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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

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Foreword

Studies in Agricultural Economics is a peer-reviewed Web of Science™ journal and is ‘platinum’ open access, i.e. there are no publication or access fees of any kind. Coupled with the fact that it is published in print and online, this means that it is well placed to support the European Union’s (EU) aspirations to increase accessibility to the results of the research it funds.

This fact is clearly recognised by Wageningen Economic Research, the coordinators of the EU Framework 7 project FLINT (Farm-level Indicators for New Topics in policy evaluation), and they have opted to publish a thematic issue of their research papers in *Studies in Agricultural Economics*. FLINT (www.flint-fp7.eu) brings together 11 partners from nine EU Member States (the Netherlands, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Spain) in a consortium that combines universities with a track record on sustainability issues with research organisations with a long tradition in data collection and policy analysis. With this profile of expertise behind them, the results of the research are likely to be of real interest to this journal’s target audience of researchers, academics, policy makers and practitioners.

Poppe, Vrolijk, Dolman and Silvis set out the rationale behind FLINT. For policy evaluation, there is an increasing need for a broader set of farm-level data in the EU, especially on sustainability issues. FLINT was designed to test the feasibility and added value of collecting such data via the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN), the EU-wide system for collecting representative farm-level data.

The availability of sustainability indicators and the criteria for defining and choosing them are reviewed by Latruffe, Diazabakana, Bockstaller, Desjeux, Finn, Kelly, Ryan and Uthes. Economic indicators have a long tradition and target a relatively small number of well-defined themes but there has recently been an ‘explosion’ of environment-related indicators. Social indicators tend to be difficult to measure as they are more qualitative and subjective.

Data collection is more feasible if stakeholders consider the data to be important. Herrera, Gerster-Bentaya and Knierim demonstrated differences in the stakeholders’ perceived feasibility and usefulness of collecting farm-level sustainability indicators, especially for those indicators which are not useful for farm-level decision making. These results were used in the selection of indicators in the FLINT project.

There is a wide variety of FADN systems. Drawing on a

theoretical evaluation and the practical experiences of collecting sustainability data on more than 1,000 farms, Vrolijk, Poppe and Keszthelyi concluded that data collection could be extended to a wider set of sustainability issues across a range of organisational settings. The trust between the data collector and the farmer is an important success factor.

Several empirical analyses were conducted to show the added value of FLINT sustainability data. Brennan, Ryan, Hennessy, Cullen and Dillon examined the use of extension services by farm households and observed stark differences between eight Member States that are attributable primarily to national policies. Furthermore, they found that the extent to which households engage with extension services has implications for farm-level sustainability.

The FLINT data have made it feasible to assess the adoption of risk management strategies by farmers and the determinants of farmers’ choice for complementary or substitute instruments. Van Asseldonk, Tzouramani, Ge and Vrolijk show that adoption rates of instruments such as insurance contracts, price contracts, off-farm income, other risk reduction measures and other gainful activities vary significantly across Member States and farming types.

Analysis of farm economic sustainability using FADN data traditionally focuses solely on income from farming activities. The FLINT dataset facilitates the assessment of a group of farms categorised as ‘sustainable’, i.e. which are economically vulnerable but are deemed sustainable via off-farm labour. O’Donoghue, Devisme, Ryan, Conneely, Gillespie and Vrolijk identified differences in farm viability and sustainability across the eight Member States surveyed.

Finally, Van Der Meulen, Van Asseldonk and Ge used the FLINT data to analyse the different adoption rates of innovations in European agriculture. They described the impact on innovation rates of farm structure, financial characteristics, farmer characteristics, and the impact of subsidies and use of advisory services on the adoption rates.

As Editor-in-Chief, I would like to record my sincere thanks to Dr. Hans Vrolijk, the co-Coordinator of FLINT, for his outstanding support in bringing this thematic issue to fruition. Coordinators of other international research projects are invited to contact me with a view to producing similar thematic issues in the future.

Andrew Fieldsend

Budapest, November 2016

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Workshop report

DANUBIONET open innovation workshop

Budapest, 6 October 2016

Danube-INCO.NET (Advancing Research and Innovation in the Danube Region, <https://danube-inco.net/>) is a coordination and support action funded under the European Union's (EU) 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. It seeks to overcome obstacles hindering social and economic development in the Danube Region by advancing research and innovation.

DANUBIONET (Building a Bioeconomy Research and Advocacy Network in the Danube Region, <https://danube-inco.net/object/project/16564>) is a 'pilot action' within Danube-INCO.NET. It intends to foster the development of a sustainable bio-based economy, with a particular focus on the Middle Danube area and on biomass feedstock from agricultural and forestry activities and organic industrial by-products.

DANUBIONET held its first 'Open Innovation Event' in Budapest on 6 October 2016, in association with the 2016 European Rural Development Network conference. The workshop, jointly organised by PANNON Pro Innovations Ltd, Budapest and the Central European Initiative, Trieste, brought together 13 experts from six countries of the Danube Region, with the aim to develop approaches to promote the use of sewage sludge based products in agriculture, in the spirit of sustainable farming and the circular economy.

In her introductory presentation, Juhász Anikó, General Director of the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics, which hosted the workshop, endorsed the need for a specific regional approach in the Danube Region. She noted that the workshop fits well with the BioEast strategic research agenda which aims to catalyse bioeconomy development in the Danube Region by showing that a regional approach and excellence are complementary measures (see *Studies in Agricultural Economics* volume 118 number 2 for details). While there is significant knowledge in the region, it is still necessary to learn how to sell it and manage innovation. She concluded that now is the right time to launch BioEast as the scoping paper for the final three years programming for the EU's Horizon 2020 programme for research and innovation has been published, and she encouraged participants to use the workshop to develop new ideas and cooperation possibilities.

The topic of the workshop had been put forward by DOW Agrosciences, a multinational company that has been active in agriculture since 1952. The company's innovation performance has been awarded several times with the Green Chemistry Awards in the USA. The 'challenge owner', as the entity seeking solutions is called in these workshops, asked participants to contribute original ideas for improving the public perception and end-user acceptance of sewage sludge based compost in agriculture. This type of material,

which is rich in nutrients, especially nitrogen, has multiple benefits with respect to soil preservation, cost reduction and productivity, but it is burdened with preconceptions, doubts and concerns among various groups of actors. The workshop therefore facilitated the elaboration of possible solutions to overcome end-users' reluctance and apprehension by focusing on the economic and environmental benefits of nutrient recycling.

Building on the results of the DANUBIONET capacity building survey, completed earlier by 95 stakeholders, the experts developed their ideas relating to the specific factors of societal perception and awareness, available standards and labelling, as well as sound business models. This interactive process was facilitated by Be-novative Hungary and Demola Budapest. As a first step, participants took part in a virtual brainstorming to generate ideas on how to overcome the challenge. A cloud-based platform was used through which users could anonymously share their thoughts and ideas on the question 'How can the communication and marketing tools be used to convince buyers about the safety and compliance of sewage sludge based products?'. In only 20 minutes this session yielded 81 automatically evaluated ideas for overcoming this challenge, including a variety of solutions from communication to test fields and education.

Using these first ideas, the participants continued their work in teams, mixing the ideas and finding synergies and possible collaborations in order to create proposals convincing enough for the 'challenge owner' and mature enough to form the basis of future projects. The tool used here was building a 3D prototype based on the method of Demola Budapest. These prototypes – built of everyday materials such as paper, straws and plasticine – acted as a visualisation of the project concepts and hence as tangible representations of abstract or complex thoughts. This creative and playful approach makes it easy to reveal connections and schemes. Finally, a proposal was drawn up as a result of the creative work that contributed to find the complementary activities of the participants.

Sándorfy András of DOW Agrosciences concluded that the workshop was an excellent platform for learning new, valuable and interesting approaches. Under the leadership of PANNON Pro Innovations Ltd. and Central European Initiative the proposal from the workshop will be further developed with a view to implementing the idea, thereby creating a circular economy of nutrient recycling.

More information about DANUBIONET, the series of Open Innovation Events and their outputs is available by email from Gyalai-Korpos Miklós PhD, Project Development Manager at PANNON Pro Innovations Ltd, at miklos.gyalai@ppis.hu.

Studies in Agricultural Economics

Information for authors

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