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E-001935/2020

Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.6.2020)

Knowledge exchange, advisory services and innovation play a key role in helping farmers meet economic, social and environmental challenges and better respond to consumers' needs. This is why the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provides support in these areas under the current rural development programmes and it is proposed to strengthen this support under the future CAP.

Besides, in the current period, the Commission launched new tools to stimulate innovation and development of knowledge. The European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability (EIP-AGRI¹) is a main initiative designed to speed up innovation on the ground. It promotes collaboration between various innovation actors (e.g. farmers, entrepreneurs, advisers, researchers etc.) in agriculture and forestry to make the best use of complementary knowledge in view of co-creation and dissemination of solutions ready to implement in practice.

The EIP-AGRI benefits from a unique set of instruments, such as Operational Groups (OGs), multi-actor projects, Focus Groups and knowledge-exchange events, creating synergies under Horizon 2020 and CAP.

Significant results have been achieved so far. For example, over 1300 OGs offering a lot of practice-oriented knowledge ready to use by farmers, are currently active throughout the EU. Also, 180 multi-actor research projects work on similar issues at a transnational scale.

Building on the EIP-AGRI success, for the next programming period the Commission proposes to strengthen the role of the EIP-AGRI in order to boost innovation and knowledge sharing in the agricultural sector.

¹ The EIP-AGRI website <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/> provides comprehensive information on EIP-AGRI activities.