

Multifunctional farming and advisory service: a literature review

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The advisory service as key element of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) plays a strategic role for European agricultures. The relevance of advisory service, assumed as a process of knowledge production for and with the farmers, is even more crucial in the transition processes towards multifunctional agriculture (MFA).

The specific requirements, practices and innovative actors of MFA systems pose new challenges to the advisory system, as well as to the whole agricultural knowledge system (Renting and al., 2008). A major challenge is related to farm diversity. MFA acknowledges a diversity of farms and farmers (in terms of sizes, production systems, projects, etc.) that may have different needs for knowledge and services (Labarthe and Laurent, 2013).

In recent years, diverse theoretical paradigms and tools were developed to describe and analyze ongoing processes and emerging dynamics regarding advisory services. However there are still some knowledge gaps about their empirical consistence and applicability at different levels and stages, and about their complementarities.

This paper presents a methodological reflection on how to organize a review of the recent academic literature on advisory service, acknowledging the diversity of available theories and concepts, so as to inform public decision and action related to MFA. This reflection would be a first step research process aiming at:

- mapping the frameworks and concepts related to advisory services used to investigate MFA, taking into account regional and infra-regional farm diversity;
- discussing the operability of the frameworks, which can be defined as their capacity to be used in empirical research studies, especially if related to policy making, including time, cost and resources for implementation.

The paper is intended as a resource to inform debates in transition towards sustainability and agricultural knowledge and information system, and to provide relevant indication to policy makers.

The study is carried out within the EU FP7 Project *Prospects for Farmers' Support: Advisory Services in European AKIS* (PRO AKIS). The overall purpose of PRO AKIS is to contribute to the performance of advisory services within the European AKIS, to make available significant and reliable knowledge for farmers and other rural actors.