

Pre-Conference Highlights

Parallel Session: Adding value locally. Rural areas and global value chains

Moderator: - David Lamb, ENRD Contact Point

BACKGROUND

The main aim of the workshop was to consider how rural producers and networks can add value and improve linkages to target markets - considering their economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Both the [Cork 2.0 Declaration](#) and the OECD's [New Rural Policy 3.0](#) (NRP 3.0) stress a number of common points: the importance of integrated approaches for strengthening both rural value chains and local productive networks; the emerging business opportunities related to food quality, health, the bio-economy; the circular and low-carbon economies. Cork 2.0 also refers to the need for new approaches to horizontal and vertical integration to ensure fair and transparent relations within supply chains and to strengthen farmers' collective actions. NRP 3.0 puts the emphasis on smart specialisation strategies which focus on the absolute or comparative advantages of different types of rural area.

PANELIST PRESENTATIONS



How can producer collaboration add value?

Alastair Dobson
(UK - Scotland)

'Taste of Arran' is a group of nine small food and drink producers based on the island of Arran. Based on their initial collaboration, Alastair has realised the benefit of further cooperation on export and with regional economic partners to enhance marketing and tourism, and to combat depopulation.

Collaboration has reduced cost through shared logistics and has enhanced innovation through shared new product development, but needs time, trust and leadership. Value still needs to be driven back through the supply chain to farmers.

« We are cooperative by nature, but it takes time to create a culture of trust. We had a range of cheese producers. I showed them that our regional product was the cheeseboard, not the cheese. »



How do we grow local food communities?

Carlo Ricci (Italy)

'Food communities' is a regeneration strategy focused on the local gastronomic heritage and based on a special participative approach.

The central idea is that regional gastronomic identity represents an underexploited territorial asset with important economic potential in terms of tourist attraction and added value production.

Food communities are small groups of local actors (farmers, producers, representatives of municipalities and associations, researchers and individuals) joined together with the aim of enhancing the value of local produce and linking it to tourism.

« Territorial strategies for food communities combine three different categories of support action: protection, characterisation and marketing. »



What soft skills do we need to connect value chain actors and support innovative networks?

Teresa Pinto Correia (Portugal)

The soft skills that we can use to connect the different components of the supply chain include communication, listening, empathy, creative thinking, work ethics, team work, flexibility, problem-solving, positivity, critical thinking, and conflict resolution. These skills are not (currently) learned in classrooms, but in life.

Connecting value chain actors and innovative networks requires collective actions across different stakeholder groups. Although there is high potential for new value chains to emerge, the skills required are missing, particularly on collaboration and networking.

« Soft skills are interpersonal - they characterise how a person interacts in their relationships with others. They are crucial in rural development. »



Food policy as a driver for change?

Chung Jae-kyun (South Korea)

Trends in rural areas of South Korea have involved depopulation and migration to cities, particularly of young people. However, many retirees (baby boomers) choose rural communities for their retirement and often lead social and agricultural activities in these areas.

Some agricultural areas are taking a territorial-based approach to promote rural innovation. This includes a focus on developing local food systems as part of a comprehensive territorial approach.

South Korea is developing rural policies linked to policies in other sectors – supporting young innovators and creating more opportunities for community-based business activities.

« There is a rediscovery of rural areas as source of innovation. Local foods are under the spotlight as a new strategy to deliver rural innovation. »

MAIN OUTCOMES FROM THE DISCUSSIONS

- **Promote producer collaboration**
 - This requires a culture of trust and takes time;
 - There is a need to identify leaders and enable champions;
 - Use/create synergies between regional assets;
 - Collaboration should be business and market-driven; policy should support - not drive.
- **Soft skills matter and can be taught**
 - Consider peer-to-peer learning;
 - They should be built into early education;
 - Provide platforms (including online) to address different needs;
 - Develop technical skills which are specific to rural areas.
- **Develop food policies**
 - Public procurement can be used to promote local produce (involve schools/parents);
 - Facilitate local ownership using policy instruments directed at local needs;
 - Bring local actors together - this can be cross-sectoral and read across different policies.

More information at <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu> & <http://www.oecd.org/rural/rural-development-conference/>