



UNDERSTANDING & IMPROVING
THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGROECOLOGICAL FARMING
SYSTEMS IN THE EU

Role and Experiences of Multi-Actor Approach in Agro-ecological Transitions

Katherine Irvine, David Miller, Philippe Fleury,
Audrey Vincent, Emmanuel Guisepelelli,
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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020
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Poll – Who is here?!

- Please click on the ‘Poll’ icon on the right side of your screen
- Answer the question as best you can 😊
- Thank you for being here with us.

Present the role of Multi Actor Platforms in the UNISECO project

- The principles for their operation
- The experience of applying the Multi- Actor Platform for Socio-Ecological System research at the case study level
- Key messages from the ex-post evaluation feedback

Some food for thought:

- How is the Multi-Actor Platform a relevant tool to help understand the issues of agro-ecology? What does such an approach bring in addition to or different from a classic diagnostic approach?
- Is a Multi-Actor Platform a means of producing new knowledge? In what way?
- What place is given to the knowledge and know-how of local actors in the debates?
- What type of relationship between actors and researchers does such a system allow?
- What experiences or reflections do you have from involvement in a multi-actor approach for agro-ecology?



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Principles and operation of multi-actor platform

Katherine Irvine, David Miller



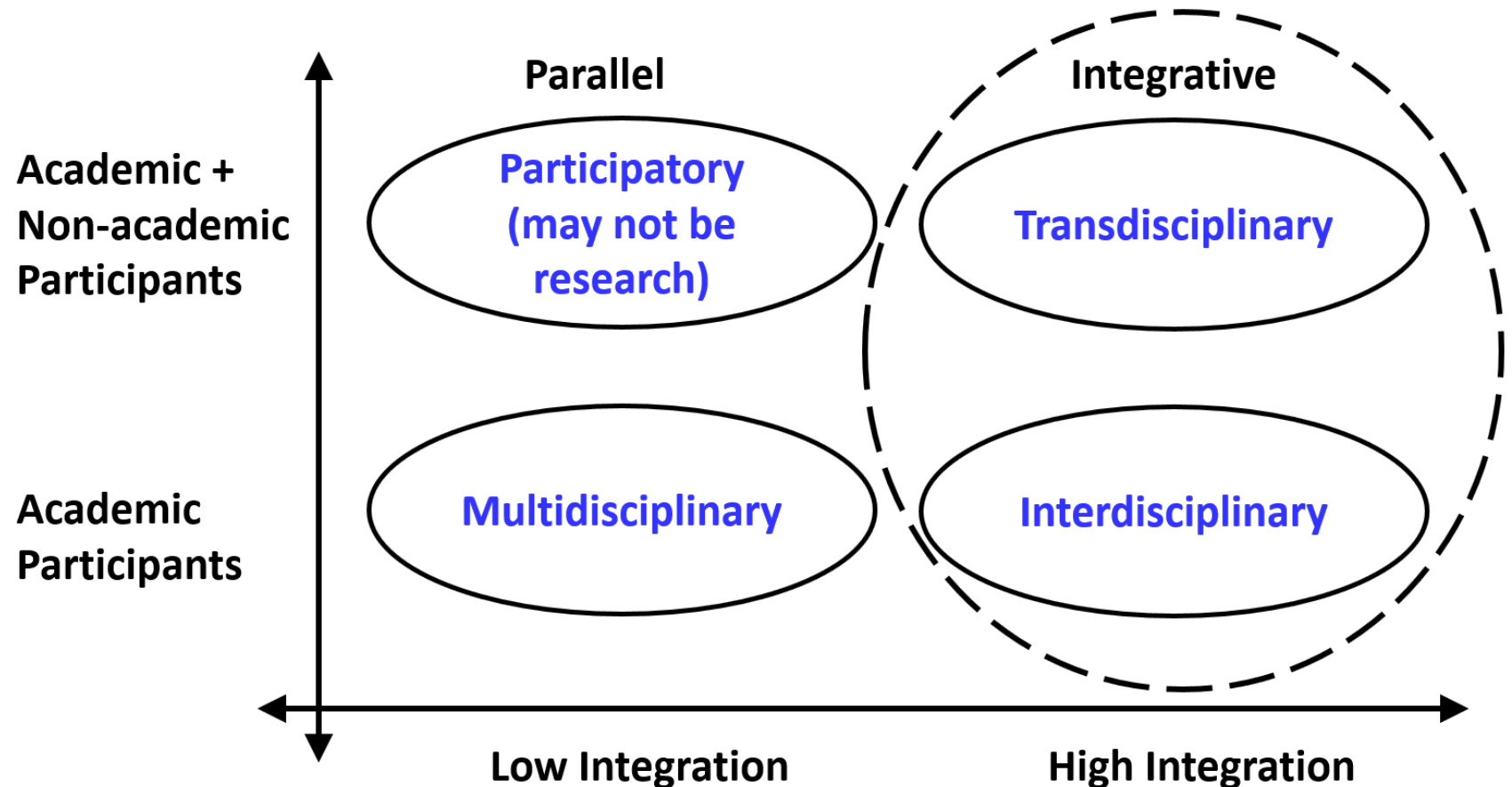
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- A **transdisciplinary Multi-Actor Approach** was used to co-construct practice-validated strategies and incentives for promoting agro-ecological approaches
- **The aims are to produce structured co-constructed strategies** and policy instruments for delivering public goods through economically viable agro-ecological farming systems
- **The impacts sought were:**
 - Instrumental, through influencing the development of policy, practice or services
 - Increase capacities leading to operational changes in farming practices
 - New, or strengthened networks



- Membership of the **Multi-Actor Platforms** is designed to cross boundaries of disciplines, expertise and roles, in academic and non-academic organisations
- They form an integrative transdisciplinary framework
- ... and strengthen capacity of project partners and actors to assess the sustainability of agro-ecological farming systems



Co-construction by actors ...

- Farmer – Knowledge of equipment and land
- Research – Knowledge of problem process
- Agricultural advisor – Extension to other farmers
- Policy team – Compliance with support measures, relevance of policy innovations
- Value chain – Market requirements and opportunities

Knowledge Exchange ...

- On site, in field, explanations of practices
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Promotion of best practice in research and businesses

Swedish Case Study: Co-creating solutions for sustainable food systems



Criteria for selecting members of the Multi-Actor Platforms

- Interest
- Availability
- Relevance
- Appropriateness
- Representativeness
- Willingness
- Gender
- Geography
- Age range

Plus ...

- Build on existing relationships, with established trust
- Develop new relationships

Experience showed

- Good composition, and operation of the Platforms created atmosphere of constructive working

Principles for operating Multi-Actor Platforms

- Respect
- Sharing
- Listening
- Attention
- Teamwork
- Ethics

EU level Multi-Actor Platform, e.g. Brussels, March 2019



Workshop to discuss scenarios of future food systems, general methodological approach, and requirements for certain outputs.

Different functions or focus

- **European Union level:** Focused on relevance of approaches and findings to EU and international policy and practice
- **Local level:** Focused on national or regional/local policy and practice, within those biophysical, political and social contexts
- **Cross-level:** Stakeholder Reference Group, drawn from both levels

Actor Roles and Relationships

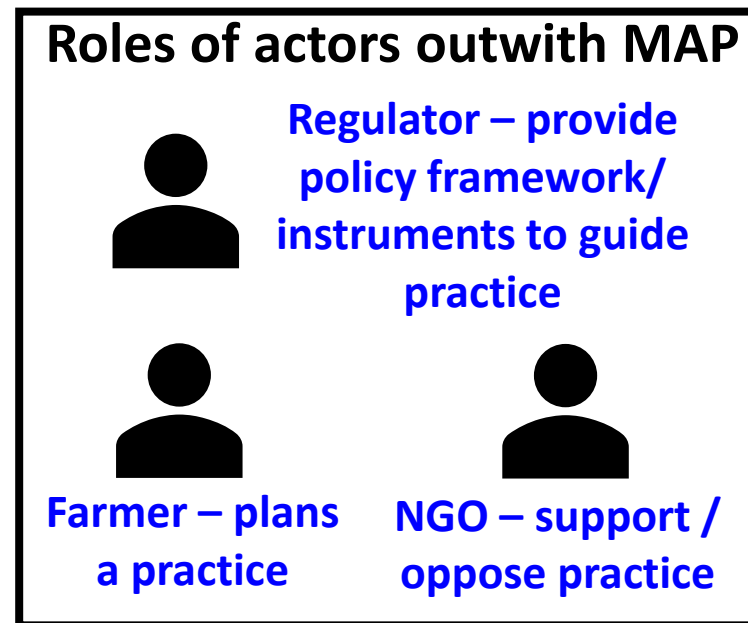
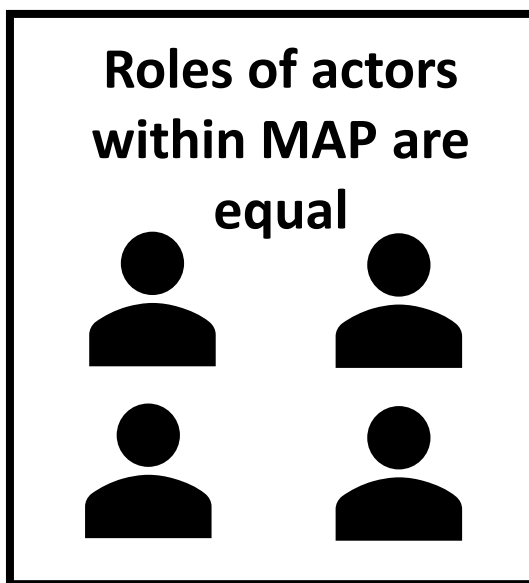
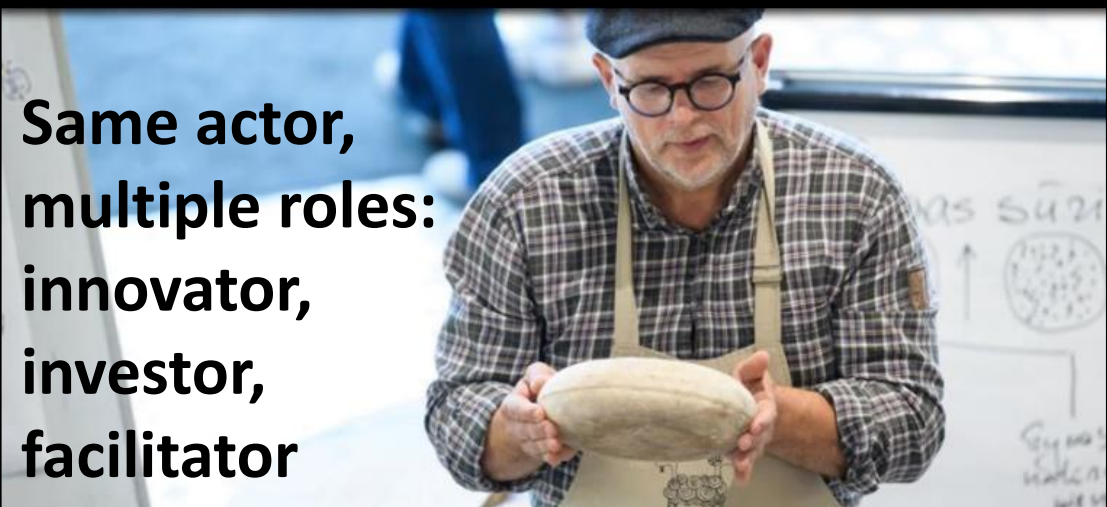
- **Actor roles**

- Beneficiary, innovator, investor, facilitator of knowledge exchange ... and user of knowledge

- **Actor relationships**

- Power relationships between actors are different in and out of project roles:
- e.g. equals within project, seeking permission for development externally

Keeping it small and extensive: the way to a sustainable future in Lithuan...



- Local understanding of the farming systems and transitions in the diverse range across UNISECO
- Working closely with actors to understand supply chains and networks



**Case Study of
Peach Growers,
Imathia, Greece**

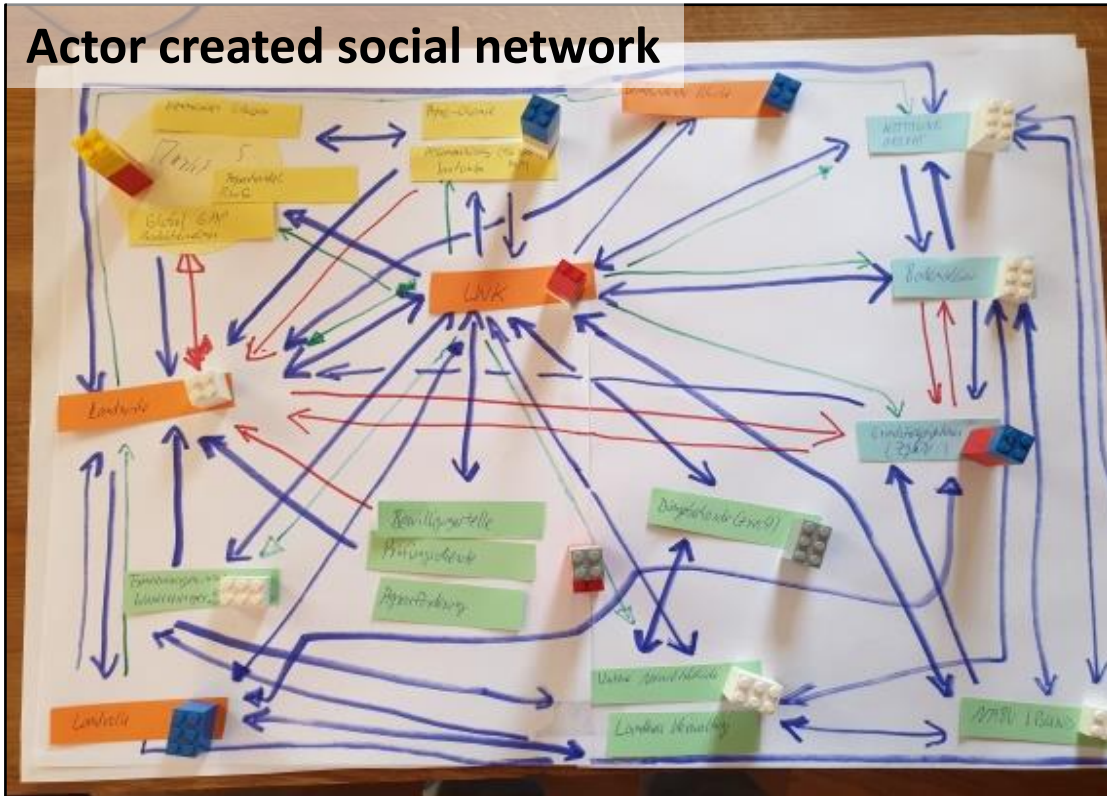






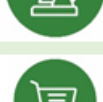


Local actors: agricultural co-operatives/Producer Groups, fruit-industry group, local authority and agronomists consultants



Working with local actors to understand and address issues of sustainability

- Eliciting information about networks of flows of knowledge and information, and products



	Authorities and Administration
	Farmers
	Agri-food value chain
	NGOs, civic society organisations, local community representatives
	Science, innovation, advisory, capacity building
	Consumers
	Media

UNISECO-wide Network Actors

Experience showed

- Recognition of benefits of joint working
- Added value of strengthening networks between actors

- Adherence to principles and best practice in research ethics contributes to creating outputs and impacts sought
- Take time to identify suitable actors for Platform
- Take time to recruit actors: ‘no surprises’ for them or project
- Need for shared understanding of ‘rules of engagement’ within the Platform
- Co-developing the concept and implementation of Multi-Actor Platforms with the actors contributes to developing long-term relations and networks
- Operation of the Multi-Actor Platforms increases the shared capabilities of members in policy, practice and science



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Crossing scientific and stakeholders approaches

Emmanuel Guisepelli, Audrey Vincent, Philippe Fleury



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A framework for interdisciplinary sustainability analysis of systems that interact

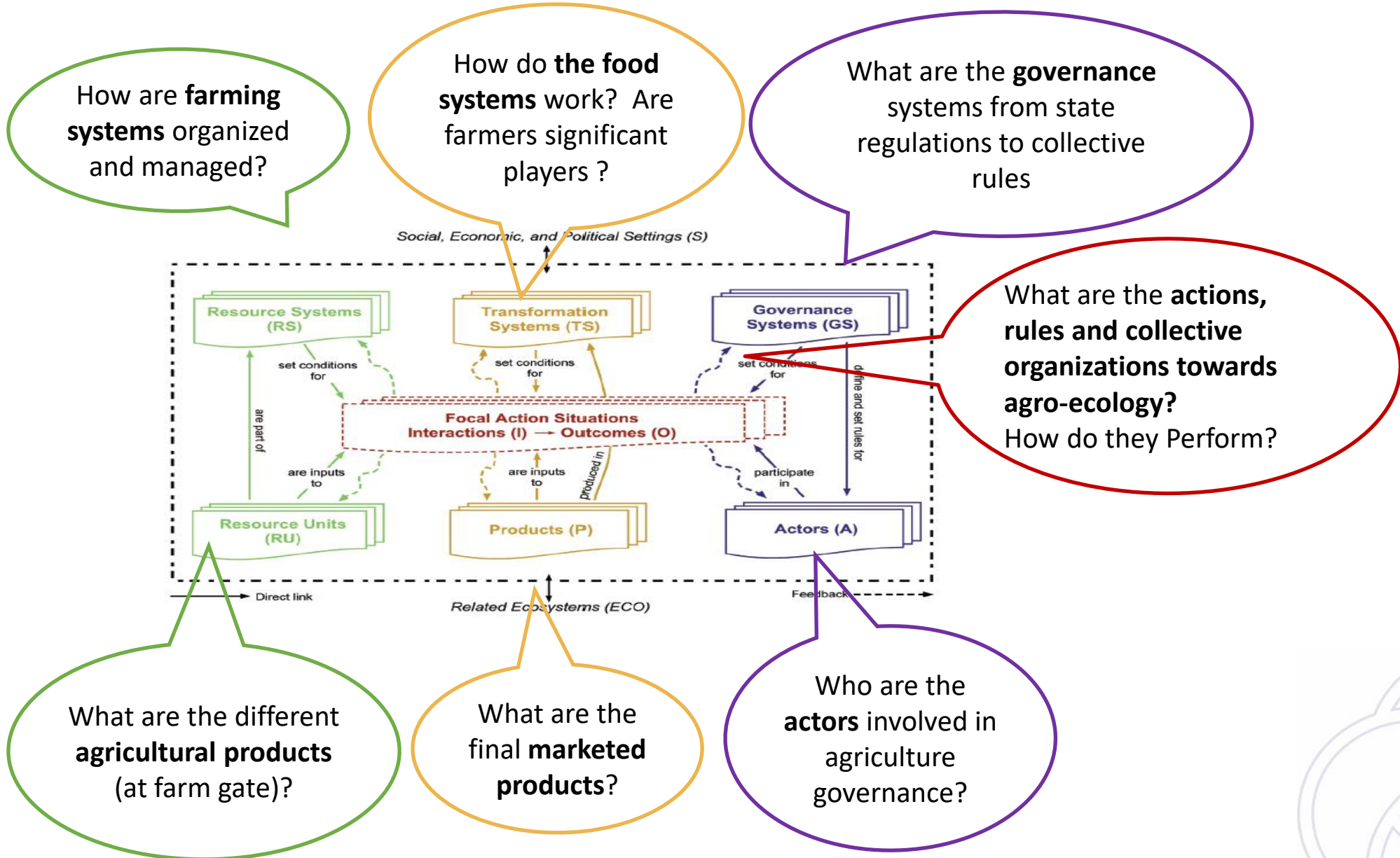
- **Subsystems**

- resource system (location, size, etc.)
- resource units (replacement rate, number of units)
- governance system (organization and rules)
- actors (number, knowledge technology, etc.)

- **2 external dimensions**

- economic and socio-political context
- connected or non-connected ecosystems (source)

- The Focal Action Situation is the social space created to discuss and manage the agro-ecological transition



Use of Socio-Ecological Systems approach supported the ...

Sustainability assessment

- Standardised overview of case studies, providing consistency in considering the multiple interactions and drivers
- Qualitative assessment (primarily) of the sustainability of the sub-systems of the Socio-Ecological Systems

Identification of drivers of and barriers to agro-ecological transitions

- Identification and analysis of the relationships of the main barriers and drivers relating to the sub-systems of farming systems in case studies
- Identification of off-farm variables relevant to the implementation of agro-ecological practices



Use of the Socio-Ecological Systems approach with local Multi-Actor Platforms

- The Socio-Ecological Systems framework was used in structuring aspects of engagement with the local Multi-Actor Platforms
- The approach:
 - Enabled a step-by-step discussion of the drivers of agro-ecological farming systems, and barriers to its uptake
 - Organised the collection of the in-depth knowledge of specific dynamics of the social-ecological system in a local context
 - Structured the development of visions of transitions towards agro-ecological farming practices and systems
 - **Helped to create a common understanding of the farming systems, within and between the case studies**



Contribution of Socio-Ecological Systems




- “External” and expert knowledge
- Systems approach: drivers, barriers, sustainability

Implementation of Agro-ecological practices



- Relevant practices and levels of action
- New markets, innovations, launch of experiments

Contribution of Multi-Actor Platforms

- Knowledge from communities of place and of interest
 - Prioritisation of issues and actions (farm, local, food systems, etc.)
 - Initiating social dynamics
- 

Linking Socio-Ecological Systems and Multi-Actor Platforms enables the ...

- Creation of visions of action plans based on a holistic and interdisciplinary analysis of drivers, barriers, sustainability
- Discussion of technical practices and identifying a broad range of key factors important to the dynamics
 - e.g. governance, policies and regulations, food system, local territory and actors
- Design and implementation of a future of agro-ecological farming systems and practices, as identified by stakeholders





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Ex-post evaluation of Multi-Actor Engagement

Alexandra Smyrniotopoulou, George Vlahos



ΓΕΩΠΟΝΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
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Objectives

- To interpret societal expectations using participatory process with stakeholders and end users (practitioners, educators etc.)
- To engage end users in the process of sustainability assessment
- To empower end users through familiarisation with the use of sustainability assessment tools



- Assess the performance of the MAPs in promoting co-learning, and capacity building of key actors
- Monitor and evaluate the “moments of engagement” in which the UNISECO partners interact with actors through participatory processes
- Adjust and improve the approach based on feedback from members of MAPs and project partners



Case study level

- Effect of participatory project activities on the **capacities** and **networks** of participants through questionnaires or personal interviews

Ex-post Evaluation at Case Study Level

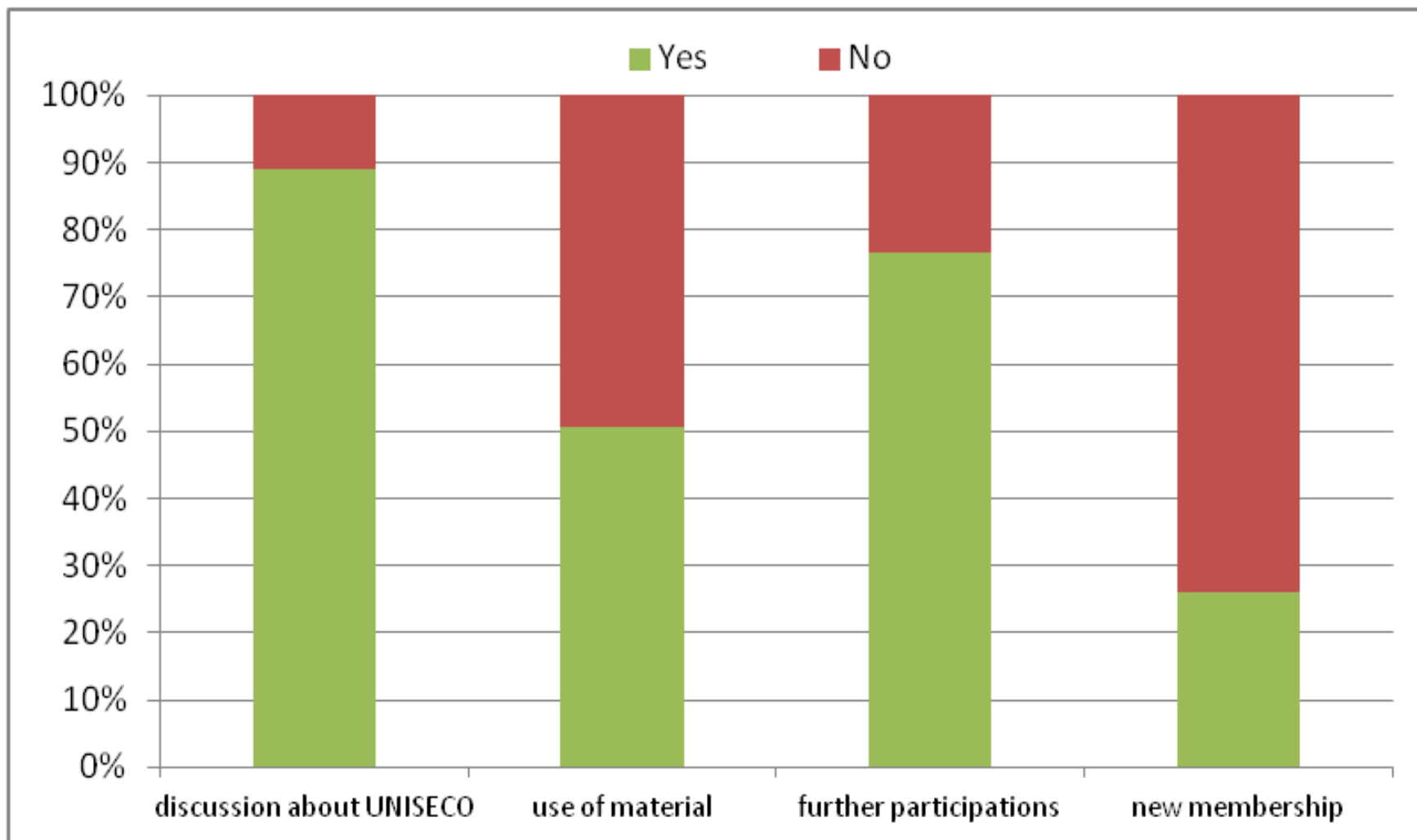
	CZ	FR	DE	GR	HU	IT	LV	LT	RO	ES	SE	CH	Total
Female		1	1	2	4	3	4	5	1	4	5		30
Male	4	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	2	10	2		39
N° of completed questionnaires	4	4	5	4	8	6	7	7	3	14	7	13	82



Ex-post Evaluation at Case Study Level

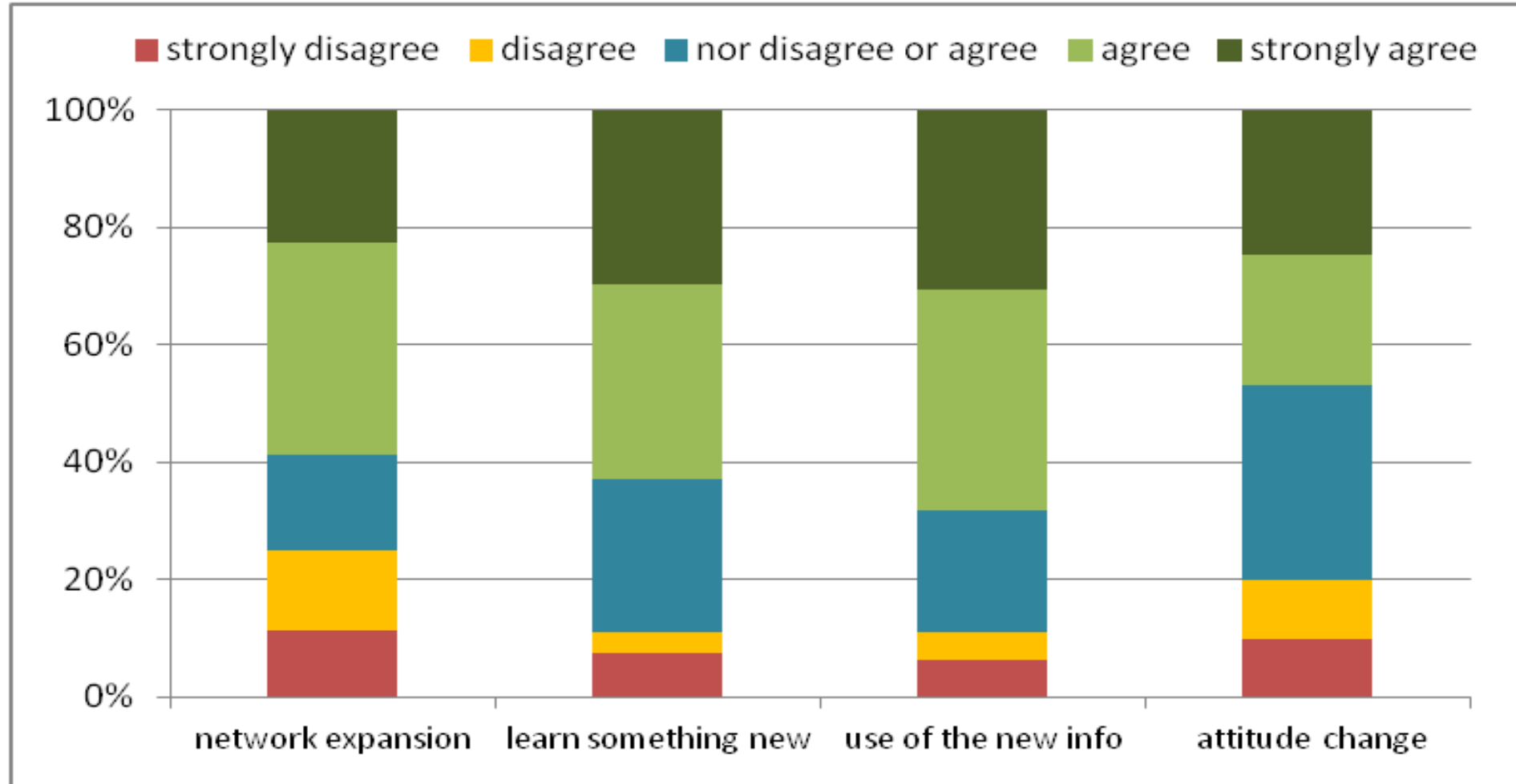
	CZ	FR	DE	GR	HU	IT	LV	LT	RO	ES	SE	CH	Total
Farmers	1	1	1	1		1	1	2		7	1		16
Authorities and administration	1		2	1	4	1	2	2		4			17
Agri-food value chain				1	1					1	3		6
NGOs		1	1		1	1	3	1	2	1	1		12
Science, advisory, capacity building	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	2		18
N° of completed questionnaires	4	4	5	4	8	6	7	7	3	14	7	13	82

Key Findings from Ex-post Evaluation Feedback



- The majority of respondents (89%) have discussed the UNISECO project activities and outcomes with their colleagues, experts, family.
e.g. “I have shared inputs in both professional and family contexts...”; “Other environmental /nature conservation associations in the area”
- Half the respondents (51%) have used the resources provided to them over the course of the UNISECO project in order to communicate and inform others about issues related to their professional activity.
e.g. “I looked at the website and read some deliverables”; “Story maps are used as samples to illustrate the project activities”; “I used the net-map of the actor assessments showing the linkages between actors”
- More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) have participated at least in another meeting/activity/campaign for sustainable agriculture.
e.g. “online conference organized by the EC or meeting in building AKIS”; “Webinar about digital farming”; “online discussion of the Agroecology forum in Greece”
- Around one in four respondents (26%) have joined at least one new group, organisation, network, partnership on agro-ecological farming practices.
e.g. “Participation in the working group set up by the Ministry of Agriculture for the CAP Strategic Planning”; “I joined the Result Based Payments Network ”

Key Findings from Ex-post Evaluation Feedback



- More than half of respondents (59%) have established communication links with persons for sharing information and experience on agro-ecology.
e.g. “with the regional agricultural co-operation network...”; “I’ve “discovered” scientists working in related fields”; “new linkages with the other participants of the project”
- Most respondents (63%) feel that they have learned something new about agro-ecological issues.
e.g. “The importance of analyzing the roles and potential influence of the various actors is an important knowledge for me”; “I received very useful information about factors that encourage and inhibit farmers from adopting agro-ecological practices”; “The results of the sustainability tools and the exchange with the farming families after the calculation of their farms was interesting”
- Around two-thirds (68%) will use the information, knowledge acquired in their professional activities.
e.g. “I will use the information and knowledge I acquired in UNISECO to develop the territorial economic plan of ...”; “In other ongoing projects where the target group will be farmers and land owners”; “Providing inputs for the planning of the CAP Strategic Plan”
- Four in five respondents (80%) were already involved in sustainable agriculture.
e.g. ³¹“My attitude towards sustainable agriculture has been very positive for a long time”; “I was always motivated “; “I am motivated to CONTINUE working towards sustainable agriculture”

- **Engagement may create opportunities for network building**

“Thanks to UNISECO I have established new contacts with colleagues, experts, researchers...”; “the engagement between the different actors... open and constructive exchange was an important contribution of the project”

- **BUT ALSO** *“The UNISECO project was not the catalyst for solving regional environmental problems... I wonder if the study will do anything in practice and in the region”; “... we have not felt very involved except for the data we have provided”*

- **Efforts to create valuable and consistent content with actors’ needs and interests**

“Some of the tools/software used to collect data (e.g., CFT) are not very relevant for the features of agriculture in my area”; “The topic of the project is quite complex... simple language is important...English is often problematic for us”; “There was no particularly new knowledge for me”; “... it is the project that benefits from our participation since agroecology is our daily routine and we have been working on it for years”



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