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Bridging the gap between research and practice: demonstrative actions in Latvia

Keywords/Tags

- Demo-farms
- Peer-to-peer learning

Potential users

- Managing Authorities/AKIS coordination bodies
- Farmers and other agricultural enterprises
- Advisors/Innovations support services providers
- Trainers

RATIONALE

Demonstration actions are a very powerful tool for accelerating knowledge transfer, through bridging the gap between research and practice and ensuring that results of research are effectively disseminated across the agricultural systems, in view of possible adoption and innovations by the farms.

This type of initiative can serve as knowledge brokerage, to show to a wide of potential users, such as farmers and other rural entrepreneurs, advisors and researchers, and discuss on advantages and feasibility of the latest agricultural methods, technologies, and, possibly sustainable, solutions for farming.

Moreover, demonstrative actions in farms have a great potential for encouraging adoption of the results of research by farms, as by showcasing successful applications and tangible results, they lead reducing uncertainty and risk perceptions among potential adopters.

Some key functions of the demonstrative actions in research and agricultural knowledge and innovation systems regard:

- **Knowledge transfer:** They facilitate the sharing of knowledge between researchers, farmers, and other stakeholders. By demonstrating practices in real-world settings, participants can see the benefits and applicability of new techniques.
- **Capacity building:** Demonstrative actions help build the skills and confidence of farmers and practitioners. By engaging in hands-on activities, they gain practical experience that can enhance their decision-making.
- **Feedback loop:** These actions create opportunities for feedback from farmers and other users, allowing researchers to refine and adapt technologies and practices based on real-world challenges and successes.
- **Validation of innovations:** Demonstrative actions can serve as trials to validate new technologies or practices under local conditions, helping to assess their effectiveness and suitability.
- **Networking and collaboration:** They promote interaction among various stakeholders, fostering collaborations that can lead to more integrated and sustainable agricultural practices.

In Latvia, there's the need to increase the level of knowledge of farmers, as well as rural entrepreneurs of other sectors operating in rural areas, given that only 28.4% of farmers possess specialized agricultural education. As well, farmers need advice on topics that are relevant for their development and for the CAP, such as environmental impact of productions, biodiversity maintenance, food protection and health quality.
Solution

SOLUTION

In Latvia, the demonstration activities have been supported by the Rural Development Program 2014-2020 with the aim to ensure the establishment (creation, furnishing, installation of equipment) and implementation of a demonstration that practically demonstrates or demonstrably demonstrates the advantages of a new agrotechnical technique, technological process, crop or animal breed, which have been tested in research and reflect at least two variants - the current standard techniques and new techniques.
Through well-organized events like farm visits, demonstrations, workshops, and advice, farmers and rural entrepreneurs gain practical insights into sustainable practices, biodiversity conservation, and climate-resilient agriculture, fostering a more informed and capable agricultural workforce.

IN PRACTICE

The Managing Authority of the RDP 2014-2020 of Latvia launched a call for applications for the following type of initiatives:

- Demonstration installation, implementation, promotion and dissemination of the results of the demonstration.
- Investments in tangible assets and intangible investments that are directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the demonstration.

The beneficiaries are legal entities that are registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions or the Register of Educational Institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science for demonstration events and information events.

The requirements for support applicant are:

- At least three years of experience in setting up demonstrations, organizing field days or public seminars in the agricultural sector.
- At least three years of experience in advisory services in the agricultural sector.
- Developed proposal for setting up and implementing a demonstration in which at least one association representing producers, a scientific organization, an advisory organization and a farm or commercial company that is registered in the Enterprise Register, commercial register or is registered as a tax payer confirms its participation.
- For the installation and implementation of the demonstration, an industry specialist and a scientific leader who represents the academic staff of universities or holds an academic position in a scientific institution or who has at least a master's degree in agriculture or natural sciences are engaged.

Eligible Costs

The program provided funding for all necessary expenses associated with setting up and maintaining the demonstration, with a maximum eligible cost of 15,000 euros per demonstration per year (excluding VAT).

Eligible costs included:

- Demonstration installation, implementation, promotion and dissemination of results:

- Compensation for the personnel involved.
- The cost of teaching materials related to the demonstration.
- Transportation expenses.
- Costs of purchase of materials and services necessary for setting up and implementing the demonstration;
- Publicity costs.
- General costs (including administrative costs).

- Investments in tangible assets and such intangible investments in the demonstration farm that are directly related to the achievement of the objectives of the demonstration. The costs of tangible and intangible investments are applicable only for the time of installation and implementation of the demonstration (rental).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR REPLICABILITY

- Inter-Ministerial coordination to facilitate collaboration among relevant ministries to identify and verify eligible beneficiaries effectively, enabling smooth registration and alignment of program requirements across sectors.
- Identification of a list of eligible, possibly strategic, environment-friendly practices to share by demonstration activities.
- Provision of the presence of scientists/researchers to facilitate knowledge transfer among participants and a detailed explanation of the innovations implemented in the farm.

BENEFITS

- **Access expert solutions:** Involve skilled advisors who can identify overlooked issues and suggest targeted solutions to enhance farm profitability.
- **Build long-term knowledge:** Acquire knowledge that empowers informed, strategic decisions not only for immediate concerns but also for future planning, strengthening the resilience of farms.
- **Streamlined administrative process:** Efficient procedures ensure rapid and uncomplicated endorsement of demonstration activities, reducing bureaucratic delays and fostering smoother project initiation.
- **Enhanced impact of interactive demonstrations:** Demonstrations conducted in an interactive way can foster practical learning and encourage greater participant engagement and knowledge transfer.
- **Supportive environment for scaling innovations:** The initiative promotes a conducive atmosphere for the broader adoption and scaling of innovative practices, facilitating the diffusion of new techniques across the sector.

FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Call for applications for demonstration projects Latvian RDP 2024-2022.

LATVIA

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