

Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title *Research report on the 'Potential of Farm Partnerships: to Facilitate) Entry into and Establishment in Farming'*

Theme *Networking Activities*

NRN *National Rural Network, Ireland* Coordinator *National Rural Network NRN*

Partners *NRN and agricultural stakeholders*

Period *2011* Resources *c €10,000 plus time of group participants*

Geo-location *Ireland*

Beneficiaries *Regions, Local agencies for water management, Authority of river basin districts, Ministry of Agriculture, ANBI*

Background

Irrigation is fundamental for Italian agriculture, assuring a greater productivity and production elasticity, and irrigation will be more and more important considering the scenarios of climate change. Otherwise, agriculture has to contribute to environmental improvement of water resources and several actions can be pursued to save water. From this point of view, it will be necessary a strong coordination of policies (CAP, energy policies) and a deeper knowledge and integrated research to support decision level. SIGRIAN is a geographic information system (GIS) for territorial analysis, planning and programming in the irrigation sector at national and regional level. In particular, it is a decision support system (DSS) that can be used to support short and middle-term actions (water crisis management) such as long-term actions (policies and investments programming)

Main activities

One of the main results of this research project was that it stimulated discussion and debate among all stakeholders on exploring mechanisms to support and encourage the development of farm partnerships. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Mr Simon Coveney has expressed a keen interest in the development of farm partnerships and recognises the important role that they can play in achieving the Food Harvest 2020 report targets. The interest of the Minister is being responded to by the staffs of his Department who are keen to explore mechanisms to increase the uptake of partnerships.

The consultation process identified: benefits of partnerships; perceived barriers to farm partnerships; challenges to partnerships; possible incentives to encourage partnerships; supports for farm partnerships; and the promotion of partnerships. The report makes both broad and specific recommendations which could enhance awareness, appeal and uptake of farm partnerships. The recommendations specifically address: regulations; information & promotion; and incentives & supports. The involvement of the stakeholders in the Working Group has also stimulated the thinking on new initiatives among other organisations. In response to the renewed interest in partnerships, Teagasc are developing a new service to promote and encourage farm partnerships and some of the farm organisations are also exploring ways in which they can encourage more farmers to consider a partnership as a viable and sustainable option for the future.

The next phase of the research is ongoing which involves promoting the consultation findings and recommendations to the wider public by way of presentations, circulation of the report, engagement with the farming press and broadcast media. It is important to continue to generate debate and discussion on farm partnerships to ensure that appropriate measures are introduced, that there is increased awareness among farmers and that all stakeholders become engaged in the process of promoting the concept.





Main Research Activities

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc (national agricultural research, advisory and training body) and other interested groups (farmer discussion groups) have undertaken research and produced reports on farm partnerships. The intention of the NRN research was to collate existing research, reports and facts on farm partnerships and to utilise the experience, expertise and insight of members of the Working Group to prepare recommendations for the development of Farm Partnerships. The NRN project was intended to complement the research undertaken previously by other organisations.

The Working Group included: representatives of the main farm organisations (IFA, ICMSA, Macra na Feirme, ICOSA); Teagasc; farmers; and a solicitor). The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine inputted at key stages in the production of the report.

In addition to the collation of existing information, specific consultations involved: meetings/discussions with stakeholders; a public request for submissions/comments; a request for input from farmers, discussion groups, consultants, Teagasc; meetings with members of farmer discussion groups (drystock, tillage and dairying); submissions from individual dairy, drystock and tillage farmers; Teagasc managers and specialists; and meetings with members of family and non-family partnerships.

Contribution of the partners

From data supply and information aimed to share implementation of SIGRIAN

Lessons Learned from the Process

One of the main lessons to be taken from the research process is that the approach of involving a wide range of stakeholders not only benefits from the experiences and knowledge of those involved but also stimulates discussion on the issue among their respective bodies/organisations. The long-term result could lead to a series of complementary measures/steps taken by a range of stakeholders.

The wide network of NRN contacts facilitated the consultation process and the linking of the stakeholders.

- It is evident that there is a benefit of collating academic and institutional research and combining that with the expertise and knowledge of those involved in the industry at ground level (farmers, advisers, professionals etc.). The insights provided by farmers who were already participating in partnerships ensured that the recommendations addressed the issues as encountered on the ground.

