

“How can family farmers work together to deliver innovation? Examples of best practice”

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Family farming - Access to new technology and research

29 November 2013, Brussels

Bibliography

- ✓ Running the family farm “Kaigari” in Bauska region, Latvia since 1991
- ✓ Arable crops including seeds production – started with 14ha, today 520ha
- ✓ Vice – Chair of the Latvian Farmers Parliament, responsible for Agriculture and Rural development strategy, project implementation and international relations
- ✓ Vice President of Copa and Chair of the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Rural Development



Characteristics of family farms and factors that hamper innovation

- Great heterogeneity in family farms across the EU e.g. full/part time, old/young farmers, with basic skills/well educated -> “one size fits all” not an option
- Conservatism and strong habits
- Dependence from subsidies
- Lack of access to research outcomes
- Lack of cross sectoral, cross border cooperation

BUT regardless the great differences each farm must be competitive and sustainable

- to be able to produce food
- to contribute to rural economies



Innovation is essential for family farms

- Driving forces for uptake of innovation:
 - Entrepreneurship / willingness to make progress and development
 - Finances (adaptation to market situation)
 - Limited land and workforce availability
 - To make life easier (mechanisation)
- Access to information about innovation in “farmers’ language” as a prerequisite
- Innovations in technologies, organisation and management practices, farm structure, marketing, communication (relations between generations)
- Normal practice in one sector could be highly innovative in another!



Innovation creates added value (1)

Honey lollipop

- Idea from young farmers in Latvia to find alternative use for honey
- Product development by food specialists and in collaboration with SME candy producer
- Honey producers get access to new marketing channels (shops, pharmacy, wholesalers) and a better price for their honey



Innovation creates added value (2)

Miscanthus straw

- Idea from young farmer in Wallonia as alternative use of low productive arable land
- Straw in easy to handle packaging sizes for gardeners as shelter and for horse bedding
- Adaptation of own machinery for planting and harvesting in cooperation with local welder



Innovation creates added value (3)

Laser-Apple

- Idea from farmer growing apples at lake Constance, Germany
- The apple becomes an advertising tool allowing individualised messages
- At the same time it allows to promote sales of apples from this region as the new product has an international market





Organisational innovation Giving old crops new life

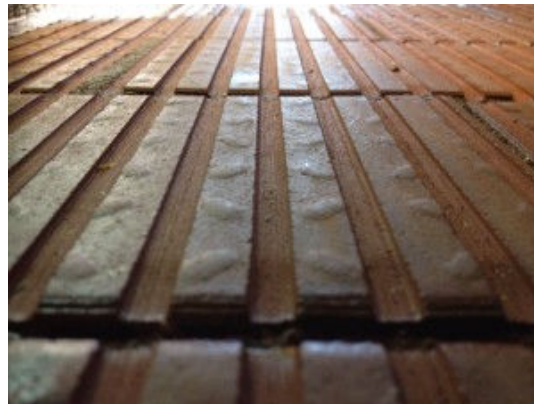
- Creation of a new brand for forgotten vegetables “Bel’Oblita”
- answer from growers to new trends: seasonal, local sale, “forgotten “ vegetables
- Business opportunity for (smaller) family farms, today over 150 farmers are participating
- Introduced in November 2011 as part of “Flandria”: same rights & obligations and access to existing markets
- strong position of farmers within the producer organisation, with great potential through cooperation
- Very own style recognised by consumer; supported by strong marketing tools
- Contribution to maintaining genetic biodiversity



On farm innovation

Roughening of slatted floors

- Roughening of slatted floors in stables
- Farmer and successor of a family farm with 60 dairy cows from Bavaria, Germany, developed in 2011 a machine to avoid his animals to slip
- Today this technology is widespread and is a cost-effective solutions to improve living conditions for animals



Organisational innovative Compost stable

- Milking cows living in a stable with compost as bedding, Netherland
- Change in nutrient management at farm level, with separation technology allowing a very efficient use of manure
- Splitting in a solid and a liquid fraction reduced mineral fertiliser use and a better targeting to crop needs
- Good animal welfare and improved milk production in new stable



Innovative Communication

Precision spraying technology

- Precision technology allows to differentiate application of plant protection products inside field
- It contributes to efficient use of farm inputs and to protect valuable habitats in agricultural landscape
- Young farmers were asked to come with their brides and had a nice surprise ... none of them got wet!



Concluding remarks

- Innovation potential from farmers should not be underestimated
- Family farms are playing an important role in bringing innovations into practice
- Uptake facilitated through stronger links between science and farming sector
- Cross sectoral, cross region and cross border cooperation is beneficial
- Encouragement of dialogue/cooperation between generation to boost innovation
- Innovation is essential for the viability of rural areas and to secure competitive EU family farming in future