

Deliverable 6.2 Month 30

# WP6 Synthesis Report

with validated best practice, governance recommendations and indicators

WP6: Governance, good practice recommendations and decision-support tools



**PLAID**  
PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING:  
ACCESSING INNOVATION  
THROUGH DEMONSTRATION



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 727388

# PLAID PARTNERS



**PLAID**

## DOCUMENT SUMMARY

---

**Deliverable Title:** WP6 Synthesis Report with validated best practice, governance recommendations and indicators

---

**Version:** 2

---

**Deliverable Lead:** Innovatiesteunpunt (ISP)

---

**Related Work package:** WP6

---

**Author(s):** Marleen Gysen

---

**Reviewer(s):** Lee-Ann Sutherland

---

**Communication level:**

---

**Grant Agreement Number:** 727388

---

**Project name:** PLAID

---

**Start date of Project:** January 2017

---

**Duration:** 30 Months

---

**Project coordinator:** The James Hutton Institute



**PLAID**

# Content

- Introduction ..... 5
- 1 Access..... 6
  - 1.1 Introduction ..... 6
  - 1.2 Geographical differences in access to demonstration ..... 6
  - 1.3 Good practices to increase the access to a demo event..... 10
  - 1.4 Increasing access through virtual demonstration ..... 12
- 2 Indicators of positive impact: good practices for successful demonstrations ..... 14
  - 2.1 Introduction ..... 14
  - 2.2 The objectives of a demonstration ..... 15
  - 2.3 Mediation..... 18
  - 2.4 Monitoring and evaluation..... 20
  - 2.5 Increasing the impact of demonstrations ..... 20
  - 2.6 Good Practice Overview: checkpoints for successful demonstrations..... 22
- 3 Policy recommendations ..... 25
  - 3.1 Introduction ..... 25
  - 3.2 Demonstration as part of dissemination activities in EU innovation support projects ..... 27
  - 3.3 Education and training to enhance demonstration for farmers, facilitators and demo organisers ..... 29
  - 3.4 Supporting Demonstration through Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Funding Schemes ..... 33
  - 3.5 Setting long-term (EU) demonstration networks and exchange programmes..... 37



**PLAID**

## Deliverable 6.2

Deliverable 6.2: "Synthesis report with validated best practice, governance recommendations and indicators"

This deliverable relates to Task 6.1 of Work Package 6 of the PLAID Grant Agreement: "Synthesise PLAID findings on best practices and policy recommendations (Lead: ISP). Best practices are identified in each WP, with reference to the conceptual framework."

## Introduction

As described in the Grant Agreement, the PLAID project has been designed to map and analyse on-farm demonstration with the aim "to increase the innovativeness and sustainability of European agriculture by enabling a wider range of farmers and farm employees to access high quality peer-to-peer learning opportunities on commercial farms".

To achieve this objective, PLAID has undertaken two main efforts to collect data on past and ongoing demonstrations across Europe:

1. by creating a pan-European inventory of on-farm demonstrations (WP3; jointly with the AgriDemo-F2F project)
2. by carrying out 24 in-depth case studies in 12 European partner countries (WP5)

At the beginning of the PLAID project, a Conceptual Framework (CF; WP2) was developed and subsequently used to specify the methodologies for making the pan-European inventory and to carry out the case studies. Starting point was the analysis of demonstrations that was described in the Grant Agreement. A further literature study led to specifying the various approaches and theories that would enable a detailed analysis of the working of demonstrations in the project. The subsequent analysis of the inventory and the 24 case studies necessitated a partial revision and refinement of the CF.

Conclusions of the pan-European inventory as well as good practices from the 24 in-depth case studies were validated and discussed with different stakeholders (farmers, advisors, researchers, policy makers) at three 'supra-regional workshops', three National Consultative Stakeholder Group meetings per partner country, a 'pan-European case study meeting', two 'policy recommendations workshops' and workshops at the Final Conference.

This WP6 Synthesis report describes the main findings of the PLAID work packages and workshops, with regard to best practices and policy recommendations. They are clustered as follows:

1. Access
2. Indicators of positive impact
3. Policy recommendations



PLAID

# 1 Access

## 1.1 Introduction

Providing good access not only concerns lowering barriers to attend a demonstration (geographical, physical, economic, social), but also taking measures to assure that at the demonstration event the visitors have good access to all the demonstration activities, to all the information that is provided and to all the auxiliary facilities.

In this chapter, we give an overview of the findings from the pan-European inventory of on-farm demonstrations and of the best practices from the 24 in-depth case studies, related to access and with reference to the Conceptual Framework.

## 1.2 Geographical differences in access to demonstration

The PLAID project, in collaboration with AgriDemo-F2F, has produced an inventory of on-farm demonstration across Europe. As part of this process, consortium members and sub-contractors identified the trends in on-farm demonstration in the EU 28, Norway, Serbia, and Switzerland.

Findings from across Europe were identified, focusing particularly on distinctions between three 'supra-regions':

- Northern Europe: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK
- Eastern Europe: Croatia, Serbia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
- Southern Europe: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

Findings are based on reports on demonstration farming in each country and three 'supra-regional' workshops, held in Venice (Italy), Krakow (Poland) and Leuven (Belgium) in February and March 2018. The country reports were based on inventory entries<sup>1</sup> and observations by consortium members and sub-contractors during the process of enrolling farmers and organisations involved in demonstration into the inventory database.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that although over 1200 entries were in the inventory at the time of making the country reports, we do not see these as representative of all on-farm demonstration in Europe. However, the inventory and associated reports represent the first substantive dataset on demonstration on European farms and are useful for identifying themes and distinctions between countries and regions.



PLAID

Moreover, the PLAID project has developed a demonstration typology, using a clustering procedure to the database created for the inventory:

- Cluster 1: Professional commercial livestock extension
- Cluster 2: Farmer-led commercial development
- Cluster 3: Environmentally sustainable horticulture/ orcharding
- Cluster 4: Farmer-led community development
- Cluster 5: Research-based innovation extension
- Cluster 6: Externally-funded community development
- Cluster 7: Small informal crop demonstrations

Analysis of these clusters resulted in additional information concerning access to demonstration.

### Demonstration topics

The main topics of demonstrations in all of the countries are related to improving production (i.e. animal husbandry and crop-related issues). There is more focus on technical innovation relating to individual aspects of farming than on whole-farm approaches. Within regions, the most common topics demonstrated typically reflected the dominant farming types in those areas (e.g. arable cropping topics were most frequently demonstrated in areas where arable cropping is most dominant).

Topics with an environmental focus occur through Europe but appear to be more common in Northern Europe than elsewhere.

Demonstrations are more likely to occur on organic than on conventional farms. These demonstrations are also more likely to be based on whole-farm systems (consistent with organic farming ethos). Organic demonstrations tend to differ from the conventional ones: they are often farmer-led, more oriented towards community values and the impact on the whole community; they are also more extension-oriented, with a clear purpose to promote the techniques amongst other farmers.

In general, different types of demonstration organisers have different priority topics. Farmer-led demonstrations tend to focus on production systems, while organisation or company-led demonstrations focus on specific techniques, and input and research-led demonstrations focus more on resilience and sustainability issues. However, all three types of organiser are known to engage across all these topic areas.

### History of on-farm demonstration

The roots of farming demonstration in Europe extend back at least 250 years, to a pioneering farmer and model farmer in Switzerland in 1763. Professional exchange and model farms continued to emerge through the 19th century in the British Isles, France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Latvia, Estonia, and the Czech Republic. These demonstrations were primarily led by large-scale farmers and farming organisations. In Lithuania, Slovakia, Croatia, and Hungary research stations started demonstrations in the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century. Demonstration emerged in Scandinavia in the first half of the 20th century; this was supported primarily through research institutions.



**PLAID**

Modern understanding of farm demonstrations and how they are put into practice has evolved throughout the 20th century. In many cases, demonstrations have developed in parallel with the formal agricultural education system. This is particularly true of post-Socialist countries, where the period of collectivization had a great influence on demonstration activities, which were primarily organised by state-funded research stations.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the emergence of big commercial farms and market entrance of large supply companies for seeds, machinery, fertilisers and pesticides had a significant influence on the demonstration landscape. This effect was realised later for post-Socialist countries (i.e. post 1990), but was particularly significant, often involving cross border activities (i.e. companies from Western Europe organising demonstrations in Eastern Europe in to promote their products).

Portugal, Spain and Slovenia reported their first organized demonstration activities in the late 1970s to beginning of 1980s. These countries therefore have a relatively short history of on-farm demonstration.

For many countries the 1990's became a turning point regarding the implementation of demonstration activities. In Bulgaria, like in many countries of Eastern Europe, the main reason was the structural economic and political change, especially the reorganisation of land holding and the restoration of the private property rights. In Italy, Greece and Slovenia a significant decline of demonstration activities has occurred in recent decades, due mostly to limited public support. By contrast, Austria has seen an increase in demonstration in recent years. In Portugal, meanwhile, technical support for agricultural development became a function of many co-operatives and farmers' associations, with a high degree of fragmentation and dispersion; the exception being the existence of networks or some form of articulation and coordination between them in specific topics.

A common point reported by many countries is that farm demonstration activities gained a new dynamic with the emergence of organic farming (from the 1940s in Western Europe and the 1990s in Eastern Europe).

### Demographics

Gender, age, education and other practical considerations (proximity, prevalence) were explored in terms of access to on-farm demonstration.

#### **Gender**

Clear gender distinctions between on-farm demonstration participants have been found across Europe. In Northern and Southern Europe, events are typically male-dominated, whereas gender representation is more balanced in Eastern Europe.

The topic being demonstrated has been found to influence gender balance, whereby demonstrations on technology and machinery are particularly dominated by men. Women are more likely to represent higher numbers at demonstrations that focus on farm diversification, processing of farm produce or direct marketing. Analysis of the clusters showed that clusters 3 and 4 show relatively high numbers of female attendees. The focus of these



**PLAID**



types on a range of non-economic objectives (environmental capital, social capital, use of a whole farm approach, ...) also reflects a greater focus by women on sustainability.

It is important to note that farming as a profession is male-dominated, therefore greater numbers of men attending demonstrations is to be expected. Greater gender balance is evident in those organising on-farm demonstration, as both men and women are commonly employed as staff in farming and advisory organisations. However, given that the demonstration types most attended by women were largely farmer organised (clusters 2, 3 and 4), this raises a question concerning whether non-farmer organised demonstration is showing a gender bias (either in the way the event is organised or the topics covered).

### **Age**

Farm demonstrations across Europe are most commonly attended by participants over the age of 40. However, it appears from the supra-regional workshop discussions that although farmers attending demonstration events are not, by definition, 'young farmers' (under 40), they tend to be somewhat younger than the average age of farmers across Europe. In Romania, however, more than half of attendees can be defined as young farmers.

### **Education**

Educational background also impacts on demonstration participation: more highly educated farmers are more likely to attend demonstration events.

### **Prevalence and proximity**

There are also differences within and between countries, in terms of the prevalence of on-farm demonstrations. At a national level, this reflects the levels and sources of funding available; advisory service provision; the historical context of demonstration; the number, power and credibility of farming organisations, advisors and researchers; and the logistics of providing demonstration (e.g. reflecting geography).

Regional differences typically reflect the density of farming (i.e. regions with higher numbers of active, commercial farms are more likely to have on-farm demonstration activities). These regions tend to be centrally-located, more highly populated and well serviced by demonstration providers (particularly advisory services, but also private companies, research institutions and NGOs). Demonstrations are less common in areas that are more remote (e.g. Northern Scandinavia), areas that have primarily small-scale farms, or areas that have issues relating to access (e.g. islands).

### Demonstration provision and funding

There are a wide range of demonstration providers currently working in Europe: public, private and charitably funded agricultural advisors, research institutes, higher education institutions, commercial companies, farmer organisations and farmers themselves. It is common for several of these actors to work together to put on a demonstration in Northern Europe, but in Southern Europe demonstrations are more commonly led by a single organisation.



**PLAID**

The primary organisers of demonstrations vary by country. In general, advisory services play an important role in the organisation of demonstrations in Northern and Eastern Europe. In countries without a strong advisory system (including much of Southern Europe), this role is often taken by research institutes.

Demonstration provided by research institutions is incentivized (in part) by the requirement to demonstrate impact to funding providers, such as the European Commission and other providers at the national and regional-levels.

Where available, advisory services are the key initiators that bring together multiple types of actors to put on a demonstration activity. However, there remains considerable fragmentation in demonstration provision, particularly in larger countries (i.e. there are no overarching networks that integrate the demonstrations available). The role of commercial companies (i.e. companies undertaking demonstration with the purpose of selling their products) is increasing.

In all countries farmers play an important role in demonstrations, acting as event hosts. To establish a demonstration activity, organisers must collaborate with the farmer on whose farm the demonstration is being held. Farmer-led demonstration is much more common in some European countries (e.g. Belgium, England (UK), Finland, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, Romania, the Czech Republic) than others.

Funding for demonstrations is mostly linked to demonstration providers, who in turn receive their funding from a variety of sources (e.g. government, farmer levies, supply chain companies, charitable giving to NGOs, private capital). We see striking differences between countries in terms of who is funding demonstration. For example, in Croatia, Hungary and Poland self-funding is most common, whereas public or research funding is much more common in Latvia. Advisory services often play an important organisational role in on-farm demonstrations, but are not commonly involved in terms of providing funding.

Organic farming represents a special case for on-farm demonstration, as organic farmers are more likely to lead demonstration activities than conventional farmers. On-farm demonstrations are also more likely to occur on organic farms, relative to the percentage of organic farms within the agriculture sector overall.

### **1.3 Good practices to increase the access to a demo event**

#### Reaching a balanced variety of visitors (participant profiles)

Results from the PLAID clustering of the pan-European database indicate that two types of demonstration are more likely to include women: 'environmentally sustainable horticulture/orcharding' which focuses on a broad sustainability approach with a focus on environmental improvements, and 'farmer led community development' which focuses on the development of social capital in rural communities (mostly animal husbandry or general demonstrations) and may also attract many non-farming



visitors. The more production-oriented demonstration cluster-types tend to be male focused, some of them strongly.

Good practices to increase the access and to attract a more balanced variety of participants to demonstrations are:

- Organise more demonstrations in areas that are attractive to these groups, like e.g. in organic farming or animal production where the male dominance is less prominent.
- Modify the 'hard' production oriented demonstrations by introducing a more general sustainability focus.
- Target the promotion campaign for the demonstration toward the groups that are underrepresented. In view of the 'succession problem' this might also be used to attract people from outside the farming community who may be considering to become a farmer ('new entrants').
- The presence of the male and female host farmers encourages the participation of both male and female participants.
- Involve multiple organisations sharing the same objective(s) to reach target groups.

#### Enabling good access to all demonstration activities

Choosing a host location has an influence on the accessibility of the demonstration:

- Geographic: location, travel time, good and easy access
- Social: facilities, comfort, security; also, can visiting farmers relate to the host farm?

To reach a wider group of participants, organisers might want to organise the same demonstration at different locations and on different farms within their region. Organising group transport can also increase accessibility of more remote host farms.

The timing of the demonstration is also a key factor to ensure good attendance of the demonstration. Often, choosing the right time will be a trade-off between multiple aspects (e.g. when there is a lot to see on the field, there is often also a lot of work on the farm).

The case studies showed that there are some other organisational issues that are not always well addressed, making it difficult or impossible to follow certain activities. Organisers have to be sure that there are suitable facilities to increase accessibility and make visitors feel welcome:

- Clear audio and visual equipment
- Adequate seating
- Toilet facilities
- Specific measures and provisions for people with limitations; this can open up demonstrations to a group of people that is otherwise excluded

For smaller demonstrations, where all visitors are together in one group, it is usually not a problem to give them an overview of what will happen and to keep them engaged with all activities. For larger demonstrations however, with various activities running in parallel, it is much more of a challenge to give visitors a good overview of what will happen and to help them to find the



**PLAID**

activities that are most interesting to them. A simple tool is to provide a brochure or leaflet with the main parts of the programme and to explain the main features of the programme during an introductory talk at the opening of the demonstration. For very large demonstrations it is also useful to provide a helpdesk or assistance desk. To allow visitors to follow their own path through the demo programme, it is important to carefully plan the timing of the various activities and to entrust a number of people with the responsibility to ensure that this timing is kept for all activities.

#### **1.4 Increasing access through virtual demonstration**

Virtual demonstration can be an alternative or an addition to 'live on-farm demonstration'. Virtual demonstration describes the use of educational video and digital technology to allow viewers to view an innovation without having to attend an on-farm demonstration that constricts the participant to a location and a time that may not be convenient. Many agricultural activities are linked to the time of year, such as tillage or harvesting. A video captures the current moment and the content becomes accessible to a wider audience. It also allows to demonstrate innovations in places (such as pig farms) where visitors cannot go.

Online videos have the advantage to provide continuous access to the information related to the demonstrated topic(s). Viewers can use it as a reference.

Moreover, like most people farmers tend to find online videos on innovations more appealing than written resources that they find on the internet. Many people prefer visual learning as a learning method. Providing an attractive video online after the demo event might also attract other farmers to participate in future demo events.

##### Virtual demonstration guide

Video trainings for farmers and consultants were carried out during the PLAID project. The experiences of these trainings form the basis of the guide "Video production for agriculture. A guide for farmers, advisors and researchers" (Annex to Deliverable 4.3). It provides tips on how to produce informative videos using simple means. This guide follows the three steps of each video production: planning, production (shooting) and editing. The focus is on the specific requirements of videos for agriculture.

The guide is targeted to beginners: farmers, consultants, but also researchers in national and international projects who would like to produce simple instructional videos themselves as part of their dissemination activities. It is very well received by the different stakeholders. The EU projects RELACS and Legumes Translated already use the video guide for supporting their dissemination activities. RELACS seeks to promote the development and adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools and technologies to reduce the use of external inputs in organic farming systems. The overall aim of Legumes Translated is to increase the production and use of grain legume crops as part of a European Protein Transition.



### The PLAID Virtual Farm

Besides online videos and guidelines on virtual demonstration, the PLAID project developed a proof of concept of the 'Virtual Farm'. The PLAID 'Virtual Farm' is a simulated farm environment hosting 360° videos, filmed in real live situations therefore by combining a gaming platform and immersive videos. The platform can be navigated either on a laptop using a mouse or by using a virtual reality headset. To minimise the cost of additional hardware that may not be readily available, especially in remote regions, it was decided to develop the virtual reality access using cardboard headsets, that are available at a minimal cost (they can also be made, instructions are available on-line) and an android phone. The viewer moves about the simulated environment using head movements and accesses the hosted videos with a one click button. Once the videos have been accessed the video runs and the viewer can move their head to get an omnidirectional view of the innovation whilst the video plays, allowing the viewer to rotate fully to investigate the 'real' environment

The Virtual Farm uses the gaming environment, where users are comfortable with the technology, to introduce farming innovations to trigger informal learning. Social interactions enable generations, where the technology is not generally accessed, to be introduced to innovations by younger generations. Families access the innovations on multiple platforms and the innovations can be discussed in a social setting allowing peer-to peer learning. Different generations within a family can access the platforms depending on the technology they are most comfortable with, but the resulting discussions focus on the innovations rather than the method that the information was received resulting in a common discussion point and thereby increasing access to the innovation. This can lead to an increased uptake and adoption of the innovation.



**PLAID**

## 2 Indicators of positive impact: good practices for successful demonstrations

### 2.1 Introduction

A starting point in PLAID is that the success of a demonstration can be assessed from various different angles and in relation to various specific aspects of a demonstration. It is therefore important to specify a 'yardstick' to measure the success. This yardstick is provided by the objectives of a demonstration. These objectives should specify what the demonstration seeks to achieve and the degree of success then indicates to what extent these objectives have actually been achieved.

Demonstrations can help farmers to become aware of particular issues, to become motivated to change their practices and to gain useful knowledge on various options for change and use this to take better informed decisions on where to go with their own farm. The term 'useful knowledge' is key here. Information that a farmer receives (at demonstrations or via other channels) needs to be 'tuned to the needs of the farmer' by placing it in the context of the farmer's own practice. Demonstrations can play a key role in realising this if they seek to make that information 'tangible' for the visiting farmers. This can be done in two ways:

- By using communication techniques that engage multiple senses: seeing, tasting, smelling, touching;
- By interacting with visiting farmers to make a closer connection between the supply side (the information provided and demonstrated) and the demand side (what farmers need for their own practice).

The general objective for demonstrations is thus: "To present, discuss and demonstrate innovations in farming practices, materials and equipment in a way that helps farmers to make better informed decisions about innovation on their farm."

A method is needed to collect data on how a demonstration actually 'works' (monitoring), as well as a method to evaluate the findings from this monitoring vis-à-vis the objectives of the demonstration. We refer to these two activities combined as 'monitoring and evaluation' (M&E).

Another starting point in PLAID is that on-farm demonstrations should not be seen as isolated activities but as taking place in the context of an ongoing innovation process to make agriculture more sustainable. Demonstrations are meant to have a positive impact on that process, but the specific role of demonstrations is difficult to establish because these processes involve a variety of actors and factors. In PLAID we assessed the ways to increase the quality and effectiveness of demonstrations within these innovation processes.



PLAID

## 2.2 The objectives of a demonstration

The objectives of a demonstration should specify what a demonstration seeks to achieve. Subsequently, all the aspects of the demonstration should be prepared and performed such that they will contribute towards achieving these objectives. This includes the identification of the demonstration topics, reaching out to the main target groups, all activities that will be carried out at the demo event, the set-up of monitoring and evaluation, etc.

However, the PLAID case studies showed that in preparing a demonstration most organisers immediately start discussing the topics and the activities at a demonstration, without paying explicit attention to the objectives, to what they want to achieve with the demonstration. To give guidance to the organisation of a demonstration, the objectives need to cover the following aspects:

- Why: the motive(s) for the demonstration
- What: the topic of demonstration
- Who: the targeted visitors of the demonstration
- Goals: what do the organisers want to achieve; what should visitors take home from the demonstration

These four aspects determine how the demonstration can best be set-up to be successful and form the basis for the various organisational aspects of the actual demonstration event, including:

- Access: making the demonstration attractive and accessible for the targeted participants;
- Where: choosing the host farmer and location of the demonstration;
- When: setting the time of year and the duration of the demonstration;
- How: elaborating the programme of the demonstration, i.e. all demonstration activities and how they are to be carried out.

### Why – The motivation for a demonstration

The 'why' aspect specifies the motivation or need for the demonstration. The following two general reasons can lead to holding a demonstration, which is often inspired by a combination of these two:

- A problem or a challenge in agriculture, either 'internal' to farming (farming sustainability needs, e.g. plant health, labour) or societal/political (societal sustainability needs);
- A new opportunity (e.g. emerging from research, from business, from pioneer-farmers).

A demonstration has the largest impact when a new opportunity provides a solution to a problem or a challenge that is encountered by the visiting farmers. In assessing the success of a demonstration it is therefore important to look at the role that both these motivations play.



**PLAID**

### What – The topics of a demonstration

The 'what' aspect specifies the topic that is demonstrated, e.g. farming equipment, farming practice, crop varieties, etc. The PLAID case studies illustrate that there can be an enormous variety in the innovations that are demonstrated. Two important aspects are:

- The range of innovations that are demonstrated (e.g. a narrow focus on machines for undersowing catch crops in maize versus a broad range of demonstrated topics at an organic cattle day;
- The 'readiness' of various innovations (how easy is it to buy and/or apply).

Organisers can be guided by two different models to demonstrate these innovations:

- The open market model: the organisers do not target specific farmer groups with what they will demonstrate. A diverse range of things is displayed, and a variety of visitors look around to see whether there is something in it for them;
- The targeted visitor and topic model: the organisers target a specific farmer group with a limited number of specific innovations that are demonstrated.

Smaller demonstrations tend to be more targeted and often follow the second model while broad demonstrations with many topics often follow the open market model. In the latter case, however, some parts of the demonstration may also be more targeted.

The 'readiness' of the innovation(s) is important in defining who the targeted visitors should be. For innovations with a high degree of readiness, the target group can be the 'average' farmer. However, if an innovation has a low degree of readiness, only 'innovative' farmers are likely to consider using it. Yet, in such a case the demonstration could also target the average farmer to raise awareness on the innovation which may make them prepared to apply it in the longer term.

To be able to assess the success of a demonstration it is important that the objectives indicate the readiness of the various aspects that they will demonstrate and distinguish between various user groups that they seek to address with these.

### Who – The visitors of a demonstration

Based on the 'why' and 'what' aspects discussed above, the next key aspect of the objectives are the targeted visitors. This can be a specific subset of the farming community and/or other actors from the agro-food chain.

One distinction may be related to the sectoral profile of what is demonstrated, for instance:

- Farmers in a specific subsector (e.g. dairy farmers, potato growers, fruit growers)
- Organic and/or integrated farmers



**PLAID**



Another distinction is related to the general type of attitude of farmers towards innovation, which connects to the 'readiness level' of what is demonstrated as discussed above:

- 'Reluctant adopter' farmer (when the topic of the demo has a high level of 'readiness');
- Innovative farmers (for topics with a low level of 'readiness');

Other audiences may include:

- Farming advisors (they are important as potential 'multipliers' of the demonstration outputs);
- Farming press (can also act as 'multipliers');
- Stakeholders from the agro-food value chain;
- Policy makers (to make them aware of potential policy barriers or stimuli);
- General public (to improve connections between farmers and the rest of society).

The objectives need to indicate which specific groups are targeted as that will determine which information channels should be used to reach these audiences. One indicator of success of the demonstration will then be how many of these audiences actually visit the demo.

#### Goals – What should visitors take home

The project made a distinction between short-term and longer-term goals:

- The short-term goals refer to what the visitors of a demonstration take home (= demonstration 'output').
- Longer-term goals can refer to what happens after the demonstration, to what the visitors do with what they have learned (= demonstration 'impact').

At a demonstration, visitors can gain various types of knowledge. In PLAID, four types were distinguished: know-why (awareness, motivation); know-what (the demonstration topic); know-how (applying the demo topic); and know who (the demonstrators and farmer-colleagues met at the demonstration).

Concerning short-term goals, what different farmers take home will depend upon the type of farmer and the demonstrated object. For instance, for a 'reluctant adopter' farmer, a 'very advanced' innovation will only lead to increased awareness while an innovative farmer may be motivated to actually apply it back home.

Organisers of a demonstration may also set longer-term goals on stimulating what demonstration visitors do with their new knowledge after the demonstration and thus seek to increase the impact of the demonstration. Such longer-term goals may include:

- Empower farmers in terms of motivation, knowledge and/or skills by providing them with further information after the demonstration;
- Motivate farmers to inform themselves further on specific aspects;



**PLAID**

- Motivate farmers to further consider changes by offering platforms for exchange, e.g. via social media or face-to-face meetings;
- Motivate farmers to change specific farming practices;
- Empower farming advisors (in terms of motivation and knowledge) so that they can 'multiply' the demonstration output and raise its impact;
- Stimulate all of the above by informing the farming press on a variety of 'inspiring' new developments.

The above shows that the four aspects of the demonstration are closely linked and partially define each other. The topic, for instance, defines who the targeted audience should be. Thus, the four aspects of a demonstration need to be closely tuned. But once they are clearly set, they provide a coherent description of what the organisers seek to achieve which allows using them after the demonstration to assess which aspects were more and which were less successful.

The demonstration objectives provide the main guidance for setting up a successful demonstration. They form the basis for the various organisational aspects of the actual demonstration event, including:

- Access: making the demonstration attractive and accessible for various visitor groups;
- Where: choosing the host farmer and location of the demonstration;
- When: setting the time of year and the duration of the demonstration;
- How: elaborating the programme of the demonstration, i.e. all demonstration activities and how they are to be carried out.

### 2.3 Mediation

How information is provided to the visitors is at least as important as the actual information. This 'mediation' has a great influence on how well the visitors process the information provided, and how this helps them to assess to what extent it may be useful for them.

Farmers need to make new knowledge 'their own', relate it to their own situation and their own farm. This requires not only 'showing and demonstrating objective information' but also facilitating observation, listening and interaction. Exchanges between hosting and visiting farmers, between visiting farmers, between farmers and advisers or scientists and also between the different demonstrators are essential for knowledge exchange and for the effectiveness of demonstration activities.

Some of the key lessons from the project are:

- Tune what is presented to what visiting farmers need: avoid long talks, make things practical and avoid scientific jargon;
- It is important who tells what: visitors will be influenced by how credible a speaker is and speakers need to make an effort to connect with the audience.



**PLAID**

- Actively engage visiting farmers: pose questions, ask for opinions (e.g. via hand raising), let them actually do handle equipment, or physically engage with the demonstration, etc.
- Adjust group size to mediation technique: e.g. actively engaging larger groups is more difficult.
- Ensure good acoustics: especially with larger groups, background noise in the field (e.g. wind) can lead to poor audibility.
- Stimulate interaction by asking each demonstrator to propose discussions based on their presentation and/or provide facilitators to do this.
- Use different presentation and interactive tools on different places and times of your demo event: indoors and outdoors; with different type of demonstrators or facilitators; practical and theoretical; with visual supports or material; with the possibility to touch and do hands on activities; allow and facilitate peer to peer discussion.
- Train the demonstrators about facilitation methods they will have to use
- Make clear what the key message is and limit the number of key messages as people can only process a limited amount of new information. Repeat the key messages to make the new knowledge 'stick'.
- Give visitors materials to take home to encourage them to give another look afterwards to the key messages.
- Show and discuss also failures where the practice was difficult to implement, the material didn't work properly ... which serve as important objects for mutual learning and for delimiting the area of relevance of the proposed novelty.
- Networking and informal exchange between visitors and with demonstrators is important to stimulate reflection and to make messages stick. 'Benchmarking' ideas with peers increases visitors self-confidence and allow them to discuss the potentials barriers towards a novelty. Provide 'open space' in the programme and breaks with provision of food and drinks to facilitate such networking and self-reflection.
- Give place to other kind of exchanges: Visiting farmers at demonstrations also learn a lot from other types of presenters (e.g. researchers, commercial actors), which we call farmer to expert exchange. Good moderation is essential to facilitate this kind of exchange. Hence, a farmer may learn more from a well-moderated expert presentation than from a poorly moderated farmer presentation.
- Exchanges between farmers and commercial companies can also be rich and useful if the demo event is co-organised between neutral actors and different sale companies and if there is a good agreement on the main messages between all the organisers. Commercial companies should not solely co-organise or attend the demonstration to make a sales pitch, but also contribute in terms of knowledge and information exchange. Involving more than one company and involving 'neutral' parties like non-commercial advisory services or researchers can contribute to the credibility of the demonstration event and thus the wider use of the



**PLAID**

demonstrated novelties. Having an experienced neutral facilitator in such a case of diverging interests can also be a good way to increase the credibility for the audience of what is presented.

- Being able to do business at the demonstration is also a way to make the messages stick. This can take the form of directly buying or ordering products or establishing new relations with businesses to follow-up later.
- Hands-on activities give participants a real-life experience. The objective is to allow them to touch, test, practice and comment novelties which are demonstrated, or their potential effects.

## 2.4 Monitoring and evaluation

To assess the success of a demonstration (was the demonstration tuned to the need of the visiting farmers?), it is key to evaluate how it actually worked out. It is important to link the evaluation to the objective of the demonstration.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is also important to add reflexivity to the process of organising a demonstration and clearly helps the organisers to learn in a more structured way on how to best do this. It is therefore not only a way to measure success of a demonstration but it can also be used as a means of improving its success.

The PLAID case studies showed that organisers typically do evaluate a past demonstration, but they tend to do that somewhat intuitively, based on their own impressions of what happened.

Project recommendations are:

- Use only a few and relevant questions.
- Collecting feedback is more likely to be successful on the day itself, than afterwards through email.
- Organisers may attempt to 'professionalise' M&E by engaging a research institution or an agricultural college

## 2.5 Increasing the impact of demonstrations

### Stimulating demonstration output

It may take quite some time before the impact of a demonstration becomes visible and this impact is also affected by many other things than the demonstration.

However, the PLAID case studies showed that demonstrators can do various things to stimulate that what a visiting farmer takes home from a demonstration aligns better with the wider context of making European agriculture more sustainable, to make the lessons a farmer has learned 'stick' and motivate her/him to continue a further exploration after a demo.



**PLAID**

The PLAID case studies showed that demonstrators can do several things to make the lessons a farmer has learned 'stick' and motivate her/him to continue a further exploration after a demo, including:

- Provide written materials on what is demonstrated that farmers can take home (leaflets, brochures). This may include presentations, descriptions, weblinks for further information, contacts for further assistance (e.g. advisors)
- Create space at the demonstration for networking and follow-on contacts with advisors, businesses, farmer colleagues, etc.
- Provide opportunity for visitors (and non-visitors) to ask for further information after the demonstration and offer a (web-based) discussion platform
- Liaise with farming advisors to provide adequate support after the demonstration
- Invite and adequately inform the farming press

#### Stimulating further learning and networking

An interesting finding in almost all of the PLAID case studies was that many visitors indicated that the possibility for networking was a key driver for them to attend demonstrations. It is evident that interaction with colleagues and others is of large interest to them during the demonstration but this may even be of larger importance to what happens after the demonstration, i.e. to raise the impact of a demonstration. Farmers do not change their behaviour easily by implementing an innovation and often interact with various others before making a decision to do so.

#### **Follow-up activities**

Demonstration organisers can stimulate this type of after-demonstration interaction by organising or contributing to follow-up activities. Follow-up activities could be formal, such as organised follow-up demo events or hearing the opinions and experiences from other farmers in a discussion group or meeting. Informal follow-up can include farmer-to-farmer communication whereby farmers are able to see what their friends, neighbours or 'innovative farmers' are doing on their farm including changes they have made that are based on what they learned at a demonstration

#### **Enrolling advisors**

Another way of stimulating further learning is to enroll advisors. Advisors can play an important role as 'multipliers' of a demonstration, i.e. to help spread the key messages from a demonstration to a wider group of farmers. Depending on the farmer they are talking to, they can act as an awareness raiser, motivator, or information provider. They can also act as a 'network broker' by building links between farmers who applied the innovation and the ones who are interested, thus facilitating or fostering the peer-to-peer process.

This special role of advisors makes it useful to give them special attention at the demonstration (e.g. a brief session especially for advisors). Next to that, they can also be given a specific role in the after-demonstration activities since they have a broad overview of how various types of farmers respond to the innovations. They can be asked to bring this in in various ways,



**PLAID**

e.g. on the demonstrator’s website, via social media, at face-to-face meetings, etc.

Furthermore, demonstrators can stimulate the advisor-farmer interaction to already commence at the demonstration, e.g. by organising an ‘advisor fair’ during which farmers can ask questions to advisors which may be followed-up by further exchange later. This would also form an interesting networking opportunity for advisors as a way to come into contact with farmers that they would not meet otherwise.

## 2.6 Good Practice Overview: checkpoints for successful demonstrations

The table below provides an overview of specific checkpoints for demonstration aspects that should be addressed in the organisation of a demonstration.

<b>Preparing a demonstration</b>	
The organising team	Invite multiple organisations sharing your objective(s) to reach target group(s); Involve the host farmer family early-on in the organisation; A facilitator can assist to handle discussions in the team and act as a neutral third party.
Setting demonstration objectives	Ensure that the four separate aspects below are 'in tune' with each other.
Objective aspect 1: 'why'	Specify the motivation for the demo, addressing (1) challenges that visiting farmers face and (2) emergence of new farming opportunities (materials, technologies, practices); Take regional agricultural developments and challenges into account to attract farmers and to increase your impact.
Objective aspect 2: 'what'	Specify the demonstrated topics, distinguishing materials, technologies, and practices.
Objective aspect 3: 'who'	Specify targeted audience, distinguishing relevant types of farmers and other types of visitors.
Objective aspect 4: Goals	Specify what different visitor groups should take home from the demonstration; Specify the key messages.
The hosting farm	Choose the host such that the demo setting is representative of the farming situation of the most important target group. The presence of male and female host farmers encourages the participation of both male and female participants; Collaboration between commercial companies and farms could be beneficial: it allows participants to see the newest innovations on a real working farm; To reach a wider group of participants, the same



**PLAID**

	demo can be held at different locations in a region/country and on different types of farms.
Timing of the demonstration	Ensure a good balance between availability of farmers and 'demonstration effectiveness'; Choose a fixed date for recurrent demonstrations; Take other events into account that could attract your targeted audience.
The overall demonstration programme	At the opening, make clear to visitors that there is a coherent set of activities, seeking to address their needs; A welcome by the host farmer family is very much appreciated; In a closing session, come back to the 'key take-home messages'; Provide a tour around the farm.
Demonstration activities	Tune the planned activities to the objectives of the demo; Split up large groups in smaller groups to increase active participation and discussion; Offer a wide range of experiences and look for ways to surprise participants.
Other organisational issues	Stimulate informal exchange (also by offering coffee, drinks, food); Create a stimulating and familiar setting; Use microphones, visual materials that each participant can see, put chairs in a circle, organise a market, provide funny icebreakers, ... be creative and original; Provide good audio-visual equipment; Have a 'plan B' for bad weather.
Announcement and registration	Assess needs of targeted audience(s) (via participating organisers) and address them in the invitation; Register participants before the event: this helps to learn what your audience needs and allows sending interesting materials before the event; Introduce all organisers in the invitation; Make the invitation clear and appealing. Do not overwork it, do not use different fonts; Provide a welcoming friendly photo of the hosting farm(er); Send personal invitations; Make special efforts for hard-to-mobilize farmers.
Monitoring & Evaluation	Set up M&E scheme; If possible, involve agricultural college or researchers.
Raising demo impact – planning follow-up	Provide hand-outs to take home; Make plans to continue interaction with visitors after the demo.



**PLAID**

<b>Carrying out a demonstration</b>	
Types of mediation	Tune forms of mediation to type of demo activities and the audience.
Address variety in demo visitors	Offer range of activities, tuned to needs of different audiences. Give special attention to advisors and the farming press that can act as 'multipliers' of the demo messages.
Stimulating learning	Create small groups; Focus on key messages and repeat them; Provide 'open space' in the programme to stimulate interaction between visitors
Connecting with the audience	Make speakers introduce themselves; Use plain language; Refer to visiting farmers' challenges.
Active engagement	Offer 'hands-on' activities; Stimulate visitors to relate the demo to their own farm situation.
Take home messages	Identify key 'take-home lessons'; Provide brochures, flyers; Offer photos / videos Think about how to distribute materials during the demo event. If they are distributed during presentations, it might distract participants. Some of this information can also be sent in advance to the participants or after the demonstration.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Carry out visitor exit survey at minimum; Stress the importance of this and invite visitors to take part at the opening of the demonstration; Evaluate demo <i>vis-a-vis</i> the objectives.
<b>Raising the impact of demonstrations</b>	
Providing after-demo information	Repeat key messages; Provide links to further info and contacts; Provide on-demand further info / assistance.
Stimulating further learning and networking	Use various information channels (including social media); Connect people with comparable interests (based on visitor exit surveys); Make follow-up activities accessible for those who did not participate in the demo event; Send updates on new developments.
Stimulate after demo Peer-to-Peer interaction	Create P2P groups (virtual or face-to-face); Select topics for such groups from visitor exit surveys.
Advisors	Work with them before, during and after the demonstration; Organise a brief exchange with visiting advisors at the demonstration.



**PLAID**



## 3 Policy recommendations<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1 Introduction

#### Role of on-farm demonstrations

PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F cooperate with NEFERTITI to form the FarmDemo network. All 3 projects have the joint aim to enhance peer-to-peer learning and focus on on-farm demonstration as a tool to boost innovation. On-farm demonstration events focus on showing and understanding innovations within a commercial working farm context or a local setting. FarmDemo creates resources about demonstration activities from the early stages of conception right through to impact assessment, leading to the identification of best practices, innovative approaches and overall recommendations to foster demonstration activities.

In general, the findings of these projects confirm that:

- On-farm demonstration is an effective way to innovate / to foster innovation / to disseminate research results and best farming practices or systems to a wider audience
- Effective demonstrations foster knowledge exchange among farmers and between students/farmers/advisors/researchers
- Effective demonstrations are a way for scientists students, teachers, farmers and advisors to build and share innovation and knowledge
- Demonstration events are a very effective education tool, particularly if they have an active role to play in the demo
- On-farm demonstrations have evolved from being a more one-directional way to introduce farmers to innovation, to 'meeting places' where experiences are shared in a farmer-to-farmer setting, and to support knowledge co-creation between farmers and other actors.

#### Objective of this chapter

PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F have cooperated to formulate a set of key messages, primarily intended to support R&I policy-makers and funders in the European Commission, in National Ministries and Regional authorities to increase the impact of their programmes with these advantages. However, these recommendations are also intended to provide value to the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) including educational bodies and the demonstration organisers themselves.

---

<sup>2</sup> Authors of this joint PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F deliverable are:  
Anne-Charlotte Dockes, Marleen Gysen, Boelie Elzen (PLAID)  
Peter Parea, Lies Debruyne (AgriDemo-F2F)



**PLAID**

The key messages have been developed into four policy briefs:

- Demonstration as part of the dissemination activities in the innovation support projects in EU
- Education and training to enhance demonstration for farmers, facilitators and demo organisers
- Supporting Demonstration in Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)
- Setting long term (EU) demonstration networks and exchange programmes

These recommendations have been designed and improved in interaction with experts and stakeholders, and inspired by data collected throughout the project. This was a multi-step process, which was initiated at the start of both projects, with the development of a visionary framework. Data was collected through the Pan-European inventory of demonstration farms, developed by PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F. As part of this process, consortium members and sub-contractors identified the trends in on-farm demonstrations in the EU 28, Norway, Serbia, and Switzerland. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of a set of 56 case studies was conducted of demonstration activities on commercial farms in 18 European partner countries to assess the processes involved in achieving efficient and effective on-farm demonstration activities.

Based on this data, a set of best practice guidelines were developed for organising, doing and evaluating on-farm demonstrations. Data was discussed and validated during three supranational workshops<sup>3</sup> and during two recommendations workshops<sup>4</sup>. In addition to these international workshops, data was also presented and discussed during several national stakeholder consultancy group meetings. As a final step, policy recommendations were presented and validated in two workshops, one during and one after the FarmDemo conference (Brussels, 21-22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019).

The entire process resulted in four specific key recommendations, as listed above and further described in this chapter. Each description contains the main challenges, lessons learnt from PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F and the recommendation itself.

---

<sup>3</sup> Southern Supra-regional workshop in Venice (Italy), February 2018; Eastern Supra-regional meeting in Krakow (Poland), March 2018; Northern Supra-regional meeting in Leuven (Belgium), March 2018

<sup>4</sup> Alberese (Italy), 25-26th February 2019; Den Bosch (The Netherlands), 2nd April 2019



**PLAID**

### 3.2 Demonstration as part of dissemination activities in EU innovation support projects

#### What is the challenge?

Despite the general consensus about the fact that demo events are useful instruments to stimulate innovations, to disseminate and to validate research results in practice and to bridge the gap between science and practice, demonstration activities are rarely included in project calls, and as a result, are seldom part of project proposals and projects.

#### What did we learn from PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F?

Analysis of the inventory data, country reports, case studies and workshop recommendations yield the following key messages with regard to integrating on-farm demonstrations as part of dissemination activities in EU innovation support projects:

- Demonstration is not a 'one way knowledge transfer', it also give scientists a chance to listen and learn from farmers' practices and expectations which can help to improve research findings. On-farm demonstrations bring a range of stakeholders together in the context of collaborative relationships and opportunities for interaction and exchange on a range of topics
- Demonstrations work well on research farms but a demo activity might have more impact when the host farm operates under the same 'real life' conditions as average farms. Farmers want to identify with the host farm. Demonstrations on commercial farms increase the credibility of research findings.
- Demonstrations and cross-visits are a good way to engage farmers and practitioners in EU research and innovation projects. Increased farmer involvement in leading demonstration activities could be achieved by making funding directly available to them
- There is a clear demand for more organised on-farm demonstration, especially where agriculture is regionally based (e.g. Italy and France), where farmer networks are generally weak (much of Eastern Europe) and at the EU scale. Agricultural advisors are often the key stakeholders that bring together multiple actors to organise and host a demonstration event.
- Organisers of on-farm demonstration (e.g. public, private and charitably-funded advisors, farmers, researchers) would benefit from opportunities to network across regions and countries in Europe. Projects at a European level can act as a platform to host such exchanges.
- Thematic networks and Interreg projects are good examples of successful projects including demonstration activities.

#### Recommendation

In each application form of EU research and innovation projects there is a section about the dissemination of the project outcomes. Many project programmes also emphasize the need to involve end users in project results and innovations.



**PLAID**

For example, the H2020 manual states that:

*"Dissemination means sharing research results with potential users - peers in the research field, industry, other commercial players and policymakers. By sharing your research results with the rest of the scientific community, you are contributing to the progress of science in general."*

*"Involve potential end-users and stakeholders in your proposal. If they're committed from early on, they may help guide your work towards applications. End-users could come from the regional, national and international networks of the partners in your consortium, or from the value chains they operate in. They could be involved as partners in the project, or, throughout its duration, as members of an advisory board or user group tasked with testing the results and providing feedback."*

Demonstration should be put forward in programme manuals as a valid option to effectively disseminate research results and actively involve stakeholders.

**We propose that on-farm demonstration should be a relevant part of the dissemination activities of EIP Agri research projects, Thematic Networks, Operational Groups and other European innovation project programmes such as Interreg. This way, we encourage researchers to work together with end-users and other stakeholders in the agri-food chain (farmers, advisors ...) and to build demonstration activities together in order to improve, to validate and to disseminate their research findings.**

Furthermore, we suggest that a specific focus is included on the follow-up and evaluation (see also Recommendation 3), to improve i) the impact of the actual demonstration (through follow-up), and ii) future demonstration events (through monitoring and evaluation). However, this focus on follow-up and evaluation should not lead to administrative overload for the demonstration organisers. Monitoring and evaluation should be done as much as possible in an interactive format. Follow-up activities to stimulate further learning and networking could include e.g. providing online videos and reports of the demo event or creating an online platform, social media groups, blogs or physical networks in which researchers and practitioners can report their experiences with interested farmers. Projects could also be encouraged to find innovative ways to reward the best practices of demonstration and knowledge exchange.



**PLAID**

### 3.3 Education and training to enhance demonstration for farmers, facilitators and demo organisers

#### What is the Challenge?

Demonstration events, or in short 'demo events', focus on visually showing and understanding innovations within a working farm context or a local setting. There are many different types of demo events, but they all have in common that they provide authentic showcases that facilitate knowledge exchange: farmer-to-farmer and with innovation actors (advisers, researchers, input providers...). However, to be effective, demo events must be well targeted, prepared, carried out, evaluated and improved. They are a complex activity that require high and diverse specific soft and hard skills.

The demo events we observed and analysed in PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F projects often showed some place for improvement, in their organisation, in the demonstration methods, or in the organisers' skills, hence the need for training. Training courses can also give demo organisers the opportunity to exchange ideas and practices.

#### What did we learn from PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F?

From the 56 case studies, we learnt how to target, prepare, carry out and evaluate effective demonstration activities (more information on <https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/demo-design-guide/>). An effective demo event requires high and diverse specific soft and hard skills of the various demo actors.

#### **Host Farmers**

The host farmer contributes to the success of a demo event, specifically when his or her role goes beyond that of merely providing the demo site. A host farmer can be involved in different degrees in the preparation and the demo event. The host farmer can be involved in a wide range of activities such as providing and/or preparing the demo site and infrastructure; providing or organising catering; contributing to the overall management of the demo; (Co-) deciding on the demo topics; providing content for the demo topic; providing the introduction and word of welcome of the demo event; performing the demonstration; providing answers; guiding a farm walk ... The role of the host farmer is essential to establish a trust between the participants and host.

Useful skills:

- Organisation and logistics
- Management
- Technical skills (not addressed by this brief)
- Speaking in public
- Active listening
- Facilitation



**PLAID**

### **Demo Organisers / Logistics manager**

The role of demo organiser is to supervise the overall organisation of the demo activity, which is targeting, preparing, carrying out and evaluating the event, but also managing the demonstration team.

Logistics manager refers to the person who has close contact with the hosting farm in the run-up of the event taking care of administration and organisational issues, taking care of a good follow-up of the programme and who keeps track of time during the event, and is the contact for troubleshooting.

Useful skills:

- Organisation and logistics
- Project Management
- Planning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Risk management

### **Demonstrators or speakers**

The demonstrators or main speakers are the people who provide information and content to the demo event. They can give presentations, demonstrate machinery or practices, demonstrate the results of field experiments, but can also be involved in the preparation of infographics, information panels, and booklets.

The quality of the demonstrators can have a big impact on the perceived effectiveness of the demo event by the participants. In general, participants refer to a demonstrator as someone being: expert in his/her field, aware of the local context, good speaker able to communicate and transfer knowledge, known and trusted.

It is most effective if at least one of the demonstrators is a farmer who can go into specifics of using the demonstrated innovation in practice, also addressing possible downsides or skills that are required to apply the innovation. Visiting farmers see such a farmer as one of their peers, and are more inclined to accept what he/she has to say because this is more related to the situation at their farm.

Useful skills:

- Communication
- Active listening
- Educational tools
- Practical expert (not addressed by this brief)

### **Demo Facilitators**

Besides the demonstrator, the presence of someone performing the role of a neutral facilitator is crucial. His/her role is to facilitate the group processes, to promote the discussions, to articulate questions and comments from visitors, to reword and summarize the main issues and to keep the focus on the topic of the demo event.

Facilitators can be specialist facilitators, researchers, farmers or advisors, but they should foster active listening, learning, and questioning by providing (non-confrontational) feedback, raising



**PLAID**

questions, stimulating people to talk, as well as translating and structuring information.

Useful skills:

- Active listening
- Facilitation
- Feedback
- Learning methods
- Educational tools

#### Recommendation

**Training programmes to enhance demonstration should be supported and implemented in each of the EU countries and regions, targeting host farmers, demo organisers, demonstrators, and facilitators. Specific training should be organised at national level to train the trainers. Training of demonstration organisers and demonstrators is crucial to develop and improve the aforementioned skills, and to raise awareness on good practices for on-farm demonstrations.**

We propose training at three levels:

- Specific training courses for demo trainers (train-the-trainer) in each EU country, followed by training for demo actors in each region
- Integration of demo activities in agricultural vocational education in each country followed by modules that enhance young farmers to take responsibility in demonstrations
- Organization of regular cross visits at national and EU level

A training programme about demonstration activities could be carried out by each country's agricultural training and education bodies, with an involvement of scientists, facilitators and demonstration practitioners. Actors of FarmDemo Projects could be involved in the setting-up and the implementation of these training programmes. The funding of this programme should cover at least training of trainers and the initial development of the training programme. Some regions or countries could choose to fund all the training courses in order to support the development of demonstration activities and skills in areas where they are still less common. We see this set-up of a training programme as largely national and regional. Consequently policy stimulation is needed at these scales. EU level funding should be focused on the facilitation of trans-national learning (3.3.3; see also Recommendation 4).

#### **Specific training courses for demo trainers and for demo actors**

Specific training courses should be supported by training funds in each of the EU countries (relevant level for training the trainers) and regions (for the demo actors). These funds could support the direct training cost, the time spent for training, and the costs of cross visits to facilitate learning between demonstrators. This is particularly important for farmers' training.



**PLAID**

Possible target groups of training:

- Demo Trainers (experienced and skilled demonstration organisers, interested in sharing their knowledge, and with training abilities)
- Hosting farmers,
- Demo organisers and logistics managers,
- Demo facilitators,
- Demonstrators or speakers.

Possible objectives of training:

- To professionalise the organisation of demonstrations
- To support the development of demonstration skills.
- To communicate demonstration best practices and tools developed by the FarmDemo team

Possible content of the training of Demo Actors:

- Presentation and test of 'best-fit' demonstration practices
- Showing videos of demo events and of the different demo steps and roles
- Visits to demo event with a role of monitoring and evaluation and organized feedbacks
- Practical work to prepare, implement or evaluate demo-events

Possible content of the training of trainers:

- Pedagogical tools and approaches for training demonstration actors
- Participatory elaboration and test of training courses for demonstration actors

### **Integration of demo activities in vocational education**

Demonstration activities should be part of the agricultural vocational education at different educational levels. This can include:

- Participation of students to demo visits with preparation before the event, a role of monitoring during the demo day and a feed-back organized after the event, about what was observed and learnt on the topic of the demonstration
- Invite demo organiser into the classroom to discuss the set-up of a planned demo with the students
- Organisation of demonstration event on educational farms targeted to farmers and advisers of the area as well as to students and involving students into preparation, carrying out and evaluation of the events
- Implementation of specific courses about demo activities and learning methods in order to develop the specific skills needed for demo activities and to do the best practices known to the future hosts, demonstrators, and facilitators.



**PLAID**



## **Organization of regular cross visits at national and EU level**

These cross visits should specifically have the aim to exchange about experiences with organising on-farm demonstration events, and associated skills. We suggest to organise them around an effective demo event in the hosting country:

Possible target groups of training:

- Demonstrators' trainers
- Demonstrators
- Demo organisers and facilitators
- Host farmers

Possible objectives of training:

- To support the development of demonstration skills.
- To communicate the demonstration best practices and tools developed by the FarmDemo team
- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on demonstration activities at national and EU levels and share best practices

Possible content of the training:

- Presentation of 'best-fit' demonstration practices
- Showing videos of demo events and the different demo steps and roles
- Visits to demo event. Visitors focus on evaluation and provide feedback/exchange with local demonstrators afterwards
- Practical work to prepare, implement or evaluate training about demo-events

### **3.4 Supporting Demonstration through Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Funding Schemes**

What is the challenge?

Despite a widespread recognition amongst stakeholders that demonstrations are an effective way to exchange knowledge and facilitate change and innovation, we observed several barriers, existing at various levels: in the organization, facilitation, hosting and attendance/access of on-farm demonstrations. Specifically farmers and (agricultural) students were mentioned as having most problems to overcome these barriers. (risks, money to attend). More specifically, a weak aspect of demo activities is the lack of compensation for using farm assets and farmers' time for demo activities. Farmers involved in demo activities are often engaged through personal involvement, however this can lead to a situation where the long term sustainability of demo activities relies heavily of personal approaches of some individuals. Provision of public funds for farmers operating as demo farms is seen as a precondition of any effective and systematic inclusion of demo farms in any national AKIS plan

Furthermore, calls for projects, guidelines for proposals, reviewing criteria and project management requirements often do not pay specific attention to the instrument of on-farm demonstrations to enhance impact (see also Recommendation 1).



**PLAID**

Possibilities in RDP to create easy-to-access funding possibilities for demonstrations are often not used.

Finally, There is a specific lack for follow up and evaluation activities after on-farm demonstration events, and demonstration organisers have very little incentives to do so. This lack hampers opportunities for continuous learning from past experiences.

#### What did we learn from PLAID & AgriDemo-F2F?

Based on the case study analysis, and further discussions with stakeholders, it is clear that the RDP programme offers opportunities for accessing incentives and targeted funding for on-farm demonstrations. At the same time, there is a wide diversity in AKIS structure and composition across EU countries, resulting in very different ways of organising/supporting on-farm demonstrations across Europe. So, as a result, RDP measures are translated into national legislation and AKIS funding schemes in very different ways across Europe. The advantage of these national and regional structures in RDP is that they consider the existing local barriers (which are again diverse across EU countries), and adapt locally to help overcome them. There are lessons to be learnt, inspiration to be found in the way this is organised in other countries.

Evidence from the AgriDemo-F2F and PLAID case studies clearly indicate that:

- Funders of innovation support, advisory services or education have a lot of influence, and can couple funding to specific requirements or requests. As such they can specifically require:
  - to organize and carry out on-farm demonstration activities,
  - that agents/advisers/demonstrators are trained for demonstration activities
  - to support access for farmers to on-farm demonstration activities
  - for education bodies: to organize participation and to assign a specific role to the students during on-farm demonstration activities. E.g. students could play a role in evaluation and stay at the end of the demo day with the organisers to share their evaluation.
- Increased farmer involvement in hosting/leading demo activities contributes to effectiveness. This could be achieved by making funding directly available to farmers for this purpose, and could cover:
  - for the time they dedicate in organising and hosting demo events
  - for the investments made, necessary to facilitate demonstration activities: on farm trials, meeting rooms, accommodation and catering facilities
  - for following trainings on competences needed in demonstrations
  - for associated risks (e.g. hygiene and biosecurity equipment, or damages on and around the farm (equipment, yield reductions, ...)).



PLAID

- Funding should be conditioned to the implementation of the basic ingredients for good practices for on-farm demonstration events: there should be a focus on facilitating access, creating a learning environment (mediation methods...), and increasing impact through evaluation and follow-up activities. The latter are crucial to improve the quality and enhance reflection and learning on past demonstration activities. Evaluation should not lead to an overload of paperwork, but should be aimed at enhancing interaction between practitioners. Support can be more effective on the long term, when networks between stakeholders are created and supported (see Recommendation 4).

#### Recommendation

**Existing programmes and funding schemes (at EU, national and regional level) have the potential to create more opportunities for on-farm demonstrations, but to achieve this potential, there needs to be a more specific and explicit focus on on-farm demonstrations in the various project calls, guidelines, criteria and requirements. These funding systems should create favourable conditions for demonstration activities, keep the basic ingredients for good practices for on-farm demonstration in mind, consider farmer involvement, and with a clever design of the regulations in order to minimise administrative burden. The focus of support should be on rewarding and raising enthusiasm rather than control (through KPI's and tendering) and additional paperwork. Attention should be given to coordination of demos within and across programmes to avoid fragmentation and duplication, and to facilitate integration into advisory landscapes/AKIS to reinforce messages.**

Not all recommendations can be brought in action at the same time, so we suggested a phased approach, offering specific recommendations for different phases of building up support structures. We focus on the process of organizing RDP.

- In 2019, the Member States prepare their CAP Strategic Plans. In these plans the AKIS is described as follows: "the combined organisation and knowledge flows between persons, organisations and institutions who use and produce knowledge for agriculture and interrelated fields". A more inclusive AKIS induces better knowledge flows supported through interventions, supported by advisory services and networking activities. We recommend to firmly position on-farm demonstrations as an effective tool to organize, disseminate and implement innovations. Quantification of the activity is possible: an impression of the type and amount of demonstration farmers can be found in the FarmDemo Hub.
- In 2020, after agreement between EU Ministers of Agriculture, EP and EC, the Member States and the EC start the design of national plans. In this phase we recommend to include the measures in these plans where on-farm demonstrations should be an unmissable instrument, and include this explicitly, wherever possible:



**PLAID**

- Funding for EIP Operational Group (OG) innovation projects through the "cooperation" intervention (Art 17). For the explanation of the EIP you can use Art 114: interactive innovation model principles as basis for innovative solutions actors with complementary knowledge cooperate to tackle concrete farmers'/foresters' needs and opportunities. OGs can support all CAP objectives.
- Funding Information Projects with one-to one advice, organising Information Actions, setting up advisory & innovation support services, etc; through the intervention "Funding for knowledge exchange, advice & information" (Art 72).

In this planning phase, we also recommend the inclusion of the interventions that support these OGs and Information Projects:

- fully integrate services covering economic, environmental and social dimensions and delivering up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by research and innovation in the AKIS (Art 13). These farm advisory services also include innovation support (= innovation project brokering, innovation project facilitation, etc) for preparing and implementing innovative OGs
- create conditions to form CAP networks at EU level and national levels, to foster innovation and knowledge flows and thus contribute to a well-functioning AKIS (Art 113)
- When the national/regional plans are fixed, and the management structure is organised, we recommend to
  - Include in the management authority people who can judge plans (proposal phase) and reports (execution phase of projects) and communicate in an stimulating, effective way with the stakeholders;
  - Communicate about the possibilities of the new CAP for on-farm demonstrations through OGs and Information Actions, via the channels and in the language that farmers use. Communicate about the quality of support needed in successful projects.
  - Start in an early stage to decide on the themes that will be covered by the first calls for OGs and Information Projects, so that the first calls can be opened asap.
  - Include independent people with experience in on-farm demonstrations in the committees that do the selection of projects submitted.
- When projects are running, we recommend to
  - Open demonstrations for a broader public, where suitable
  - Use websites, like the agenda in [Farmdemo.eu](http://Farmdemo.eu), to communicate about these demonstrations.
- In the review of the projects, we suggest to
  - Support project responsible people with tools to report on demonstrations in an easy way
  - Communicate about the results.



**PLAID**

### 3.5 Setting long-term (EU) demonstration networks and exchange programmes

#### What is the Challenge?

When it comes to fostering European agricultural innovation and sustainability, policy is largely driven at the EU level, while demonstrations are organized mostly at a local level. This possibly results in a mismatch between demonstration programmes, often focusing on the national/regional level, and the challenges that need to be faced at a European level. There is also a need to coordinate demonstration networks and events at both regional and EU level. Experiences from the FarmDemo projects also clearly showed that demonstrations are organised very differently within Europe, and the approaches that are being used differ greatly between countries and regions (e.g. Eastern European countries tend to have less interactive demonstrations, while demonstrations in the south of Europe are less commonly used as a means of dissemination).

These differences however create learning opportunities. By broadening exchanges and networking across borders, we believe that this will create more opportunities for cross-fertilisation, and should allow to broaden the vision of demo organisers and to develop the number and the quality of on-farm demo events. Experiences can be shared both on on-farm demonstration approaches, but also on technical or agricultural innovation aspects.

#### What did we learn from PLAID & AgriDemo-F2F?

Analysis of the inventory data, country reports, case studies and workshop recommendations yield the following key messages with regard to setting long-term demonstration networks and exchange programmes:

- Participants and demo organisers express the need to improve their skills and experience and to benefit from exchanges with their peers, at national and EU level. The case studies showed that exchanges are a good way to improve practices on demo activities both at local, national and EU level.
- The 56 demo cases we studied in the projects showed very different demonstration activities and approaches, indicating an important diversity of interactive practices, according to the regions and countries.
- Demonstration organisers expressed a great interest in a better knowledge about demonstration practices in other countries. Learning from each other is the main objective when they get involved in projects like PLAID or AgriDemo-F2F. They are motivated by knowledge exchanges about how to demonstrate, as well as exchanges about the topic and content of the demonstrations.
- During the PLAID project, a demonstration workshop was organized in Croatia with practitioners from each case study, small interactive groups among the practitioners were organized these shared the exchanges between countries. The participants explained that to see each other's context helps to reflect on their own context and practices.



**PLAID**

- NEFERTITI project is already based on these analysis, and on the hypothesis exchanges about Demo activities, these are an important source of continuous improvement of the practice in EU. NEFERTITI organizes structured and monitor cross-visits among EU countries, which constitute a kind of “living lab” of one or more future EU network(s), at the core of this recommendation.
- Both host farmers and organisers of on-farm demonstration (e.g. public, private and charitably-funded advisors, farmers, researchers) would benefit from opportunities to network across regions and countries in Europe.

#### Recommendation

The organisation of exchanges about on farm demonstration at EU level, and of a network of demo organisers at that level are an excellent way to improve:

- The skills of demo organisers (demonstrators, facilitators, host farmers)
- The number and quality of demonstration activities
- The general knowledge about sustainability issues in agriculture
- Sharing of specific technology and practices

**As such, we propose two main recommendations.**

**Firstly, we suggest to make use of existing projects, like NEFERTITI, Eureka and EU project programmes like the Thematic Networks and Interreg project, where cross-border exchanges are implemented, to capitalize on their experience, in order to improve their methods, bring renewed insights to demonstrators, offer more opportunities for accessing new knowledge both on demonstration methods and practices and on diverse technical issues in agriculture.**

**Secondly, we propose long term demonstration networks at European level. These long-term networks can reinforce trust among partners, allow further expertise development in the network and consequently build a network of real “demonstration experts” to support technology and practices that develop more sustainable agriculture in their countries, and at EU level.**



**PLAID**

Two target groups can be identified for this EU network:

- All actor types involved in the organization and facilitation of demonstrations. They will benefit mostly in cross-topic networks, centered on exchanges about demonstration methods, facilitation practices and tools, policy supports ...
- Host farmers and thematic experts involved in demonstration. These will possibly be more interested in thematic demonstration networks, focusing on their specific sector. However, focus should be both on exchanges about thematic content and demonstration methods and approaches.

Our recommendation thus combines several aspects:

- The EU Commission could directly fund a network of demonstration organisers and trainers, on a long term basis (at least 5 years), based on cross visits, skills exchanges and cross methodological trainings
- Some EU projects could put an emphasis on networks about demonstration. We recommend to support and fund more thematic networks and Interreg projects after 2020, including cross country demonstration activities directly involving farmers and advisers or demonstration organisers. The projects could benefit from a funding duration over a period of 5 years and should be evaluated on their capacity to propose longer term knowledge and practice exchanges, but also rewarding of the best exchange initiatives (See also Recommendation 1).



**PLAID**