



VLK Report on the AgriSpin Cross Visit in Germany

May 8th to 12th 2016,
Hotel Kloster Höchst, Oldenwald
Germany



Organized by:

Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern (VLK)

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Agenda of the week

Focus of this Cross-Visit in Germany:

Innovation in German agricultural advisory methodology and organization

Schedule: Sunday May 8th:

Arrival in Höchst on Sunday May 8th 2016 is linked to the traditional “65. Apfelblütenfest in Höchst/Odenwald”, the festival about apple blossom in this little town. Main roads are closed.



12.00 to 12.30 o'clock: kick off: presentation of participants and instructions for visits, wrap-up and timeline, building groups & discussing methodology

12.30 to 13.30 o'clock: you find your own lunch snacks at the festival market

13.30 to 14.30 o'clock: pageant with traditional groups and music.

14:30 to 18:30 o'clock: Transfer to **case 1**: farm visit at **Hofgut Oberfeld**, Erbacher Straße 125 in Darmstadt: Community Supported Agriculture and a lot of other social innovation. Details at <http://www.initiative-oberfeld.de/>

18.30 to open end: Transfer for wrap-up/timeline and dinner at “Land-Gasthaus Dornröschen” Annelsbacher Tal 43, Höchst-Annelsbach

Monday May 9th in the meeting room “Elisabeth” 1st floor of Kloster Höchst:

09:00 to 12:00 o'clock: presentation of institutions, presentation of agriculture and advisory landscape in Germany

12:00 to 13:00 o'clock: Lunch break

13:00 to 17:00 o'clock: **Case 2**: Training of trainers with Andreas Hermes Akademie: "qualification of multipliers -

focuses on both: the personal development of multipliers themselves as well as on the train-the-trainer level"

17:00 to 17:30 o'clock: break

17:30 to 19:00 o'clock: Wrap-up and timeline

19:00 to open end: Dinner and storytelling at Kloster Höchst with Carola Ketelhodt about the first EIP support service office for operational groups(**case 3**) at Chamber of Agriculture in Schleswig-Holstein/Germany



Tuesday May 10th:

07:45 to 08:45 o'clock: Transfer to Lorsch, Alnatura, distribution centre

08:45 to 12:0 o'clock: **Case 4**: Trainee program for the organic farming business, presentation of the innovation and discussion with former participants

12:00 to 13:00 o'clock: Wrap Up and timeline

13:0 to 13.45 o'clock: Lunch break paid by the organizers

13:45 to 15.00 o'clock: Transfer and Guided tour at Alnatura Bensheim

15:00 o'clock to open end: urban agriculture in Frankfurt at "Frankfurter Gärten", dinner, paid by the organizers





Wednesday May 11th in the meeting room “Elisabeth” Kloster Höchst:

08:00 to 11.30 o'clock: **Case 5:** CECRA: up-scaling of advisors' qualification standards in Europe: presentation of the innovation and discussion with stakeholders

11.30 to 12.30 o'clock: Wrap Up and timeline

12.30 to 13.30 o'clock: Lunch break

13.30 to 17:30 o'clock: **Case 6:** entra: „It's not necessarily lonesome at the top“ – Facilitated exchange for managers of advisory organizations : presentation of the innovation and discussion with former participants



17:30 to 18:30 o'clock: Wrap Up and timeline

18:30 to open end: Dinner and preparation of Thursday's feed-back at Kloster Höchst

Thursday May 12th in the meeting room in Kloster Höchst:

08:30 to 12:30 o'clock: Meeting with German stakeholders: results of the Cross-Visit, puzzles and pearls, discussion of open questions etc.

12:30 to 14:00 o'clock: Lunch

14:00 o'clock: Departure (1 transfer to Frankfurt Airport (FRA) on demand)

Participants: cross visitors from EU countries + *regional Multipliers* + hosts

<u>Asensio, Pablo</u>	IALB Internationale Akademie landwirtschaftlicher BeraterInnen
<u>Fisel, Thomas</u>	ENTRA, Agrarorganisationen
<i>Stefan Dietz</i>	<i>ENTRA, Agrarorganisationen</i>
<u>Förster, Marietheres</u>	Andreas Hermes Akademie, Bonn, Germany
<u>Ketelhodt, Carola</u>	EIP Agrar, LWK Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
<u>Kubutsch, Wolfgang</u>	Andreas Hermes Akademie
<u>Kügler, Michael</u>	VLK, Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern- Brüssel
<i>Jürgen Becker</i>	<i>EIP managing authority, RP Gießen, Hessen, Germany</i>
<i>Dr. Ulrich Gehrlein</i>	<i>IFLS, Frankfurt, innovation support service Provider in Hessen</i>
<i>Ellermann-Kügler, Karin,</i>	<i>VLK, Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern – Brüssel</i>
<u>Spiegel, Ann-Kathrin</u>	FiBL-Germany, organic farming research
Wielinga, Eelke	ZLTO / Link Consult, Netherlands
Hundrup Rasmussen, Heidi	SEGES P/S; Denmark
Barabanova, Yulia	IFOAM, organic farming EU Group, Brussels
Diebele, Anita	LLKC Latvian rural advisory Centre
Maiz, Damiana	HAZI; Basque rural development Agency, Spain
Ndah, Hycenth Tim	Universität Hohenheim, Germany
Prigent, Philippe	tropical farming institute in ACTA, France
Rey, Frédéric	ITAB, organic farming institute, France
Riaño, Pilar	HAZI, Galicia, Spain
Kursitis, Andis	LLKC Latvian rural advisory Centre
Orten, Natascha	DVS, National EIP contact Point in Germany, BLE, Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung
<i>Ruland, Waltraud</i>	<i>Landwirtschaftskammer NRW, Director of advisory dept.</i>
<u>Klähre, Daniel Pascal</u>	IALB and horticulture advisor in Bavaria
<i>Ute Williges</i>	<i>Organic farming advisor at LLH, public rural advisory service in Hessen</i>
<i>Wiedemann, Josef</i>	<i>BBV Bayrischer Bauernverband, München, Germany</i>



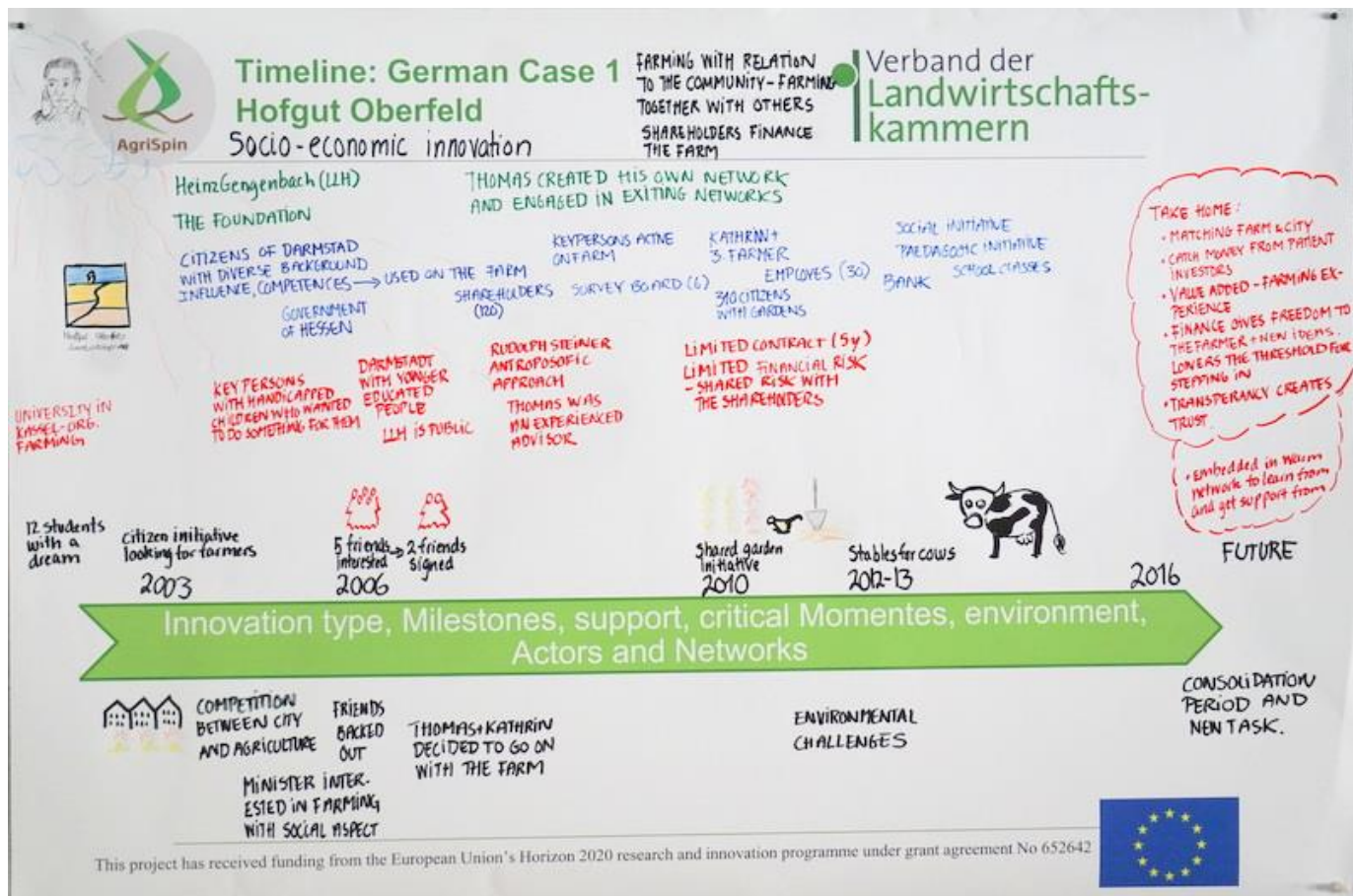
Innovation Case 1: 'Hofgut Oberfeld'

Type: Social economic on-farm-innovation with strong integration of local citizens as shareholders and co-workers.

This Farming is in the framework of CSA, community supported agriculture embedded in a warm network of local and regional actors for bio-dynamic farming, micro-enterprises for processing, direct selling and on-farm services.

Actors/roles within the innovation: The farming family as employee of a citizens' driven foundation in close economic and social linkage and cooperation with on-farm micro-enterprises for food processing, direct selling, on-farm-shopping, catering, on-farm-restaurant and social enterprises for care-farming with handicapped children. Risk capital to start came from anthroposophy driven, local enterprises and international software companies; from public funding for care farming under the umbrella of Hessian ESF-activities and with a personal impact of the secretary of state with own handicapped children. Business-plans and investment for farming infrastructure was supported by public rural farm advisors of LLH. Co-financing is part of public Hessian EAFRD-funding

The definition and responsibility for success is transferred from the farming family to the foundation, embedded in a warm network of crowd funding and young volunteers from around the world and Darmstadt citizens in favor of bio-dynamic farming, micro-enterprises, NGOs for short food-supply chain and slow-food activists.



Role of support services:

- Public advisor of LLH, public rural advisory service in Hessen, is key door opener for starting the initiative.
- State secretary in the Hessian ministry for social affairs with critical patronage.
- Strong network of Demeter farmers as permanent support service.
- Specialized public advisors for administrative and technical projects.

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Analysis of factors of success and failures:

Pearls:

- perfect matching of city and farm
- catching crowd funding money: local and transnational
- financing of citizens gives freedom for farming

- transparency for citizens creates trust for farming

Puzzles:

- Depending on one family only.
- Transferability to other regions?
- No space for privacy.
- Need for coaching and professional supervision to start a consolidation phase.
- Consolidation has minor priority.
- Risk of burn-out on a long perspective.
- Rich German regions have more options than poor regions in EU periphery.

Appreciation of regional particularities:

- Embedded in a warm network
- Strong and permanent relation with consumers is links to the urban location
- Key persons with handicapped children as patronage is extraordinary
- The pioneer and starting farmer before had long experience as advisor
- Darmstadt has best macro-economic framework conditions in EU: low unemployment, young people, high education

Pearls:

- Direct local citizens' engagement as shareholders for essential financing gives space for well embedded innovation.
- Strong trust because of local citizens' as shareholders.
- Strong vision/to have a dream of sustainable farming by the actors/farmers as fundament of trust.
- Successful urban-rural co-learning process with CSA-farms is a model for middle Europe.
- CSA best practice example facing the public discussion about agriculture.
- Fascinating strong and warm network of farmers and citizens.

Specific recommendations and response of the regional representatives:

- Continuity and sustainability of consolidation is key for a long life of a successful CSA-farm under these conditions.
- Look for consolidated CSA also cross border.
- Involve complementary characters to start consolidation successful.
- Hand over responsibilities for consolidation.
- Delegation of responsible jobs.
- Farmers as contracted employees of citizens are a future model for urban and semi-urban regions.

- Shared gardening for citizens on farms has a better profitability than farmers' farming.

Innovation case 2: “Personal Skills decide in competition” (AHA-) trainings for farmers, multipliers/ advisors create the open minds for networking and for new innovative ideas



Type: What is the innovation about?

Our points of innovation in the history of training for more success are

- different innovations on at first two different levels □ on levels of farmers and of advisors
- and mostly their interaction: Methodological trainings can open minds and people allow themselves to think and act “out of the box”, and in fact they inspire each other to think and act “out of the box”.

first level: trainings for farmers □ in order to find the own individual way

- describing the characteristics of entrepreneurial thinking and action
- working on the personal strengths and weaknesses
- a series of trainings instead of one single training
- starting a process: the trainings lead participants in a process of developing and an interaction between developing myself and my business

second level: trainings for advisors □ in order to be an advisor with a triple

expertise as an advisor, coach and moderator,

who accompanies the development process of the farmer

- to strengthen methods concerning these three competencies
- giving tools to the advisors instead of facts to expand their own skills
- to enable them to stimulate and support their farmers to create new and innovative ideas and ways to their success

third level: the mutual influence between both for further steps of success

Or in the end one can say the influence between not only the farmers and advisors but as well between the staff of the different organizations, who have got the tools in trainings and workshops as well.

Key actors and their role in the process: Andreas Hermes, founding the first advanced education training organization in German agriculture in 1948 and supporting the education or just pressing the importance of lifelong learning into the German agriculture

- Dr. Gerd Lohmöller who creates with the bus-trainings the idea of a learning process and the ideas of a “creative learning”. And Gerd Lohmöller put the corner stone for a very trustful work together in the team of trainers that lasts until today...
- The Andreas Hermes Academy with the team of trainers and stuff who just have the task to deliver adult education in agriculture. But more than this they are working by heart – for training and opening minds and for supporting farmers/ people in their trainings, workshops or coaching.

They are well settled in the German and international network of agriculture for reaching the target groups on the one hand and getting the information on their needs on the other hand.

Role of the support services: As support agencies in this time I consider for example the organizations in agriculture, like for example the Chambers of agriculture in Germany. The role of the support agencies for supporting the innovations in trainings are on different levels:

- Networking in agriculture .
- Networking with the providers of trainings and describing the needs for trainings.
- To raise awareness for adult education.
- To offer trainings to their members, customers, stuff....
- To disseminate the ideas of advanced vocational trainings.

Success factors: In the most cases we have seen during our cross-visit in Germany and as well in the cases our guests have presented from other cross-visits the initializing nucleus of innovations can be described as:

- An economic, a social or a personal pressure (sometimes)
- An idealistic vision or
- an economically idea AND
- a few people, who spread or force this idea:
- “They keep the flame on burning”

That was and is the same in the AHA-trainings. Staff and trainer, they keep the flame on burning into the future.

So in my opinion the most important supporting points for innovations are:

At first Open minds and Networking. If people open their minds, for example by the support of training or coaching, they will join networks. The DISC-model is a helpful tool. And in these networks people can create new ideas.

When people use the power of networks $2 + 2$ is no longer 4 but 5 or more.

Some other success factors for innovations are, that people:

- reflect their attitude;
- have the courage to see and to do things in another way than before;
- have the courage, to ask; that will say to ask for help, to exchange questions or experiences, to discuss about their challenges or problems with others = people from the same profession or experts, to ask for advice.

For these points as well people get methods and open minds by tools and methods of trainings.

Fail factors:

Tools and methods for the personal behaviour are sometimes valued not in the same way than getting facts. The reason could be, that sometimes people don't understand, that tools and methods, that knowing HOW to do something, will support myself the whole live.

Regional and/or historical particularities: In Germany with the different federal states there are different rules and political requirements in each state. And there are many different organizations for supporting agriculture and working with the farmers. Regarding this, it could be a great effort to get a valid network all over the different states, the agriculture and the society.

Specific recommendations: Trainings need to be explained to people/ participants. People mostly join trainings, when there are experiences, how these methodological trainings can help in the personal development. If not, it is necessary to talk and explain.

Lessons learned: Think about the necessity of warm networks – between farmers, between farmers and their advisor and between farmers, advisors and stuff in the different organizations. And for this in my opinion the consequence is, to give people/ stuff:

- open minds, creativity
- attitude and space

☐ to connect people !! = to connect networkers, who are often the initial persons of an idea/ an innovation and the stuff of the organizations

☐ to exchange experiences and to establish innovations

☐ to open minds and ☐ to be aware of the needs of others

So in regarding our approach on innovations by trainings we can say that trainings for farmers, multipliers/ advisors, staff and volunteers in organizations create the open mind spirit for networking and for new and innovative ideas.

Innovation case 3: 'Innovation Office EIP, „Innovationsbüro EIP Agrar“ at Landwirtschaftskammer, Chamber of Agriculture in Schleswig-Holstein



Type: organizational innovation: The Innovation Office is a new service provider particularly for farmers and players operating in the agricultural sector. It is the first support service unit for operational groups in Europe already operating since 2015, funded according Art.35 of EAFRD-funding program in Schleswig-Holstein. It offers advice, service and support in the planning and implementation of innovation projects for more sustainability and efficiency in agriculture, Individuals and groups who have questions about EIP project proposals, are looking for project partners, or require further assistance within the Operational Group, can contact the Innovation Office for:

- Strategic guidance and active support in setting up innovation projects.
- Information on funding opportunities.
- Assistance with applications and administrative processing.
- Mediation of cooperation partners in research, consulting and practice.
- Qualifying the players for project working in teams and groups.
- Innovation brokering.

Actors/roles within the innovation: To support the innovation process for more efficiency and sustainability in agriculture, the Ministry (MELUR) has set up the Innovation Office EIP Agrar. It is hosted by the Schleswig-Holstein Chamber of

Agriculture in Rendsburg with good relations with farmers, advisors and experts for agriculture. To be established as the first support unit in Europe because of early risk taking regional government before the establishment of the regional EAFRD. Trust between the actors was key to take risk. They know each other since they studied and worked together in a different context.

The Innovation Office EIP Agrar is the interface between practice and Managing Authority in the implementation of EIP in SH. The main driving forces for the work nowadays are the goals of practical relevance projects and farmers involved in Operational Groups of regional EAFRD-funding.

Role of support services: The Innovation Office as regional support unit for EIP Agri provides farmers and various players with information, assistance and support in the planning, application, implementation and execution of their project ideas. Its tasks are to build up and support the Operational Groups (OG) as seed cells for innovative projects, to organize networking and knowledge transfer. The Innovation Office coordinates the public relations work for the exchange of information on project results and it supports the desired transfer of knowledge into practice.

Simultaneously the Innovation Office EIP Agrar Schleswig-Holstein supports the Ministry in Kiel on any matter concerning EIP. It is embedded in the rural, semi-public advisory service in this region: Chamber of agriculture of Schleswig-Holstein. As the “new, most loved kid in town” by the managing directors, within the traditional, mainstream advisory service its impact is stressing and provoking innovation in methodology at the operational level of the advisors’ hierarchy and their relation to applied research and farmers.

Analysis of factors of success and failures: advisory institutions do not recognize enough soft skills qualifications for advisors’ career

- the methodology to describe innovation is complex but dominantly Organisational
- farmers’ opinion about innovation is missed
- trainings are for small scale farmers too expensive

Meanwhile the EIP-unit is the “new, most loved kid in town” by the managing directors. Within the traditional, mainstream advisory service its impact is stressing and provoking innovation in promotion of the advisors’ job and methodology at the operational level of the advisors’ hierarchy and their relation to applied research and farmers.

Appreciation of regional particularities: The first 17 EIP projects/operational groups were selected and Operational Groups started to put their innovative projects into practice in June 2015. The Innovation office offered training courses, workshops and advice for information and networking. Now it is organizing the PR and planning the self-evaluation for the groups. Another task of the Innovation Office EIP Agrar in Schleswig-Holstein is to prepare the next call for innovation projects in 2017.

Specific recommendations and response of the regional representatives: The Hessian authorities and the Hessian innovation support service provider for implementing EIP operational groups intend to contact the best practice example in Schleswig-Holstein. Meanwhile they did study visits and have regular communication. Individual, informal action of the first months is taken over by DVS, the national EIP support service thanks to the participation as cross visitor

Innovation case 4: FiBL: Training young professionals for the job in the organic sector – a success story from Germany



Type: Organisational innovation: The case is a unique example for the power of participatory approaches within a sector. One company alone would be too small to set up an own trainee program, but the collaboration within the sector allows to qualify young professionals according to the demands on the job. On top of that, it helps to strengthen networking within the sector. The trainee program for the organic sector was initiated in the wake of the German federal program of organic farming, which aimed at raising the area of organically farmed land in Germany. To cope with this aim, more well-trained organic advisers were needed. the trainee program was set up to qualify them. Nowadays, the program is open for trainees from the whole sector, which gain an understanding and a network of the whole organic food chain. Each year, 25 trainees from enterprises and organizations all across Germany are qualified within the program.

Innovative Points:

The case is a unique example for the power of participatory approaches within a sector. One company alone would be too small to set up an own trainee program, but the collaboration within the sector allows to qualify young professionals according to the demands on the job. On top of that, it helps to strengthen networking within the sector.

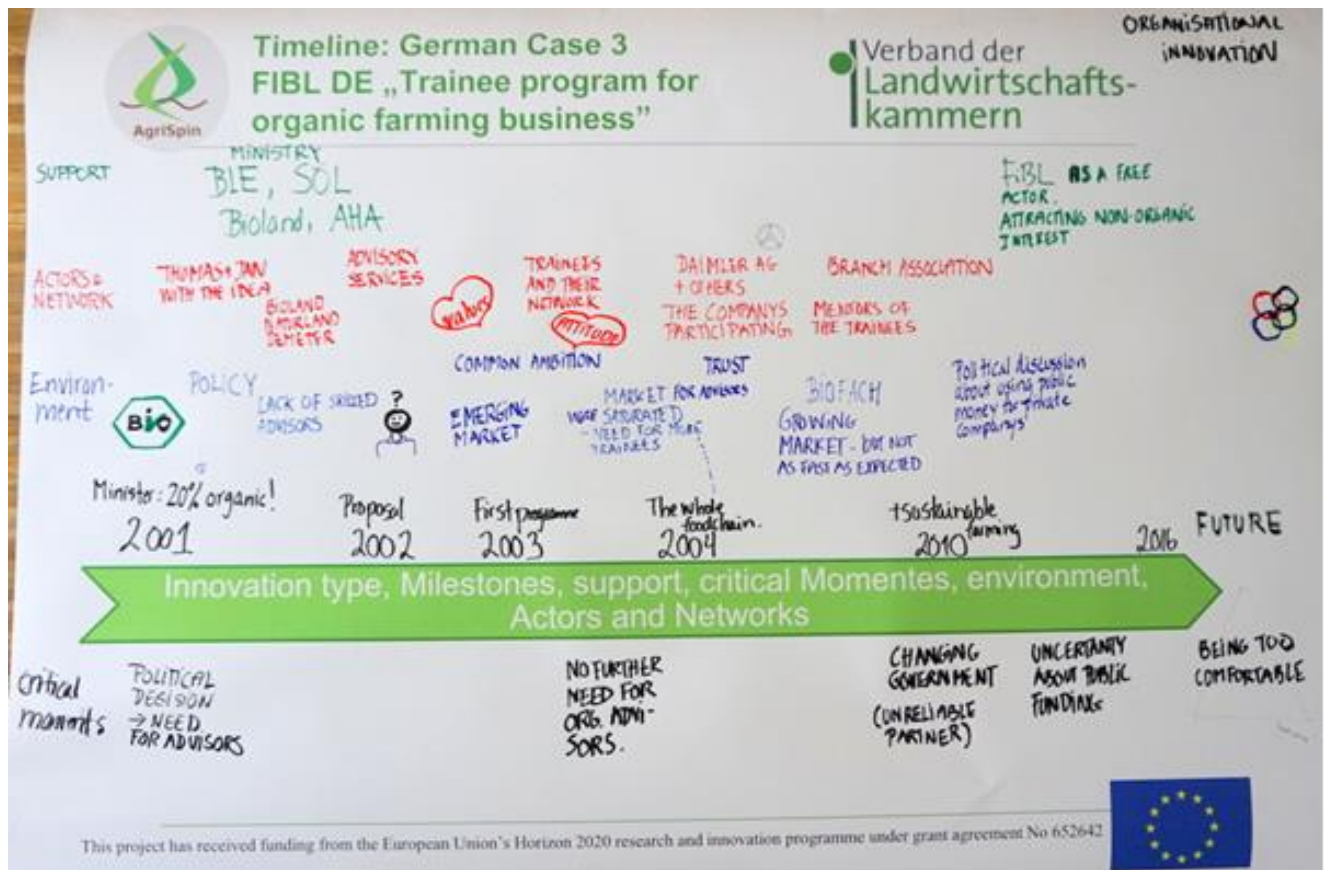
2. Drivers/actors: The trainee program for the organic sector was initiated in the wake of the German federal program of organic farming, which aimed at raising the area of organically farmed land in Germany. To cope with this aim, more well-trained organic advisers were needed. The trainee program was set up to qualify them. Nowadays, the program is open for trainees from the whole sector, which gain an understanding and a network of the whole organic food chain. Each year, 25 trainees from enterprises and organizations all across Germany are qualified within the program.

In the beginning, the national Ministry for Agriculture was a big driver, as it funded the Federal Program for Organic Farming, which gives the co-funding for the program. The organic companies in Germany are the second driver: they co-fund the other part of the program and they demanded for the opening of the program for the whole sector. Moreover, the consumers are a driver as well: the rising demand for organic products pushes the organic sector and thus creates a demand for new and highly qualified employees.

Activities and results

- The program aims at qualifying young professionals for working in the organic sector and thus to provide companies with highly qualified (regarding soft skills and knowledge about the organic sector) staff.

- The program is co.-funded by the German federal program of organic farming and by the participating companies.
- Since the first steps in 2002, 325 trainees were qualified within the program.
- Many companies participate yearly or at least more than once.
- Continuous feedback from trainees and companies is used to develop the program.



3. Results and impacts. The program aims at qualifying young professionals for working in the organic sector and thus to provide companies with highly qualified (regarding soft skills and knowledge about the organic sector) staff.

- The program is launched and co-funded by the German federal program of organic farming and by the participating companies since 2002
- Since the first steps in 2002, 325 trainees were qualified within the program; every year between 70 and 85 % are taken over or stay in company after the traineeship
- More than 100 companies participated until now (companies that apply for the first time are preferred)
- The Trainee programme is very known and highly appreciated by the enterprises; graduates of the program have a good image (based on a survey in 2015)
- Meanwhile graduates of the program are found in responsible and leading positions all over the sector (a survey for that is planned but not yet done)

4. Pearls, Puzzles and Proposals (expressed by the AgriSpin - Visitors during the Cross Visit in Kloster Höchst (9. – 12.5.2016))

Pearls:

- Project proposed by companies who select the trainee.
- Strong networking output thanks to shared values.
- Couple is the best solution.
- The start up at the correct moment.
- Resilient network.
- Use of DISC model to facilitate tutor/trainee – relationship.
- Accepting non-agri background intentionally.
- For every participant: to take the great opportunity to take part.
- Great testimonies.
- Ability to widen the target group.
- Recognition of program quality.
- Strengths of small networks.
- Trainees have a chance to be selected with job (!)
- Training program as a nucleus and driver for professional network that sustains.
- Content of the work is driven by partners expectations.

Puzzles:

- What is behind the “everyone is happy” scene?
- Will it work without funding?
- Sustainability in the time for the program?
- Why no reaction to policy focus on other sustainability farming models?

Proposals:

- Similar training for other sectors.
- Widen by paying of organisation or trainee.
- Storytelling to show effect of networks.
- Involve universities in evaluation of impacts.
- Network nucleus (free actor) needs to be funded collectively.
- To take care of the alumni (e.g. with yearly meetings) because they know and they trust each other => a great chance for exchange.

5. Summary

5.1. What is the innovation?

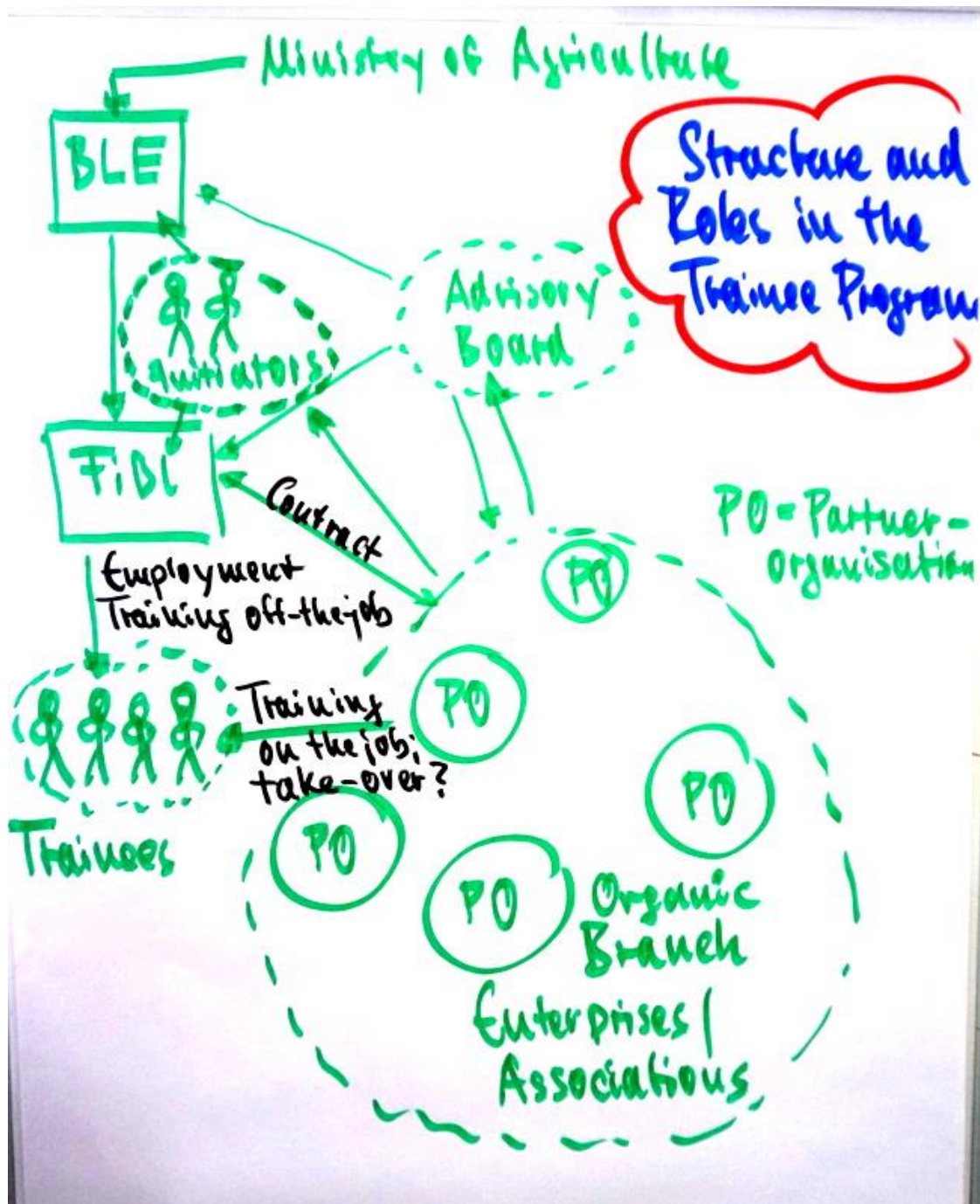
The case is an example for the power of participatory approaches within a sector. It was classified as organizational innovation during the cross visit. On company alone would be too small to set up an own trainee program, but the collaboration within the sector allows to qualify young professionals according to the demands on the job. On top of that, it helps to strengthen networking within the sector.

5.2. Key actors and their role in the process

- Jan Plagge having the idea.
- the above mentioned and further representatives and organizations (advisory services in the beginning) of the sector proposing it to the Ministry of agriculture (small group of persons) and supporting it.
- Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau and later FiBL Projekte GmbH as contractor.
- Thomas Fisel as sparring partner for Jan and Co-Developer.
- Ministry of agriculture represented by Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung as contracting authority.
- Later on the advisory board (steering committee) of the Traineeprogramm, which represents the different stakeholder groups of the sector (Producers, Processors, Traders, Associations etc.).
- Every year 25 Enterprises and Organisations (offering training on the job for the trainees) as participants in the program (all in all more than 100 organisations participated until today) with personal mentors for the trainees.
- every year 25 Trainees as participants (actually about 1000 applications on 25 traineeships and 25 trainees passing the traineeship) and their network.

5.3. Drivers and Success Factors

- Political support after new government
- Ministry of Agriculture funding the Federal Program for Organic Farming
- small value based warm network with a vision as idea giver and developers
- close link to the branch and its enterprises
- enterprises co-funding the program and demanding for opening it to the whole sector
- Moreover, the consumers are a driver as well: the rising demand for organic products pushes the organic sector and thus creates a demand for new and highly qualified employees.
- searching for and getting advice from outside (e.g. Daimler AG)



5.4. Hindering forces and critical moments

- No further need for organic advisors in 2003
- change of government: no more preference for organic farming
- Uncertainty of public funding (From time to time upcoming discussions in the last years: is it necessary and adequate to fund such a program with public means or can it be financed totally by the sector?)
- Being or becoming to comfortable?
- Short term hr-planning of the small enterprises in organic sector: a lot of changes every year when it comes to the selection of enterprises which offer a traineeship

5.5. Regional particularities

- The organic sector is quite good organised in Germany: Producers, Processors, Traders have branch organisations. So it is easier to bundle common interests and to launch projects.
- In 2001 Renate Künast launched the “Agrarwende” => this was a very good frame condition for the program

6. Lessons learned

Additional and not yet mentioned lessons (due to AgriSpin) are

- to be confirmed in the intention to initiate similar programs in other sectors
- to involve universities and other researchers in evaluation of networking effects
- to be confirmed, that such a networking nucleus must be funded collectively if it should be sustainable

7. Future Perspectives

FiBL Projekte GmbH has the mandate to execute the Trainee Program until 2018; there is an option for BLE to prolong the mandate for one more year; it is not yet clear if there is a further tender after this period.

Specific recommendations of the target group: “What I like best about the trainee program is that the trainees do not only learn a lot when it comes to expert knowledge, but that they already have established their own networks.” Karin ArtztSteinbrink, Upländer Bauernmolkerei, organic trainee years ago.

“The companies benefit from the program as they receive practical ideas on how to systematically approach staff development.” Thomas Fisel, Trainer

‘managers exchange’

“What I liked best in these exchange forums was to see, how other branches and actors – for instance a manager from Audi AG – have overcome the same challenges that we have. It was encouraging that we are not alone with the problems. Dr. Waltraut Ruland, Head of Advisory Department, Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein – Westfalen)

Innovation case 5: *The CECRA Certificate*



Type: an Organisational innovation, Europe wide: CECRA is a modular training program on methodological basics in advisory work, open for rural advisors. The program concludes with a certificate.

Current situation: at AgriSPIN's Cross Visit in Höchst Germany, IALB received sound feedback on CECRA structure and contents and its current expansion process. In the

cross visit, experiences and views on advisor qualification, innovation support and training, have been exchanged based on the discussion of the presented CECRA system. Results and Findings of the presented Innovation case “CECRA” were structured in Pearls, Puzzles and Proposals.

Pearls:

- The upgrading, harmonizing and opening process of Europeanization of CECRA
- The participatory approach of the trainings

Puzzlings (critical issues, open questions):

- Bureaucracy,
- Development of a monopole?,
- How can CECRA be made attractive for advisors,
- Without support (above all financially) few advisors will take part
- Do the CECRA partners all have equal rights?
- How could further organizations in Germany become CECRA Partner?

Proposals:

- Address Advisory Services and Institutions directly, as they are responsible for HR development
- Introduce a new CECRA Module for Facilitation of EIP groups
- Learn, how to market the product
- Integrate vocational training by re-certification

Further results:

1. The Basque Advisory Service is interested and thinks about becoming CECRA-Partner
2. The Idea, that entra, EUFRAS und IALB develop a new format, an exchange platform for managers of rural advisory services.
3. A video on CECRA as Innovation Case
4. Mr Wiedemann, BBV announces to introduce CECRA as standard in his RAS in Bavaria

Currently, several Organisational processes can be observed happening at the same time.

In Spain, Ireland and Latvia, first CECRA Trainings have started, they are in a realization phase, from EUFRAS perspective it's the beginning of the roll out, the dissemination.

The first CECRA TTT has been developed, preparatory work is still to be done, some uncertainty remains and hopefully there will be enough applications for the realization.

The CECRA Working groups of EURAS and IALB are parallel adapting the guidelines to the new situation, further accreditations of future CECRA partners are expected – this is in development. If the timeframe is too long and activities and personal contacts around CECRA are low, maybe interest in accrediting might cool down.

Lessons learned:...by key actors: Practice orientation is crucial! The Feedback from the cross-visit was presented and discussed within CECRA Working Group and IALB Committee. The maybe most important impulse was that the practice orientation is crucial. We have to be conscious, that we do not train advisor method trainers for the sake of the advisors, but to improve advisory work and innovation management on farm and individual business level.

What's your target group? Valuable was the reminder, that the main target group when rolling out CECRA is not the common advisor but the institutions in charge of personal development, i.e. the directors and HR departments.

Always involve all partners! A cooperative approach such as CECRA is very powerful, but needs a lot of communication. Individual decisions are not productive. All partners have to be involved in decision processes. This takes its time. Until a considerable number of CECRA certificates is reached, with half-voluntary work of the partners, compromises in the speed of the extension process will be necessary

Findings on training of farm advisors and innovation brokers: Innovations need professional brokerage! We took as a confirmation the approval to the general approach of CECRA, that innovation and individualized solutions as well as cooperative actions demand the command of communicative skills and a methodological toolkit to be able to adapt and use the advisors expertise adequately in different situations. The demands towards farm advisors shift from pre-fabricated solutions to innovation support by systemic counselling. Innovations don't spread automatically by themselves.

In Europe, a long list of agrarian Universities and State Research Centres produce new knowledge in countless research projects and practical on field experiments. At the same time, many pioneers among farming practitioners and from the up- and downstream industry create innovations that are meant to be spread. The Farm Technology sector is a remarkable hotspot for innovations and pioneering spirit.

Well-trained advisors ensure this knowledge and innovation transfer, called for from many sides. Rural, Farm and household economy advisory services offer professional innovation management. In this sense, counselling farmers mediates accurately individualized knowledge, competences and learning possibilities.

New things do not integrate without conflict in existing patterns. Professional brokerage and negotiation between interests and among different players become more and more important for a successful implementation of innovations.

Summary

1 Actors/roles within innovation

4 Analysis of factors of success and failures

The CECRA Cooperation and Usage Agreement (2015 between IALB and EUFRAS) is generally agreed on in a relatively short time. This did not happen without conflict. But we took conflict as a good sign to affirm that something new is negotiated, that we were in the middle of an innovation process. Several attempts to get funding for the further development and roll out of CECRA failed. Nevertheless CECRA trainings started in several new regions in Europe.

5 Appreciation of regional particularities

In the Fast-Track Train the trainer event in October 2015 in Dublin, CECRA trainers from different corners of Europe were asked if they wanted more regulation within in the CECRA guidelines. The answer was clear, that they would like to stick to the basic framework to have enough flexibility to adept to regional needs. This concerns the level of detail in the Module Descriptions and the possibility to select fitting elective modules. The translation of the CECRA material into local languages remains a challenge.

6 Specific recommendations worked out in the AgriSpin-Cross-Visit

- Address Advisory Services and Institutions directly, as they are responsible for HR development.
- Introduce a new CECRA Module for Facilitation of EIP groups.
- Learn, how to market the product.
- Integrate vocational training by re-certification.

7 Lessons that can be generalized

- Practice orientation is crucial. Training advisor methods follows the overall objective to improve advisory work and innovation management on farm and individual business level.
- It is worth to have defined very clearly your target group to address with your innovation. For CECRA it is not the common advisor but the institutions in charge of personal development, i.e. the directors and HR departments.
- A cooperative approach such as CECRA needs a lot of communication. Individual decisions are not productive. All partners have to be involved in decision processes. This takes time.
- Innovations need professional brokerage. New things do not integrate by itself into existing patterns.

Innovation case 6: „It’s not necessarily lonesome at the top!“

– Facilitated exchange for managers of advisory organizations

”



1. Results and impacts

What came into practice and which is the impact? Introduction of coaching methods in rural advisory Coaching and its benefit for advisory work was an important issue of the exchange. The concept idea of coaching is meanwhile quite known in German advisory organisations. Since 10 years Andreas Hermes Akademie in cooperation with Entra and VLK (Verband der Landwirtschaftskammern) is offering a one-year-training course on coaching for rural advisors. Since 9 years the Federal State Institute for agricultural Development in Baden Württemberg (LEL)

is offering the same training course on coaching for rural advisors, which is partly funded by the federal government of Baden Württemberg. More than 190 advisors have passed these courses and use coaching tools in their advisory practice. Farmers are taking benefit, because advisory services in Germany are widening their offer and are better able to support farmers in management questions and farm development, where “soft skills” often play an important role.

Strategy advisory for small and middle sized farms: The Bioland Beratung GmbH (Bioland Advisory Service Ltd) took up the idea to develop appropriate strategy advisory tools from the above mentioned exchange with Denmark. Within the frame of an applied research project, Bioland, together with the Von-Thünen-Institute in Braunschweig, developed a strategy check which is called “Standortbestimmung” (location determination) “Standortbestimmung” was presented several times at

the above mentioned exchange meetings of advisory organisations and is meanwhile used by numerous advisors and advisory organisations in Germany and Austria. It is also part of the above mentioned training course on coaching. The Federal State of Baden Württemberg is actually establishing a smart strategy advisory tool for family farms (called “Betriebscheck”: farm check) which was derived from “Standortbestimmung”. “Betriebscheck” will be a comprehensive consultation offer for farms in Baden-Württemberg which is freely available for all farms in Baden Württemberg. Especially small farms, and farmer-families who are not a member or client of an advisory service, can profit from this offer.

Teamwork and cooperation of advisors:

Several times “cooperation between advisors”, “role distribution of advisors” and “cross selling” were important issues. Crucial point in this concept is to define roles and rules, when different advisors are working with the same group of clients. Another objective is motivating advisors to bring the services of other colleagues and partners, under the attention of the client. The concept of “advisory teams” and “cross selling” between advisors was taken up and successfully introduced by the Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein –Westfalen, one of the biggest advisory organisations in Germany. Many other organisations are also working

on that issue, because advisors are more and more specialised and should cooperate in order to bring the best service to the client. The idea of diverse advisor roles is meanwhile spread in a lot of organisations (e.g. a client manager with a coach profile cares about farm development and integrates more specialised advisors in the advisory process; all being in continuous exchange and knowing from each other).

Marketing and active selling: Marketing is an upcoming topic in advisory organisations in Germany. Marketing trainings for Rural Advisors

Become more and more usual. The concern of many advisors against active selling, which was typical in the last decades, is changing towards a positive marketing

attitude. The exchange helped the managers to see the importance of marketing and gave them ideas on the way how mindsets of advisors could be changed.

Marketing trainings for advisors have meanwhile become an important service of Entra.

Designing of offers and billing of advisory services: There is no “magic bullet” or a single answer how advisory offers and billing systems should be designed for having satisfied clients and satisfied advisory organisations. The question is very complex and a lot of factors have to be taken in consideration. But for instance Bioland Beratung as well as Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, who were intensely participating in the above mentioned manager exchange, are leading (non-profit-) organisations regarding the development of paid advisory offers in Germany. Many other organisations have been visiting them and have taken over their concepts and experiences.

2. Pearls, Puzzles and Proposals expressed by the AgriSpin - Visitors during the Cross Visit in Kloster Höchst (9. – 12.5.2016)

Pearls: Get Input from other sectors; to look how other sectors have overcome the same challenges

- The pause between the forums gives organisations the time to digest the fruits
- the trainers network in a good way and really know the background of the advisors
- Not afraid of having contact with “Enemies” (conventional sector)
- Relevance of personal contacts
- often innovations starts in networking atmosphere

Puzzles: Is it enough to follow the demand of the clients? (Referring to the presentation of Dr. Waltraut Ruland,

Landwirtschaftskammer NRW; comment of the author)

- What do the advisors want?
- Monitoring plan?
- Look for sustainability (financial)

Proposals: probably demand is still there: Organise new offer with EUFRAS

- Write an article about the networking live-cycle
- Be in contact with members of the network
- Develop a “Menu of Exchanges” addressed to different publics
- involve management level in new approach
- Bureaucracy

3. Summary

1. What is the innovation?

According to the discussion during the cross visit it is primarily an Organisational innovation: Managers and advisors exchange knowledge and experiences across

Organisational borders in order to make their organisations more efficient and successful in times of change. But there is also a social component: The participants discovered common interests and potentials for synergy and cooperation. New contacts between organisations were established which led even to mutual visits. Some of them got another perspective on their own situation and realised that they are in good company with their problems. “It was good for me to see, that other organisations even very big ones in industry had to go

through similar difficulties and struggles in the past”, which was a quote from Dr. Waltraud Ruland (Vice-Director of the Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen during the Cross Visit in Kloster Höchst.

2. Key actors and their role in the process: Jan Plagge, head of Bioland Advisory Service in Bavaria at that time; a very innovative person with entrepreneurial attitude and excellent management skills

- Thomas Fisel, advisor and head of Bioland Advisory Service until 2000; during the innovation he was freelancer (linked to Entra) with the freedom and the capacity to bring the ideas into practice which were developed together with Jan Plagge
- Bioland and other organic associations: giving the freedom to its employees (advisors) to look for new ideas and to start new projects
- Danish Advisory Service (DAAS): partner for exchange and important source of knowledge and experiences
- Andreas Hermes Akademie (in cooperation with VLK und AID Infodienst) and later Entra:
 - giving the platform and the Organisational background in order to organise the exchange events; access to EU-Funds (ESF);
 - taking up ideas of the exchange and offering additional services (soft skill trainings for advisors; Coaching course for advisors, etc.).

3. Drivers and Success Factors· There was (and still is!) a need for change and more quality in rural advisory in Germany because of changing market conditions.

- Small core group of engaged advisors with friendly relationships (warm network), out of practice, innovative and with management skills;
- There was a business model (free lancers in cooperation with an Entra and AHA as open-minded and entrepreneurial organisations) which allowed to make “products and services” from new ideas and to spread them.
- Thorough preparation and professional facilitation of exchange is crucial, because Managers of advisory organisations and experts from outside have little time. They will only attend in those exchange forums if there is a high benefit in short time; furthermore it is crucial to create an appropriate framework of conditions, and to stimulate them talking openly about good and bad things.
- Although most participants take concrete purposes with them from the exchange meetings, a lot of these ideas perish in the everyday life. So, it was important to create concrete examples and to offer additional services (e.g. advisory concepts, seminars, trainings) that helped them to realise the knowledge transfer and to start the intended changes.

- It was important that some of the key persons had good connections to other branches and other countries in order to find best practices, suggestions and inspiring experts from outside.



4. Hindering forces and critical moments

- Dependence on only one or two persons

In our case the initiative to organise the next exchange forum relied often on one or two persons. When these persons were too busy with other things, the forum didn't take place (e.g. years 2008, 2009, 2010 and also at present. It would be helpful to have an initiative group and more persons involved on the one hand side. A regular interval and long term planning of the meetings is important.

Also when Thomas left in 2011 for a job as managing director, there was no other person, to take over. Divorce Entra - AHA

The end of cooperation between Entra and AHA in 2007 was also a reason, that there was no exchange forum between 2007 and 2011

- Necessary time and endurance: It needed endurance to create a positive image of the exchange meetings and to make them well known in the target group. Especially in the beginning it is important that exchange events take place, although participation is not satisfying.
- Financial resources: It is not easy to make those meetings profitable or at least cost covering. A certain idealism and also some positive side effects are necessary in order to make it attractive for those who take the financial responsibility.

5. Regional particularities

In Germany most of the advisory organisations operate mostly on regional or federal state level. The structure of rural advisory and the relevant frame conditions (public funds; scientific and Organisational support etc.) are varying in a broad range between the different federal states; there is little systematic exchange between advisory organisations on national level. Only similar organisations (like for instance the Chambers of Agriculture) have regular exchange.

6. Lessons learned

There were a lot of lessons, which we could learn during the innovation and also when reflecting the innovation case with the help of the AgriSpin methodology. These lessons are part of the summary. The most important additional insights during the Cross Visit are:

- Is there (comparable to the concept of product lifecycles in marketing) also a network lifecycle? And is the actual pause of exchange events also indicator for the end of a life cycle?
- To be confirmed that “warm networks of colleagues with friendly relationship” are often “ingredient” of innovations processes
- Digestion of ideas and innovation takes time and needs resources within the organisations => is the actual pause also due to the necessary time for digestion?

7. Future Perspectives

Actually there is the idea between EUFRAS (Pablo Asensio) and Entra (Thomas Fisel) to design and place an offer for capacity building and exchange for managers from advisory organisation via EUFRAS and in close cooperation under the umbrella of WP 4 in AgriSPIN.

Cross visit in Germany:

1. Lessons that can be generalized mentioned by the participants:

- Side effects of cross visits are as important as the rest.
- To establish CECRA at home.
- High Importance of soft skills and education rediscovered for quality of advisors.
- A lot of new and warm networks.
- Networking as key factor for innovation dynamics established.
- Possibility for young colleagues to enter into services via CERA qualification.
- Trust as key and basic for a successful advisory job.
- Farmers can pay for services.

The following “ingredients” are important in order to initiate such open and systematic exchange between managers:

- Endurance in order to get known and to achieve the trust of advisors and managers.
- Professional and creative facilitation in order to make it fruitful and exciting enough.

- A rather informal and semi-public atmosphere in order to create confidential openness.
- Look outside the box: Bring in Examples and experiences from other Branches and Countries.
- Additional services, which help the managers to follow up and to implement ideas, which they received in the exchange (Creation of Contacts, Visits, Training, Advisory offers ...).
- Organisation of exchange should be business: The organizers must have a genuine interest and there must be enough incentive and resources, in order that they do their best.



2. Side effects

In autumn 2016 already there have been several occasions to present “cross visits” as a method in other circumstances. The 2 most important seem to become

- Cross visits of EIP-operational groups to lift up the quality of management.
- Cross visits to start thematic networks in Horizon 2020 proposals.

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