

Demo Focus groups

Széchenyi István University has more than 60 members in its demonstration farm network such as farmers, financial institutions, food industry enterprises, research institutes, organic farmers, large farms. In recent years, the openness and willingness to cooperate among the demofarms, the university and other regional AKIS actors has been declining.

To manage this challenge, we planned to set up pilot discussion groups (partly based on the university's demo farm network) where regional AKIS actors (researchers, advisors, chamber of agriculture, banking sector, agro-media) had the opportunity to discuss challenges and to seek co-created answers. After creating a trustful atmosphere through interactive exercises, the facilitators demonstrated the criteria for the embedding of innovations, and participants practiced effective collaboration as a "living lab."

The main topic of the discussion groups was the identification of research directions based on farmers/market needs (bottom up). We considered it decisive that researchers and university lecturers were also involved in the discussion group, so they were closer to the market, they could establish professional relationships of trust, and as a result, innovations were integrated more effectively into practice.

Advisors who were aware of the i2connect mindset were important players in the discussions. As a continuation of the pilot project, our goal was for these advisors to create new discussion groups and to expand and strengthen the spread of interactive innovations.

Since the advisors were part of the pilot project, they could witness the impact of this type of meeting, and as a result, some of them have already organized meetings for various AKIS actors. We have received very positive feedback on these events.

