Action Plan for Innovation and Learning in organic and agroecological food and farming systems

Agroecology Conference
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• One of seven flagship initiatives to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EU 2020 Strategy)

Research for its own sake

Innovation with tangible impact
Putting ideas into practice
Innovation Union

• More than dissemination of research results
• Results of the creativity and interplay between actors
• Horizon 2020
  – Multi-actor approach [which will] ensure interactions between researcher, businesses, farmers/producers, advisors and end-users
• European Innovation Partnership – Agriculture
  – Closing the gap between research and farming practice
Action Plan for Innovation and Learning

• Demonstrate innovation potential of organic farming and agroecology
• Develop a vision on agroecological learning and innovation
• Analyse opportunities offered by recent EU policy instruments
• Provide policy recommendations for innovation and better learning in the EU
Target Groups

• EU Policy Makers
  – European Commission
  – European Parliament

• Transnational research networks:
  – ERA-Nets and Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs)
  – Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs)

• National ministries

• Other EU umbrellas and NGOs
Organic and agroecology

• Is organic part of agroecology or vice versa?
  ➡ Two movements with strong overlaps

• Is organic conventionalised?
  ➡ Organic is very diverse

• Organic is defined by IFOAM principles not by regulations

• Recognise short-comings and learn from each other
Learning and innovation

- Learning not education
- Innovation as a networking and social process, not linear diffusion from science to practice
- Focus on the actors and the process not outcome
Actors in agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS)

Source: SCAR-AKIS (2012) Reflection paper
Actors in agro-ecological knowledge and innovation systems

Source: Susanne Padel
Agroecological principles for innovation

• Multitude of realities
  – never single solution to a problem
  – take research out of the controlled environment

• Stakeholder participation ensures link between science and day-to-day life
  – Farms as individual cases
  – Farmer as professional expert
  – Farmers sharing expertise
Participatory Action Research

I. Exploring the context and building trust

II. Practitioners and stakeholders define research needs

III. Researchers interpret input into researchable questions and assure scientific rigour of experiments - feedback to assure that experiments are understood

IV. Research by scientists and/or practitioners

V. Evaluation

Continuous dialogue
Organic districts as innovation

- Organic approach to rural development
- Networks of farmers, retailers, tourism industry, public authorities and associations
- All actors involved from the very beginning
- First organic district: Cilento, Campania Region, Italy
Policy Recommendations

• Practitioners and researchers should be appropriately rewarded for the time invested

• Project funding should allow for preparatory phased needed to build trust

• Funding bodies should accept that output cannot always be predicted

• Innovation requires sustained financial commitment

• All stakeholders can contribute to innovation, also general public
# Time frame

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft version</td>
<td>April-September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Consultation</td>
<td>October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary final version</td>
<td>End December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Plan printed</td>
<td>Mid February 2014</td>
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Thank you for your attention!

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