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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND
ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Agricultural Policy Forum 4th - 7th June 2024 Jahorina, BiH

South Eastern Europe SWG RRD Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

Agricultural Policy Forum 2024

Reassessing of Agricultural and Rural Development Policy in South Eastern Europe and challenges ahead: Food Sovereignty, Climate Change Impact, Demographic Renewal of rural areas

Working Group 3: AKIS and Agricultural Policy Developments

Progress Activities on AKIS for North Macedonia

Dragan Gjoshevski, Ana Simonovska, Emelj Tuna

Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
04 - 07 June, 2024

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AKIS in North Macedonia

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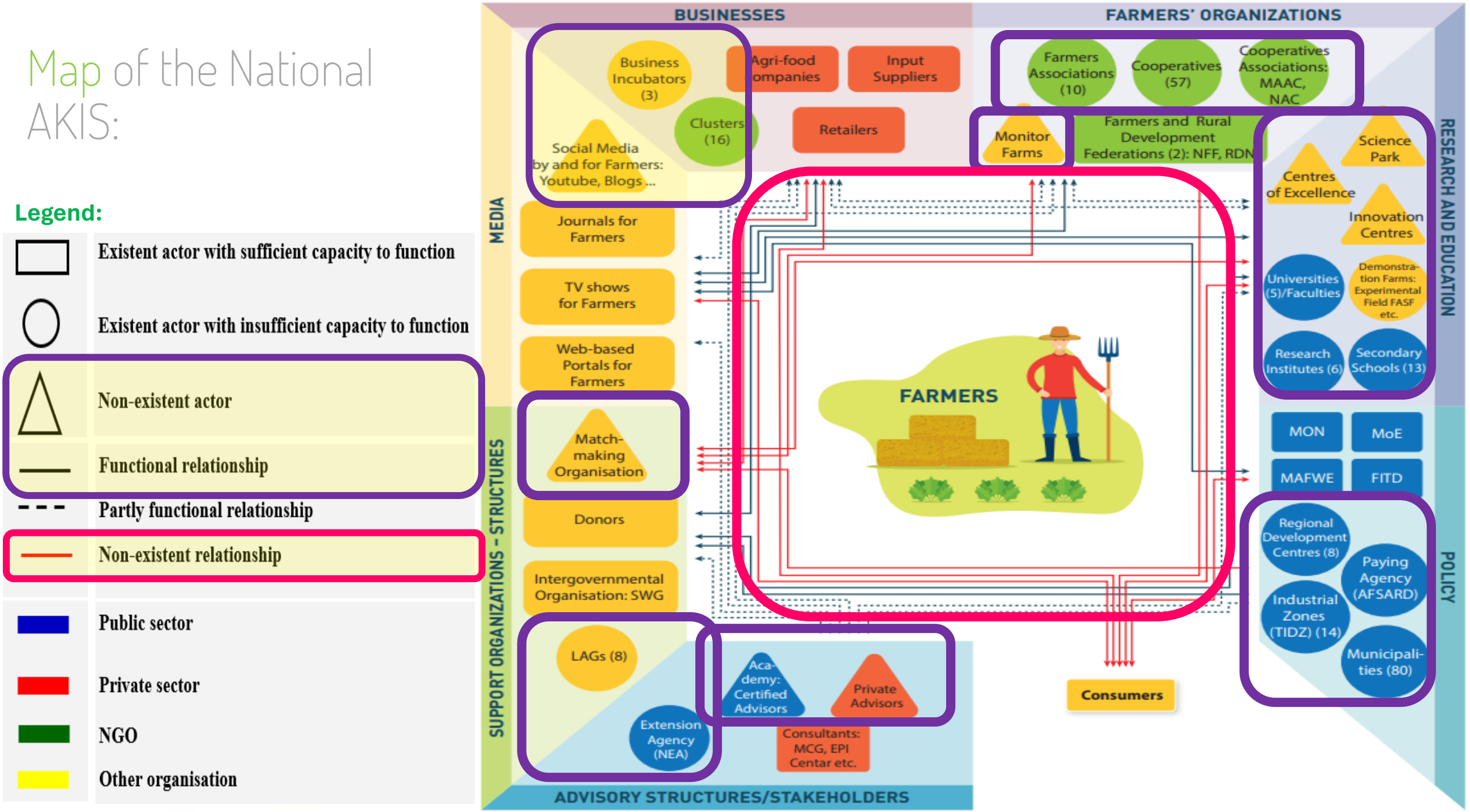
- **AKIS** in North Macedonia is in the **development phase**
- There has been **certain progress** in developing a functional and efficient national AKIS in the last two years
- The following progress has been achieved within the previous SWG's engagement:
  1. **Investigating research, innovation, and technology transfer capacities** (RITT) in the country (**during the period of 2019-2020**)
  2. **Investigating the state of development of the national AKIS** and the innovation process in the agro-food sector (**during 2021**)
  3. **Mapping of the national AKIS** with its existing and missing institutions and interlinkages between them as a first step towards building a functional and integrated national AKIS (**during 2022**)
  4. **SWOT analysis with a focus on national AKIS** to set the groundwork for developing strategic documents for developing a national AKIS (**during 2022**)
  5. Preparation of a **Roadmap toward functional national AKIS** (**during 2022**)
  6. Preparation of an **Action Plan for developing a functional** (and integrated) **national AKIS** (**during 2022**)
- Current task: **Implementation of the National AKIS Action Plan** for developing an effective and efficient AKIS (during 2023-2024)

Map of the National AKIS:



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Roadmap
National AKIS MK

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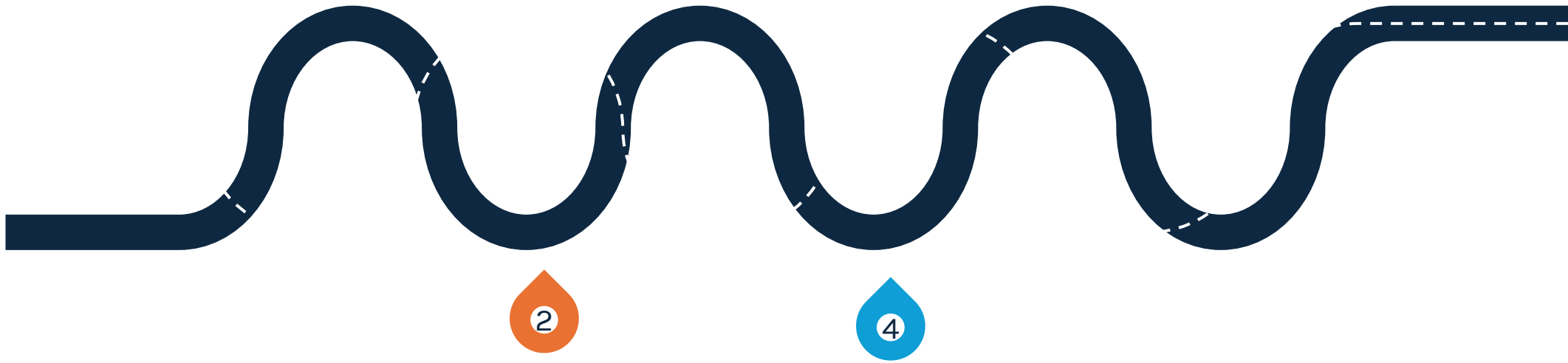

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Action Plan: Strategic objectives and actions

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FIRST TASK
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Implementation of AP (within SWG)

01

Formalisation of AKIS

- Laws and by-laws
- Strategy

02

Stranghten capacities of AKIS

- Advisory services
- Research and education
- Public institutions
- Farmer-based organizations

03

Introduce new structures in AKIS

- Private advisory services
- Business incubators
- Innovation centres
- Centres of excellence

04

Create functional relationships within AKIS

- Groups of farmer-led interactive innovation
- Coordination Body

Progress – National AKIS action plan

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Strategic Objective 1: *Formalization of AKIS*			
Main Strategic Activities	**Any progress** (YES / NO)	**Progress description**	**Next steps**
Adoption of the law and by-laws on advisory services	YES	The law was prepared, and public consultations were realized. The by-law on operational management and coordination of the advisory service system and AKIS was drafted, including process and procedures for application, registration, and licensing of advisory service providers, the certification of advisors, provision of advice, and the monitoring and controls of the system.	Adoption of the law, and by-laws
Preparing a long-term strategy for AKIS	NO	-	-

Strategic Objective 2: *Strengthen the capacities of AKIS actors*			
Main Strategic Activities	**Any progress** (YES / NO)	**Progress description**	**Next steps**
Introduce a life-long learning program for advisors	YES	The training curriculum has been developed consisting of 33 modules. A procedure for certifying advisors and their continuous education was also developed.	Verification of the training curriculum. Piloting of 8 training modules will start at the end of June.
Establish Educational Centre for certifying advisors	YES	The Centre has not been established in classical terms, but the eligible institution (such as the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food – Skopje, educational organizations, or other competent institution could verify the training curriculum.	The preliminary verification of the training curriculum would be offered to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food – Skopje, but if it is not interested, other organizations are considered.
Provide continuous training for public administration in supporting RITT	NO	Enhance human capacities employed in the research and education sector	Introduce academic study programs to support innovations in the agro-food industry Modernise demonstration farms …

Progress – National AKIS action plan

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Strategic objective 3: *Introduce new structures in AKIS*			
Main Strategic Activities	**Any progress** (YES / NO)	**Progress description**	**Next steps**
Set supporting infrastructure for the operation of the private advisory services	YES	This activity is in line with the Law and by-laws on Advisory Services, and training and certification of advisors (see the lines above).	See the relevant lines above.
Establish business incubators	NO	-	-
Establish Innovation Centres in the agro-food industry	NO	-	-
Establish Centres of Excellence in the agri-food industry	NO	-	-

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Strategic Objective 4: *Create functional relationships within AKIS*			
Main Strategic Activities	**Any progress** (YES / NO)	**Progress description**	**Next steps**
Establish an AKIS Coordination Body	YES	This activity is in line with the Law and by-laws on Advisory Services (see the lines above). The Monitoring and Coordination Council for Advisory Services and AKIS was formed and the first meeting was realized.	Regular meetings of the Body.
Encourage farmers-led interactive innovation	YES	A plan for encouraging farmers-led interactive innovation has been developed within the SWG's AKIS project activities.	Preparation of information materials on the importance to exchange knowledge and co-innovate dedicated to farmers. Design Guides and Tools for organizing and promoting events on groups of farmers-led interactive innovation. Organize informative sessions for the promotion of the guides and tools.

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AKIS

In the newest programming period of CAP (2021-2027)

- Modernization of the agricultural sector through the promotion of knowledge, innovations and digitalization

1. Enhancement of the **knowledge flow** and strengthening the **links between the research and practice**
2. Strengthening all types of **advisory services** in agriculture and encouraging their interrelation within the AKIS
3. Enhancing **inter-thematic** and **cross-border innovations** through interaction
4. Support of **digital transition** in agriculture

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Progress – National AKIS
North Macedonia

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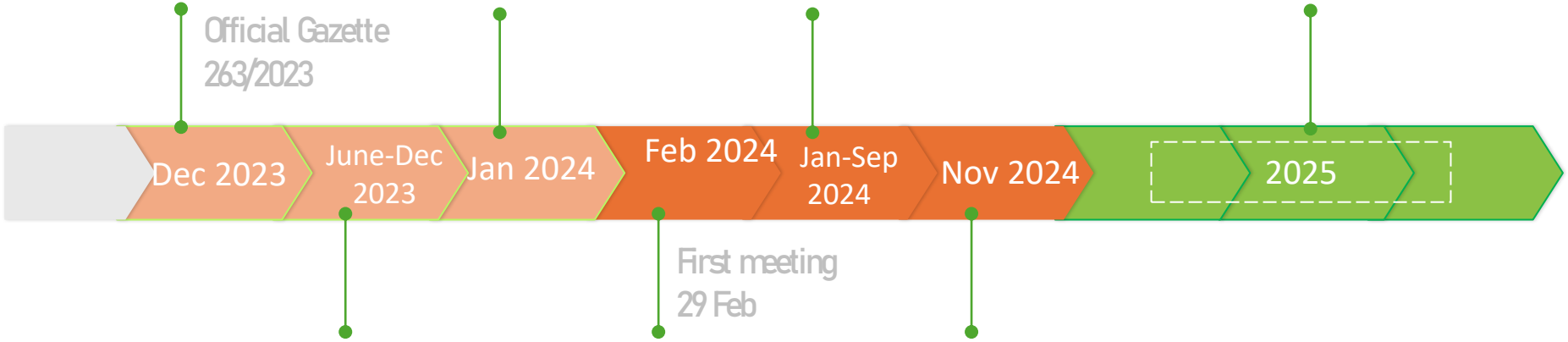
Project EU-MAFWE: Modernization of Advisory Services

+

SWG activities

1. Register of advisors and regular training
2. Adopted by-laws on advisory services
3. New study program at FASF on digitalization in agriculture
4. Strategy for digitalization in agriculture
5. …



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Progress on the AP implementation within SWG's project

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APD-WB project between SWG and BMEL

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

- **Review and adaptation** of the draft **advisory training program** prepared within FAS project (**deadline: May 2023**)
- **Preparation** of information materials **(pamphlets)** on farmers' exchanging knowledge and co-innovating (**deadline: November 2023**)
- **Design Guides and Tools** for organizing and promoting events on groups of **farmers-led interactive innovation** (**deadline: September 2024**)
- Organize **informative sessions** on groups of **farmers-led interactive innovation** - promotion of the guides and tools (**deadline: November 2024**)

WBs COMMON ACTIVITIES

- **Input to the Western Balkans AKIS Knowledge Repository:** relevant documents related to legislation, policies, administrative framework, innovation, education, promotion, good practices, research, etc.
- **Input to the Western Balkans Knowledge Repository:** Case Study (**deadline: November 2024**)

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04

PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIVITIES

Create functional relationships within AKIS actors

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To increase awareness among farmers (and of the government and the entire innovation ecosystem) on the importance of exchanging knowledge and co-innovation.

Preparation of a series of PAMPHLETS (November 2023)

Small, typed documents containing concise information, that we will use for educational, promotional, or advocacy purposes – DIGITAL editions (.pdf)

They could add content to:

- National repository (digital AKIS platform): MAFWE activities – EU project
- Regional repository (digital AKIS platform): SWG activities

1. General on groups for interactive innovation
2. Demonstration farms
3. Field labs
4. Living labs
5. Benchmarking for better farm performance
6. YouTube and social media for and from farmers

Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS)

Groups for farmers-led interactive innovation

Agriculture Innovation

Can provide an opportunity for farmers to increase productivity while better managing natural resources.

"Taking new-to-the-world ideas 'from inception to impact'. (Budden and Murray 2018:3)

INNOVATION

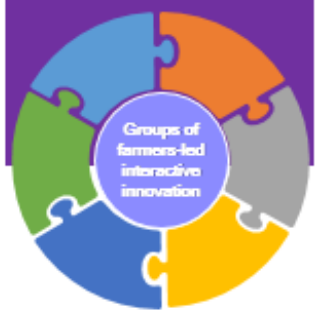
"Change in the processes by which an organization transforms labor, capital, materials, and information into products and services of greater value. (Christensen 2019:10)

Why innovation is important for farmers?

Farmers' knowledge and innovation are basic and important components of the research/development continuum.

There should be increased networking and knowledge sharing between farmers

Scientific community should complement and build on this knowledge.



Mainstream models

of agricultural innovation and science and technology development usually **isolate farmers** as technology adopters.

Farmer-led innovation

brings **farmers together**, preferably with other stakeholders as well, in a collaborative endeavor that recognizes multiple forms of expertise.

INNOVATION SPIRAL

Theoretical foundation to examine the practice of innovation in each of its seven phases.

Zaalmink et al., 2008 - adapted -

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Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS)

Groups for farmers-led interactive innovation

Demonstration farms

Demonstration farms

Also known as **demo farms**, **model farms,** or **pilot farms**, are agricultural or farming sites that serve as practical examples and learning platforms for farmers, researchers, and the wider community. These farms are designed/identified to showcase and demonstrate innovative agricultural practices, technologies, and techniques in a real-world setting, but more recently also to share experiences in a farmer-to-farmer setting, and to support knowledge co-creation between farmers and other actors.

What is the main purpose of demo farms?

The main purpose of demonstration farms is to provide hands-on experiences and promote knowledge exchange to improve agricultural productivity, sustainability, and rural development.

Demo events in general focus on:

Showing and understanding innovation within a working farm context or within a local setting.

- They are based on knowledge exchange between farmers or between farmers and innovation actors (e.g. advisers, researchers, and input providers).
- They stimulate peer-to-peer knowledge exchange between farmers and address farmers' needs.

HOW DEMO FARMS LOOK LIKE?

Farmers themselves are opening their farms to connect with their peers and the general public as part of business development strategies (e.g. short food supply chains, community-supported agriculture.

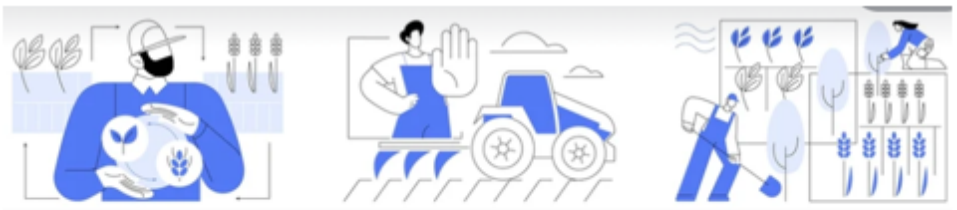
Demonstration activities can range from **ONE-OFF 'FIELD DAY'** events to **MULTI-YEAR 'MONITOR FARMS'** where farmers, advisors, and industry members come together at regular intervals to assess farming opportunities in situ, **TO PERMANENT 'RESEARCH FARMS'** where researchers test and demonstrate innovative technologies and approaches.

Demonstration events can be organized ON-FARM and VIRTUALLY.

ON-FARM demonstrations are planned, initiated and organized by a wide range of actors. There is no 'one-fits-all' approach for a successful demonstration event.

VIRTUAL demonstrations take place online without any physical interaction.

HYBRID FORMS of demonstrations are emerging, where some aspects of the demo event are situated in real life and others are situated online.



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Field labs

Field labs

Practical, hands-on trials that are open to farmers and researchers. Farmers working with a group of like-minded farmers and top researchers can get fast and thorough insights into new solutions to challenges facing their business. Field labs are code-signed by all participants allowing them to collect robust data that is relevant to the real-world farming environment and easily transferable to their businesses.

HOW DOES A FIELD LAB WORK?

1. It starts with an idea

From an existing discussion group, project, or network, a group of farmers or growers come together around an idea.

2. Identifying existing knowledge and a suitable topic

Supported by a coordinator, the group establishes a topic or challenge they would like to explore and sets realistic expectations and outcomes for the field lab.

3. Formulating a clear research question and co-designing a trial

Innovative farmers match the group with a researcher so they can develop a practical research question to be answered through a field lab. The group works collaboratively to design what data to record and monitor, ensuring the trial is both scientifically robust and practical for a working farm. The plan should be realistic about the roles, responsibilities, and time that the farmers (trialists) and researchers can commit.

4. Applying for funding

The group can apply for funding to cover trial costs.

5. Progressing the field lab

The group meets regularly and uses social media to discuss insights and tips and make sure the trial stays on track and data is collected regularly.

6. Analyse results

The group jointly analyses the findings and identifies what they have discovered over the duration of the field lab.

7. Share findings

The results and tips are shared with the farming community through events, online, and in the media so everyone can benefit.

8. Next steps

Farmers apply what they have learned to their farming business and explore whether a new field lab or other funding streams are needed to answer further questions.

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Groups for (farmers-led) interactive innovation

Living labs

Living labs

Real-life environments where stakeholders (researchers, public officials, local communities, farmers, businesses, etc.) collaborate, experiment, and co-create solutions to address societal challenges or enhance innovation processes.

They serve as dynamic platforms for driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and addressing real-world challenges by actively involving users, stakeholders, and researchers in the co-creation process within authentic environments.

Key aspects of the Living Labs in farming:

- Real-life Environment: They operate within actual environments where users, stakeholders, and researchers interact and test solutions in local contexts. This ensures that the solutions developed are practical and relevant to the real-world challenges faced by farmers or other people in rural areas.
- User Involvement: They emphasize the active involvement of end-users throughout the innovation process. This participatory approach ensures that solutions are user-centric, meeting the actual needs and preferences of the target audience (farmers, rural population, etc.). Users are not merely subjects of research but are actively engaged as co-creators and collaborators.
- Co-creation and collaboration: They facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders including researchers, businesses, government agencies, non-profits, and end-users. These stakeholders work together to develop, test, and refine innovative solutions, leveraging their diverse expertise, perspectives, and resources.
- Experimentation and iteration: They provide a platform for iterative experimentation and learning. Solutions are tested, refined, and improved through continuous feedback loops, allowing for rapid iteration and adaptation based on real-world insights and experiences.
- Multidisciplinary approach: They often involve multidisciplinary teams with expertise in areas such as agricultural sciences, other technology, design, social sciences, and policy. This interdisciplinary approach helps address complex challenges from multiple perspectives and enables holistic solutions that consider various factors including technological feasibility, usability, social impact, and sustainability.
- Openness and transparency: They promote openness, transparency, and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Findings, data, and insights generated through Living Lab activities are often made accessible to the broader community, fostering innovation, learning, and collaboration.

Lighthouses are exemplary projects or initiatives within the Living Lab ecosystem that serve as **GUIDING BEACONS** for innovation, collaboration, and best practices. They represent [illegible] that demonstrate the potential and impact of Living Labs in addressing societal challenges, fostering innovation, and promoting sustainable development.

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Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS)

Groups for farmers-led interactive innovation

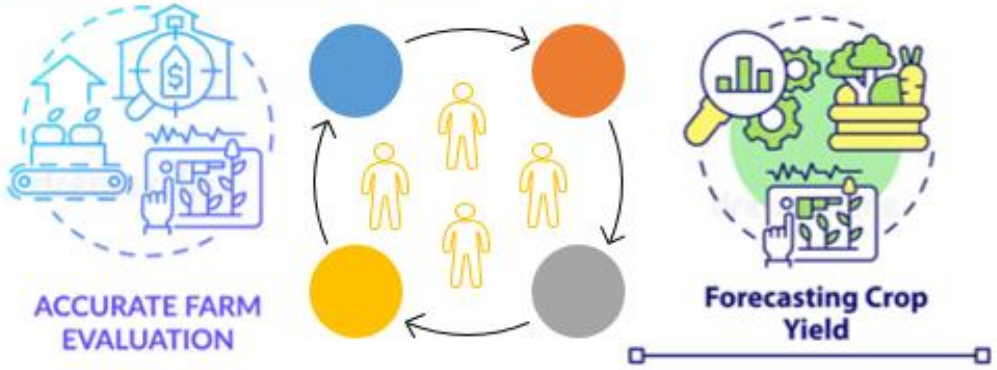
Benchmarking for Better Farm Performance

Benchmarking events

Valuable tools that can help farmers assess and improve their farm performance by comparing their practices and results with those of other farms or industry standards. These involve identifying key performance indicators and measuring the farm's performance against established benchmarks or best practices. By utilizing benchmarking as a tool for continuous improvement, farmers can enhance their farm performance and contribute to the sustainability and profitability of their operations.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BENCHMARKING?

Benchmarking helps farmers identify areas for improvement, set **PERFORMANCE TARGETS**, learn from successful farms, **OPTIMIZE RESOURCES**, monitor progress, adopt **INNOVATIVE PRACTICES**, and **FOSTER COLLABORATION** within the farming community.



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Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS)

Groups for farmers-led interactive innovation

YouTube and Social Media for and from Farmers

The Internet

Creates opportunities for easy access to information and a space to create multi-actor networks - platforms, exchange of experiences and knowledge through YouTube channels and social networks, etc.

YouTube

WHY FARMERS SHOULD CONSIDER YouTube?

1. Reach a **wider** audience

Farmers can reach people all over the world who are interested in what they do.

2. Build a **brand**

By creating high-quality videos that showcase your knowledge and expertise, you can attract new customers and build a loyal following.

3. Monetize farmer's content

If videos are popular, farmers can earn money from YouTube through advertising revenue, sponsorships, and merchandise sales. While it may take some time to build up a following, the potential for earning passive income is significant.

YouTube CHANNELS FOR AND FROM FARMERS

YouTube has become a popular platform for farmers to share their knowledge and experiences with others.

Many farmers have found success in monetizing their content. Advertising revenue, sponsorships, merchandise sales, and affiliate marketing are just a few ways that farmers can monetize their content on the platform.

With the right approach and a bit of creativity, farmers can turn their farming knowledge into a profitable YouTube channel. Of course, creating videos for YouTube does require some knowledge, time, and effort.

To start a YouTube channel, farmers need to invest in:

- Camera
- Microphone
- Mobile phone
- Training in editing videos

With a little bit of practice and persistence, farmers can create high-quality videos that will help them grow their businesses and reach new customers

OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA FOR AND FROM FARMERS:

WEB SITE of the farm.

CONSULTATION ONLINE using social media such as, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

VIDEO BLOGS using farm web site, YouTube, and other social media such as, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

ONLINE FORUM using farm web site, social media such as, Facebook, Twitter, and online video platforms.

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PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIVITIES

Create functional relationships within AKIS actors

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To increase awareness among farmers (and of the government and the entire innovation ecosystem) on the importance of exchanging knowledge and co-innovation.

Design Guides for organizing and promoting events on groups of interactive innovation (September 2024)

Larger, typed documents containing concise information, that we will use for educational purposes – DIGITAL editions (.pdf)

They could add content to:

- National repository (digital AKIS platform): MAFWE activities – EU project
- Regional repository (digital AKIS platform): SWG activities

1. Demonstration farms
2. Living labs
3. Benchmarking for better farm performance
4. YouTube and social media for and from farmers

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Groups for farmers-led interactive innovation

Guides and Tools
for organizing and promoting

Demonstration farms

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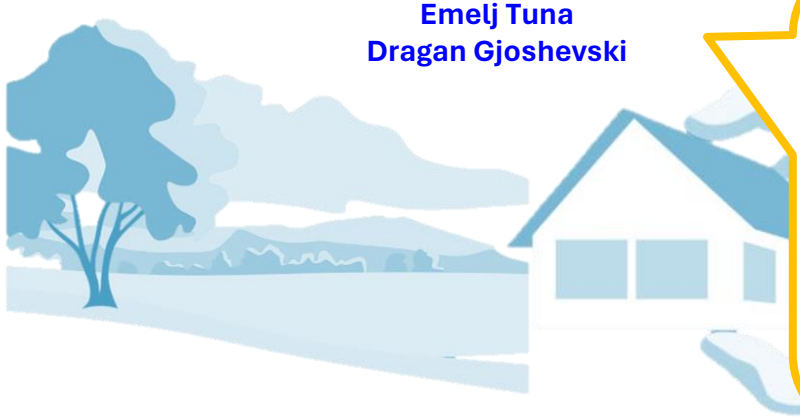

Content

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1. Concept of demo events
2. Steps in the organization of demo events:
   - Setting up objectives for the event
   - Selecting a host farm
   - Selecting stakeholders
   - Setting up the program (agenda)
   - Selecting the learning and

The dissemination and peer-to-peer learning effect of a demonstration event depends on a **well-structured event** as well as specific skills (soft and hard skills) for the hosting farmers, organizers, facilitators, and demonstrators:

- Education and training programs for effective demonstration are necessary.

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Benchmarking for Better Farm Performance

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Content

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1. Concept of benchmarking for better farm performance
2. Steps in the organization of benchmarking learning groups:
   - Organization of the event
   - Identification phase
   - Data collection phase
   - Comparison phase

The dissemination and peer-to-peer learning effect of a benchmarking event depends on a **well-structured event** as well as specific skills (soft and hard skills) for the hosting farmers, etc.:

➢ Education and training programs for effective benchmarking are necessary.

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PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIVITIES

Create functional relationships within AKIS actors

FOURTH TASK

To increase awareness among farmers (and of the government and the entire innovation ecosystem) on the importance of exchanging knowledge and co-innovation.

Organize informative sessions on groups of **interactive innovation** - promotion of the guides and tools (deadline: November 2024)

1. National convention on the EU: March 5 2024
2. Dissemination event at MAFWE: March 8 2024

3. Informative session organized by SWG

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NEXT TASKS

Agricultural Policy Forum 4th – 7th June 2024 Jahorina, BiH

Next activities

1. **Design Guides** for organizing and promoting events on groups of **interactive innovation** (**deadline: September 2024**): **2 more Guides**

2. Organize **informative sessions** on groups of **interactive innovation** - promotion of the guides and tools (**deadline: November 2024**): **1 more Sessions**

3. **Input to the Western Balkans AKIS Knowledge Repository** – relevant documents related to legislation, policies, administrative framework, innovation, education, promotion, good practices, etc. (**deadline: November 2023**) - extended

4. **Input to the Western Balkans Knowledge Repository** – **Case Study?** (**deadline: November 2024**)

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Concluding remarks

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AKIS is in line with national and EU policy

- AKIS is very important for increasing the profitability of agriculture and rural areas' sustainability
- **No universal** AKIS model

AKIS should be further promoted and put in the top priorities of the national policies

- **Simple but effective steps** need to be undertaken, centered around farmers as key actors in the system

KEYWORDS:
- Trust
- Exchange / Cooperation

- Activities related to the **increasing awareness** among farmers, and other innovation actors, on the importance of exchanging knowledge and co-innovation within SWG's project
  - Prepared pamphlets
  - Prepared guides
  - Organized dissemination events
  - Created repository

NEXT STEPS ARE REQUIRED

TRAINING of the actors is necessary to get their involvement in these collaborative forms (platforms) effectively.

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ENABLING FUNCTIONAL AND INTEGRATED AKIS SYSTEMS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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