

Common workshop on soft skills for farm advisors (hybrid)

29.01.25



To accelerate knowledge creation and sharing on **Integrated Fertilization Management**.



The first European-wide network of **organic advisors** and advisory services.



EU-wide network of advisors specialised in the **use and risks of pesticides**.



OBJECTIVES

- 1 Challenges** of establishing and running advisory services, and what **support** (policy) is needed for them.
- 2 Variety of soft skills** required to run (organic) advisory services.
- 3 To connect advisory networks** across Europe.



PARTICIPANTS

72 Online

14 In person

Experience of participants on farm advice



I'm only starting

I'm an experienced advisor



SOFT SKILLS FOR FARM ADVICE

Establishing trust, credibility, and mutual respect is essential for maintaining long-term relationships with farmers.

Building trust and relationships

Emotional intelligence and human connection

Empathy, patience, enthusiasm, and humour foster positive interactions and strengthen advisor-farmer relationships.

Advisors emphasise the importance of listening actively, asking the right questions, and communicating clearly to engage farmers effectively.

Communication and active listening

Networking and knowledge exchange

Advisors benefit from collaboration, peer learning, and understanding innovation processes to support continuous knowledge transfer.

Flexibility, resilience, and critical thinking help advisors navigate complex farm situations and tailor their advice.

Adaptability and problem-solving

Facilitation, engagement, and training skills

Advisors need strong facilitation and training skills to organise discussions, demonstrations, and peer-to-peer learning activities.

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GROUP EXERCISE: Soft skills needed to overcome non-agronomic challenges and support needed to acquire them.



CHALLENGE: Stay updated about technology developments and to provide recommendations

SOFT SKILLS

- Networking
- Rapid innovation exchange
- Time management

SUPPORT

- Access to affordable online courses
- Combined: hybrid + online
- Lifelong learning programmes
- Support from farm advisory projects (training, exchanges, newsletters)



CHALLENGE: Convincing farmers to adopt new technologies or sustainable practices

SOFT SKILLS

- Share of quality knowledge/experience
- Good organisational skills
- See/share good practical examples - cross visits
- Good communication skills
- Empathy: care about economic/other implications

SUPPORT

- Training on the use of new technologies/good communication and organisational skills
- Well-established and stable network
- To cover farmers' travel costs



CHALLENGE: How to engage new stakeholders?

SOFT SKILLS

- Time management
- Variety of soft skills needed
- Organisational skills
- Weekly planning
- Tasks prioritisation
- Trusting your team
- Adding pauses to the agenda
- Capacity to delegate tasks
- Planification of events
- Tolerating mistakes

SUPPORT

- Training on team management
- Tools and techniques for prioritisation: Pomodoro, Eisenhower matrix, etc.
- Understanding the three roles of managing a group: facilitating, moderating, animating.



CHALLENGE: Keep a group engaged

SOFT SKILLS

- To put farmer and advisor practice at the center
- Teaser for the next meeting
- Knowledge exchange, not only transfer
- Listen to the group wishes
- Be available for calls (reliability)
- Active listening
- Engaging activities
- Keep interest of the group
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Quality knowledge
- Shaping the content, making it accessible

SUPPORT

- Access to the best knowledge
- How to create the feeling of community
- Opportunities to learn from best practices: study trip, training, demo farm, creation of community of practice



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TAKEAWAYS

The workshop highlighted the importance of **networking, communication, and knowledge sharing** among advisors **facing similar challenges across Europe**. Participants emphasised the need for engaging **communication, peer learning, and long-term collaboration** to strengthen advisory services. While challenges were identified, there was a strong call for **practical solutions and next steps** to address them.

Happy farmers = happy advisors

All different and all with the same challenges

Continuity is needed to save our results and to create a community



TOOLS



A **video conferencing** tool for virtual meetings, training, and workshops with features like **screen sharing, breakout rooms, and chat**. Best for live discussions and interactive sessions



An interactive tool for live **polls, word clouds, and quizzes**. Ideal for engaging participants, gathering feedback, and making sessions more dynamic.




A collaboration platform with **digital whiteboards and brainstorming tools**. Great for structured discussions, teamwork, and visualising ideas.



RESOURCES

Competency profile for the innovation advisor, developed in the i2connect project.

 <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/1/182>

FarmDemo toolkit 

This website collects interesting tools, guidelines and videos for successful farm demonstrations, both on-farms and online.

i2connect resources 

i2connect's **toolbox for innovation support** was developed containing a number of useful tools for advisors and facilitators, including video tutorials.

<https://i2connect-h2020.eu/>



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