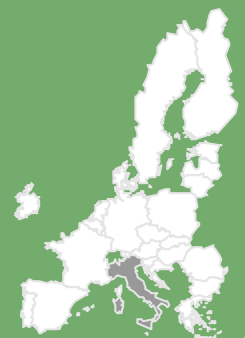




Innovation support services

AKIS-in-Practice! 7.1

Innovation Hubs: Catalyzing Collaboration in Veneto's Agricultural Landscape



Keywords/Tags



Hubs



Advisory services



Selection criteria



Innovation Support Services



Potential users



Managing authorities of the CAP Strategic Plans



AKIS coordination bodies



Training bodies



Advisors, including Innovation Support Services providers

RATIONALE



The Veneto Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) involves a diverse range of stakeholders who contribute as both producers and users of knowledge. With the presence of four universities offering relevant programs, the regional agricultural, agri-food, and forestry sectors benefit significantly from research, education, and technology transfer initiatives.

To further enrich this environment, it is essential to promote open knowledge sharing and create collaborative spaces where various actors can meet and develop new ideas. This initiative should support the establishment of aggregative forms, which connect leading entrepreneurs with AKIS participants. By facilitating these connections, the initiative aims to bridge gaps between farmers and those in the AKIS with whom they have limited direct contact. Such interactions can spark innovation, foster partnerships, and ultimately enhance the effectiveness of agricultural practices and policies within the region.

This holistic approach can strengthen existing networks but also encourage the emergence of new collaborations, driving the advancement of sustainable agricultural practices and innovation in Veneto.

SOLUTION



Under the Rural Development Complementary Programmes (RDCP) 2023-2027 of Veneto Region was approved the intervention aims to establish partnerships called "Innovation Hubs" for the implementation of actions to support innovation and the provision of services aimed at the agricultural, forestry and agrifood sectors. These hubs are aimed at addressing systemic needs and challenges faced by farms and rural areas.

The primary objectives of the hubs include:

1. Identifying innovative ideas to meet farmers' needs.
2. Enhancing training, information and knowledge sharing and dissemination.
3. Promoting the adoption and sharing of innovations.
4. Connecting actors within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS).

The establishment of the Innovation Hubs is intended to enhance the skills of professionals driving agricultural innovation and to expand the knowledge of farmers participating in these initiatives.

Support is granted in the form of an amount covering only the running costs of the cooperation and the specific costs of the project, using funds from other rural development interventions to cover the costs of other operations implemented (package of interventions).

The application for application for this intervention is submitted by the lead partner that is entitled by the partners as the representative and coordinator of the hub, on behalf of the group. This application must include an activity plan detailing the timeline and expenses for each intervention undertaken by partners. The coordinator also oversees the submission of support requests from partners for planned activities. The implementation of the Innovation Hub is based on using the intervention package method, offering the possibility to use the following interventions:

- Provision of advisory services.
- Demonstration actions for the agricultural, forestry, and rural sectors.

IN PRACTICE



The support application for the Innovation Hub intervention must be submitted by one of the partners, acting as the HUB coordinator under the mandate of the other partners. This application must include support requests from each partner initiating Interventions, if specified in the HUB Activity Plan. The HUB coordinator, therefore, submits an "umbrella application" for Innovation Hub intervention, attaching the Activity Plan, which also contains a timeline and the requested budget for each activated Intervention and partner.

The coordinator oversees the submission of support applications by the partners for the operations outlined in the Activity Plan and links them to the "umbrella application." The eligible Interventions that can be activated within the "umbrella application package" for the Innovation Hub include:

- a) Provision of advisory services.
- b) Demonstration actions for the agricultural, forestry, and rural sectors.

If an application for the Innovation Hub is funded, the other applications for support under the other HUB Activity Plan submitted by the individual Cooperation Group partners are also funded.

The Innovation Hub interacts with the EIP-AGRI OGs as AKIS actors.

The beneficiary of support is the cooperation group (Innovation Hub) or its components. The members of the cooperation group belong to the following three types:

1. Universities or public research institutions.
2. Associations of agricultural or forestry entrepreneurs, or producer organizations.
3. Advisory service providers.

The Innovation Hub must be composed of at least three partners, at least one of which must be from each of the above-mentioned types.

The intervention includes the execution of at least one of the following activities:

- Establishing and managing contact points, idea incubators, and welcoming centers for businesses.
- Organizing integrated training, information, demonstration, and consulting activities targeted at companies.
- Supporting the creation or strengthening of demonstration farms and conducting small-scale experimental trials for testing innovations, as well as facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

Table 1: Eligible and non-eligible costs

Eligible Costs	Non-Eligible Costs
1. Costs for preparatory activities, including stakeholder engagement and needs assessment	1. Defined by the document "General Procedural Guidelines"
2. Direct operational costs of cooperation	2. Investment expenses in tangible fixed assets
3. Administrative and legal costs for establishing the cooperation group	3. Expenses related to the routine production or service activities performed by the applicant and agents
4. Project-specific direct costs necessary for the implementation of activities	4. Expenses not included among eligible costs
5. Indirect costs (other costs necessary for the operation of the activities, such as utilities, rents)	

Table 2: Selection criteria

Criteria	Points
Adequacy of activities in relation to the territory and/or supply chain and the need for innovation	20
Adequacy and consistency of expenditures	20
Quality of partnership	20
Contribution of the innovation support service to the achievement of the specific objectives of CAP2030	20
Quality of the context analysis with respect to territory and/or supply chain	20

The coordination group must meet at least twice a year to review the progress of the Activity Plan. Minutes of these meetings must be prepared, including attendance sheets, and both the Agro-Food Directorate of the Regional Government and Veneto Agricoltura Agency are invited to participate.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR REPLICABILITY



- Meanings and aims of this type of intervention must be duly explained by the MA of the CAP SP and possibly tuned with the participation of potential applicants in view to smooth the application process and ensure consistency of proposals.
- Time alignment of the calls for Action Package.
- Procedures, templates and eligibility requirements along with selection, and reward criteria must be established previously to the call for applications and in a transparent way in view to ensure harmonization, compliance and consistency of the proposals.
- Cooperation and collaboration between the different people in charge of the interventions involved in the Innovation hub is necessary for an effective implementation
- Role of CAP Networks and/or local agencies (or other public entities) is crucial to guide and support beneficiaries before (sensibilization) and after (implementation).

BENEFITS



- Creation of synergies among the AKIS related interventions.
- Straightening knowledge flows in the territory.



FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION



- Intervention description from the Veneto Region CAP SP.
- Call for applications.



Italy, Veneto Region



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