



5.1 Organizing back-office services to support up-to-date knowledge flows within the AKIS: the case of Veneto Region

Rationale

Under the 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plans, Managing Authorities planned a mix of interventions aiming at strengthening farm advice and fostering all advisors' interconnection within AKIS. One of the novelties of this set of interventions is the back office, that aims at providing information and specialized support for advisors and other AKIS actors on a wide range of issues, such as: use of natural resources (water, soil air); weather events and climate change; problems related to livestock, forestry and crop production (including crop protection); market conditions; business management. More in general, the goal of back office is to create an enabling environment to knowledge exchange for all AKIS actors, to develop faster innovation pathways and better exploitation of existing knowledge in order to achieve the specific objectives of the CAP.

In MSs, like Italy and its regions, that are characterized by a variety of farming systems and AKIS actors, defining a best-fitting model for the organization and the delivery of back-office services is challenging, due to the plurality of advisory services and competencies that are needed across the rural areas.

As well, trust and mutual recognition of roles and competencies is crucial to enable collaboration among researchers and advisors and cooperation for innovation.



Keywords

Innovation support services; advisory services; back office



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Regional development agencies



Country

Italy - Veneto region

Solution

Under the CAP strategic plan of Veneto Region, the back-office services have been delegated to Veneto Agricoltura, which is the regional Agency for Innovation in the Primary Sector, an in-house body which carries out support activities to the Regional Council in the field of policies for the agricultural, agri-food, forestry and fishing sectors [see the dedicated box in 4.1 AKIS-in-practice!].

Specifically, the tasks assigned to Veneto Agricoltura in the back-office role are:

- set up, strengthen and integrate monitoring networks for data collection, analysis (including laboratory analysis) and information, including those from experimental actions/projects;
- develop and make available regional/national/international databases to advisors and the general AKIS;
- develop and make available digital tools also for carrying out complex processing (DSS, AI, etc.);
- develop and make available to advisors and AKIS actors regional/national/international databases
- implement networking activities and virtual communities between AKIS actors and in particular between advisors, researchers and the CAP Network, at regional, national and international level.

Back-office services will be provided by experts in relation to the needs and topics of interest to AKIS actors working in rural areas and with farms.

All information will be accessible to all actors in the EU territory, since its purpose is to contribute to improving AKIS. The intervention also provides for the connection and participation in the activities of the CAP Networks

In practice...

A specific delegation act from the Managing Authority of the Complementary Rural Programme (CRP) 2023-2027 of Veneto Region identifies Veneto Agricoltura as the unique beneficiary of the back-office intervention.

To this aim, the Veneto Region published a call for proposals, by detailing topics, conditions and costs of back office activities.

Particularly, Veneto Agricoltura has presented a Project (according to a specific format) describing the planned activities, divided into work packages, the time schedule, as well as the quantitative (man/hours) and qualitative (qualification) information of the human resources to be employed in its implementation.

The eligible costs are:

- i. staff costs;
- ii. missions and assignment;
- iii. acquisition of services and advisory services;
- iv. purchase of software and licenses;
- v. purchase of consumables;
- vi. rental of classrooms and facilities;
- vii. other expenses necessary for the operation of activities, such as utilities, rent, overheads (indirect costs).

To monitor and evaluate the back-office project, a working group (AKIS Backoffice service Committee) between Veneto Region and Veneto Agricoltura is set up, to check its implementation on a quarterly basis. Expenditure related to indirect costs is calculated on a flat rate basis, based on 7% of eligible direct costs (ref. Art 54 of EU Reg. 2021/1060). The support rate is 100% of eligible expenditure.

Practical implications for replicability

Veneto Region established the back office upon the existing agency that has a with a strong background and longstanding competencies about AKIS that represent an advantage.

However, some provisions are needed along with:

- Dedicated budget to implement the back office under art. 78 Reg EU 2021/2015;
- Publication of a public call for proposals dedicated to select the best projects related to back office;
- Clear definition of functions and boundaries in relation to the activities provided under the daily agency activities.

Benefits

- The presence of Agencies at territorial level and their interconnections within the local AKIS represents an added value for the implementation of the AKIS strategy.
- This allows to maximize effectiveness and efficiency with respect to the purposes of public interest, also because of the operational flexibility guaranteed by the Agency, the streamlining of procedures, the lower impact of management costs of the rationalisation of services and transparency of expenditure.
- Less administrative burden to award the tender.

Watch this AKIS-in-Practice!



Further information

- [Veneto Region Delegation act n. 1125 del 19 settembre 2023 \(IT\)](#)

Contacts:

Giorgio Trentin
giorgio.trentin@regione.veneto.it