong public funding by public authorities - Different actors are more connected in AKIS (20 years ago national schemes) - High variety of farmer based organizations - Database for specific activities in plant protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National database of advisors-identifying advisors - Strong link between farming and forestry based association and knowledge innovation providers and farmers. - Many technical support from many institutions.

<p>Weaknesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to reach out to the large group of farmers. - Certain group of farmers are hard to reach - Too much information/complex knowledge management makes difficult to find right information. - Needs more activities in innovation process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oldest farmers in Europe - 71,4% farmers has only elementary school-low education - Advisory services are highly fragmented throughout the country - Need to inform farmers more regularly about innovation.
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	Greece	Cyprus
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Producer groups have their own advisors - Broad network of collaborating local agronomists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has capacity to support farmers
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No system in Greece - Political problems- no attention to that issue (not having extension service) - No horizontal links between actors - Farmers are without support - Weak farmers cooperatives - Highly fragmented and ineffective AKIS - Lack of coordination and extremely weak linkages - No coherent policy and support - No public extension service - Knowledge not easily accessible by farmers and new entrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisors are given new tasks on more rush manner- - Restrictions - Constants conflicts between advisors and farmers over compensation for damage done to the farm. - Farmers not involved in system

**Identified commonalities between the four countries
(France, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus)**

1. AKIS of all four countries are centralised.
2. Farmers based organizations are included in the AKIS as one of the actors.
3. France and Portugal have more actors included in AKIS and they started earlier with developing some similar systems like AKIS (1960 s).
4. The complexity of AKIS is a weak point in all four countries.
5. Geographical and history context between France and Portugal are similar, same applies for Greece and Cyprus.
6. In all countries links between some of the actors in AKIS system must be strenghted.

**Break-out group 2: Discussion on the AKIS country reports presented
Communalities and differences, lessons and insight to take, synergies to explore –
Spain, Italy and Malta**

In the discussion of the second break-out groups conclusion were drawn as follows: Italy and Spain have a similar challenges. Diversity of many systems and actors in those countries makes it a challenge for the governance. The bureaucracy burden is very high and advisors tend to become a serious set of bureaucratic officers, instead of being brokers and facilitators. Stronger linkages between actors, connections with farmers are needed also. Overall conclusion of the discussion was that there are many similarities between them, Italy and Spain can learn from one another. It becomes apparent that this concept, with its terms and with its way to operationalize the idea of the various knowledge services is really helpful. It is a good basis to explain situations in the countries for the sectors, and also to try to make everybody perspective on the same level.

	Spain	Italy	Malta
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Diversity of the system – many actors involved – Good transfer of knowledge on some levels – Interdisciplinary Thematic Platforms, implemented by Spanish National Research Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High number of actors – Knowledge reservoir – National Rural Network – National base of professionals – agronomists, foresters, etc. – Long-learning path – education every year (training credits for maintaining professionalism) – Coordination between bodies in AKIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dynamism of farmer-based adv. organisation – Arrival of new generation of farmers and researchers – Strong linkages with external actors (Italian, France and Spain)
Weaknesses / Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Defragmentation – Bureaucracy – Reinforcing skills in digitalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Coordination – Bureaucracy (paperwork) – Knowledge flow should be improved – Stronger linkages between actors needed – Connection between farmers and researches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Low level of coordination – Old methods of advising – circular knowledge flows should be

		– Innovation brokers –dealing with paperwork	improved
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**Identified commonalities between the three countries
(Spain, Italy and Malta)**

- **Spain**
 - Advisory services under regional governments and private companies
 - Lack of database of public/private advisors (this depends on the region); problems with the regionalization and need for coordination (fragmentation).
- **Italy**
 - Creation of a database of advisors with specialisations, every advisor in the database needs to show that he/she is operational (training credits for maintaining professionalism)
- **Malta**
 - Many external advisors (Mediterranean countries) and public Advisory Services.
 - Agriculture has very low importance for Malta (tourism a key sector).
 - Strategic/methodological coordination is needed so actors know how to diversify the system is a common issue between Spain and Italy , also the possibility to learn from each other.
 - Bureaucracy – challenge in every country.
 - Fragmentation of stakeholders — proposal to create a platform to share potential solutions to common problems
 - Policy coordination is not evident, the Ministry of Research and Agriculture has no coordination at different levels(national - regional no cooperation).
 - National Rural network – once a week meeting all together (Ministry and regional actors).
 - Bureaucracy problems - lack of cooperation between regions is more important than the different interpretation of AKIS.
 - “Innovation brokers” professionals : most of the time work on paperwork and administration instead of following innovation.
 - Concerns and interests of researchers and farmers are quite different.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Comparative approach of national AKIS has its strengths and weaknesses. Although a graphical representation of AKIS is very tangible, there are some disagreements on the countries positions, also the model is maybe oversimplifying the situation. Adding additional categories is one of the solutions.

Benchmarking is important and bilateral talks between countries with similar challenges, as suggested by the discussion groups, can be very valuable.

Focus on advisory services is very helpful when we want to go deeper into the understanding of what is going on in interactive innovation. Interactive innovation support services are emerging and are being provided by a diversity of actors. For a successful support to such complex innovation processes, we have to be able to perceive them all or many of them, strengthening their linkages and fostering the exchange of knowledge between them.

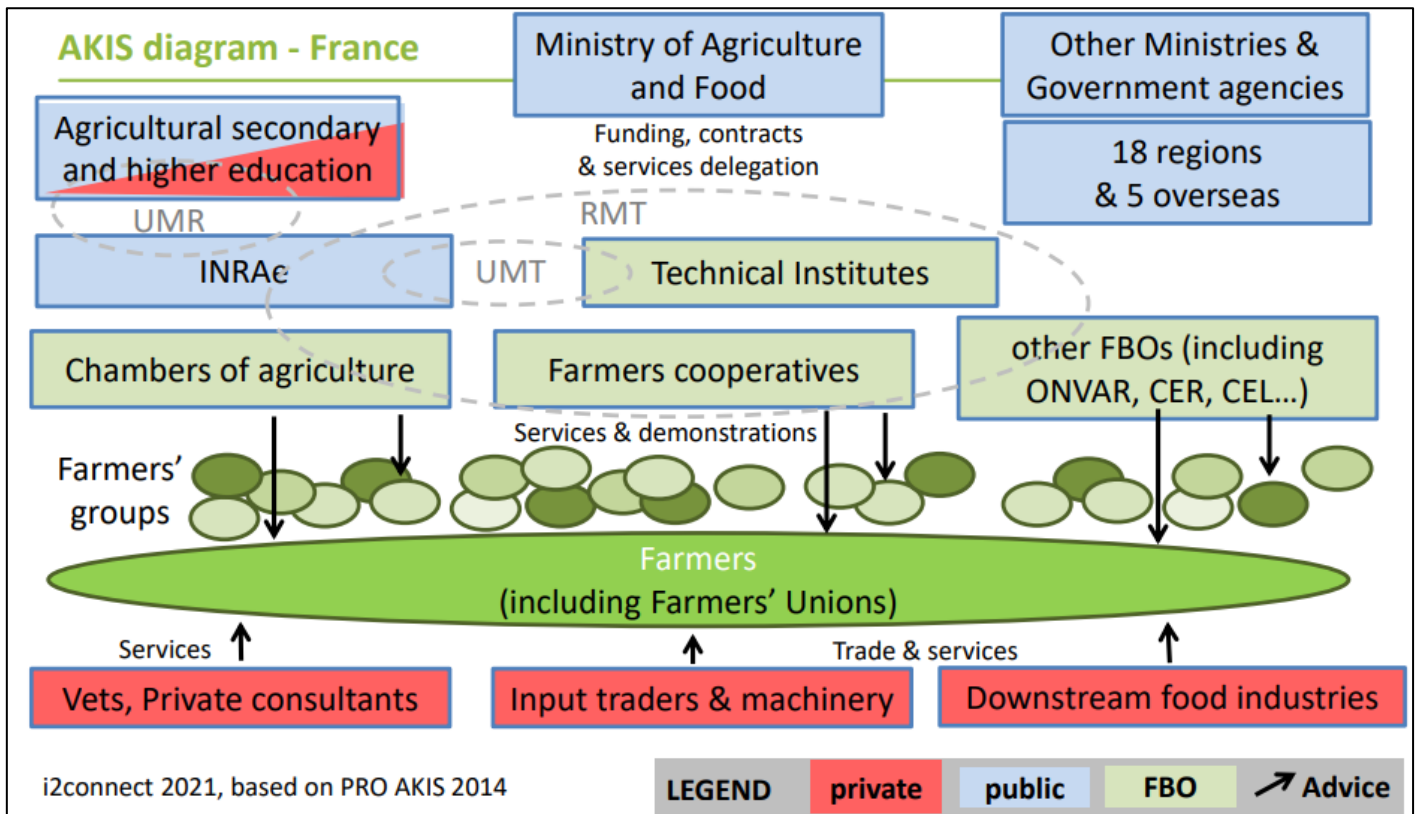
Cooperation among the diversity of actors must be encouraged and supported so as not to strengthen only one group at the expense of another.

Annex 1 –

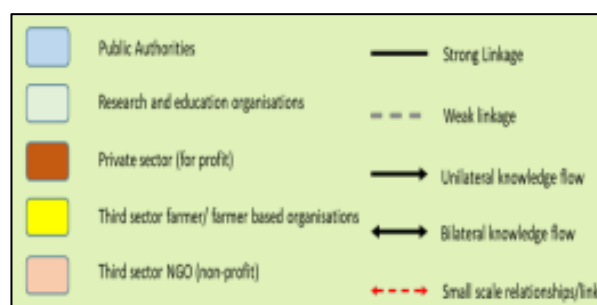
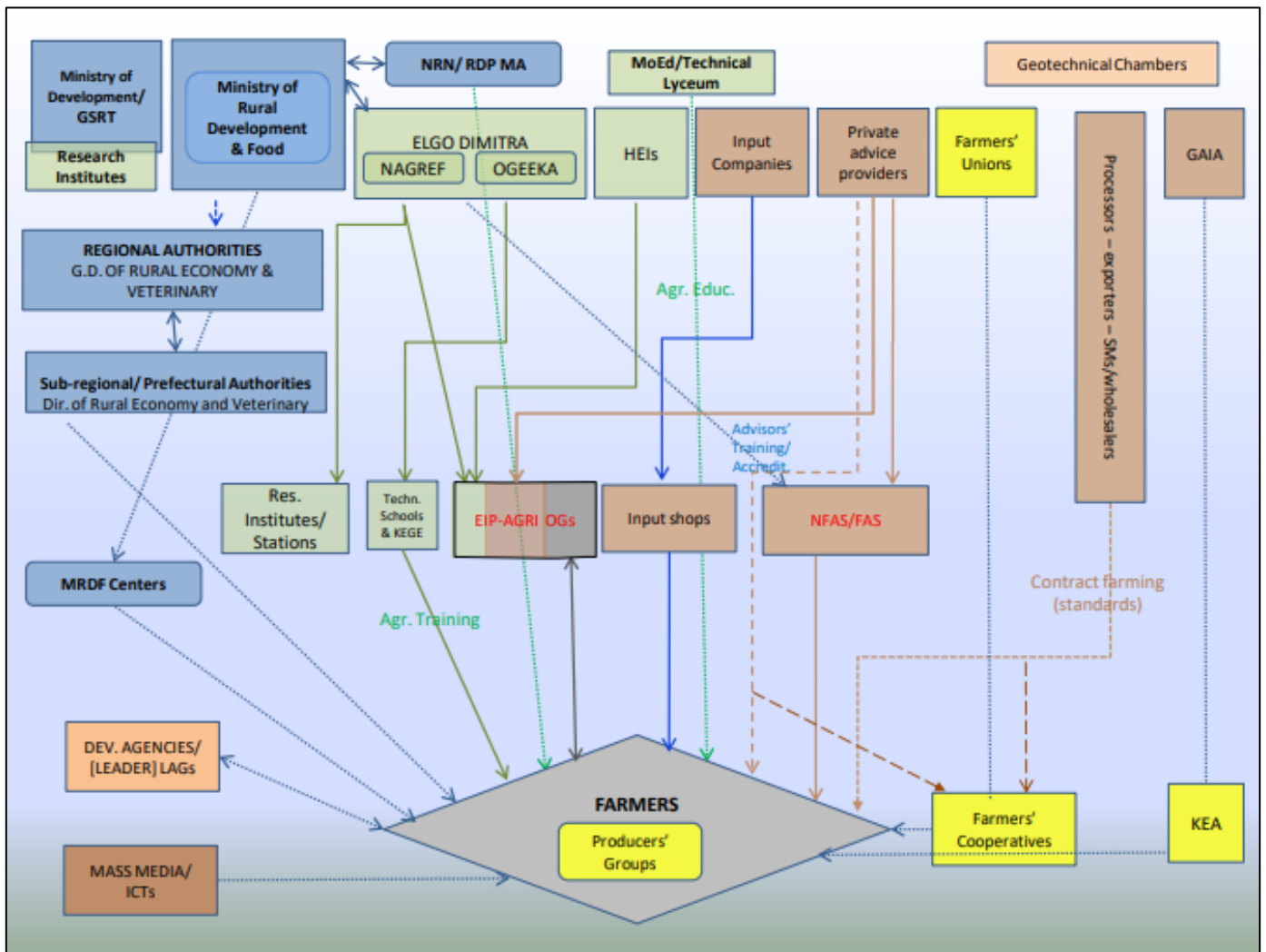
PORTUGUESE AKIS



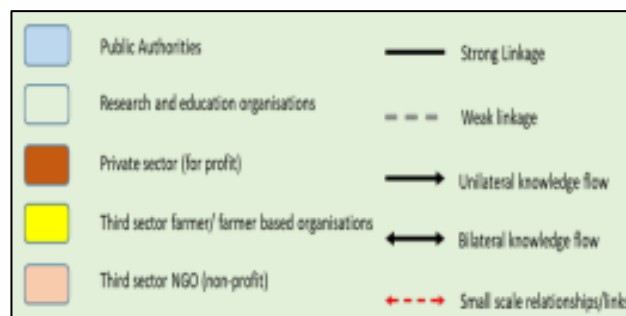
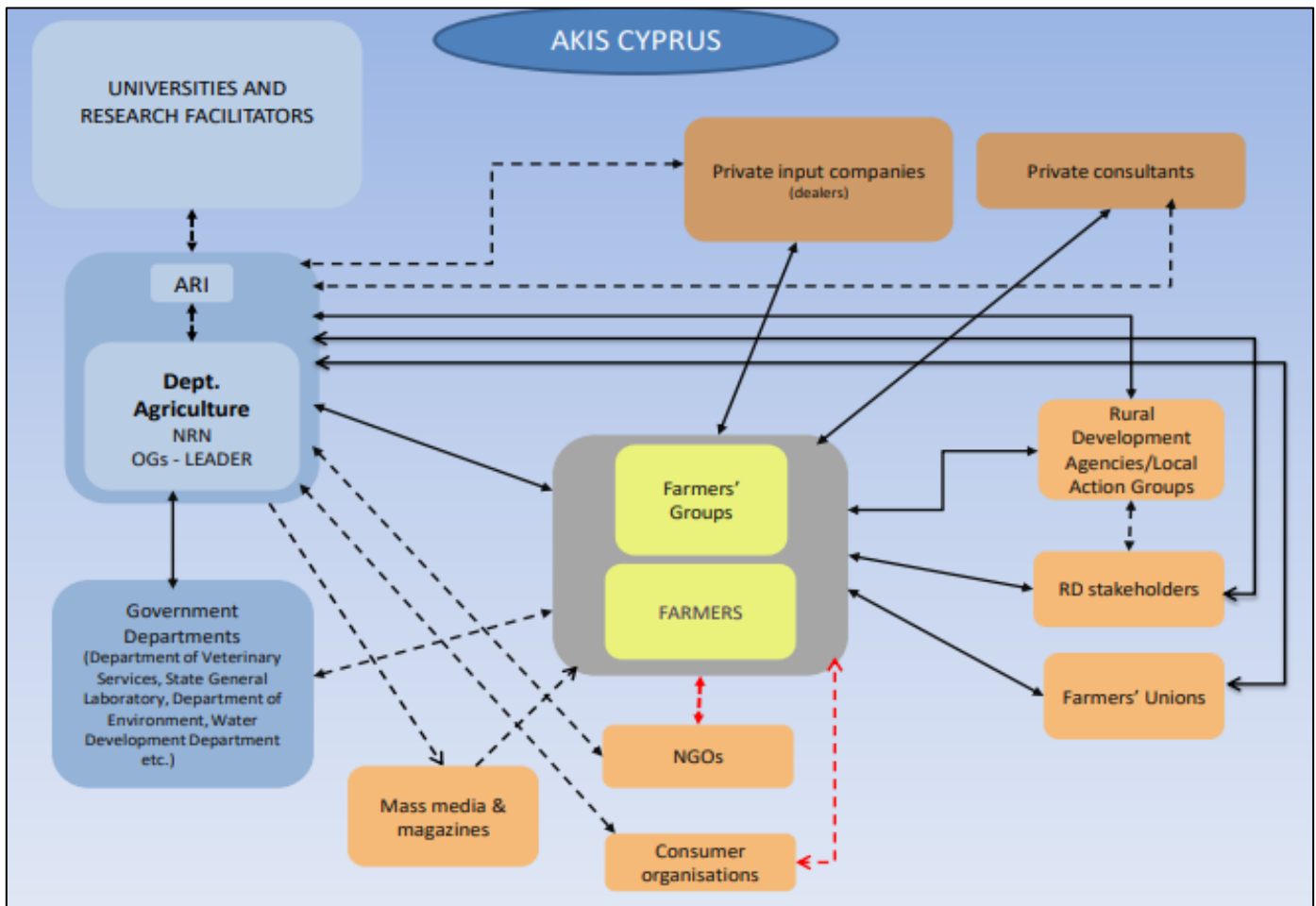
FRENCH AKIS

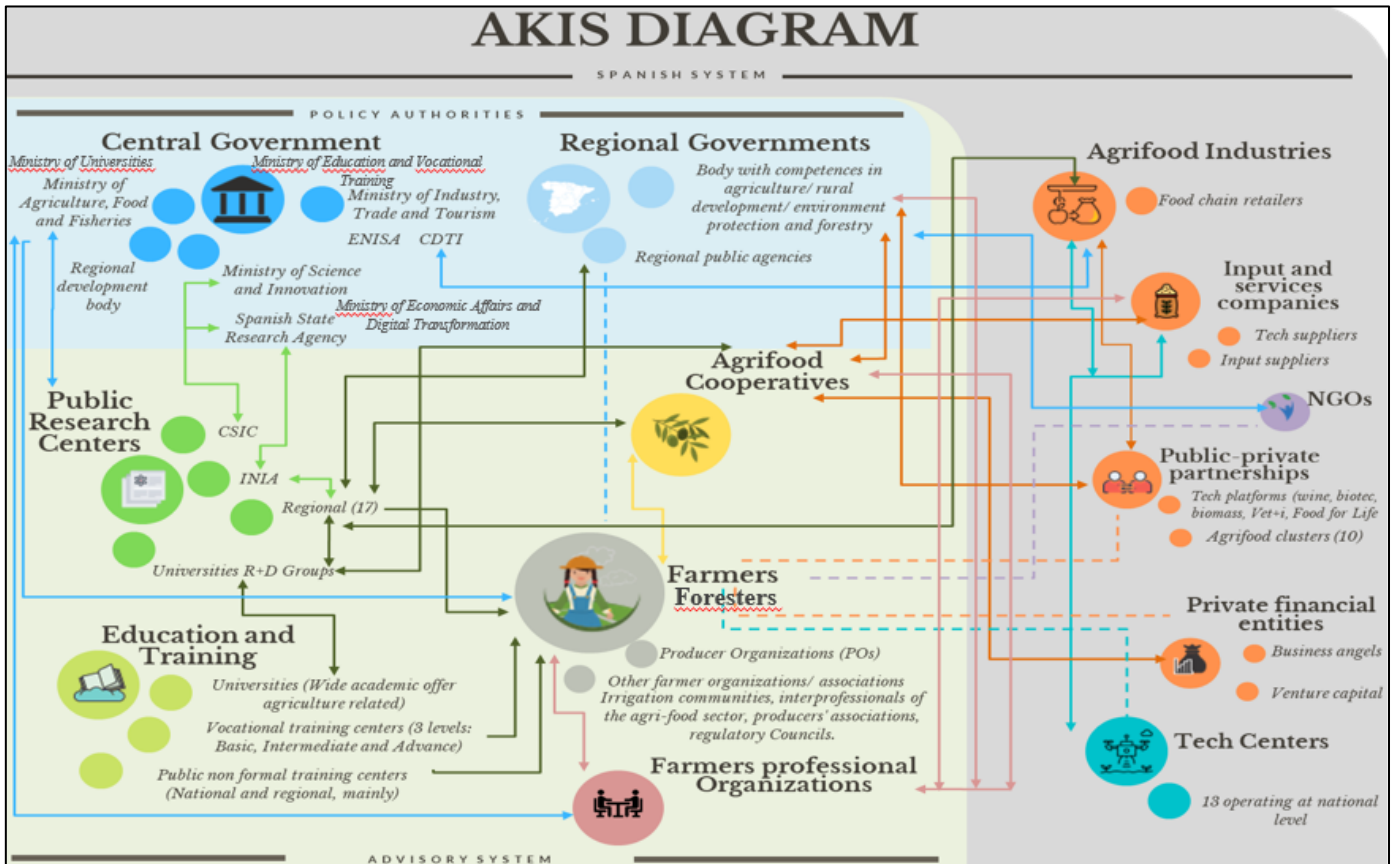


GREEK AKIS

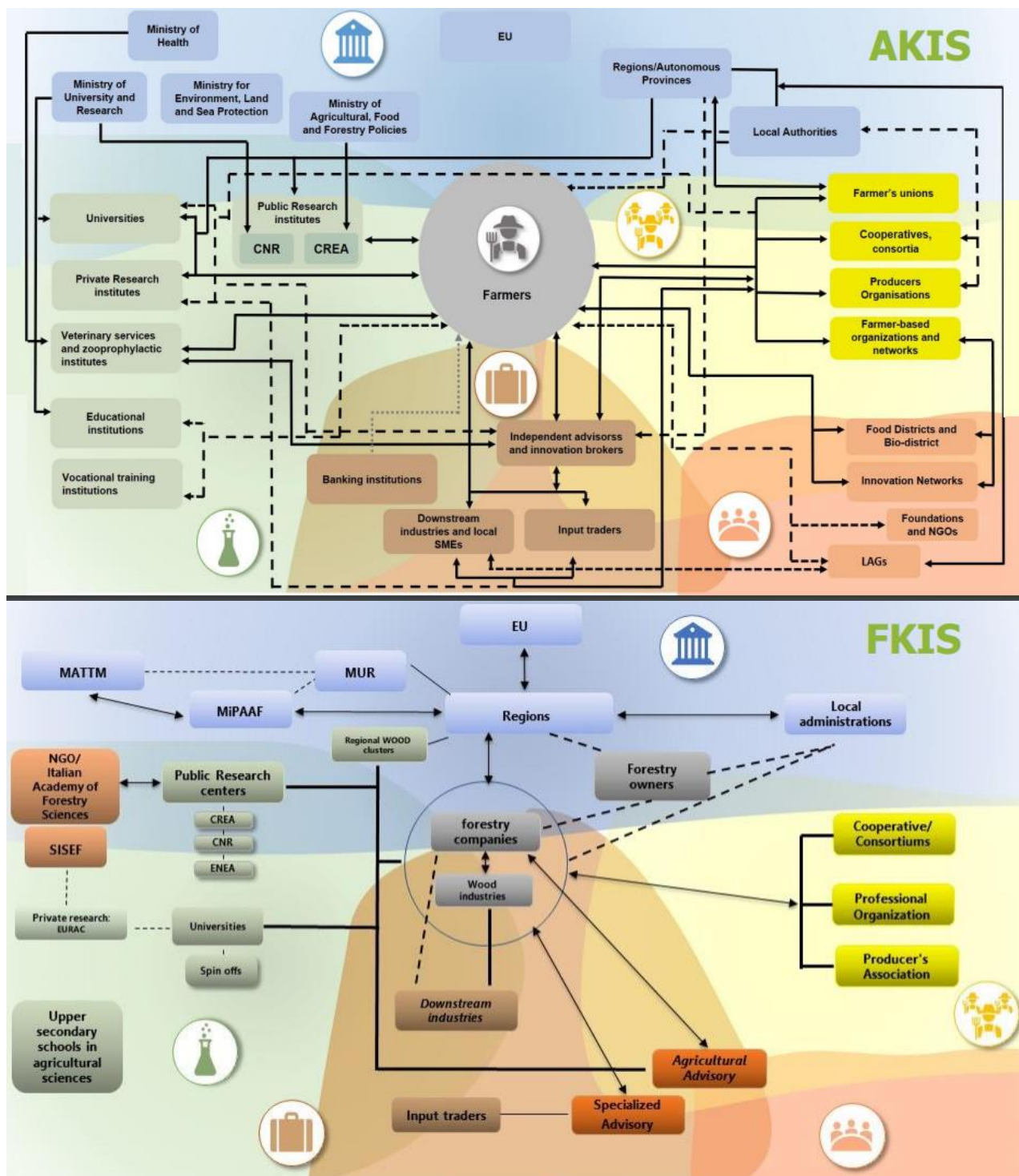


CYPRIOT AKIS

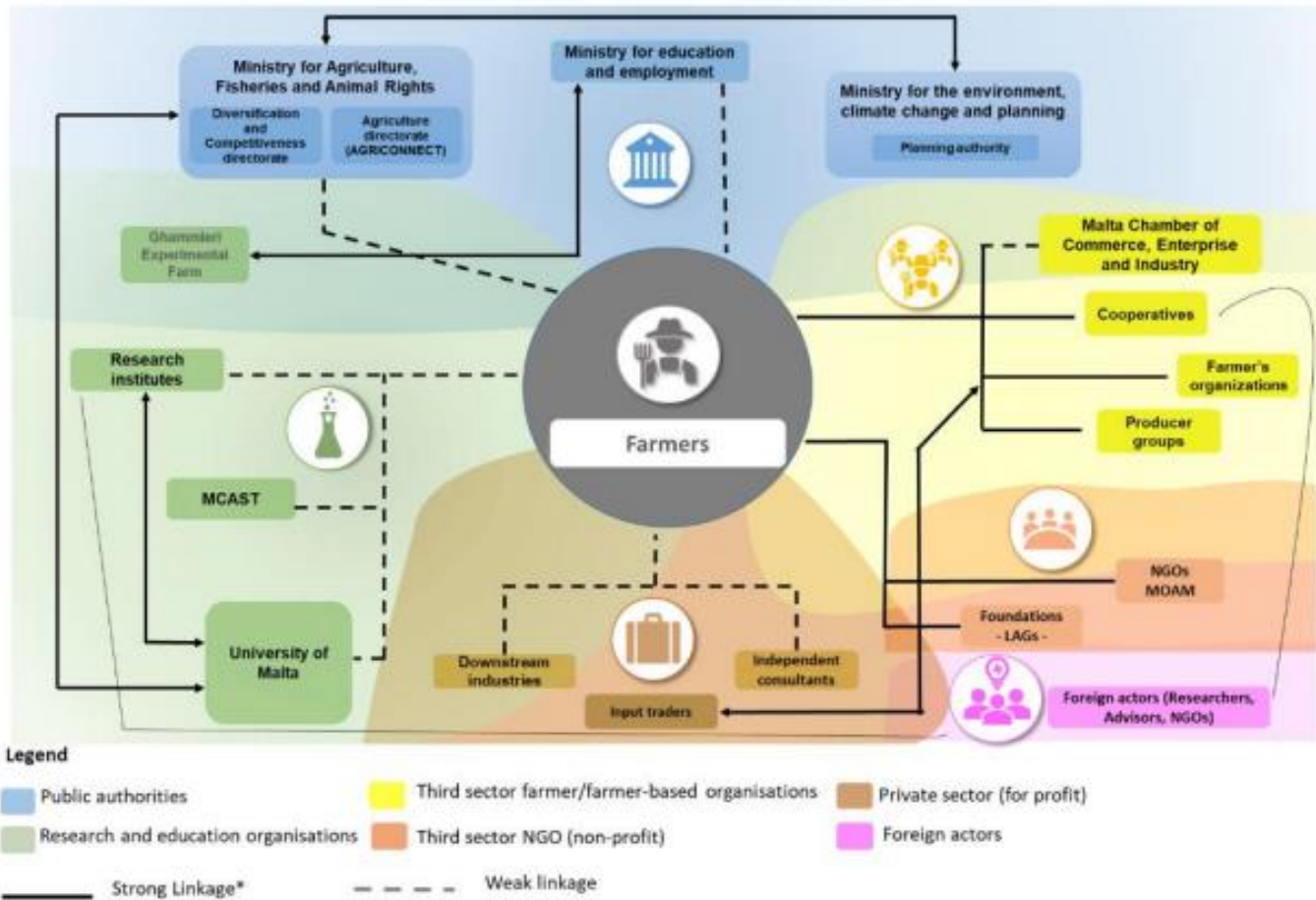




ITALIAN AKIS



MALTESE AKIS



Annex 2

The List of registered participants (161 in total) is available upon request to the Project Coordinator (CDA France)

	First Name, Last Name, Email, Registration Time, Approval Status,Country/Region, Organization, Job Title, Questions & Comments, Country/Region
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