

Where and how is Extension today in Portugal? Revisiting AKIS in a Time of Crisis and Challenges

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Governments and international organizations throughout the world are concerned with food security and agriculture and rural development are back in the priority agenda. That implies, as underlined in several documents, such as the “Budapest Declaration”, recently issued at the EU Conference on “Transitions towards sustainable food consumption and production in a resource constrained world”, a comeback of extension and the AKIS or the Agricultural Innovation System in general. In this paper we will analyse the Portuguese situation in this respect, answering a key question: Where can Extension be found today in Portugal? The study is based on inventory work recently done in the frame of the EU funded research project on the “Prospects for Farmers’ Support: Advisory Services in European AKIS” (Pro-Akis, KBBE.2012.1.4-07: Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems for an inclusive Europe). Fieldwork was conducted between March and June 2013, using document analysis and interviews with public services and private organizations, following a comprehensive interview guide and a questionnaire schedule. These instruments were designed to obtain a complete picture, identifying the organisations working in the field, their nature, mission, roles and objectives, the linkages between them and farmers, the groups being served and not served, the approaches and methods, the impacts produced, as well as the issues and challenges ahead. The paper will present an overview of the history of Extension in Portugal and a summary of the main research data, along with conclusions and recommendations.