



## 4.1 Digital Knowledge platforms: the case of InnovaRurale

### Rationale

One of the tasks of the CAP Networks is to promote and facilitate the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and innovations. Indeed, this became more and more necessary since the time of implementation of the EIP-Agri initiative that, already through the Rural development programmes 2014-2022 (RDPs), is boosting the cooperation for innovation projects run by the operational groups (OGs).

On this regard, digital knowledge platforms represent a powerful tool to combine data and information about actual research and innovation projects (e.g. databases/repositories) with up-to-date documents, capacity building and networking activities, communication through social media and other activities that are usually set in the sphere of action of CAP networks.

In fact, “digitalisation of knowledge and innovation in agriculture and forestry can play a major role in contributing to wide dissemination and the uptake of research and development results by the end-user, farmer, forester, advisors and other key actors and hence increase impact. As such, digitized knowledge which can be easily found in open access and a user-friendly system is receiving increased impact in stimulating innovation in several agricultural and forestry sectors.” (Gerling-Eiff et al., 2019).



#### Keywords

Digital knowledge platforms, knowledge sharing, CAP network



#### Potential users

Managing Authorities, AKIS coordination bodies, Other AKIS actors



#### Country

Italy

In the case of Italy, the systemisation of research activities and innovations funded under the CAP and by other funding schemes at national and regional/local levels has been set as one of the key actions to achieve the strategic priority of 'Promotion of Innovation' of the National Rural Network programme for 2014-2020.

In a regionalized country like it is Italy, this systematization was certainly crucial for enabling AKIS actors acquire up-to-date and relevant information and it was challenging due to the numerosity of knowledge and innovations to map and the different target groups to reach.

## Solution

Under the framework of the NRN 2014-2022 and the 'Strategic Plan for Innovation and Research in Agriculture, Food and Forestry, a digital knowledge platform was established under the name of Innovarurale (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>). This was promoted by the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the NRN programme (Ministry of Agriculture), in agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and the MAs of the RDPs 2014-2020. This was designed to address the needs for information, knowledge and information of the main typologies of AKIS actors across Italy: farmers, researchers, academics, advisors, public administrations, media providers, ect.

The digital knowledge platform is particularly aimed at:

- encouraging the dissemination of innovation in agriculture;
- promoting a continuous flow of information between European, national and regional institutional actors and with regard to professionals and civil society, and to facilitate institutional and technical dialogue between AKIS actors;
- supporting decisions and human capital growth by providing knowledge and training tools and analysing regional knowledge and innovation systems within the wider national and European system to highlight their potential, deficiencies and possible upgrading processes.

## In practice...

Developing the digital knowledge platform implied setting up a management organization as it follows:

- Editorial advisory board (16 experts), that includes researchers and experts of the two main partners of the NRN (CREA and ISMEA), representatives of the national and regional MAs of the NRN and of the RDPs, farmers unions, scientific boards and universities.
- Editorial management board (15 experts), that includes web designer and web editor and some NRN project managers having the tasks of contents design, update and development;
- Secretariate of the editorial management board (3 experts) that supports the on-going management of the digital platform.

Activities to design, develop and maintain the digital knowledge platform include:

- Assessment of the needs for information and knowledge by the AKIS actors that was carried out by the NRN for the purpose of own action plan;

- Contents definition by the editorial advisory board;
- Digital infrastructure design and development;
- Setting up of common procedures, tools and templates for the on-going collection of information on new projects (e.g. EIP-OGs), news and other relevant material.
- On-going collection of research and innovation projects and results, based on the already in place databased/repositories run by national research institutes (e.g. CREA), by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regions/Autonomous Provinces.

InnovaRurale website can be accessed directly (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>) and from the RRN website. CREA owns the hosting digital infrastructure, and this ensures its maintenance over the CAP programming periods.

The digital platform applies three main functions:

- **Information, monitoring, analyses and communication**, that includes collection of news about CAP implementation (e.g. calls for applications, statistics), R&I projects (e.g. databases of EIP-Agri OGs and of others, research), events (e.g. NRN, SCAR AKIS, EU CAP network) and thematic focus groups.
- **Provision of Practical Tools**, including guidelines, templates for OGs (e.g. Project Submission Guide, Information Collection Template, Partnership Agreement and Project Form), partners' search tool, video tutorials, business planning, ect.
- **Networking and capacity building activities**, including workshop, webinars, online courses, ect.



The screenshot displays the InnovaRurale website interface, which is organized into several main functional areas:

- Capacity building:** Includes sections for Workshops, Round tables, Technical meetings, Conferences, and Territorial labs. A central graphic features a lightbulb and the text "WORKSHOP INNOVAZIONE".
- Monitoring & Communication:** Contains a "Gratifici - Banca dati dei Gruppi Operativi in Italia" section with a bar chart showing the percentage of groups by region. It also includes a "Call for applications (DB)" section and a "Meter of the OGs" section.
- Practical Tools:** Features "Application forms", a "Navigator for farmers", and "Tutorials".
- Monitoring guiding & templates:** Includes a "PEI-AGRI" section and a "Gruppi Operativi in Italia" section with a "Partner search tool".

The sections of Innovarurale are:

- **Home**, including the background information, objectives of the digital platform, glossary, FAQ section and useful links;
- **Europe**, dedicated to the dissemination of activities carried out at European level, including the Sub-Group of Innovation, SCAR AKIS, Focus Groups Network EIP-AGRI, the EU regulatory documentation, relevant research projects and databases (e.g. modernAKIS), news and events;
- **Italy**, dedicated to the dissemination of the news, legislation and notices, documents, news and events from around Italy;
- **European Innovation Partnership in Italy**, including the database of the OGs, statistics, news, tools, analysis and evaluation documents and events;
- **InnovalnAzione**, including sub-sections on the **Catalogue of Innovations**, and the tool "**AgroSemplice**", that supports agricultural and agri-food businesses in finding the most suitable benefits to support their investment projects;
- **Knowledge**, that includes:
  - Vocational training courses (**Farm advisor**; **Precision agriculture**), materials and tools (**Rur@Lab** - <https://www.innovarurale.it/it/conoscenza/ruralab>), for trainers, farmers, advisors and other operators of the agri-food sector.
  - Analysis and evaluation tools (**Ev@Lab** - <https://www.innovarurale.it/it/conoscenza/evalab>), including the following:
    - **APDecisio**, a decision support tool for evaluating the economic advantage associated with an investment in precision agriculture (PA);
    - **Evalnnova**, a tool for assessing the economic, financial, environmental and social sustainability of an innovative investment in agriculture at the service of technicians, consultants and entrepreneurs;
    - **GestInnova**, that makes it possible to identify regional areas of economic, environmental and social criticality through a series of indicators. The aim is to help understand whether it is appropriate to incentivise the adoption of specific innovations by companies and in which direction.

Over the years, InnovaRurale (<https://www.innovarurale.it/it>) became a fundamental tool for knowledge and innovation transfer, dissemination and exchange.

At the end of 2022 it encountered over 450,000 visitors (on average 320 per day), with 692,831 pages viewed (500 per day) and 644 registered users.

## Practical implications for replicability

The setting up and maintenance of this digital infrastructure can be funded by the technical assistance of the CAP SP.

A mix of scientific and technical competences, as well as supporting staff are needed all along the web-platform setting up and implementation. This specifically includes:

- for the IT infrastructure: web designers, web communication and graphic designer, IT systems developer, ICT technologist and data mining expert.
- for the maintenance web-platform

Functional organization includes management, technical, supporting and possibly advisory/steering bodies to run the different governing, executive and operational tasks.

The different sources of data and information need to be mapped at the very beginning and as well standardized procedures and formats serve the smooth collection of relevant materials.

Periodic meetings of the editorial board facilitate the decisions and flexibility that are needed about the contents and sections of the web-platform.

Interoperability with other digital platforms/databases is an asset in view to connect with other existing databases at European and/or national level (e.g. EUFARMBOOK).



## Benefits

- Systematization of all the research and innovation projects' information and materials in one point of access for all the potential users.
- Monitoring of OGs at national level.
- Dissemination of up-to-date research results and innovations.
- Enabling and empowering access to RDPs/CAP Strategic plans.
- Strengthen linkages between digital infrastructures and exchanging of R&I knowledge and experiences.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



### Further information

[InnovaRurale website](#)

[Programma Rete Rurale Nazionale 2014-2022](#)

[Presentation of innovarurale web-platform](#)

[innovarurale, nasce il nuovo portale della conoscenza e l'innovazione nel settore agricolo, alimentare e forestale](#)

[Geerling-Eiff F., Bogaardt M.J., Burssens S., Kujáni K., Reszkető T., \(2019\) "Exploring digitalisation to enhance knowledge flows in EU AKIS" – SCAR AKIS, Brussels](#)

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