



**Registration and
Impartiality of
advisors**

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Establishing a national registry for phytosanitary advisory service in Spain



Keywords/Tags



Advisors



Database



AKIS



Registration of advisors



Phytosanitary



Plant health



Potential users



MAs/AKIS coordination bodies



Advisors/ISS



Farmers



Phytosanitary product users



Plant health sector stakeholder



Operational Group



RATIONALE



Spain, with its 17 autonomous regions, operates under a highly decentralized system, where each administrative region has considerable autonomy in managing agricultural advisory services, including those related to plant health and phytosanitary products.

Given the diversity in Spain's agricultural farming systems across the sector, shaped by vast geographic and climatic differences, each region faces unique challenges, from water scarcity to soil management. This diversity also extends to provincial differences, making a one-size-fits-all approach to agricultural advice ineffective.

Improving farm productivity is a central goal in Spain's agricultural policies. However, this objective is intrinsically linked to maintaining plant health, which is essential not only for farm yield but also for sustainability and environmental protection. Effective advice in phytosanitary management requires customized strategies, where regional needs and specific crop threats are considered. This means that advisory services must be finely tuned to local conditions, supported by efficient coordination mechanisms between regional governments and national agencies, as well as effective management practices that can cater to this complexity.

SOLUTION



The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (MAPA) has established a unified national registry of producers and operators on phytosanitary products, that includes advisory services providers, supporting the consistent application of plant health regulations across Spain. This registry serves as an essential database, coordinating the knowledge and practices required to adhere to plant health legislation throughout the country. In alignment with Spain's 1978 Constitution, which designates the State Administration as responsible for overarching coordination in economic planning, MAPA assumes the role of managing this registry. Through this centralized system, MAPA ensures that advisors on phytosanitary products are equipped to provide standardized, reliable guidance on plant health, a critical element in safeguarding agricultural productivity and public health.

IN PRACTICE



In accordance with the framework of action to achieve sustainable use of phytosanitary products, MAPA has created a web application for the exchange of information on registrations in the **Official Registry of Producers and Operators (ROPO)**. The registry encompasses a wide range of entities active in the field of phytosanitary protection, including advisors, producers, distributors, and operators.



Particularly, all natural or legal persons who carry out the following activities must be registered in the Registry:

- **Advisory service:** it includes individuals who provide advisory services on integrated pest management to agricultural farms, entities or individuals.
- **Supply of phytosanitary defense means:** it includes manufacturers, distributors (sellers), logistics companies and companies engaged in the storage of phytosanitary defense means (which includes phytosanitary products and Others and certain means of defense).
- **Carrying out phytosanitary treatments:** it includes natural or legal persons who carry out phytosanitary treatments by land, air, or in warehouses or other premises.
- **Handling and use of phytosanitary products for professional use:** it includes users with a professional user card for phytosanitary products.

It is possible to obtain a pest management advisor status by demonstrating possession of the required qualification to the competent authority within a Spanish autonomous community. Specifically, advisors must hold a recognized degree or vocational training certification with a minimum of 40 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits in areas directly related to plant production.

This training should cover core topics such as soil science, plant physiology, botany, crop science, forestry, environmental impact assessment, agricultural mechanization, and plant protection, among others. Specifically, at least 12 ECTS credits must focus on plant protection, including key areas like crop protection, agricultural and forest entomology, plant pathology, weed science, and the use of mechanized equipment for crop protection. In some Spanish autonomous community is registration in the phytosanitary advisory sector of the ROPO is carried out automatically (without the need for a request from the applicant) for individuals who obtain accreditation as an integrated pest management advisor.

Once certified and registered in any ROPO office in the Spanish autonomous regions, the advisor can operate across the entire national territory.

The competent authority of the autonomous community oversees advisory activities to ensure compliance with these requirements, potentially within the framework of official checks on phytosanitary product regulations.

The advisor's certification may be suspended, modified, or revoked if they receive an administrative sanction for a serious or very serious offense related to plant health, public health, or environmental regulations, or if they fail to maintain the requirements set forth in this decree or the relevant law.

This web application allows public consultation of registered entities and advisors, with a dual purpose, on the one hand to make the status of the application known in real time to applicants, and on the other to inform the general public about the certified operators that are entitled to carry out any activity related to the advisory services provision, marketing, distribution and use of any means of phytosanitary defense.

The search engine has the following filters:

- Searches for user and entity registrations can be carried out using the following fields: identification code, ID, name and surname or company name, province, municipality and category.
- Searches for establishment registrations can be carried out using the following fields: identification code, ID, name and surname or company name, province, municipality and category.

Figure 1: ROPO's website app

The image displays two identical search forms from the ROPO website. The top form is titled 'Consulta de inscripciones:' and the bottom form is titled 'Consulta de establecimientos:'. Both forms contain the following fields: 'Código identificación:' (text input), 'DNI/NIF/NIE:' (text input), 'Nombre y apellidos o Denominación social:' (text input), 'Provincia' (dropdown menu), 'Municipio' (dropdown menu), and 'Categoría' (dropdown menu with 'SECTOR DE ASESORAMIENTO' selected). To the right of the 'Provincia' dropdown is a blue button labeled 'Cargar Municipios'. At the bottom right of each form is a blue button labeled 'Buscar'.

Source: <https://servicio.mapa.gob.es/ropowebwai/default.aspx>

Registration in the ROPO is valid for 10 years. Currently, over 24,000 advisors specializing in phytosanitary products are actively registered in the ROPO.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR REPLICABILITY



- Establish a national framework for coordinated implementation: In coordination with regional and provincial authorities, define a unified national framework that accommodates local specificities while ensuring consistent application across regions. This framework should outline guidelines, roles, and responsibilities at national/regional level for the management of the register.
- Set clear and consistent standards for the registration/renovation of the advisory service providers: Establish standardized qualifications, performance metrics, and compliance criteria for the advisory providers, ensuring a high level of expertise and accountability across regions.
- Allocate dedicated budget and ICT professionals for the digital infrastructure: Invest in developing, maintaining, and periodically updating a web-based application that serves as a centralized database and resource hub for advisors and users. This application would facilitate access to registration data, real-time updates, and records for both advisory professionals and stakeholders.

BENEFITS



- Transparent and relevant quality standards and procedures for professional advisory providers on the specific topic.
- Networking possibilities between advisors.
- User-friendly tool for farmers to get in contact with specialized and nearby advisors.
- Visibility of advisors.
- The advisor's access data is shared: email, telephone, etc.
- Advisors can easily be included in initiatives to create operational groups or horizon Europe projects.



FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION



- ROPO's website app (ES).
- ROPO in MAPA's website (ES).
- Sustainable use of phytosanitary products. MAPA's website (ES).
- Royal Decree 1311/2012, of September 14, which establishes the framework for action to achieve sustainable use of phytosanitary products (ES).
- Report on the qualifications that enable you to practice as advisors (ES).
- Advisory documentation for integrated pest management (ES).



Spain



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