



Agriculture and Rural Development in the context of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Overcoming the Impact of the Global Challenges

Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation systems (AKIS) in the Western Balkans

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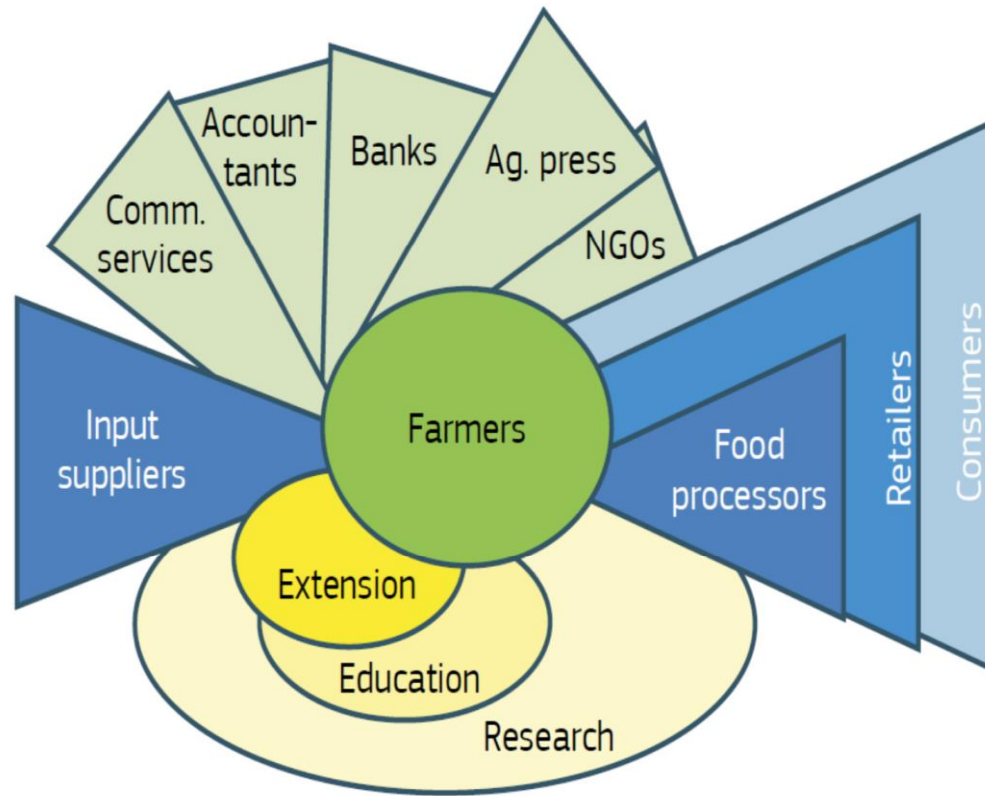


Structure of the presentation

- AKIS concept and role
- Rationale for AKIS in WBs
- Main weaknesses of AKIS in WBs
- SWG interventions and achievements
- Main challenges
- Future alternatives



AKIS definition and role



What?

- System that links people and organisations to promote mutual learning, to generate, share, and utilize agriculture-related technology, knowledge, and information.

Who?

- Farmers, advisors, researchers, (farmer) organizations, retailers, media, services, and ministries. They all produce and need knowledge!



Old paradigm

- “Linear knowledge transfer” model or “from laboratory to market“-experts develop solutions and then pass them down to farmers
- Each organization acting primarily within their own space with some degree of interaction

New paradigm

- "interactive innovation model" which focuses on forming partnerships - using bottom-up approaches and linking stakeholders in Operational Groups
- Peer-to-peer learning-co-creating knowledge and sharing the expertise needed
- The knowledge “exchange” stimulates innovation and helps to target the research agenda



AKIS models in EU

Level of strength refers to structure and support

- **Strong** AKIS-influential actors or organizations at the national level providing public support (France, Germany, and more fragmented Austria and Ireland).
- **Weak** AKIS (Greece, Portugal, Romania)

The level of integration refers to the formal links between AKIS actors

- **Fragmented** AKIS - independent knowledge networks that operate in parallel, not well coordinated, rarely cooperating or even might compete (Netherlands)
- **Integrated** AKIS- coordinating structure supported by national policies on AKIS and advisory services that frame the (inter)actions of AKIS actors.

Hybrid forms: AKIS fragmented but strong (Netherlands) **or weak** (Estonia and the UK)

Rationale for AKIS in WBs

- The relationship between farmers, society, and the overall global context is changing.
- New knowledge, new skills, and innovative ideas to develop and manage smarter and more sustainable production systems.
- AKIS in the WBs needs functionality, recognition and support for enabling innovation ecosystem by enhancing knowledge flows strengthening links between research and practice.



SWG intervention

- Create a **network** bringing together actors.
- Carrying a situation analysis at country level.
- Design a **national Roadmap** and a **National Action Plan** for achieving strategic objectives.
- Define **regional and/or sectoral or thematic AKIS** aiming at fostering knowledge and innovation transfer
- Develop an **education and communication measure** for scaling up technical innovations and innovative business models.



SWG REAWG on AKIS

- Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on AKIS was established in 2019
- Represents an “AKIS” knowledge and innovation transfer network, which brings together governments, academia, and private regional innovation champions from the WBs and Germany.



Main weaknesses identified in the SWOT analyses

- **Finalization of regulatory, legislative framework**

- AKIS recognition; private advisory services formalization; certification to improve the service credibility; Smart Specialization Strategies.

- **AKIS structure:**

- High fragmentation and weak partnership
- Education is weakly connected to research, extension, and market operators.
- Education, advisory and research face different challenges, are governed by different aspects, and are financed by different sources:
- Other parts are either missing or have a weak presence and functionality for the system.

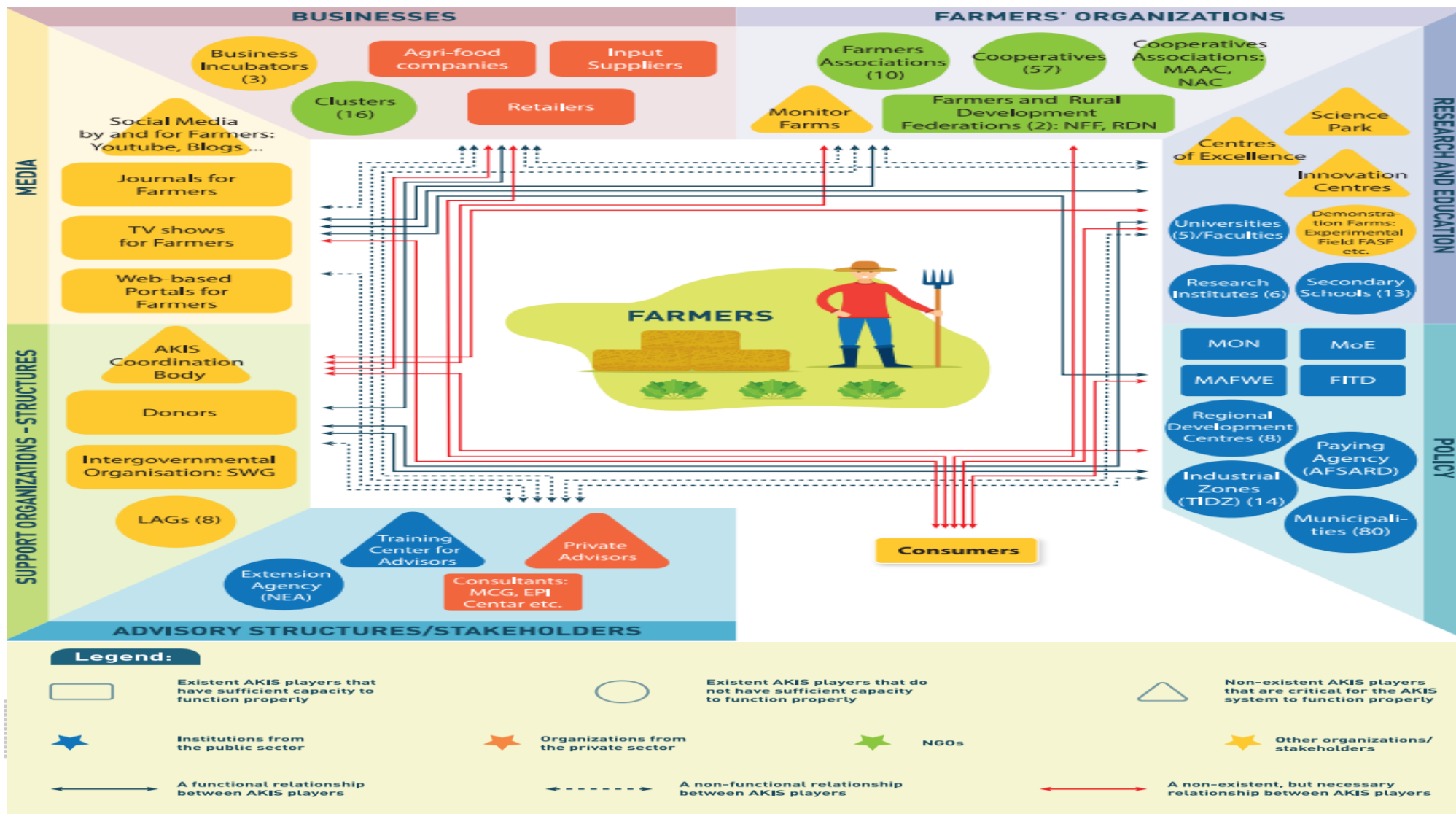




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Main Approach and structuring for Formalization of AKIS

- Option 1: a **systems approach**, to help bridge the gap between science and practice, depending on the country/territory or sector
- Option 2: A **gradual approach** of the development initiating with ‘experimental’ thematic/sectoral AKIS structures to work as laboratories for the implementation of AKI



System approach

- The **formalization of AKIS** and introduction of **new structures** within AKIS
 - Creation of **AKIS Coordination Body** with clear role and functionality
 - Strengthening **links between research and practice** and enhancement of interactive innovation
- **Formalisation and capacity building of private advisory services** as complementary services
 - **Training and accreditation**
- **Capacity building of all AKIS stakeholders and enhancement of R&D and Research, Innovation & Technology Transfer (RITT)**
- The budgetary design and **activation of IPARD's measure of advisory services**
- Supporting digital transition in agriculture to minimize the digital divide



Potential new structures

- **AKIS center**, for mapping and managing the existing and future needs of the Advisory Services and other RITT structures
- **AKIS “one-stop shops”**
- **Agri-food Centers of Innovation and Entrepreneurship** involving University/Research Institutions, Regional authorities, Farm organizations, and the private sector
- **Regional Educational, and Training Centre** for the theoretical and practical training and accreditation of future farm advisors



Gradual approach

- Creation of AKIS technical group at the sector level on several themes
- Establishment of EIP-AGRI like Operational Groups targeting a certain intersectoral theme or problem solution through a concrete innovation project



Tasks for the future and takeaways

- Finalise the **National Action Plan with feasible activities considering each country context.**
- Define **regional and/or sectoral or thematic AKIS** aiming at fostering knowledge and innovation transfer
- Develop an **education and communication measure** for scaling up technical innovations and innovative business models.





Thank you for your attention!
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