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1.4 AKIS Coordination body in Finland

AKIS contest

Finland has a diverse and nationwide network of research, development and education actors. Alongside the national organizations, there are many small organizations in their own specific fields. Some efforts must be made to coordinate resources and to cooperate effectively to ensure the vitality of rural areas and the renewal, development and diversification of their livelihoods. This has been the focus of attention in recent years and the AgriHubi network has been established in 2021 to coordinate and enhance AKIS cooperation and to target resources on perceived weaknesses.

AgriHubi focuses on strengthening the business management skills of farm businesses, promoting the uptake of smart agriculture and making more efficient use of data sources and resources.

Box 1 - Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)

The Natural Resources Institute Finland is one of the most multidisciplinary research institutes in the world. Established in 2015, Luke conducts research on natural resources and collects statistics on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural areas. Just over half of its research funding (€133 million in 2021) comes from the state budget. It has 22 locations in Finland, plus two research cooperation sites, and five field bases across the country, as well as two research collaborations with universities.



Keywords

Governance, AKIS coordination body



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP Strategic Plans, AKIS coordination bodies



Country

Finland



Funded by
the European Union

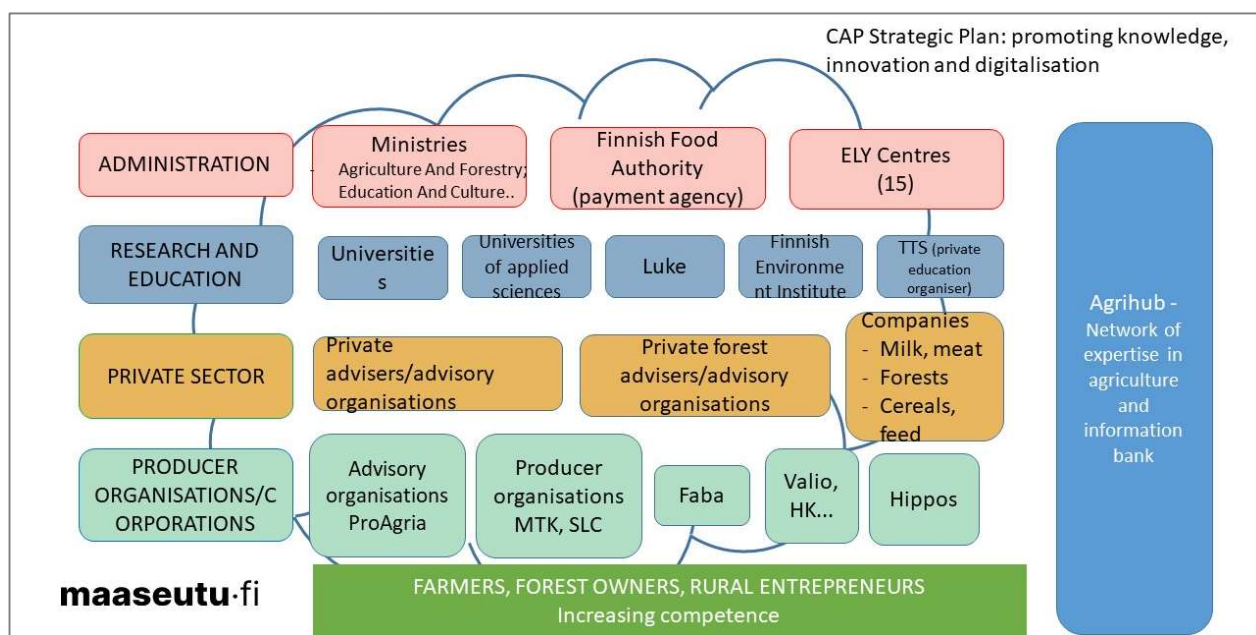
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However, the Finnish AKIS seems to be in some ways characterized by fragmentation and under-utilization of advanced interfaces. At a time when rapid and efficient knowledge transfer and accessibility is essential for the development of the economy, it is important to make national and international research knowledge rapidly available to support practice. Farm entrepreneurs who are developing their business also want to be more actively involved in development and research. The younger generation of farmers is well educated, but education must provide young people with the skills they will need in the 2030s, as well as further training for existing entrepreneurs and advisers. School teaching farms and willing private farms must be made more effective in sharing knowledge and examples by promoting activities such as Living Labs and demo farms. All AKIS actors also want to link more actively to international networks and strengthen the discussion and exchange of information between Finnish actors on the various possibilities for participating in international cooperation.

Figure 1: Finland AKIS Diagram (to be completed)



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Finland

Rationale

The political relevance given to AKIS strategies in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans (SPs) 2023-2027 has certainly highlighted the opportunity of defining governance bodies aimed at coordinating the AKIS-related interventions and actors in view of their better implementation and contribution to the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP SPs.

In Finland's CAP SP, AgriHubi is nominated as the AKIS coordination body. In addition, in the CAP SP it is said that AgriHubi and the National Rural Network will develop the functioning of the AKIS system together with the AKIS working group consisting of representatives of the network.

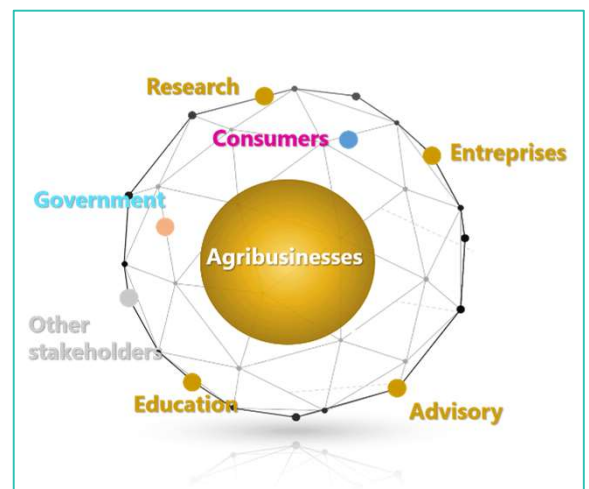
The lack of a clear definition of role and functions of the institute of the AKIS coordination bodies by the EU regulation has certainly favored the managing authorities of the CAP SPs in identifying the configurations that best fit the needs for governance of the AKISs and the expectations of the respective actors.

In practice...

1. Who is the AKIS CB

The AKIS Coordination body is AgriHubi which is part of Public affairs and governance in Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke). The AgriHubi Network is a national initiative that brings together research, advice and training in the field and builds interaction with other actors in the food system. The overall aim of the network is to promote and facilitate scientific knowledge into the better use of farm enterprises in order to develop their competitiveness and renewal.

Figure 2: the AKIS network in Finland coordinated by Agrihubi



2. Composition of the AKIS CB

Agrihubi is a collaborative network of research, the steering group includes farmers, educational institutions, advisory organisations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and private companies.

3. Functions attributed to the AKIS CB

The main operation responsibility of AgriHubi as AKIS CB is to support AKIS activities, foster farmer participation in RDI projects and foster activities to support farm profitability.

More in detail, role and responsibilities/activities include:

- generate and coordinate cooperation among actors and build new connections on the following topics: i) Business management; ii) Data sources and resources; iii) Smart farming.
- supports farmers participation to RDI – projects → innovations for and with practice.
- fosters and develops an open network.

Coordination team of AgriHubi is composed by the coordinator, a communications specialist, senior scientists and a professor to run and discuss of the daily basis work.

A steering group, that includes all the representative of AKIS actors, is set up to ensure its functioning and realization of the activities.

Along the CAP programming period, the financial resources are provided the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for the years 2021 – 2022 and by the Ministry of Education for the period 2023-2025.

4. Procedures for interplaying with other AKIS actors and with the MA of the CAP SP

The procedures for interplaying and the main activities of Agrihubi are defined in an internal annual goals paper, according to which Luke has meetings on regular basis with AKIS actors. Particularly, they organize 6 steering group meetings per year, 4/5 meetings with the AKIS group stakeholders and meetings with MoAF's leaders once/twice per year.

Practical implications for replicability

Natural Resources Institute Finland is under Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland's governance and provides also policy support for the ministry. Budget funding from MoAF and the annual strategy and steering discussions are MoAF's tools to guide Luke's work. Within the role of managing authority, MoAF appointed the task of establishing AgriHubi to Luke at the end of 2020 with seed funding.

AKIS coordination was appointed to AgriHubi, however, the CAP Network Finland has a strong role of coordination AKIS -related activities such as Leader, EIP, rural businesses, and rural women entrepreneurship.

The Finnish CAP Network is appointed to Food Authority Finland's tasks and works as an own unit. There are common members in AgriHubi's and CAP Network Finland's steering group. Furthermore, great number of activities among the AKIS goals are supported by AgriHubi's and the Finnish CAP Network's work together. Example of this close collaboration is the networking platform maaseutuverkosto.fi / agrihubi.fi. However, in Finland the work that AgriHubi is accomplishing could not be located on the Finnish CAP Network that works within the CAP's technical support funding. Part of AgriHubi's tasks is closely related on other sectors field and cannot be financed by CAP.

Benefits

- Adaptation of a pre-existing body that was already well functioning for the coordination of some key functions of the AKISs.
- This configuration of the AKIS CB brings together the actors that are already playing some institutional and operational key functions/activities within the national AKISs.
- The network organization allowed increasing the collaboration between research institute and education actors.

Further information

- Finland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans/finland_en

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