



agrathaer

Strategische Landnutzung

DG AGRI workshop

„Establishing Operational Groups under
Rural Development Programmes“

An example for Innovation Support Service
(ISS)

25-26 March, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Anita Beblek, Katharina Diehl

Who is agrathaer?



Our team



Truly transdisciplinary:

- lawyer
- business economist
- industrial engineer
- landscape ecologist
- agronomist
- geographer

Our mission: bridging the gap between science and practice in land use to foster knowledge and technology transfer for future innovation

What is and does agrathaer ?



- **Founded in 2011 by Leibniz Centre for agricultural landscape research (ZALF), research institute in Eastern Germany as technology transfer and innovation management entity**
- **Based on finding that ZALF is not transferring knowledge and practical solutions to farmers but farmers are approaching ZALF to resolve their practical problems**
- **We scout research results for potential end use applications**
- **We ask farmers what problems they have**
- **We translate the different languages and expectations → we call it shuttle diplomacy**
- **We formulate the innovation**
- **We look for funding possibilities**
- **We administer and execute grant programmes**

How do we work ? EVI Project as one example



■ What is EVI about?

- **The Problem:** a virus called *Verticilium dahliae* infects the soil and causes strawberry wilt



- The disease can survive in soil for over 30 years and causes severe yield losses
- Up to total crop loss in a year
- There was no practical solution for strawberry farmers
- Common practice was either acceptance of yield losses or abandonment of whole strawberry fields

The innovation



- **What was the objective of EVI?**
 - To develop a method and a standardized treatment that could avoid an infection of strawberry plants by *Verticilium*
 - **What did we achieve?**
 - A new vaccine (biological control agent - bca) was invented and patented
 - A new method to apply the vaccine was developed – dip moulding of strawberry plant roots
- in simple terms: a flu jab for strawberries



25-26 March 2014

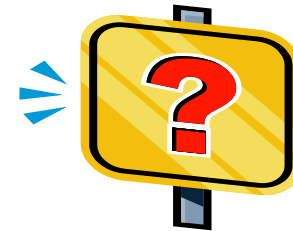


Workshop Ljubljana

The Process



- **How did we achieve it ?**
- **The Process**
 - Field days for farmers - ZALF → farmers have the chance to raise questions, name problems of cultivation, new diseases, adaption strategies and express new requirements
 - Analysis of potential gaps – what is needed to solve the articulated problems by ZALF researchers → idea of potential solution
- **Problems:**
 1. no technical expertise
 - 2. no funds
 - 3. field experiments under real conditions required
 - 4. no incentive to develop an application (no basic research)
- **Solution:**
 1. involve the technology transfer and innovation broker entity agrathaer
 - 2. find a SME that has sufficient technical know-how
 - 3. organize workshops to establish willingness for real field experiments at farmers level
 - 4. scouting of suitable grant schemes



Our Experience with innovation projects



- Transdisciplinary approach with multi actor involvement was key factor for ability to successfully conduct the project
- Farmers are highly motivated to engage in an innovation process if there is a clear and verifiable benefit for them
- Each of the project partners could contribute to the solution but on a stand alone basis no solution would have been achieved
- Only by involving farmers a proof of concept was possible
- Farmers and scientists speak different languages, the operational group was functioning due to our translation and brokerage activity
- For SME and farmers the risk and uncertain outcome of an innovation project is only acceptable if there is some kind of compensation or short term benefit
- A permanent facilitator of the project group is mandatory → Innovation support service
- Farmers ability and willingness to establish, organize and administer funded projects is limited

Key Factors



■ Success Factors

- Transdisciplinary approach
- Continuous feedback between all partners (workshops, field surveys, field days, conference)
- One common objective from start of the project & a pressing practical problem
- understanding different languages

■ Bottlenecks

- Disparity between funding schemes and practical requests at farmers level
- Different time constraints between project partners
- Diverse expectations between science and practice
- Finding the right project partners

Recommendations



- Invest in time and brain to formulate the right project idea before an Operational Group starts an innovation project
- Establish a person/ organization that can bridge the language gap
- Implement a proper project management
- Institution required that is collecting relevant informations, problems, partners to enable a systematic innovation process
- Permanent Innovation support services with database and network

agrathaer

Strategische Landnutzung

contact

agrathaer GmbH
Eberswalder Straße 84
15374 Müncheberg

Anita Beblek
Tel. 033432/82-141
anita.bebek@agrathaer.de

Katharina Diehl
Tel. 033432/82-414
katharina.diehl@zalf.de

