

 <p><b>AKIS Coordination Body</b></p>	<p><b>AKIS-in-Practice! 1.15</b></p>	
	<p><b>AKIS Coordination body in Portugal</b></p>	

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<p><b>AKIS context</b></p>	
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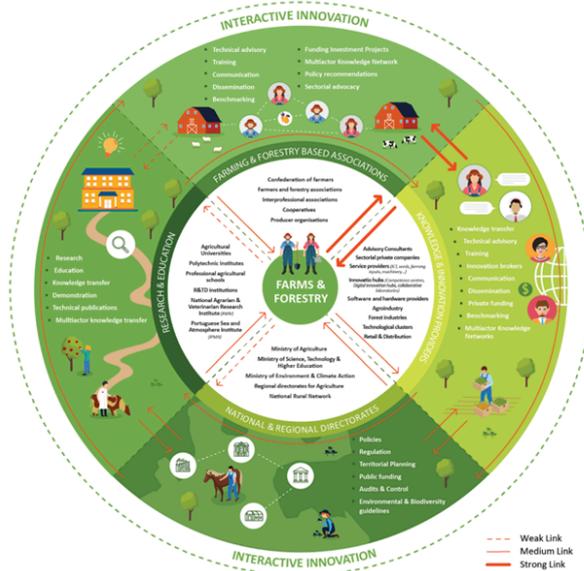
Portugal's Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) is marked by a wide array of participants, each with varying degrees of interaction, a fragmented structure, and limited national-level coordination. These participants can be grouped into four primary sectors, where farmers and forestry professionals form the central pillar. The advisory services are mainly performed by farmer-based organizations, while information and knowledge dissemination are largely managed by smaller, private entities. Additional key AKIS actors include those focused on research, education, and both national and regional directorates of the Ministries, all of which operate under the coordination of the National Government.

The strongest connections are observed between the farming and forestry groups and their affiliated associations, as well as the knowledge and innovation service providers. In contrast, the research and education entities maintain only loose connections with farmer-based organizations. Additionally, connections between the farms, national and regional directorates, and research institutions remain underdeveloped.

In general, the Portuguese Research and Education has limited dialogue to the other AKIS actors. Knowledge in the agricultural sector and associated innovation has increased in recent years, mainly due to a greater link between the different actors in the value chain, and the existence of many innovation projects at national and international levels.

Further support for the AKIS structure is anticipated under the CAP Strategic Plan, which plans to leverage other financial resources, including the Cohesion Policy Funds, Horizon Europe, and the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). These instruments are intended to bolster the research, development, and training sectors aligned with national regulatory frameworks, thereby enhancing Portugal's capacity for agricultural innovation and education

Figure 1: Portuguese AKIS diagram



Source: i2connect (2020)

## RATIONALE



The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-related interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

Particularly, the AKIS coordination body is indicated by the CAP SP 2023-2027 as a point of contact of the European Commission and of the European CAP Network.

In the case of Portugal, a national decree (Decree-Law no. 5/2023) established that the AKIS Technical Coordination Body is the DGADR - General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development.



## 1. Who is the AKIS CB

The technical AKIS coordination body in Portugal is the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DGADR) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, that functions through the support of the Portuguese CAP Network. This body facilitates collaboration between various stakeholders, including those responsible for knowledge transfer, research, advisory services, and innovation partnerships, as well as the Agricultural and Forestry Advisory Service (SAAF), the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy (PEPAC), and the Portuguese CAP Network (RN PAC), all of which are under the auspices of DGADR.

## 2. Composition of the AKIS CB

The technical coordination body represented by the DGADR of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will establish an AKIS Follow-up and will be assisted by a Monitoring Group (GA AKIS) to approve AKIS action plans, monitor implementation, and address capacity building needs. The GA AKIS will integrate all key actors of the AKIS, with a particular focus on the SAAF and technical support.

The AKIS Follow-up and Monitoring Group, overseen by DGADR, brings together representatives from:

- The Portuguese National Institute for Agricultural and Veterinary Research (INIAV, I.P.).
- The Office for Planning, Policy, and General Administration (PPG).
- Madeira's Regional Secretariat for the Environment and Natural Resources.
- The Azores Regional Directorate of Agriculture.
- The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).
- The National Innovation Agency (ANI), as a key Horizon Europe representative.

In addition to this core team, other members may be called in as necessary, including representatives from Portugal's main Farmers' Confederations (CONFAGRI, CAP, CNA, AJAP), advisory bodies, the PEPAC central and regional management teams, the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), the Directorate-General for Employment and Labor Relations (DGERT), the Authority for Working Conditions (ACT), and the Managing Authorities for EAFRD and other related funds.

An Advisory Council will also be formed, drawing from leaders in the farmers' federations (CONFAGRI, CAP, CNA, AJAP), forestry organizations, Federação Minha Terra (the Portuguese GAL-LEADER Federation), environmental NGOs, the CCISP (Coordinating Council of Higher Polytechnic Institutes), the CRUP (Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities), and designated Competence Centers.

The primary tasks of the Follow-up and Monitoring Group include reviewing and endorsing the AKIS Action Plan and its evaluation framework, ensuring a thorough review at least biennially. This Action Plan, designed collaboratively through a bottom-up process with input from the Advisory Council, aims to enhance alignment across resources and policies while setting out key initiatives in areas such as:

- Developing complementarities between funding mechanisms and programs that support innovation and knowledge creation aligned with sectoral needs.
- Facilitating partnerships for national and international innovation projects.
- Strengthening cooperation networks among project teams across sectors and at the European level.
- Boosting participation in cross-border initiatives, especially Operational Groups within Horizon Europe.
- Enhancing training and skills of trainers, advisors, and producers on economic, environmental, and social aspects of innovation.
- Building interconnections across stakeholders to foster shared learning, co-creation, and the application of innovations across agricultural and rural sectors.

### Box 1: Portuguese CAP Network

Portugal's National CAP Network was launched on 28 November 2023, marking the end of the former National Rural Network (2014-2022). To ensure the functioning of the National Rural Network, there is a central animation structure (Technical Animation Structure) with regional centres in the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Directorates and in the Regional Secretariats of the Autonomous Regions.

The main objectives of the Portuguese CAP Network are

- Promoting participation and joint work among rural development agents.
- Transferring good practices and new knowledge to qualify the intervention of rural development agents.
- Improving the design and implementation of rural development policy measures.
- Promoting the image and potential of rural territories.

The CAP Network's activities fall within specific Intervention Areas designed to ensure the Network's effectiveness in meeting its mandated objectives (per Article 113):

- 1. Network Technical Team Operations:** Encompassing the essential functions for running the Network's core administrative and operational tasks.
- 2. Collaboration and Peer Exchange:** Supporting activities that foster cooperation and mutual learning across network participants.
- 3. CAP Observatory:** This area focuses on efforts to track and assess progress in agriculture and rural sectors, aligning with specific objectives. It involves initiatives to enhance the monitoring process and develop tools that improve PEPAC's implementation quality.

Moreover, the CAP Network aims to strengthen Portugal's AKIS by promoting knowledge sharing, innovation across borders, improved advisory services, and digital transformation in agriculture. Through its Innovation Group, which gathers main AKIS actors, the Network's activities align with the AKIS Action Plan and are overseen by DGADR to support effective interactions and involvement of all stakeholders. In this area, an important responsibility of the national CAP network is coordinating and dynamizing the **AKIS Platform**, a digital platform that integrates and centralizes knowledge and innovation in place within the agricultural sector, through facilitating a better coordination among various AKIS actors, such as farmers, researchers, advisors, and policymakers (for more information read AKIS-in-practice! 4.3 – Portuguese AKIS Platform: Driving Innovation and Collaboration in Agriculture).

The Portuguese CAP Network includes a wide array of stakeholders from Portugal's agricultural, environmental, and rural sectors. The members are more than 3,000 (source: <https://www.rederural.gov.pt/membros-da-rede>) including:

- Farmers / Agricultural Entrepreneurs.
- Cooperatives.
- Associations.
- Local Action Groups (LAGs).
- Federations / Confederations.
- Non-Business Entities of the R&D&I System (ENESII).
- SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises).
- Sole Proprietors.
- Central Administration Bodies and Services.
- Regional Administration Bodies and Services.
- Local Administration Bodies and Services.
- Foundations.
- Operational Groups members.

It is possible to become a member of the Portuguese CAP Network by completing an online registration form. A full list of current members is available on the network's official website.

### 3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The AKIS Coordination Body in Portugal has the following key functions:

- AKIS strategy coordination: Ensuring the alignment and coordination of the AKIS strategy with national goals and priorities.
- Coordination with other EU projects/policies: Facilitating collaboration and synergy between AKIS and other European Union projects and policies.
- State-of-the-art strategy discussion: Engaging in ongoing discussions to refine and update the AKIS strategy based on the latest advancements and insights.
- Monitoring data collection: Overseeing the collection of data to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the AKIS strategy.
- Communication of the AKIS strategy implementation: Ensuring clear communication about the implementation progress and outcomes of the AKIS strategy to stakeholders.
- Participation in the AKIS evaluation: Contributing to the evaluation processes to assess the impact and success of AKIS activities.
- Bringing out new and unexpressed needs: Identifying and addressing emerging or previously unexpressed needs within the agricultural innovation system.
- Strengthening actions on the level of integration of actors: Promoting stronger collaboration and integration among the various actors involved in AKIS to enhance overall system performance.

These functions are essential for the effective coordination and continuous improvement of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System in Portugal.

### 4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The procedures for engaging with other AKIS actors and with the Managing Authority of the CAP Strategic Plan have not yet been clearly defined.



## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR REPLICABILITY



To ensure the replicability of this practice, several key conditions should be in place:

1. **Formal Appointment Decree:** An official decree designating a central coordinating body for AKIS governance, such as a Directorate-General, is essential.
2. **Pre-established CAP Network Team:** A dedicated and functioning CAP Network team to support and implement AKIS strategies effectively.
3. **Experienced Leadership:** A director with significant experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder networks and managing agricultural or rural development projects.
4. **Cross-institutional Support:** Strong partnerships with national research institutes, advisory bodies, and private innovation stakeholders to facilitate knowledge flow and technical support.
5. **Dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework:** A clear framework for assessing AKIS-related actions, involving a Monitoring Group or similar entity to ensure alignment with strategic objectives.
6. **Regional and Local Coordination Units:** Local support structures, such as regional directorates or local advisory groups, to ensure effective on-the-ground interaction and support for actors across sectors.

## BENEFITS



- This configuration of a collegial AKIS CB brings together the actors that are already playing some institutional and operational key functions/activities within the local AKISs.
- Well defined functions and roles defined in a specific document dedicated to AKIS CB give a stronger impulse to the AKIS CB mandate.
- The development of a digital platform improved the knowledge flows and the sharing of information about the AKIS-related interventions.





Portuguese CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027.



## Portugal



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**Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!**

