LIAISON
Optimising interactive innovation

The TRUE Project

Sustainable food security

Sustainable protein production

TRUE – TRansition paths to sUstainable legume-based systems in Europe

H2020 Research and Innovation Action (RIA)

Europe and one country from Africa (UK, DE, DK, ES, GR, HR, HU, IE, PT, SI and KE)

24 Partners
Lead Partner: James Hutton Institute (JHI)

2017-2021

4,999,927.50 EUR
(100% EU public funding)

A little bit more about TRUE

TRUE (TRansition paths to sUstainable legume based systems in Europe) aims at identifying the best "transition paths" to increase sustainable legume cultivation and consumption across Europe, including the entire legume feed and food value chain.

The project explores strategies to increase the EU's self-sufficiency on plant protein and reduce the application of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers.

TRUE uses 24 pilot studies and transdisciplinary knowledge-exchange to create tangible innovations as well.

The TRUE project identifies more sustainable legume-based pathways – economically, environmentally and socially – and implements these via better collaboration and networking amongst European actors from across the value chain.

Since TRUE is aimed at a contributing to a systems-level solution, European citizens as consumers and as beneficiaries of more sustainable value chains are all potentially impacted by it. Although change is a longer process, it is already happening.

"Although we were identifying transition paths, we're also developing and actually implementing some of those transition paths as well." (WP leader from a public research institute)

Highlights!

Competent, devoted, resilient and supportive partners play a big role in the long-term success

Smaller companies tend to be more open for change as stakeholders but often need support as consortium partners

A critical mass achieved through networking can accelerate social change

Interesting links/videos/reports

www.true-project.eu

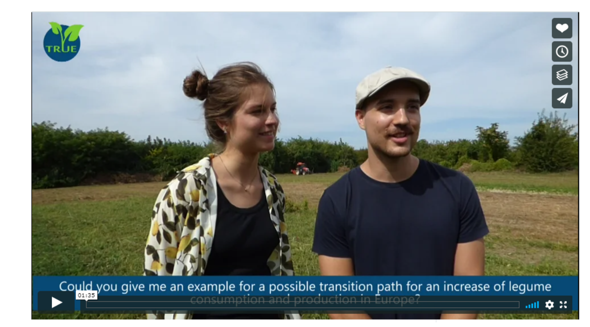
Practice abstract I
www.true-project.eu/publications-resources/deliverables/

Legume recipes
www.true-project.eu/publications-resources/recipes/

Climate positive gin from peas
www.true-project.eu/2020/02/19/climate-positive-gin-made-out-of-peas/

Interview with TRUE work package leaders
https://vimeo.com/311627406

Stakeholder interview on a LIN workshop
https://vimeo.com/385230438



Innovation and co-creation in TRUE

Innovation in TRUE

The social innovation of TRUE is in its attempt to change the current system of legume cultivation and consumption across Europe and to contribute to a social change. Officially there are 24 pilot studies (called Case Studies) in the project which create flexible space for innovation. However, there are many more hidden innovations within the work package activities as well.
TRUE is an innovative project as it:
• introduces new ways of cultivating profitable systems for legumes,
• creates new collaborations, including networks (establishing and formalising the Legume Innovation Network (LIN) to connect legume-focused actors and facilitate knowledge exchange and sustainable commercial development),
• develops new products (e.g. beer from bean, climate positive gin from peas, lentil pancake-mix, legume-based yoghurt), and
• builds up an integrated decision support system (Path Finder) to help design policies.

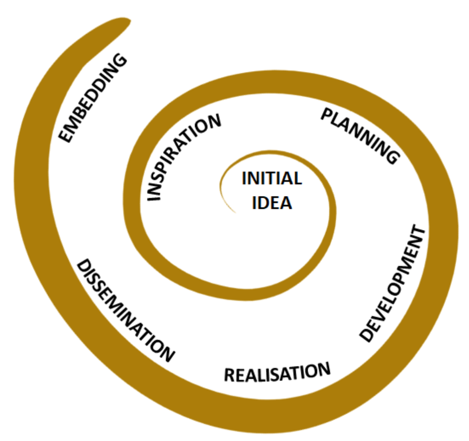


Figure: The stages of the innovation spiral the case has moved through are highlighted in brown
Source: Wielinga, E., Zaalmink, W., Bergevoet, R., Geerling-Eiff, F., Holster, H., Hoogerwerf, L. and Vrolijk, H. (2008). Networks with Free Actors. Wageningen UR, Wageningen. https://edepot.wur.nl/22956

Co-creation in TRUE

The consortium was purposefully set up as a well-balanced group, consisting of 12 academic and 12 non-academic (practitioner) partners, creating a bridge from academia into practice. Most of them lead a pilot study. Where the tasks provide space for it, co-creation is high amongst the partners. There is a very good atmosphere of cooperation and supportive relationships within the consortium, which go hand-in-hand with good coordination and transparency. Personal resilience traits and a lack of selfish mentality are all important factors in achieving the main project endeavours, such as creating a social network and building a community within the project.
Expanding one's viewpoint and broadening one's horizons were emphasised as learning opportunities within the TRUE consortium. The transdisciplinary way of working has occupied a central role in the project from the beginning. A special toolbox was developed to help partners in this process, but personal learning and learning-by-doing received even more emphasis. The annual well-prepared General Assembly (GA) meetings provide space not only for sharing results but also for learning how to collaborate and how to work with other people.
Stakeholders are involved through regular LIN workshops for co-creation. The main groups of stakeholders include actors along the legume value chain, representatives of other EU projects (e.g. Crop Diversity Cluster), policy makers, scientists, advisors and others. External stakeholders are often brought into the project from the partners' networks, taking local characteristics in different pedo-climatic regions into consideration. Since the majority of the stakeholders are practitioners, this workshop system connects the project to the 'real world'.

"A happy bunch of people working well together and having lots of fun, generating new knowledge and new insights, new tools, new products and developing a trademark within the project..." (WP leader from a research organisation)

"Allowing a culture of blame to establish in a project is especially caustic and we work to avoid this at all costs" (WP leader from a research organisation)

Good Practices & Lessons Learned

Interaction with the funding mechanism	Certain groups of actors (SMEs) could play a bigger role in European research projects if the projects were smaller or if there was a more even distribution of the resources (Eastern European countries). These could create more opportunities for innovation co-creation.	When involving stakeholders and sharing results, language barriers can be a burden. To avoid exclusion, this needs to be taken into account both by the funding rules and the partnership and planned for accordingly.
Interaction between the case study partners	Taking the time to co-create the proposal is important. During the planning phase, involvement was organised through six two-day face-to-face meetings with devoted partners, who were willing to invest from their own resources when needed.	Small organisations and micro SMEs often lack support to rationalise their resources. When challenges arise, the coordinator and other partners help them to overcome the difficulties. It becomes a point of learning.
Interaction with external stakeholders	Stakeholder workshops were organised frequently enough (3 meetings in 3 regions plus a final combined meeting) to start joint working and community building. One of the added values of these meetings was that instead of competing, competitors started communicating.	In the LIN workshops, the proportion of SMEs was relatively high, although they are usually extremely busy. Smaller, flexible companies tend to have more influence in changing the current pathways. They are more open to new things and willing to be disruptive.
Interaction with the case study context	When an academic partner develops a new product idea, there are options outside the project for advancing the process further; for instance, channelling these products into innovation schemes and accelerator programmes or establishing a spin-off company to scale the product.	Policy is only one of the factors for transformative change; there are other potentially stronger structural difficulties, lock-ins, rigid traditional patterns or attitudes (e.g. associating legumes with the poor man's meat).
Contribution to societal challenges	Change is a longer process and one project cannot accomplish everything. For this reason, networking is important at several levels, e.g. LIN workshops, legacy LIN, Diversification Cluster, writing new related proposals.	More legume production and consumption, better networking amongst legume actors as well as institutionalisation of legume activities in Europe are expected outcomes of the project.

LIAISON
Optimising interactive innovation
www.liaison2020.eu
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773418. This document presents the authors' perspective but not the position of the European Commission.
NAIK – Nemzeti Agrárkutatási és Innovációs Központ – National Agricultural Research and Innovation Centre
AKI – Research Institute of Agricultural Economics
ILVO

Author of content
Eszter Varga from NAIK AKI
Poster template
Evellien Cronin from ILVO
Sylvie Fosselle from ILVO

This poster template was developed by ILVO for the LIAISON project