

ENRD Networking - 23rd NRN Meeting

Synthesis of session on CAP networks & innovation

20 September 2022

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

NSU colleagues devoted a session at the [23rd NRN meeting](#) (September 2022) to identify the roles for CAP Networks related to innovation support and networking under the new CAP. The following synthesises the outputs from the workshop.

1. Can a CAP Network Support Unit (NSU) capture grassroots innovative ideas?

According to [Art 15 \(4\) of Regulation 2021/2015](#), advisors are the AKIS actors which are most expected to effectively capture grassroots innovative ideas given their regular contact with farmers, rural businesses & communities. Innovation support is a very individual and intensive exercise that starts with the capturing of grassroots innovative ideas and consequently develops such ideas to become Operational Group projects, by working with the owner of the idea and interacting with the relevant actors who have the right capacities and expertise to tackle the objectives of the project. The innovation support process ends with drafting a fully-fledged project proposal and a cooperation agreement among project partners, being ready for the next call for Operational Groups.

The CAP NSU can help by **providing “innovation networking”**, by bringing people together in groups, for instance by organising **opportunities** such as **targeted events (online/in-person), study groups and workshops, which help interaction**. These activities provide occasions for farmers to engage effectively with a diverse range of organisations within the AKIS, including with their peers, advisors, researchers, and others who may help generate ideas for EIP Operational group projects, thanks to the cross-fertilisation among the participants. Other opportunities lie in the provision of **opportunities** for farm businesses **to tell their stories, the “innovation ambassadors”, and to open their farms to others, including to their peers**. Competitions can provide opportunities to socialise and celebrate



the achievements of farm businesses and others in the innovation space. All this is very useful to **create an innovation-attentive environment and supports the AKIS innovation ecosystem.**

Furthermore, the **development and promotion of a digital Platform (innovation ideas hub)** on the CAP NSU webpage for capturing ideas could be envisaged. A platform may take many forms, e.g. a portal where ideas can be submitted and displayed, and/or a vehicle to connect and share ideas between parties.

The generation of innovative ideas may not come naturally to individuals: an experienced and supportive listener is often essential. The development of innovative ideas therefore often relies on advisers or innovation brokers, who analyse and help define the idea after capturing it. There may be significant opportunities for **NSUs to work closely with such partners to further enhance opportunities around innovation support & networking.**

2. Who should deliver innovation support?

The delivery of innovation support will vary depending on the innovation arena. It should be undertaken by a **neutral organisation with the relevant knowledge, skills and expertise.** Those who deliver innovation support should have frequent interaction with those who have grassroots innovative ideas and pick the ideas up and undertake the brokerage effectively.

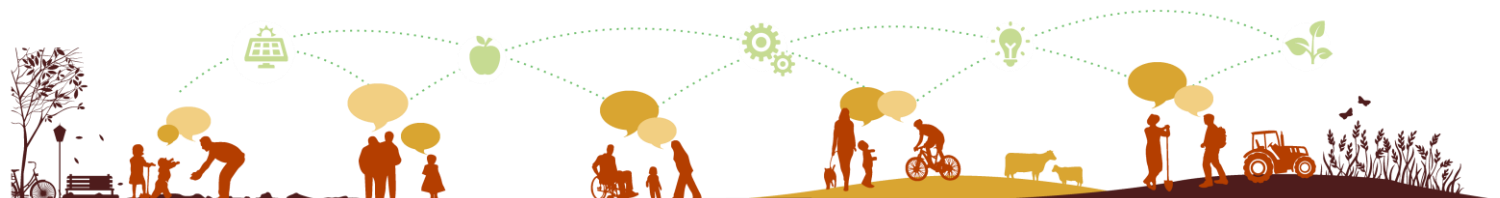
The delivery agent of innovation support will have to find the necessary knowledge on the subject and needs to have good relations to **connect to the relevant experts with the right competences in order to be able to start up a successful innovation support action.**

All who intend to provide innovation support, require specific expertise, competences, **training and skills development to ensure that they can broker effectively and impartially.**

It is possible that **provision of innovation support relies on multiple AKIS actors.** Beyond advisers, innovation support agents could also possibly include rural development experts, LEADER groups, or researchers who have frequent contact with practitioners.

3. What role and activities would you foresee for the CAP network? How would the CAP network work with others (e.g. advisors)?

CAP Networks should have specific actions around the fostering of innovation, including the communication and dissemination of information about innovation activities across the AKIS.



CAP Networks should become a trusted partner within the AKIS, working effectively with their target audiences.

CAP Networks should have a global understanding of the issues/landscape, with specialist AKIS staff in the team working closely with those that are providing innovation brokerage – the innovation support service.

CAP Networks should host networking events, focus groups with farmers, advisers and others to foster/promote innovation.

CAP Networks should host digital platforms and webpages devoted to innovation.

Disclaimer

This paper has been developed with the involvement of National Rural Networks from several EU Member states as part of the work carried out by the CAP Implementation Contact Point during the [23rd National Rural Networks meeting](#). The information and views set out in this document do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

