

Added Value of Networking



Provision of networking activities for advisors & innovation support services:

“Innovation study”

Basic information	
NRN:	Swedish NSU
Keywords:	Innovation study, research
Coordinator:	Swedish NSU
Partners:	SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences).
Resources:	n.a.
Period:	Autumn and winter of 2011/2012

Background to the networking/innovation support activities

In 2011 the Swedish Rural Network Steering Group decided to explore options about how the rural network could initiate and deliver activities that promoted innovation in rural areas. Meanwhile it was clear that the measure in the Rural Development Programme which aimed at stimulating innovation through collaboration between industry and research had not been used to the extent one might expect.

Purpose and description of the networking/innovation support activities

In spring 2011 a reference group was formed, consisting of steering committee members along with representatives from the unit's staff, who working together developed a proposal for future work. The reference group agreed that a survey on the innovation support system and its accessibility for rural innovators and entrepreneurs was necessary. In early summer, the steering committee decided to conduct the survey in collaboration with SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences).

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Who benefited from the activities and how

The results from the survey supported the NSU to tailor activities during this Programme period and focus on enabling a greater level of innovation during the next Programme period. In the longer term the beneficiaries will be entrepreneurs in rural areas who will be better able to access support.

Main results of the networking/innovation support activities & added value of the chosen delivery approach

The research undertaken was only a preliminary study and the results should therefore not be over-interpreted as only successful innovators were included, further benchmarking and indicators are needed. The results of this preliminary research concluded that:

- Innovation systems for agriculture seem to work relatively well. Some weaknesses were however identified, such as an inventory of needs and long term testing facilities;
- There isn't a robust rural innovation system, but the successful innovators had found and used systems from other sectors;
- The challenges in developing innovation lie more in supporting entrepreneurial development than the innovation process;
- Rural innovators develop strong networks that provide access to information, legitimacy and other resources;
- Rural businesses have access to and use other industry-based innovation systems;
- There is little evidence of a clear innovation system for rural areas in addition to networking and administrative support from the agricultural societies (HS), Farmers Union (LRF) and county administrative boards besides money from the Rural Development Program.

Success factors

The research was successful as the NSU working group and SLU ensured it was tightly focused and so gave results specific to the purpose.

Description of NSU and other partners contribution

The NSU initiated and formulated the research which was then delivered by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.



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Additional information and useful resources

n.a.

Pictures

n.a.

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