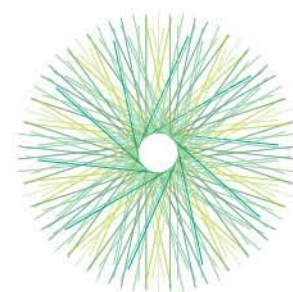


EIP-AGRI News Story

Lisbon Workshop

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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

As the programming of the European Innovation Partnership on “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability” (EIP-AGRI) under Rural Development begins drawing to a conclusion in many Member States, DG Agriculture and Rural Development is organising a series of workshops focused on the practical aspects of establishing Operational Groups under the national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

The first workshop took place in Lisbon, Portugal, on 27 February, 2014 and was kindly hosted by the Portuguese National Rural Network and by the Portuguese National Authority for EAFRD.

A total of 80 people participated in the workshop from Portugal, Spain, Greece and Malta. All participants were representatives of active stakeholder organisations in the EIP-AGRI and were specifically invited as potential “EIP multipliers” that could take home, disseminate and apply the knowledge, experience and ideas shared in the workshop.

Following introductory presentations by [DG Agriculture and Rural Development](#) and the [Portuguese National Authority for EAFRD](#), the major part of the programme was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the lessons learnt from four practical case studies, beginning with the Rede INOVAR network in Portugal and Xestión Agrogandeirae Natureza (XAN) advisory services in Spain - two very interesting and contrasting examples of successful existing innovation support services.

The [Rede INOVAR network](#) was created in 2011 by the not-for-profit organisation INOVISA to support the transfer of innovative ideas from “research labs to the real world”. Today the network connects a total of 77 key stakeholders in the Portuguese agricultural, food and forestry sectors, including business associations, scientific and technological institutes, innovation and technology business centres, regional business clusters and a public agency for innovation. Together with the Portuguese National Network for Rural Development (PNNRD) and other national innovation support structures, Rede INOVAR is now positioned to play an important role in supporting EIP-AGRI implementation in Portugal.

[XAN](#) on the other hand is a much smaller structure consisting of 2-4 advisers working directly with around 50 farmers in Galicia to provide a practical *and* functional interface between research and practice at regional level. As Yann Pouliquen from XAN explained in his presentation, “*We have research looking for farmers and farmers looking for solutions. Our role is to make connections, but to be effective we need to change the attitudes of both farmers and scientists. Farmers must make themselves active agents in setting the research agenda of the scientists*”. XAN is keen to play a role in supporting EIP-AGRI implementation, but from the perspective of working directly farmers stresses the importance of a) keeping administrative procedures as simple as possible and b) making provision for very small technology transfer projects and actions (e.g. 5,000 – 10,000 EUR). As Yann Pouliquen concluded, “*It’s better to have lots of small projects with big ideas and results, than a few big projects with poor ideas and results*”.



The importance of building trust and a good working relationship between farmers and researchers was further highlighted by José Luis Santiago from the Misión Biológica de Galicia (CSIC) during his presentation of the development, implementation and outcomes of a successful multi-actor project regarding [traditional grape varieties in Spain](#). *“Not everybody is able to develop these kinds of project”, explained Mr Santiago, “Researchers must be experienced and knowledgeable, but some previous contact with farmers is also very welcome. They must inspire confidence in the farmers (in our case vine-growers), making them a part of the project, giving support and trying to solve any questions or doubts they may have. But above all we have learned that when working with farmers all problems can be solved with emotional intelligence!”*

After all presentations were completed, several in-depth, country-specific discussions were kicked-off that allowed participants to dig more deeply into the grass-roots issues observed and / or experienced with setting-up Operational Groups in their own national or regional context.

According to Rob Peters from the European Commission, *“This was the first EIP-AGRI regional workshop and we are grateful to all participants for their willingness to travel, to meet new colleagues and to engage with these important discussions. There are already some great practical examples to draw inspiration from, but equally there are also some real practical challenges regarding delivery of the EIP-AGRI at national / regional level. Overall we are confident that participants left the workshop with enthusiasm and new ideas - and that we had taken another important step towards building the EIP-AGRI Network”.*

All presentations and other information from the Lisbon workshop are available [here](#).