

Tool 8.1 Tools for the CAP Cross-Cutting Objective (CCO) - AKIS Strategy

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The specific CAP objectives shall be supported by the “ **Cross-Cutting Objective**”(CCO) which aims at “**fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas, and encouraging their uptake by farmers, through improved access to research, innovation, knowledge exchange and training**” (Article 6(2)).

The 3 key elements of the cross-cutting objective – (1) intensive knowledge exchange and competent advisors within the AKIS, (2) co-creating innovation and sharing it, and (3) using digitalisation – can be regarded as the motor behind the many transitions in the sector and as “enablers” to achieve all nine specific and the general objectives of the CAP in a more effective and/or efficient way. Moreover, the three key elements of the CCO interrelate and will positively affect each other. For instance, actions in the field of innovation and knowledge exchange might increase the uptake of digital technologies by farmers (e.g. knowledge databases for practice).

The three key elements are key drivers for modernisation and support the whole CAP.

This tool describes how elements related to the CCO should be well embedded in a strategic way into the CAP Plans. This tool is covering specifically **Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems** (AKIS) (Section 1).

Please note some important info also in the Annexes.

1. AKIS strengthening the role of knowledge and innovation under the new CAP

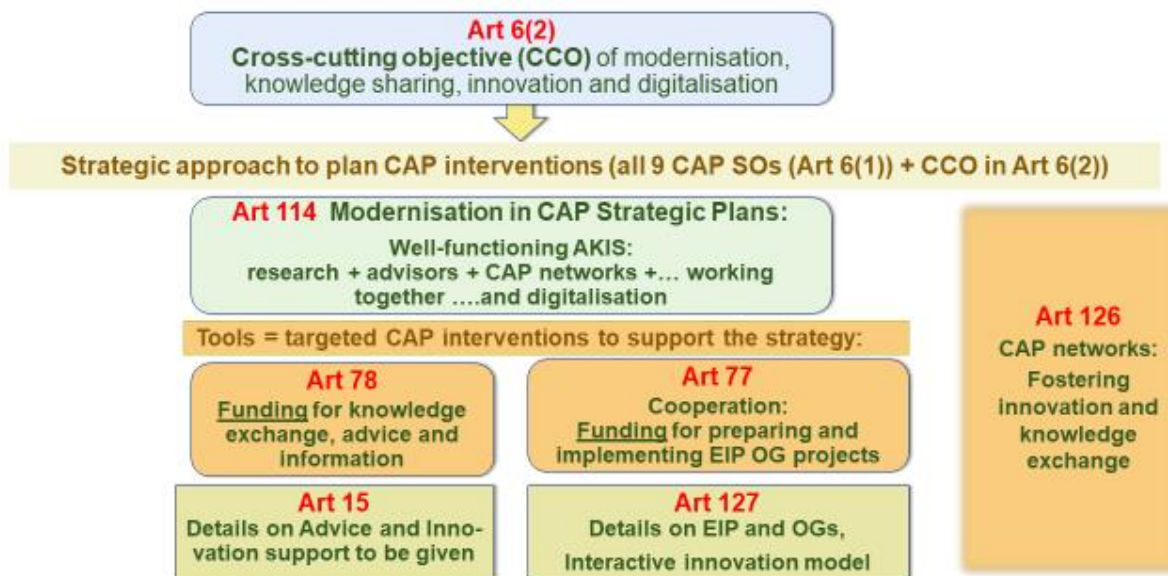
Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) encompass **all people and organisations** (farmers, foresters, farmers’ and foresters’ organisations and cooperatives, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs...) **that generate, share and use knowledge and innovation for agriculture and interrelated fields:** rural areas, value chains, environment, climate, biodiversity, society, consumers, etc.¹. For a well-functioning AKIS contributing to modernisation, the AKIS components need to interact to make the AKIS actors more competent and ready for the transition to a smarter, more sustainable and competitive agriculture and rural areas. A **strategic approach is needed to interconnect the various interventions to reach an effective and efficient AKIS linking actors and actions to serve the cross-cutting objective**, and in consequence support all specific objectives. Co-creation of innovation in **EIP Operational Group (OG)** projects should link up with **interventions on training and farm advisory services**, ensuring that the **knowledge is intensively exchanged among the AKIS actors** through a variety of methods such as targeted one-to-one advice on farm, thematic multi-actor events, networking, on-farm demonstrations, training courses, knowledge databases etc. The **specific innovation related activities of the CAP networks** also play a key role in implementing those actions. They also help to build the bridge to actors and information in other Member States and to the dedicated innovation activities including those related to the EIP under the CAP network at EU level.

1.1 Legal references and their interaction

The AKIS’ strategic approach and its related interventions are based on **Article 114 “Modernisation”** of the SPR. Articles 3, 6, 7, 15, 70, 77, 78, 107(1)(g), 109, 110, 111, 115(2), 126, 127 and Annex I of the SPR are building blocks for the CCO. The main objective is that **all 9 CAP specific objectives are served by the Cross-Cutting Objective**. The overview below illustrates the interrelations between various relevant articles. The CCO will be addressed in the same way as the other nine specific objectives, with a dedicated SWOT, assessment of needs and specific CCO interventions.

¹ Art. 3k: definition of AKIS

Overview of most relevant CCO provisions for knowledge and innovation (AKIS)



In Articles 107 and 114, reference is made to the modernisation of the agricultural sector and the CAP. **The requested CCO elements based on Article 114 SPR are obligatory, as well as the provision of advice and the integration of advisors in the AKIS system (Art. 15(2)).** Also the preparatory SWOT analysis is obligatory (Art. 115(2)). Articles 107(1)(g) and 114 request Member States to design in their CAP Strategic Plan a **strategic approach to improve the efficiency and effectivity of their AKIS.** Consequently, Member States should list the resulting interlinked CCO **interventions and actions, which need to be coherent with this strategic AKIS approach².**

Note that AKIS innovative actions may also impact creation or changing of the national/regional CAP policy itself, e.g. through co-creating innovative agro-environmental-climate interventions or ecoschemes in OG innovative projects or through new knowledge sharing AKIS networks and technologies for regular knowledge exchange.

After the elaboration of a strategic AKIS approach based on the CCO SWOT, prioritisation of needs, and sound intervention logic, **the resulting AKIS interventions will mainly fall under Articles 78 (funding advice, knowledge exchange, training and information), and Articles 77 (funding EIP Operational Group innovation projects).** The framework and details on farm advisory services are provided for in Article 15 , and for EIP and Operational Groups in Article 127.

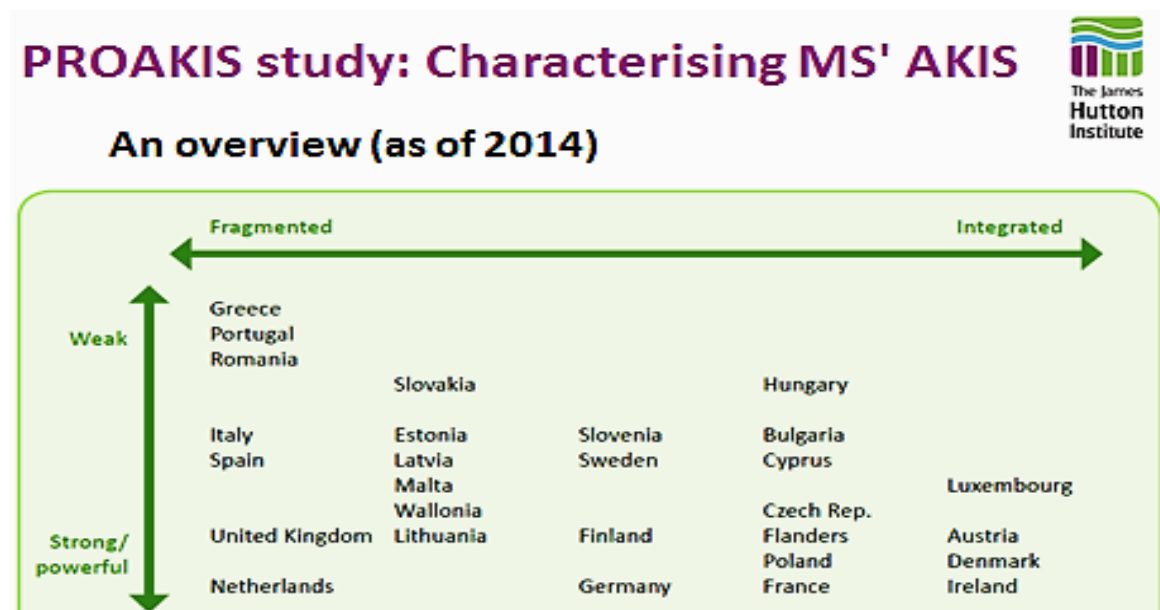
Also other interventions may have knowledge exchange, training or advice elements and contribute to the CCO, such as the **environmental, climate and other management commitments** referring to relevant training and advice, Art. 70(9), **innovative investments** - possibly by OGs - (Art. 73), or interventions for young farmers under first or second pillar (e.g. Art. 69(3) on conditions for installation of young farmers). Modernisation through knowledge sharing, innovation and digitalisation is also supported by certain types of **sectoral types of interventions** which contribute to the CCO objective on a sector by sector basis and can contribute to the relevant CCO indicators . All these knowledge and innovation interventions are complemented by the specific innovation **activities of the national CAP network** dedicated to speed up broad knowledge exchange and

² Art. 72(6) on knowledge exchange and information (including advice, training, demo etc) explicitly mentions that "Member States shall ensure that actions supported under this type of intervention be based on and be consistent with" the description of the future strategic AKIS approach provided in the CAP Strategic Plan in accordance with point (i) of Article 102(a)"

innovation (Art. 126). It will be important to highlight how different interventions and actions contribute to AKIS, and that a **sound strategic intervention logic should be the basis of any AKIS intervention** in the CAP Plan.

1.2 Why do we need well-functioning AKIS?

New combinations of knowledge and actors drive innovation. Therefore, we need to do efforts to interconnect people with different expertise, knowledge and competences who together are able to solve the challenges we face. The **national AKIS actors are however not sufficiently interconnected**. The current performance of the **AKIS varies greatly from one Member State to another** (see figure below), and often from one region to another within the same Member State. This is essential when assessing CAP plans and the necessary efforts and related budgets. Taking this into account and making use of the diversity of the EU to tackle the challenges and opportunities ahead, **each Member State now needs to strengthen its AKIS and organise it in a structured way to ensure regular and broad knowledge flows and to foster innovation processes**. This will ensure an offer of **more competent and qualitative advisors** working in synergy, increase their interaction with and within innovation projects and improve the communication of project results, making them widely used and saving costs³.



1.3 How to shape an AKIS fit for the future?

Supported by the specific innovation activities of the CAP networks at regional/national levels and between Member States, the variety of AKIS interventions will make all advisors, researchers and practitioners meet and collaborate on a regular basis around practical needs/opportunities and the potential solutions for them. This will enforce systemic links between researchers, practical knowledge (advisors) and practice (farmers, foresters, and their organisations). According to the SCAR SWG AKIS⁴, **setting a specific financial envelope for AKIS** is essential ("target"/ring-fence a part of CAP funding to knowledge and innovation of about 10%"), and such budget is also a CAP impact indicator. A substantial proportion of the CAP **budget** should be spent on the various ways of

³ The key role of AKIS is Member States (K. Rosenow): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-noBHFyJu8>

⁴ SWG SCAR AKIS: Strategic Working Group on AKIS of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, SCAR IV report, mainly pages 1-140): https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf

improving the AKIS (see the 4 strands in the box below) to ensure that AKIS actions are sufficiently taken up in the CAP plans, so that changes and the sustainable transition will indeed happen and that the strategic AKIS approach is implemented with efficient interventions. It is essential to start spending early in the period, as many AKIS interventions require a learning period.

Successful AKIS strategies include 4 main groups of actions⁵:

- (1) Strengthening **knowledge flows** and **links between research and practice**
- (2) Fostering **all farm advisors' knowledge** and strengthen their **interconnections** within the **AKIS**
- (3) Enhancing cross-thematic and cross-border **interactive innovation**
- (4) Making effective use of **information and communication technologies** to improve knowledge sharing

1.3.1 Strengthen knowledge flows and links between research and practice

Key to do's for the overall AKIS governance enhancing knowledge flows are:

1. **Develop the strategic AKIS approach for the CAP plan in a transformative process together with different stakeholders.** Beyond researchers, advisors and networks, have also farmers and rural actors actively participating in the formulation of the plans. Involve the younger generation or women AKIS actors, e.g. young farmers, advisors, researchers.
2. **Well-functioning AKIS are dependent and need to link up with other relevant policies** beyond the CAP, as well as with the **regions** within the Member State. **National Ministries and administrations should do efforts to better coordinate** and make **collaboration agreements** among each other and collaborate intensively to foster knowledge and innovation (e.g. national Ministries of Agriculture, Research and Education, Environment, Agencies in charge of national or EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, ERASMUS+ etc.)⁶. This will give responsibility as well as visibility, and will allow the individual staff the leeway to engage with practice, not as an exception, but as valued part of their work.
3. **The AKIS coordination body⁷ is the contact point for all AKIS related issues towards the European Commission.** It should cooperate with AKIS multi-actor platforms across the geographical levels in the country, following day-to-day AKIS interventions and actions, asking for modification of the CAP plan if needed, while continuously supporting interaction and implementation of the AKIS plan. The body should **keep an overview on the progress** and performance foreseen in the CAP plan, using a dedicated framework for monitoring and evaluation, in particular those related to the CAP indicators (Annex I, see Section 2.6).
4. **Linking with the research institutes and rewarding** researchers for their efforts for practice is obviously a key action⁸. **Bringing knowledge in a concise and understandable way close to practice** is key. Also the media (agricultural journals etc.) have a role to play here. **National thematic networks⁹**, possibly under the lead of back-office advisors, can deliver materials for training, advice and education, while also interlinking a mix of actors. Organise bottom-up calls and do efforts to disclose the needs of farmers, regular face-to-face exchange thematic events, etc.
5. CAP networks and/or other AKIS actors/platforms should initiate **on a regular basis meetings between research, farmers and advisors**: researchers can share their work with practice, while learning to work more interactive and more solution oriented and getting informed on farmers' needs and opportunities. This which will bring them inspiration, get them to know advisors which

⁵ See full description of possible interventions in the 4th report of the Strategic Working Group (SWG) of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) on AKIS on the DG AGRI website, in particular section 1.5 on p. 26-44

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9YIYDhmDCM> : example in "Preparing the Spanish AKIS strategy" (R. Wojski)

⁷ The AKIS coordination body as foreseen in the SFC template for CAP strategic plans

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw3Ly5X1jjo> : How to reward researchers beyond academic purposes (A. Fonts)

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPsVbkmnp9w> : Added value of thematic networks at national level (P. Bergeret)

can share practice needs and innovative ideas from practitioners, and farmers wanting to join innovative OGs.

6. **Informal ways also support knowledge flows e.g. co-location of research, advice and networks** (education, farmers' organization, food clusters, cooperatives etc.): lunching together or drinking a coffee in the same building is cheap, efficient and informal and encourages informal interaction and trust.

1.3.2 Fostering all farm advisors' knowledge and strengthen their interconnections within the AKIS

1. Member States must ensure advice on a broad number of domains is available. All advisors need to be mobilised in order to cover all farmers and many more fields of advice than currently is the case. **Thanks to the AKIS interventions**, Member States now can and should **open up the current 2014-2020 farm advisory systems (FAS), including all public and private advisors, to strengthen provision of advice and increase advisory competences**.
2. **In particular, this means to include all trusted advisors** who have overall the strongest impact on farmers' behaviour.
3. All advisors should be empowered to design solutions **adapted to their specific farm context**¹⁰ in an approach tailored to the farm and farmer and this all *"along the cycle of the farm development"*¹¹.
4. **Therefore, all advisors must be fully integrated within the AKIS to step up their qualification¹², interaction and connections**. Main elements and key examples on interventions related to advisors' integration in the AKIS can be found in Annex V and are taken into account in result indicator R.2.
5. Pursuant to Art. 15(2), Member States shall ensure that **within their territory** all following **requirements for advisory services** are fulfilled (Art. 15(2)):
 - Covering economic, environmental and social dimensions
 - Delivering up to date technological and scientific information developed by research and innovation actionsAdvisors' networking and cross-fertilisation across the EU can also upscale their competences¹³.
6. **The various interventions under Art. 78 form an integral part of the Member State's AKIS strategic approach**. Member States shall therefore according to Art. 75(6)) ensure that actions supported under Art. 78 **"be based on and consistent with" the Art. 114 AKIS strategic approach** provided for according to the CAP Strategic Plan.
7. **Advisors should take up a more interactive role and serve as innovation support services** (Art. 15(4) ("**one-stop-shops**" for innovation¹⁴), helping to reveal farmers' needs and to prepare and facilitate/implement EIP innovative projects. **There are no budget limitations concerning the maximum amount of support for advice or knowledge actions (Art. 78)**, except for the setting up of an advisory service (Art. 78(3)).
8. **Knowledge exchange and information interventions under Art. 78 could take many forms** such as: vocational or specific training courses for farmers and for advisors (or mixed). It is essential to **take into account the demand of the targeted audience** and not to programme the course fully top-down. Further actions are one-to-one on-farm advice to farmers or foresters; individual

¹⁰ "MS should ensure **farm advisory services tailored to the various types** of productions for the purpose of improving the sustainable management and overall performance of agricultural holdings and rural businesses"...""and to identify the necessary improvements as regards all **measures at farm level**". "MS should integrate all public and private advisors within the AKIS." (recital 50)

¹¹ Art. 15(2) second paragraph: "appropriate assistance **shall be offered along the cycle of farm development**"¹⁵

¹² Art. 15(3): "MS shall ensure that advisors are suitable qualified"

¹³ <https://www.h2020fairshare.eu/>, <https://i2connect-h2020.eu/> are EU advisory networks on digital advisory tools and on supporting interactive innovation. They are financed by Horizon projects but will be of great support to the AKIS in MS

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BTua8oNeLo> : Develop innovation support services including innovation brokering, facilitation and innovation tools (M. Gysen)

coaching; innovation advice; the setting up of advisory services for instance for innovation support. Mobility budgets enable to send advisors abroad and afterwards spread the new knowledge among the local AKIS actors. The organisation of knowledge exchange workshops or discussion groups, on-farm demonstration activities¹⁵ short-term farm exchange and visit schemes, etc all profit from peer-to-peer effects, as well as information actions of all kinds (face-to-face, virtual, educational,...). Advisors may be good trainers or facilitators for those peer-to-peer events.

9. **The choice of supported advisors is free, on condition that the advisors have no conflict of interest and that the advice given is impartial** (Art. 15(2)). This may be secured by a formal contract/agreement between advisor and Managing Authority. Beyond this, **the status of advisors should not be regulated**. It is up to the **AKIS coordination body to organise the advice and advisors**. There is no obligation to follow other obligatory conditions nor for trainers, nor for advisors, as this may limit the provision of sufficient and adequate advice and knowledge provision in certain areas or fields where the necessity exists. Nevertheless, **regular obligatory training of advisors is obligatory**¹⁶.
10. **Certification or designation of advisors is thus not needed**. This will reduce the administrative burden as well for advisors as for the Managing Authorities. A transparent register of advisors on the Ministry's website including all impartial advisors could be helpful, also for monitoring the situation, such as the advisory offer in certain domains. Such website will help clients with their choice of advisor, by sharing the advisors' curriculum vitae, their education, their specialisation (if any) and the experience they gained over the years. Such website can even be an instrument to work with vouchers, as some MS already do.
11. Member States shall further ensure - pursuant to Art. 15(4) - that **within their territory the following specific fields of advice are covered**. The organisation should be the task of the **AKIS coordination body** which most probably will be part of the Managing Authority to ensure legitimacy:
 - All requirements, conditions and management commitments applying to CAP beneficiaries set in the CAP Strategic Plans. This includes all eligibility conditions for support schemes under the CAP (see fiches for CAP interventions) and obligations under SMRs and GAEC standards under conditionality (see fiche 4.2 Conditionality and Annex III for the specific regulations, numbers, percentages and Articles concerned);
 - Further requirements under environmental and climate legislation, as well as for plant and animal health, related to the agricultural activity: the Water Framework Directive, The Nature Directives (Birds and Habitats), the Clean Air Directive, the Net Emission Ceiling Directive, Art. 55 of the Plant Health Law, the Animal Health Law and the elements of the Sustainable use of pesticides Directive (SUD) which are not included into conditionality, in particular the voluntary practices under Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Note that the compulsory practices under the WFD and the SUD are covered under the first bullet.
 - Farm practices preventing the antimicrobial resistance (AMR) set under the Communication COM (2017) 339 on AMR.
 - Information on financial instruments and business plans established under the CAP Strategic Plans
 - Risk management according to Art. 76
 - Innovation support in particular for preparing and implementing the Operational Groups under the EIP-AGRI as referred to in Art. 127
 - Development of digital technologies in agriculture and rural areas as referred to in Art. 114(b)
 - Sustainable management of nutrients ("a Farm Sustainability Tool for Nutrients" by 2024)

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9ycYsCIKX0>: Organise farmer to farmer exchanges including on farm demonstrations and experimentation (T. Kelly)

¹⁶ Art. 13(3): " MS shall ensure that advisors are appropriately trained"

- Conditions of employment and employer obligations as well as occupational health and safety and social care in farming communities.

Further guidance can be found in the toolkit for knowledge exchange and information¹⁷ (Art. 78)

1.3.3 Enhancing cross-thematic and cross-border interactive innovation

1. Foresee **sufficient funding for a variety of regular OG calls, all linked to the CCO. OG projects may then tackle any subject serving one of the nine CAP specific objectives**, such as the development of new products or practices, pilot projects, supply chain cooperation, consumer-producer organisation, joint environmental project approaches or climate change actions, discussion groups or networks with a purpose, cooperation in biomass provision or renewable energy, forest management, social innovation, consumer-citizens' concerns, preparing generational renewal making the farm fit for the future, rural area related actions and much more.
2. Many issues can be solved with cooperation on new approaches. The EIP brings extra value in a region/MS thanks its interaction within OGs, with OGs across borders or with Horizon Europe projects: **contacts** can be made **and experience can be shared across the EU**, be it bilateral or at the occasion of dedicated events.
3. **A set ("family") of calls under the same single and broad OG intervention opens up to a variety of objectives for OGs and reduces administrative burden**: keep the **bottom-up calls** to capture grassroots innovative ideas and practice problems, and add further "**suggestive**" **thematic calls**¹⁸ if useful for specific national/regional reasons.
4. **Support continuously open OG calls**¹⁹, with several cut-off dates per year. **This incentivises farmers with an innovative idea** or an urgent problem, who find it hard to wait much more than 6 months. MS will have to describe the intervention on OGs to count their annual and 7 year budgets in their CAP plans. How they would organise the frequency of calls is essential and is obviously related to expectations of MS and their farmers.
5. **Provide for a 2-step system** for OGs including a **first** action to prepare the project: develop the initial idea, check the available information on the project objective, find the most relevant partners who can help to develop the solution, prepare the way to cooperate and the final project proposal ready for selection. **Use simplified costs wherever you can**. This first preparatory action is often paid with lump sums under the OG intervention (indicator O.1) and thus eases the administrative burden. It could as well be an advisory action (counting for indicator O.2). The **second** action is for implementing the project. Also here new opportunities have arisen: besides flat rates, up to 40% of the direct costs can be paid directly without invoices if activities are well described in the application. Overall, **the 2 step approach helps to save money on meaningless projects, improves the overall quality of the proposals** thanks to good support during this process **and simplifies the selection** of the projects because they are better prepared. However, 2 steps should not be an obligation, it should be seen case by case. If the OG has an already prepared project thanks to other means (e.g. other AKIS interventions such as innovation platforms, innovation support etc.), there may be no need for OG preparation funding. Note that the 2 actions count separately for output indicators and in the CAP plans.
6. **Make sure that a substantial part of the OG budget is spent on communication and demonstration during the project**. Some current OG projects manage to regularly attract up to 100 farmers to their events, who learn and mimic the new approaches in the OG project. Thanks to the peer-to-peer effects, this has impacts on farming practices beyond what any other type of innovation funding can deliver. Overall, it appears that OG need clear instructions to ensure broad communication.

¹⁷ <http://agriwiki.agri.cec.eu.int/Pages/AWFile.aspx?LISTNAME=AgriWikiDocuments&ITEMID=4046>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaxZ1IE608k>: Use of a "family" of OGs & EIP network activities (Shane Conway)

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPkXbiVupgg> : Prepare interesting calls for Operational Groups (Åsa Broberg)

7. **Ensure a substantial communication budget beyond the project budgets for all OG projects, also after they finished, as well as for dissemination in other ways** or with other funding (e.g. demonstration programmes, advice, ...). Evaluation studies learn us that there is still much to gain by intensifying and possibly using **professional experts** for dissemination and communication of recent innovative practices. OGs should focus on the **existing channels which are the most used by the target audience** of end-users of project results, in particular those which also save the solutions on the longer term, beyond the project period (knowledge reservoirs/platforms).
8. Ensure **involvement of OGs in EU Horizon multi-actor projects**²⁰ (See Annex VI).
9. **Attract advisors in EIP OGs** and profit from the multiple roles they may play: helping to capture practice needs, preparing, facilitating, communicating and disseminating on OG projects and their outcomes.
10. CAP networks' innovation activities, EU advisory networks and knowledge reservoirs should help **facilitate cross-border OGs** (within one country and between countries). Timing and conditions of calls are often a hurdle. So why not synchronise within Europe one yearly fixed common timing and harmonise the selection criteria from Art. 127 (criteria for the interactive innovation model) to simplify cross-border OG calls, so that partners and CAP networks can timely prepare clustering exercises, brokering events, face-to-face encounters etc.?
6. Peer-to-peer learning is key: **organize cross-border or intra border visits for OGs** or for specific actors who can incentivize OGs (innovation support services, advisors, farmers' groups, cooperatives...).
7. **Avoid subjects without prospects** for effective implementation: ensuring application and impact are key to attract farmers and advisors. Chose a mix of evaluators with a good view on agricultural practice and an open eye to innovative (cross-over) ideas.
8. Use the relations within the AKIS and the EIP Operational Group projects **to test new practices/approaches that may become supported interventions under the CAP such as ecoschemes and environment-climate interventions**. Through such projects²¹, all will benefit from the practice knowledge and entrepreneurial skills of practitioners, while at the same time this will promote the future intervention at an early stage and motivate the future beneficiaries to take up the outcomes thanks to increased ownership of the co-developed interventions.
9. **Foster structural and regular specific innovation activities within the national CAP networks**²² to have a permanent platform and activities where all the knowledge created within and beyond the country can be shared and may inspire the implementation of new innovative practices and projects (section 1.5.2 and Annex IV).

1.3.4 Making effective use of information and communication technologies to improve knowledge sharing

1. **Interlink open public data to enable additional knowledge services**, e.g. Lithuania's RECAP app, Estonia's GIS/LPIS based layers combining soil fertility, erosion zones, spreading harmful organisms, irrigation needs etc.
2. Set up **multi-actor platforms** to discuss how to support the digital transition within AKIS, to find the most urgent needs, for instance on training/advice, involving practitioners such as farmers and advisors.
3. **Develop and share digital advisory tools, avoiding duplication** and reducing maintenance costs for the many advisors who can profit from it²³.

²⁰ See Annex VI for more details

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaxZ1IE608k>: Use of Operational Groups for testing out new CAP measures (S. Conway)

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjivPs5dRew> : Example: Promote collaboration and knowledge flows among OGs (J. Rohrhofer)

²³ The EU FAIRSHARE Horizon 2020 project (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/818488>) is testing 240 such tools already

4. Organise **training on digital skills** for farmers, advisors etc, possibly combined with a satisfaction score of users of training or advice.
5. **Build digital knowledge reservoirs /knowledge hubs that are interactive, quality checked and serve your AKIS** (e.g. LT²⁴, EUREKA²⁵). Use their recommended common EU standards and programming language for Member States' practice knowledge databases to ensure translation and interoperability of all knowledge material and outcomes from within the EU as much as possible.

1.4 Main new elements in the post 2022 CAP related to AKIS and EIP

1.4.1 Obligations

1. Member States have the obligation to include in their CAP Plan **how they will be strategically organising their AKIS to improve knowledge flows, in particular how researchers, advisors and CAP networks will work together**, Art. 114 (a)(i)and (ii)
2. **Member States shall include in the CAP Strategic Plan an AKIS system providing advisory services** for farmers and other beneficiaries of CAP support, Art. 15(1)
3. Member States have the obligation to detail in their CAP Plan **how they will be providing advice and innovation support** for OGs, Art. 114 (a)(ii)
4. **Advice must be impartial** and advisors supported under the CAP should have no conflict of interest, Art. 15(3)
5. All advisors **must be integrated within the AKIS** (key examples are listed in Annex V)
6. Within the Member State a larger number of advisory **fields are obligatory**, see section 1.3.2 (mainly points 2-7 and 11)
7. **The EIP OGs shall contribute to achieving all nine CAP specific objectives**, Art. 127(1)
8. Operational Groups shall share both the **plan and a summary of the results of their project**, to enable early contacting, networking and clustering of groups with similar themes, Art. 127(4)
9. The principles of **interactive innovation** for EIP OGs are made explicit in Art. 127(4) and easy to use as common **selection criteria** across Member States. This will simplify the conditions for cross-border OG calls:
 - focus on practical farmers' needs
 - complementary knowledge in the OG is necessary
 - co-creation and co-decision all along the project

1.4.2 Opportunities

1. Possibility of **advance payments** for EIP OG projects (**up to 50%**), Art. 44(3) of the financing regulation²⁶.
2. In principle **maximum 7 years per project, but longer is possible** if justified for collective actions for environmental, climate and biodiversity objectives (specific CAP objectives 4, 5 and 6)
3. **Higher than normal EAFRD contribution rates** specifically for EIP OG projects (**up to 80%**, instead of the normal 43%), Art. 91(3)(b)
4. **A State Aid derogation**²⁷ up to 500.000 Euro per OG project is in force from 1 January 2023

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6JMN92Lc0k>: Establish knowledge centres and digital knowledge reservoirs (G. Kučinskienė)

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9VlwGprzKk> : EU knowledge reservoir EURAKNOS and EUREKA (Pieter Spanoghe)

²⁶ R. 2021/2116 - REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013

²⁷ Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2472 of 14 December 2022 declaring certain categories of aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty

5. **Funding to provide innovation support** to OGs available through Art. 78 (Art. 15(4)(e)). Art. 78 intervention can both pay for individual innovation advice or for setting up innovation support services.
6. The introduction of the funding of **(new) cross-border OG projects** (Art. 127)
7. CAP networks now can **support** under their EIP networking the **cooperation of existing OGs** (e.g. meetings to exchange on a common theme, structured knowledge exchange on how to manage OGs or give incentives for developing common project proposals etc.), Art. 113(4). This could equally be funded by Technical Assistance e.g. for regions. Cross-fertilisation between OGs on similar or complementary topics can also be enabled by Art. 78. It could be useful as preparatory action to prepare cross-border OGs or for Horizon Europe multi-actor projects.
8. A number of **Horizon Europe projects** of calls 2021-2022 will support the various AKIS strands during the transition phase, for instance an AKIS co-creation project and one on innovation support, EU advisory networks and thematic networks. New in 2021 is a specific topic on Horizon Europe thematic networks for OGs: projects will be obliged to build themselves around a number of OGs working on a common theme. This can be the start for preparing cross-border OGs (Art. 127), after working together on a common theme in such Horizon Europe project (see Annex VI).

1.5 Cornerstones for an AKIS fit for the future

1.5.1 EIP-AGRI Operational Group (OG) innovative projects - Art. 77 and 120

Support to EIP Operational Groups follows the general provisions of cooperation (Art. 77)²⁸. Details essential for the EIP and Operational Group projects are listed in Art. 127. Overall, there is major continuity with the period 2014-2020 with a number of extra incentives (see section 1.4.2). Lessons will have been learnt from the over 3000 OGs in that period. The 100% support rate and the State Aid derogation will be essential, to boost energy, biomass, environmental, climate, rural and social innovation projects. Such subjects also were possible in the 2014-2020 period but were hardly used as 100% support rate was not possible and no private parties were willing to put in budget.

Further important info is available in Annex III. For instance, it is important to remember the fact that the **envisaged innovation may be based on new but also on traditional practices in a new geographical or environmental context (Art. 127)**. There is no “definition” of innovation needed, so any project starting **new** initiatives is eligible.

1.5.2 CAP networking for innovation post 2022 - Art. 126 and Art. 114(a)

The new CAP cross-cutting objective calls for intensified knowledge exchange and co-creation of innovation. The CAP networks are privileged platforms for this and this is indicated in the regulation as such. Fostering innovation and facilitating the networking of EIP Operational Groups are specific objectives/tasks mentioned in Art. 126. In line with these objectives, MS - to the example of some active current NRNs²⁹ - should develop more specific innovation activities in their CAP network to fulfil the requirements of Art. 114(a). Plenty of examples are available³⁰ but the future AKIS strategic approach is even more ambitious. MS will be invited to describe in their CAP Plan how they intend to organise the specific innovation activities in their CAP network³¹. Regions can also take initiatives in

on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 39-40) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.327.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A327%3ATOC

²⁸ Further guidance can be found in the toolkit for the cooperation intervention:

<http://agriwiki.agri.cec.eu.int/Pages/AWFile.aspx?LISTNAME=AgriWikiDocuments&ITEMID=3047>

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NF5H7RR8MPU>: Innovation activities of the Nat. Rural Network Unit (J. Swoboda)

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO9o0EMPnOk>: Networking meetings with Operational Groups (E. Frankhuizen)

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-MOMD3bFKg>: Preparing the role of CAP networks in strengthening the AKIS by promoting innovation and knowledge flows within the country and across the EU (I. Van Oost)

this sense and are allowed to use Technical Assistance to do so, and also Art. 78 can fund similar actions. In this case, coordination within the Member State is expected. Key points to be brought to the MS attention before developing their CAP plan can be found in Annex IV, to ensure that the CAP Networks' requirements, objectives and tasks related to innovation are fulfilled.

1.5.3 New and more interactive functions for advisors, innovation support

Beyond the classical linear advising, three more recent types of interactive advisory functions will become main instruments for a well-functioning future AKIS. These types will ensure advisors' quality within a Member State to become more competent and involved in innovative knowledge and connected with participatory research. Thus, this should be considered for the AKIS strategic approach of every country:

1.5.3.1 A set of interactive innovation roles of advisors in Operational Groups:

Which new roles will advisors take up in EIP Operational Groups or other interactive innovation projects, such as Horizon Europe (HE) Multi-Actor projects or HE Thematic Networks?

- They can capture practice needs of farmers and pass this info to researchers and CAP networks (obligation in Art. 114)
- They can share up-to-date practical knowledge from a wide range of active farms
- They can broker to help prepare interactive innovation projects
- They can facilitate interactive innovation projects and learn from the AKIS actors involved
- They are key actors for communicating and disseminating the newly generated innovative knowledge, both to their clients, their back-office specialists as to the wider public
- They can bridge between CAP and Horizon Europe consortia as innovation support services

1.5.3.2 Which functions can an Innovation Support Service (ISS) provide as a “one-stop-shop”?³²

The experience of agricultural/rural innovation support services is that you need to have expertise in both the subject matter and in brokerage/facilitation. **Innovation support** can be funded under Art. 77 (if the person delivering the innovation support is a partner in the OG: use O.1) as well as under Art. 78 (innovation coaching/advice for a project, with the advisor not becoming a partner: use O.2). A typical operational example of an innovation support service working exclusively and effectively for Operational Group projects is the one in Schleswig-Holstein³³.

The following innovation support functions are key for a “one-stop-shop” ISS:

1. **Brokering** function: connecting actors around an bottom-up innovative idea³⁴
2. **Coordination and facilitation** of projects, as an intermediate between partners
3. **Promoting** innovation at large and raising **awareness** on its importance for transitions
4. **Coaching** farmers towards innovation (individual **innovation advice**)
5. Organising **thematic brainstorming events** to find possible solutions and link partners
6. Encouraging farmers with **an innovation prize**, to show their peers how normal or easy it is to innovate. This can be done e.g. with a biannual prize from which for instance 150 candidates are reduced to 10 nominees and one winner. All nominees are promoted in the most read practice oriented farm channels, and get also help to develop their innovation, which again promotes innovation
7. **Dissemination** of innovative results, specific events and campaigns
8. Keeping **closely connected** with other SMEs and other innovation services and funding bodies.

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FBi7Z410GE> : Innovation support services: the glue in AKIS (W. Ceulemans)

³³ Page 106: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf (K. Ketelhodt, innovation advisor in the Schleswig-Holstein Chamber of Agriculture)

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbiAGzlf3IA> : Distrikempen – Logistic Innovation (P. Pasgang)

1.5.3.3 A “Back-office for advisors”³⁵:

To support their colleagues, as well as farmers, trainers, educators etc., some advisors specialise on the practical side of particular themes. This means that they are in close and regular contact with national and international researchers on that theme, as well as with OGs working on these themes and the CAP networks collecting information from theme-related projects. As such, these “specialist” advisors, thanks to their intensive knowledge on a particular subject, are of great help for the whole Member State, vocational training and education included and illustrate the strategic approach within the AKIS. Such specialists could be individual advisors (even a part time researcher that works as an advisor too), or part of a team within a larger advisory body³⁶, farmers’ organisation or an applied research institute having a group of advisors as part of the organisation. They may produce dedicated educational material serving to upskill many AKIS actors. They may also well placed to lead national multi-actor thematic networks^{37,38}.

1.6 How reflect the AKIS Strategic Approach in the CAP plan?

The following sections of the CAP plan template are dedicated to fill in the various elements of the AKIS approach in the CAP strategic plans:

Section 2 - Assessment of needs and intervention strategy

This section covers on the SWOT summary, needs assessment and interventions chosen for the CCO. It also indicates which are for the CCO the related result indicators and the target value for those indicators, including the justification of the targets and milestones and the financial allocation.

Section 4 - Elements common to several interventions

This section focuses on the work of the CAP networks and the possibility of using technical assistance. Key questions here concern the planned networking activities to strengthen innovation and knowledge flows within AKIS and the beneficiaries. The last question in section 4.6 is investigating on the coordination and complementarities between EAFRD and other Union funds (in particular Horizon Europe and ERASMUS+, but also EFRD and Interreg):

Technical Assistance (Art 89)

- **Objectives;**
- **Scope and indicative planning of activities;**
- **Beneficiaries.**

CAP Network (Art. 126)

- **Summary overview and objectives of the National CAP Network, including activities to support the EIP and to increase knowledge flows and interaction within the AKIS;**
- **Structure, governance and operation of the National CAP Network, including the indicative share of technical assistance funding allocated to the network.**

Coordination, demarcation and complementarities between EAFRD and other Union funds active in rural areas (Art. 110(d))

- **Short description of demarcation and coordination mechanisms.**

Section 5.3 - Description of interventions under EAFRD

This section includes the set of CCO/AKIS interventions foreseen in the CAP plan, including the description of the design and requirements to ensure effective contribution to the CCO, the relevant output indicator to which the intervention contributes, the territorial scope, the needs addressed by the intervention, the result indicator(s) selected for this intervention, the eligibility conditions, the

³⁵ Page 101-103 of https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTBwA4PPXbk> : Integration of Slovenian advisors in the AKIS (A. Jagodic)

³⁷ SWG SCAR AKIS Report page 29-31 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=EPsVbkmnp9w> : Thematic networks at national level (P. Bergeret)

form and rate of support, the total indicative financial allocation and the planned unit amounts per year.

Section 7 - Governance systems and coordination systems

In section 7.1. the **formal AKIS coordination body** should be identified, including its contact details. This will be the contact point for the Commission as regards the **governance and coordination of the AKIS strategic approach. This includes farm advice and all other related AKIS interventions.** It is expected that this coordinator is in close and regular contact with the main AKIS (regional) coordinators and actors in the country which can help assess and guide the improvement of the AKIS in the country by giving suggestions for encouragement of more effective knowledge exchange activities (advice, training, ...), including in particular also the generation and co-creation of innovation (EIP OGs) and the broad sharing of it.

Section 7.2 requests a brief description of the monitoring and reporting systems established to record, maintain, manage and report the information needed for assessing the performance of the CAP Strategic Plan, and the annual performance for the CCO elements (Art.123(2)).

Section 8.1 - Modernisation: AKIS and digital technologies

This is the section to describe the strategic AKIS approach on which the AKIS interventions are built. It summarizes the key elements by which the CAP plan will illustrate the planned improvement of the strategic approach related to the functioning of its AKIS and digitalisation. The knowledge exchange, advice, information actions and EIP Operational Group innovative projects need to contribute the CCO (Art. 6(2)), and may also contribute to further specific objectives according to the specific interventions chosen. Member States shall explain:

- ***The overall envisaged organisational set-up of the improved AKIS: detailing how knowledge flows between the different actors forming part of the AKIS will be improved (Art.120)(a)(i), and including the specific interventions which serve this purpose;***
- ***The description of how advisors, researchers and CAP networks will work together within the framework of the AKIS (Art.114)(a)(ii):*** including potential inter-ministerial agreements and sufficient budget attribution to support the actions that regularly interlink researchers with all advisors and with the specific innovation activities of their CAP network, to increase knowledge flows;
- ***The description of the organisation of advice according to the requirements referred to in Article 15(2), 15(3) and 15(4):*** Explaining how advising farmers and other beneficiaries of CAP support will be organised and integrated within the AKIS ensuring the delivery of up to date technological and scientific information (Art. 15(2)) and that, within the Member State, advice all fields listed in Art. 15(4) are covered. Providing details on the inclusion of all impartial advisors (public and private). Illustrating that all CAP supported advisory, knowledge exchange and information actions are based on and consistent with the AKIS strategic approach as described in reply to the former questions;
- ***The description of how innovation support services are provided as referred to in Article 114(a)(ii):*** Explaining how innovation support is organised in order to capture grassroots innovative ideas and develop them into innovation projects of EIP Operational Groups, how it is ensured that these services are supported by the regular knowledge flows between researchers, advisors and the CAP network innovation activities, and also how this innovation support is organised within the AKIS: for instance as a “one stop shop for innovation” covering any possible theme, etc.

Please, note that in that Section of the CAP Strategic Plan, in addition to the AKIS plan, also the **strategic approach towards digitalisation** needs to be described (see Section 2 and 3).

1.7 AKIS related impact, result and output indicators

1.7.1 Impact indicator (Article 7, Annex I of the SPR)

- 1.1 **Sharing knowledge and innovation:** Share of CAP budget for knowledge sharing and innovation

1.7.2 Output indicators³⁹ (Article 7, Annex I of the SPR)

- O.1 Number of European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group projects
- O.2 Number of advice actions or units to provide innovation support for preparing and implementing European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Operational Group projects
- O.29 Number of supported training, advice and awareness actions or units

1.7.3 Main Result indicators⁴⁰ (Articles 7, 97 and Annex I of the SPR)

- R.1 **Enhancing performance through knowledge and innovation:** Number of persons benefitting from advice, training, knowledge exchange or participating in European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups supported by the CAP in order to enhance sustainable economic, social, environmental, climate and resource efficiency performance
- R.2 **Linking advice and knowledge systems:** Number of advisors receiving support to be integrated within Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) (for examples of how this can be done, see Annex V)
- R.24 **Environmental-climate performance through knowledge and innovation:** Number of persons benefitting from advice, training, knowledge exchange or participating in European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups supported by the CAP related to environmental-climate performance (sub indicator of R.1).
- Several other result indicators will also be targeted by specific AKIS interventions.

1.8 Guidance questions for the assessment of the AKIS strategic approach

In blue: general questions that should fit for all types of intervention.

For the AKIS Strategic approach, interventions Art. 77/127 and 78 are key.

Reference in the CAP Plan template	Item to be assessed
	Section 1 - Common elements to all types of interventions
	Does the title reflect sufficiently clearly the content of the intervention?
2 & 5	Objective(s) to which the intervention is linked
	<i>Please refer to the tool on the CCO (2.2.10)</i>
	Is the design of the intervention consistent with the CCO (and SOs) to which it contributes? Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above issue?
5	Eligibility conditions and description of the intervention

³⁹ Note that some modifications of Annex I may still need adjustment according to the final legislation.

⁴⁰ Note that some modifications of Annex I may still need adjustment according to the final legislation.

	Do the eligibility conditions of the intervention respect the applicable legal provisions in the SPR? Are the interventions according to Article 72 based on and coherent with the AKIS strategic approach?
	Are the eligibility conditions consistent with the policy objective/goal of the type of intervention? Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above question?
	If the intervention is 'territorialised': is the territorial targeting relevant to the identified needs and intervention logic? [see the fiche X.4 on regionalisation ⁴¹]
2 & 5	Result indicator(s) to which the intervention contributes
	Is/are the RI proposed consistent with the design of the intervention and its eligibility conditions? Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above issue?
5 & 6	Please refer also to the tool 5.0 on what is an intervention
	Do the planned annual outputs fall under the relevant output indicator?
	Are the planned outputs consistent with the relevant planned milestones/targets?
	Are the planned outputs plausible in view of the design of the intervention, its eligibility conditions and thus its targeted beneficiaries? Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above question?
5 & 6	Please refer also to the tool 5.0 on what is an intervention
	Are the planned unit amounts plausible in view of the design of the intervention and its eligibility conditions? Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above question?
	Are the planned unit amounts consistent with the relevant planned milestones/targets?
5 & 8	Simplification
	Please refer also to the tool 8.2 on simplification
	Is the intervention designed in a way that would avoid unnecessary complexities or administrative burden for the beneficiaries (e.g. using SCO, vouchers, etc.)? This would be in particular need to be checked for advice under Art. 72
3	Consistency and accumulation of support
	Please refer also to the tool 3.1 on intervention strategy and its consistency/coherence
	Is the intervention consistent/not in contradiction with other interventions?(including with similar types of sectoral intervention chosen by MS) Is the level of detail of the description of the intervention sufficient to answer the above question?
	Is the intervention likely to create accumulation of support (i.e. overcompensation/double funding)?
Section 2 - Items specific to the AKIS Strategic Approach	
	<p><i>The following questions are designed to help assess the proposed Strategic Approach by MS and provide ideas for discussion with MS during informal phase, but often go beyond regulatory obligations in a way to enhance good practices.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the MS fulfil each of the obligations under Art. 114, as listed in the 4 indents in section 8.1 of the CAP plan? • Overall, what are the main collaboration pathways to make researchers, advisors and CAP networks work better and more regular together to exchange knowledge? (see section 1.3 for examples) • With which interventions will the advisors be integrated in the AKIS (Annex V for best examples)

⁴¹ <http://agriwiki.agri.cec.eu.int/Pages/AWLibrary.aspx?LISTNAME=AgriWikiDocuments&ITEMID=1097>

- How will the MS fulfil the obligations for advice and advisors under Article 15? How will this be organised while at the same time avoiding administrative burden (such as designation, certification etc.) (see section 1.3.2, 1.5.3 and Annex V)
- In the case of Art. 78 types of intervention, are the intervention “based on and consistent with” the strategic AKIS approach as described in section 8.1 of the CAP plan? Are they helpful for the aim of improving the functioning of the AKIS?
- In the case of EIP OG interventions, do they fulfil the requirements and guidance (section 1.3.3 and 1.5.1, Annex III)?
- Are they helpful for the aim of improving the functioning of the AKIS?
- Are they designed in a way that the objectives are focusing on farmers’/foresters’ needs?
- Do they take a full multi-actor approach with criteria to get an appropriate mix of relevant actors? Do they request co-creation and co-deciding all along the project (Art. 120)?
- Will OGs share their plans and the summary of results (eligibility condition)?
- Will grassroots innovative ideas be captured and bottom-up OG calls be provided to develop them? Are sufficiently frequent EIP OG calls foreseen?
- Will OGs be used to test out and develop CAP interventions?
- Has the MS provided for adequate innovation support for EIP OGs as requested in Art. 15(4)? Does it cover the full territory in a rather equal manner?
- How will up-to-date knowledge and information be spread in the MS (advisory specialists’ back-office? Innovation support database? CAP network investing in innovation exchange? etc., see section 1.3.3 and 1.3.4, Annex IV)
- How is the MS bridging between research and practice? How is it making use of the outcomes of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe multi-actor projects, and in particular from the Thematic Networks compiling knowledge ready for practice, to design their interventions, for instance under Art.78, but also for other SOs (see section 1.3.1 and Annex VI)?
- Are the innovation activities of the CAP Network well developed in terms of specific actions planned and adequately budgeted (see sections 1.3.1 and 1.5.2 and Annex IV)?
- Do the specific innovation activities of the CAP network follow the guidance given in section 1.5.2 and Annex IV?
- Is it collecting and sharing up-to-date information and knowledge with the advisors and researchers? And with which other AKIS actors?
- Has the MS defined linkages with other EU support/programmes in particular with Horizon Europe (for knowledge produced in OGs and multi-actor projects), and possibly ESF+, ERASMUS+, ERDF (see section 1.4.2 point 10 and Annex VI)?
- Are regular contacts of OGs with Horizon Europe projects and consortia preparing proposals set up? (section 1.4.2 point 8)
- Has the MS taken steps to implement the interventions from the very beginning of the Programming period?
- Has the MS considered how to reach the various types of farmers, including the small farms and the socially excluded with knowledge exchange and advice?

Annex I. Background information on AKIS

EIP seminar on AKIS in CAP Strategic plans – 16-18 September 2020:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-cap-strategic-plans-key-role-akis>

(the full seminar was recorded and can be seen again via the weblinks on the webpage)

- *Inspiration from an experienced **innovation support service**, followed by a **panel discussion on AKIS policy***
- *Opening speeches from **Commissioner** and Polish **Ministers of Agriculture***

- *One very inspiring and **Rural Inspiration Award OG***
- *An overview on the **basic elements of AKIS + Q&A***
- *Section on advice: basics + 3 diverse examples of **advisory services***
- *Section on role of the **national CAP network for innovation**, again with good examples*
- ***Online discussions** which happened in the weeks before the seminar (on advisory services, on CAP networks and on the CAP plans), summarised by Mark Gibson*
- ***10 good examples of nice AKIS interventions that can be supported by the CAP***
- ***4 MS presenting their CAP plans**, already full of content*
- *After the breakout sessions, **Director General Burtscher** closed with a summary on the interactive discussions and expresses how he sees the future & AKIS*

EIP webinars on the role of the specific innovation activities of CAP networks (3, 8 and 10 June)

AKIS animated infographic: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/news/new-animated-video-akis-building-effective>

AKIS brief: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/building-stronger-akis_en.pdf

AKIS brochure: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-brochure-agricultural-knowledge-and>

Animated infographic on **innovation support**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTV6kLH0ykg&feature=youtu.be>

Brochure on **innovation support**: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-brochure-innovation-support-services>

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf (**SWG SCAR AKIS report**, page 81-112 on **advisory approaches**)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/report-preparing-for-future-akis-in-europe_en.pdf (**SWG SCAR AKIS report**, see in particular **list of best**

AKIS practices from MS on page 31-44)

Evaluation Study on the CAP's impact on knowledge exchange and advisory services:

[file:///C:/Users/oostiin/Downloads/KF0320756ENN.en%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/oostiin/Downloads/KF0320756ENN.en%20(2).pdf)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cmef/research-innovation-and-technology/caps-impact-knowledge-exchange-and-advisory-activities_en

Further reading:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-promoting-creativity-and-learning>

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-brochure-horizon-2020-multi-actor>

Annex II. Why do we need well-functioning AKIS?

Knowledge and innovation have a key role to play in helping farmers and rural communities meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. New combinations of knowledge and actors drive innovation. Therefore, we need to do efforts to interconnect people with different expertise, knowledge and competences who together are able to solve the challenges we face.

The **national AKIS actors are however not sufficiently interconnected**. Even if there is already a substantial amount of knowledge available, this knowledge is mostly fragmented and insufficiently known and applied in practice. That is why a more strategic approach is needed to break down the silos, to look for synergies and more intensive knowledge exchange among actors.

The Foresight study of the SWG SCAR AKIS 3rd mandate revealed that **open and impartial knowledge sources (people as well as data) are essential to combat the privatisation of knowledge** by an ever smaller number of multinational interlinked companies.

In short, well-functioning AKIS will help speed up innovation throughout the EU, **avoid duplication of efforts between Member States and thus save costs**. They will increase considerably the impact of EU and national/regional research & innovation funding. Overall, the CAP post 2020, supporting better AKIS approaches in Member States, will result in **EU added value and more cross-border spillovers of knowledge and innovation**.⁴²

Annex III. Basics on EIP Operational Groups

Annex III lists the key elements on the EIP and its Operational Groups⁴³ applicable in the 2014-2020 period, which stay still valid and are very much worth reminding.

1. **What is innovation? In short, innovation is: "an idea put into practice with success"**. Therefore it is important to have practitioners involved, not as a study-object, but in view of using their entrepreneurial skills and practical knowledge for developing the solution or opportunity and creating co-ownership for the end-users of the project results. Given the **impossibility of defining "innovation" ex-ante**, managing authorities should not programme an intervention by restricting eligible operations to the condition that they are "innovative". The CAP can support operations which have the potential be innovative, **without making the innovative character of an operation an eligibility criterion**.
2. **The envisaged innovation may be based on new but also on traditional practices in a new geographical or environmental context**. The intervention may cover all costs related to all aspects of the cooperation, including in particular the work of practitioners such as farmers and advisors. Note that Member States **shall not support** through this type of intervention cooperation **solely involving researchers**: cooperation should not replace classical research, not even if applied research. The intention is to cooperate with practitioners and advisors, so that **practical (tacit) knowledge** is taken into account also, to make outcomes easy applicable and ready for practice.
3. **Obligatory selection criteria for OG projects** (not new but now in post 2022 legislation): EIP OGs must draw up a plan for innovative projects based on the **interactive innovation model** which has as the key principles as listed in Art. 127(3)((a), (b), (c)) . Besides the focus on farmers' or foresters' needs, the particular composition of the group should benefit the specific project and its outreach, making the best use of different types of knowledge (practical, tacit, scientific, technical, organisational, etc) in an interactive way. Mutual respect and putting partners at equal (decision) levels all along the project are essential to make it work.

⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-noBHfyJu8>

⁴³ See also EIP guidelines 2014-2020 for further info: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/guidelines-programming-innovation-and>

4. Member States may grant support to **prepare or to implement** Operational Group projects, or both. These actions request separate requests for grants and will be funded as separate operations, without an automatic link between them. To fund the **preparation** of an operational group, the application may be a relatively simple: a description of the rough project ideas and its relevance for practice, together with the targeted partner combination to be developed. A lump sum approach is very appropriate. For the funding of the **implementation** of an operational group project, a higher budget and a more thorough project description will be needed. The work plan and the agreements among partners on who does what and which activities will be undertaken should be clear in this stage. Such project description is important in case the foreseen solution cannot be achieved: auditors will then be able to find proof of activities planned and executed, and thus those payments allowed.
5. **Innovation support is an action** which should help to capture individual grassroots innovative ideas, understand the practice needs, bring the most relevant partners together, refine the project proposal, arrange sound working methods thanks to a clear cooperation agreement⁴⁴, and finally prepare a solid project proposal on which all actors of the operational group want to engage. As part of innovation support services, "**innovation brokering**" has an important role in discovering innovative ideas, facilitating the start-up of operational groups, notably by acting as a go-between who connects innovation actors (farmers, researchers, advisors, NGO's, etc.). The function of brokering may be combined with innovation advising and/or EIP networking.⁴⁵
6. **Operational groups (OGs) and Leader Local Action Groups (LAGs)**: Operational groups and LAGs have in common that they capture ideas from interested actors and foster the setting up of projects. However, LAGs act on the basis of a comprehensive local development strategy. LAGs will approve several projects to implement this strategy which are not necessarily multi-actor. In contrast, an EIP operational group builds itself around a single innovation project, targeted towards finding a solution for a specific issue. The operational group exists only to carry out that project and can seek help from partners or experts across the EU.
7. Operational Groups shall **disseminate their plans and the results of their projects**, within their country. They should also send them to SFC for publishing on EU CAP networks' website and enabling contacts with other projects (OGs, Horizon Europe, etc). **See Annex VII for the format in which this dissemination of plans and project results is to be done.**

Annex IV. Innovation related CAP networking elements to be brought to the MS' attention when developing their CAP plan

- How precisely will the **CAP network work closer together with advisors and researchers** within the AKIS (obligation in Art. 114 (a)(ii))? Which actions will directly deal with this?
- Is the contribution to the EU CAP network included in the planned innovation and knowledge exchange activities according to the **obligations** in Art. 126 covered by an **appropriate budget**?
- Which **high level agreements** between ministries of Agriculture, Research, Education, Innovation, Environment etc. will support this improved collaboration in the coming 7 years?
- **Which specific networking** structures/tools/activities are foreseen for innovation/AKIS support and the regular interactions between AKIS actors?
- Will the network's **governance** structure be organised in a way that **innovation/AKIS activities will be part of the network annual work plans**? How will this in turn support the other CAP network activities?

⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BTua8oNeLo> : innovation support services, including innovation brokering, facilitation and innovation tools and much more (M. Gysen)

⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkoQTH9Q5J8> : The Polish advisory service and EIP network (K. Janiak)

- How will the network support unit (NSU) ensure that the **outcomes of research and innovation projects under Horizon 2020/Europe are disseminated** through the network's tools? **How will translation and filtering of existing information (from EU OGs, Horizon Europe MA projects etc.) be organised? Is there sufficient capacity foreseen** for the website, publications, events...?
- How will the NSU ensure **availability of appropriate project datasystems** – an essential part for NSU support to support a good AKIS - based on the OG's information (laid down in the common EIP format) that will be interconnected in a single EU-level knowledge reservoir ?
- Is there a **dedicated support unit dealing with innovation**, and keeping an overview of all OG innovative projects in the Member State? (e.g. with OG databases)
- **Will this activity also actively promote OG participation and inclusion in Horizon Europe projects**, in particular in all Multi-Actor projects, Thematic networks or Advisory networks? (please be aware that for researchers it is not obvious to find farmers, advisors and other OG participants with whom they could collaborate in a Multi-Actor project, so extra networking efforts are essential)
- How will key research actors such as **Horizon Europe National Contact Points** and connection units within research bodies and universities be networked with farmers, advisors and other OG partners? How will they be **connected to the innovation support services**?
- Will support for **cooperation between existing OGs** become an essential activity of the specific innovation activities in their CAP networks?
- How will **cross-border OGs** within regionalised Member States as well as beyond the borders of Member States be encouraged?
- Is **transnational cooperation** between OG included in the network's activities and are there sufficient resources (budget, multilingual staff, sufficient knowledge and overview on the MSs' OG themes...) to cover it?
- **How will be (public and private) advisors be involved in networking activities**, considering that they are not usual actors of current NRN activities?
- Is the network promoting or **interconnecting innovation support services**?
- Will **peer-to-peer learning** for advisors and farmers be organized?
- What about the supporting and sharing of useful info with policymakers, e.g. the outcomes of test bed OGs for future CAP interventions?

Further guidance can be found in the toolkit for National CAP Networks⁴⁶

Annex V. Good practices to integrate advisors in the AKIS

A few examples of how advisors become more integrated within the AKIS system:

- Advisor giving holistic on-farm one-to-one advice on economic, environmental and social dimensions, capable of delivering up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by R&I (very broad scope)
- Specialist advisor on a certain theme or for a specific target group, on-farm or off-farm, or working for the "back-office" having regular exchanges with researchers and exploiting info from the EU from the CAP networks, collecting, managing and updating practical knowledge
- Providing individual innovation support: capture grassroots innovative ideas and accompany the preparation and implementation of a farmer-led EIP OG (the CAP networks can bring innovation brokers together to learn from each other)
- Development of an innovation support service, capturing bottom-up innovative ideas and helping preparation of OGs⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Add wiki link of the final version of toolkit 4.5

⁴⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-brochure-innovation-support-services> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTV6kLH0ykg&feature=youtu.be>

- (Obligatory yearly) training of advisors on specific themes, or learning new approaches and skills (e.g. social farming, digital, short chains, ...)
- Advisors providing training to farmers, farm workers etc. , writing in agricultural journals
- Advisors joining/organising knowledge exchange events with researchers, farmers etc., making work programmes, exchanging practical needs, Advisors writing in agricultural journals, websites, social media, newsletter, acting as EIP event coordinator
- Advisors leading a multi-actor thematic network (e.g. RMT) at national/regional level, organizing a farm demonstration, a fair, winter event or another type of multi-actor event to bring AKIS actors together for all types of knowledge exchange
- Advisors as partner in a research project, communication event,...
- Advisors going abroad to learn and come back to train and disseminate new knowledge (“advisor mobility budget”)
- Giving innovation advice linked to investment aid for novel type of investments, fine-tuning the investment and supporting the farmer in his contacts with the company on the use of this investment

It is important to start early with these new approaches, as it might take time to make them known and fully develop the concepts, promote them and implement the knowledge exchange and information actions according to commitments.

Annex VI. Links to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects

1. Rural Development interventions under the CAP and the Union Research and Innovation Policy "Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe" complement each other in providing opportunities for EIP interactive innovation groups. The rural development interventions in a CAP plan are applied within a specific programme area, whilst research policy must go beyond this scale by co-funding innovative actions at transnational level.
2. European research policy has become more practice oriented since the introduction of multi-actor projects and thematic networks in the period 2014-2020. This is why it is so **important for NRNs/CAP networks to regularly connect with Horizon Contact Points before consortia are formed. It is equally essential for them to be proactive in promoting their OGs widely and through a searchable database so that researchers interested in finding OGs can be helped.**
3. **Synergies and complementarities have been developed between the research and CAP policy. The EIP network and the common format for informing and reporting on OGs and multi-actor projects** will continue to play an important connecting role between OGs with Horizon research consortia on specific topics.
4. **Horizon Europe Thematic networks⁴⁸** are a particular format of multi-actor projects that aim to develop ready-made material for practice or training/education, such as info sheets in a common format and audio-visual material. This material should be easily understandable, stay available beyond the project period, and is to be shared through the EIP network. Dedicated Thematic Networks can from 2021 be built on the collaboration of OGs acting upon a common theme.
5. A newly developed format are the **Advisory Networks**, which interconnect advisors across Europe on dedicated themes. This will help knowledge exchange across borders and Member States' AKIS.

⁴⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gV5fqGnKtMl>

Annex VII. Common format for the output of EIP OG projects

See SFC guidance on OG data as presented in the CAP Committee on 16 May and 29 June 2023 (final)