

PORTUGAL

Links with research & innovation

Location

Porto

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P1 – Knowledge transfer & innovation

Measure

M20 – Technical Assistance

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 70 259
EAFRD 59 720
National/Regional 10 539

Project duration

2017 – 2019

Project promoter

FORESTIS – Associação
Florestal de Portugal

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Website

www.facebook.com/i9rural/

A project to allow small businesses in the agricultural and forestry sectors to incorporate innovation more efficiently.

Summary

In recent years, there have been some important investments in Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I) projects in forestry. This project set out to create conditions for product and/or service innovation and, thus, transfer value to the production chain in forestry and agriculture and to rural areas. Specific activities undertaken include the development of a digital knowledge platform and the creation of a collaborative network between R&D&I and end users. The project also provides knowledge transfer and technical assistance.

i9Rural

Assistência Técnica e Transferência de Inovação para a Floresta e Agricultura

Results

The systematisation and analysis of technical and scientific information will enable a more effective information transfer to forestry, agricultural, and rural development organisations, as well as to entrepreneurs.

A collaborative network was established as a forum for discussion and information sharing between the project partners.

The provision of technical assistance acts as a bridge between R&D&I and end-users.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Given the great difficulty in pooling the knowledge generated by R&D projects and making it accessible to end-users, it is essential to create a space for permanent communication between R&D and innovation institutions and agents linked to production and industry.
- ❑ Given the need for more effective information transfer, it is essential to use attractive formats and language that is clear and easy to understand.
- ❑ The applicability of knowledge produced must be tested for the effective transfer of good practices to happen.

Context

There is significant progress in the integration of innovation into the primary sector and rural services. However, there is still a growing demand for innovation to address the challenges that producers are facing. This is especially so in the case of small farms with less professional management, but which are of structural importance for the rural areas. Among these challenges, the most relevant are low productivity; limited diversification of agricultural and forestry, i.e., low use of endogenous resources; and limited ability to create links between different economic sectors in rural areas.

It can be hard to introduce new practices on small farms because innovations may not fit with the characteristics of less market-oriented holdings; and because many small farms cannot access support for innovative actions.

Further constraints include:

- a lack of information on aspects that can positively influence decision-making in small farms. This includes a lack of tools to increase farm managers' capacity to collect and process existing information;
- The inability of potential end users to apply knowledge generated at research level, either because that knowledge is dispersed, or because it is not available in an easily comprehensible language; and
- lack of cooperation among rural development agents to translate scientific results into practical applications for end users

Objectives

The aim of this project is to incorporate innovation in productive systems and rural businesses. It will firstly prioritise an up-to-date diagnosis of innovation needs in agriculture, forestry and rural territories; and then it will transfer relevant technical information to rural development agents through networks.

Incorporating innovation is expected to create additional value in the productive chain of the forestry and agricultural sectors and, thus, create dynamics that will boost rural development.



Activities

Activities carried out during the project include:

- Collection and analysis of information concerning rural territories and their economic activities. This information was collected using several methods, such as direct contacts with relevant parties and desk-review of sectoral documents. This provided a set of needs and helped identify suitable and practical innovation factors that could be combined with forestry and agricultural activities and rural businesses.
- Development of a digital knowledge platform to organise existing information about innovation by subject, and to monitor innovation needs.
- Establishment of a collaborative R&D network to share technical and scientific information with rural development agents, and to strengthen the liaison between knowledge-producing entities and end users.
- Knowledge transfer and technical assistance to provide access to relevant and up-to-date information and promote the introduction of innovation in rural economies.

The project activities relied on the involvement of all the partner entities and on taking advantage of their position and role among end users. The project is addressed to forestry and agricultural organisations, forestry and agricultural holdings, as well as rural development organisations and agents.

Main results

- The systematisation and analysis of technical and scientific information will enable more effective information transfer to forestry, agricultural, and rural development organisations, as well as to entrepreneurs.
- The creation of a collaborative network is expected to consolidate a forum for discussion and information sharing between the partners, allowing solidification of existing relationships and fostering new lines of research.
- By organising meetings, events and work sessions (transfer of knowledge), it is expected to promote not only the project's results and products, but also good practices that are easily transferable and capable of being mobilised without obstacles.

Key lessons

- Given the great difficulty in pooling the knowledge generated by R&D projects and making it accessible to end-users, it is essential to create a space for permanent communication between R&D&I institutions and agents linked to production and

industry. This project foresees the creation of a digital platform, which should be continued after the project ends.

- Given the permanent need to develop and apply knowledge and innovation in forestry, agriculture and rural businesses, it is essential to create a network. This should first involve the partners of the project, adding more actors and stakeholders in order to strengthen communication channels and to foster new collaborations and initiatives.
- Given the need for more effective information transfer, it is essential to use attractive formats and a language that is as clear and easy to understand.
- The applicability of knowledge produced must be tested for the effective transfer of good practices to happen. If correctly reflected and implemented, it will provide the first step towards the incorporation of innovation.
- Scientific knowledge produced by the project should be compiled, shared and its impact assessed. This will help to define priorities for future research programmes for agriculture, forestry and rural development.

Project partners

- [AIFF – Associação para a Competitividade das Indústrias da Fileira Florestal](#)
- [IDARN - Instituto para o Desenvolvimento Agrário da Região Norte](#)
- [Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto](#)
- [School of Biotechnology of the Portuguese Catholic University](#)

Additional sources of information

www.forestis.pt