

Agricultural vocational training in Europe

Survey

1. Origin of the approach

Request from the Walloon Management Authority and Walloon stakeholders to identify ways to improve Walloon agricultural training system, drawing on a survey of European good practices

2. Implementation schedule

- Beginning of 2016: at the Walloon level, drafting a questionnaire to collect useful information to feed the reflection on the evolutionary paths of an agricultural training system with the main Walloon stakeholders involved in agricultural training system
- Translation of the questionnaire into English and dissemination to various national / regional networks
- April 2016: distribution of a short version of the questionnaire within the Community of Practice "Young Farmers" of the European RD Network set up following the meeting of the European Rural Networks in Bled, Slovenia (29 Feb. - 1 March 2016).
- May-November 2016: collection and processing of information transmitted by national / regional networks
- January 2017: compilation of information and comparative analysis

3. Types of information collected through the questionnaire

Context items

- Systems and organizational modalities of implementation (public-private partnership, etc.)
- Compulsory training for obtaining agricultural subsidies, etc.
- Target publics
- Types of audiences concerned by training
- Initial level required, ages, origins

Organizational competences

- Recognition of training by official body and diploma, call for proposals
- Criteria for recognition of training organizations and accreditation
- Sources of funding and resources

Core skills

- Modalities for defining competencies and training to be implemented
- Modality of revision of the competence bases
- Modalities for controlling the acquisition of skills bases
- Training needs and trends

Teaching support and information-training techniques

- Origin, training and skills of trainers
- Accreditation of trainers certification of the trainers
- Pedagogical skills of trainers
- Organization of training

Visibility/communication

- Initial student information
- Register of available training
- Modalities for propagating training information

4. Contributions from European national/regional networks

- **Member States which filled the questionnaire:** Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Portugal, Sweden and Finland
- **Other networks providing information, references, documents and contact persons:** Germany, England, Austria, Denmark, Scotland, France

5. First Lessons

Common context elements

- Regular decrease in the number of farms
- Feminization and Aging of the Agricultural Population
- Development of short supply chains or diversification of activities
- Difficulties in access to land

Training systems and organizational arrangements (public-private partnership, etc.)

- Systems are diversified, complex (France), decentralized (each Lander has its own structure in Germany) or fragmented (Italy). Trainers are accredited for public subsidies;
- The agricultural profession is associated in a variable way with the governance of the system (co-management with the State, delegation to chambers of agriculture, etc.);
- Training is often compulsory for obtaining agricultural subsidies, in particular aid for young farmers (Belgium, Portugal, for example) or for the implementation of Agri-environment Measures (Finland, for example)

Target publics

- Mixed / heterogeneous groups affected by training => wealth and difficulties;
- The initial level is not always taken into account, the levels are very diverse => wealth and difficulties;
- The unemployed are not always a target group (Flanders). If the training project is financed by the Leader approach, the beneficiary group may be wide (Finland).

Organizational competences

- Training providers are recognized and accredited on the basis of a set of national or regional criteria (legal form, qualification of staff, etc.). The training courses are sanctioned by an official diploma;
- Agricultural training activities may be subject to European co-financing (EAFRD and ESF) in addition to national or regional public funding and are subject to a call for tenders, in particular when they are supported by the EAFRD.

Skills Bases

- Definition of competences and training to be implemented is based on different types of structures/partnership depending on the country concerned (through direct local consultation of farmers and agricultural professionals based on the needs of the target group (Sweden, Finland), Commission, advisory working groups, etc.)
- Standards used vary from country to country and are more or less sharp (National Occupational Standards Catalog (NOS) in Portugal and Scotland. Some countries do not have a competency framework defining competencies to be attained at the end of training.
- From one country to another, the modalities of revising the skills base and their rhythms are very variable
- The rules for defining success vary widely (defined by the State in Portugal, different according to the training centers in Wallonia ...)

Pedagogical support & information-training techniques

- The origin, training and skills of trainers vary greatly from country to country. The trainers are not all accredited and teacher training of trainers is not always required. Several countries are struggling to find trainers.
- The organization of distance learning courses exists in several countries and is increasing

Visibility / communication

- Depending on the country and for a given training, the candidate is not always aware of the competences proposed to him / her
- There is not always a register of all the training organized in a given region or country
- Channels for disseminating information on training vary from one country to another (via the public authorities, left to the discretion of the training centers, via agricultural newspapers, rural network websites, Etc.)

6. Some key issues and new needs

- Need of enhanced and evolving technical knowledge facing greater specialization and increased societal demands in terms of quality and preservation of the environment => Strategic management and mobilization of a wide range of agronomic skills (see organic farming)
- Need of economic and financial management, but also in terms of work organization and human resources management facing the management of larger farms
- Need of specific skills to ensure their organization and economic balance facing the development of short supply chains or the diversification of activities and, in particular, to leading territorialized collective projects
- Need to develop the capacity of farmers to better anticipate the evolution of prices of products and inputs and to diversify their activities to better secure their incomes;
- Need for renewed/ attractive training methods in order to better adapt to the demands of young farmers who are graduates and who are less often from the agricultural sector than before in terms of work organization and sharing of experiences
- Need of specific skills for risk and hazard management,
- Need to increase farmers' access to training, the overall support of their beneficiaries and the personalization of their pathways => definition of a relevant training engineering, focusing on the objectives of the evolution of practices, representations and behaviors

7. Work paths for the future

Exploring European Good Practices to :

- Improve the identification of farmers' skills needs at European, national and regional level :
 - Usefulness of having a common competence framework for a region defining the competencies to be mastered at the end of training;
 - Develop cross-cutting competencies and foster an interdisciplinary approach.
- Increasing farmers' access to lifelong learning
- Improve pedagogical training and professionalization of trainers
- Develop the personalization and diversification of skills acquisition methods, designed on the base of the own farmer's professional project
- Develop new forms of governance and public funding for these new ways of building knowledge
- Extending and disseminating best practices in engineering and training evaluation
- Provide better visibility of the agricultural training offer