



Guide for successful exchange schemes

Report III of the Pilot project: Exchange programmes for young farmers

Final

Marie-Jose Zondag (Ecorys Netherlands)
Carolien de Lauwere (LEI-Wageningen UR)
Peter Sloot (Aequator Groen & Ruimte)
Andreas Pauer (Ecorys Brussels)

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E-mail: agri-evaluation@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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1. Aim of this guide Objective of the Pilot project study on young farmers

This guide aims to be a hands-on, easy to read document full of inspiration and lessons learnt, which benefits everyone aiming to set up a new – or reflecting on an existing – *exchange scheme*. It does not aim to be a complete handbook covering each and every aspect of setting up an exchange scheme in every specific setting. Given the diversity of existing exchange schemes, which vary hugely in objectives, designs and outcomes; a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is impossible. Exchange schemes differ as much as the needs they aim to meet.

This guide intends to be helpful to current and future scheme managers. It could also serve to make sponsors and funding agencies aware of the vast benefits of exchange programmes for young farmers.

This document offers guidance and inspiration to anyone interested in improving or successfully setting up an exchange scheme for young farmers. The report is based on desk research, a user needs analysis among 2 205 young European farmers, an inventory of 300 exchange schemes in EU Member States and several OECD countries and subsequent detailed case studies on 22 of them.

The report consists of an introductory chapter (chapter one) one and a chapter explaining the 'story line' (chapter two). Chapters three to six present lessons learnt, options, good practices and tips and tricks on the design of exchange schemes (chapter three), their effectiveness (chapter four), their management and efficiency (chapter five) and their sustainability (chapter six). In the last chapter (chapter seven) some final remarks are made.

This guide is part of the "Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers", a study for the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, which has been implemented by Ecorys¹ in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in 2014-2015. It consists of the following documents:²

- Main report with an executive summary, synthesis, main conclusions and recommendations;
- Needs of young farmers (including 28 country reports) (Report I);
- Inventory and analysis of existing exchange schemes for young farmers (including an overview of existing exchange schemes and 22 case studies) (Report II);
- Guide for successful exchange schemes (Report III) (this document).



¹ www.ecorys.com.

² These reports can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.

2. How to read this guide


The guide is structured as follows:

	<p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3.1 Know your markets and target group •3.2 What do you really want? •3.3 Design with care, and not alone •3.4 Choose your size and grow
	<p>Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4.1 Really make it work! •4.2 Does your audience hear you? •4.3 Keep in touch
	<p>Efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •5.1 Stay small, but stay connected! •5.2 Make it (in)sure(d) •5.3 Keep it simple and transparent •5.4 Monitor and evaluate!
	<p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •6.1 Cherish your staff! •6.2 Raise funds •6.3 Diversify your funding •6.4 Publish and gain recognition

The guide follows a (chrono) logical story line. It starts with an observed need among young farmers and ends with observations on how to make the scheme last (for as long as these needs remain unmet).

The story line is written for the 'classic' type of exchange scheme in which young (potential) farmers travel (abroad) for a long period of time, usually months. This is the most common type of exchange scheme and handles the largest numbers of participants. Of course, the needs of farmers and the corresponding exchange schemes may differ: the guide will indicate specific tips and observations that are applicable to alternative situations.

Each chapter is 'illustrated' with examples of good/bad practices and ready to use formats where applicable/available. These good practices are described by a short narrative on the success factor(s) and benefits, as well as the pre-conditions and risk factors.

 **Lessons learnt**

Examples of good (or bad) practices
At the bottom of each paragraph the main tips and tricks are summarised in a short checklist.

 **Tips and tricks**

✓ A trick for your exchange scheme.

In the chapters below, these main aspects will be discussed in further detail.

3. How to design your exchange scheme?

3.1. Know your markets and target group

Any initiative to set up an exchange scheme for your farmers stems from a perceived need, either:

- As a young farmer and/or past participant yourself;
- As an observer from an agricultural organisation or an educational institute;
- From a research or political angle.



The need is observed among (other) (potential) young farmers and/or among host farmers. In all cases, the specific socio-economic context, the development situation of the agricultural sector, the knowledge infrastructure, the level of education of the young farmers, the strength of farm advisory and relief services, etc. determine the context and shape of the exchange scheme to be. In the case of the Danish Travel to Farm scheme for example, the scheme managers identify the need to gain experience in other countries, try something new and gain practical experience during the time of training. The French Odyssée Agri programme identifies the need to discover different ways of farming which may eventually be used once back in France. Improving language skills is also recognised as a need in many cases.

In this research, the needs of young farmers in EU Member States have been studied (through a survey among 2 205 young farmers, national focus groups and interviews with stakeholders in all Member States) and described. Important factors that influence their knowledge needs were distinguished. The type of agricultural sectors involved, the location of a farm in a less favourable areas, the farm situation of the young farmer (if he/she is the owner of the farm), his/her awareness of the needs he/she has and the role of young farmers' associations play important roles in defining the 'market', target group and designing an exchange scheme.

Historically, several types of exchange schemes have developed to address the needs of young farmers. The differences in types of exchange schemes are related to the objectives of the exchange, the length of the intended stay abroad and degree of involvement of a specific business or supply chain.³

Most commonly used classic exchange schemes	Alternative types
Exchange schemes or partner organisations have a national HQs. Selection and recruitment of hosts and participants are the responsibility of the central office.	The WWOOF exchange scheme for example has established regional host contacts that recruit, on a regional level, both host farmers and participants.

³ The classification of exchange schemes presented in this study is purely descriptive and does not pretend to be restrictive. New types of schemes may evolve wherever new needs among young farmers emerge.



- ✓ Up to now, exchange schemes hardly include any destination countries in Asia and Africa;
- ✓ Organise regular meetings with sector specialists to remain in touch with developments in exchange needs. During this research, the need for an exchange scheme in Greece in olive oil production was observed;
- ✓ Be aware of the impact of age! It is important to take the age of the future participants into account when you define your target groups, especially if your exchange objectives are more general (culture and agriculture) and practical. Allow young farmers to participate in your scheme before they are already set up on their parental farm. Afterwards, participation rates are likely to be lower, at least in schemes that only offer longer stays abroad.



- ✓ Carefully study and describe the needs of the young farmers you are targeting (sector, farm situation, education, awareness, role of young farmer association), taking country-specific needs into account;
- ✓ Read the country reports and reflect upon recent developments;
- ✓ Be aware of the present knowledge infrastructure in your country (education, extension, relief services) and the existence of other exchange schemes.

3.2. *What do you really want?*

The objectives of the scheme naturally need to match 100% the needs observed. Are these needs mostly practical, technical and aimed at acquiring day-to-day experience in running an agricultural business; or are they more business-related and directed at gaining managerial experience? Or are more general needs, such as living abroad, getting to know another culture and language the most important? Do you plan to facilitate individual travel or is your objective to travel in groups? Or perhaps both?

Answering these questions in detail helps you to arrive at the most suitable design and organisational structure. Many schemes such as the German Praktikantenaustausch follow the slogan 'grow abroad', targeting multiple aims, including developing professional skills and gathering personal, cultural experiences. The Irish Equipeople Agricultural Work Experience has as its objective to enable young people to experience a different way of life and to broaden their outlook in the agricultural field.



The observed needs (section 3.1 above) will also help you to decide the optimal length of the exchange: can they be satisfied in days or weeks; or do they need stays abroad of months and even up to a year? Or do you have to offer both options?

Most commonly used classic exchange scheme	Alternative types
Exchange schemes facilitate the exchange at the individual level of both participant and host.	In a very limited number of existing schemes, the needs are met through group exchanges. Other types of schemes are purely knowledge oriented, in which user needs are satisfied through the internet and the open access to information and libraries.
The minimum length of the total stay abroad is generally around 3 months.	Exchange of knowledge and experience may be reached in visits lasting only a few days to 2 weeks. In knowledge exchange schemes there is no travel at all.

Last but not least, the intentions of the organising entity are relevant. In the majority of the schemes studied, the objectives are not-for-profit. However, private companies are also very successful in offering services to young farmers, although they have more of a background role and act as sponsors. What are their intentions in facilitating, financing and/or organising an exchange scheme? The preferences of the businesses involved play a decisive role in the design of the scheme.

A clear description of your objectives is a first step in expectation management (for participants and hosts). So write down your objectives, group them into categories, rank them by priority and redraft them if necessary. Only once you have clearly structured your objectives should you move on to the actual implementation.



- ✓ Expectation management is essential in satisfying the needs of hosts and participants. Many tools are available to do so: from one-to-one talks to group introduction weekends. A good example is presented by R-ETA in Hungary.

3.3. *Design with care, and not alone*



Instead of ‘reinventing the wheel’ and building completely new structures, it is good to link up with existing ones. A scheme, designed in close cooperation with a young farmers’ movement and/or agricultural colleges, seems to guarantee access to participants and up-to-date information on developments in knowledge needs. This specifically applies to the classic exchange schemes where participants travel (usually abroad) for periods of several months. Some schemes like the Austrian ILP have been implemented within the existing structure of the Landjugend (an organisation for rural youth), which also gets support (in terms of office space, etc.) from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture. Schemes aimed at organic farming methods or leadership and business development tend to have more links with consumer organisations or agribusiness.

For more specialised schemes that aim to select and exchange only limited numbers of individuals, ties with educational institutes do not seem to play a role. For such schemes, young farmers’ movements and informal networks are the most important. They usually handle tens of participants per year, whereas the more general schemes may send out up to thousands of young farmers annually. Also, these specialised schemes have much shorter exchange periods (weeks instead of months).

Be aware of the many possibilities! The following types of exchange schemes exist:

1. Classic exchange schemes for longer periods;
2. Classic exchange schemes for longer periods on organic and biological farms;
3. Leadership exchange schemes;
4. Business and supply chain type exchange schemes;
5. Web-based exchange schemes without physical travel;
6. Group exchanges;
7. EU and governmental exchange schemes.

There are other types of exchange schemes but these are more general in nature, directed at youngsters looking to learn about another culture and language, or relate to schemes purely designed for students of an educational institute (college or university).

Make sure that your design is flexible and, in case of a mismatch between host farmer and participant, that a replacement procedure functions well. The needs of young farmers are diverse and may also change during the stay abroad. Offer flexibility in the length of the stay. For one young farmer a few weeks may feel sufficient (or be the maximum possible), while another may want to participate for a full season or year.



- ✓ Offering language courses and technical vocabulary prior to departure will enhance the learning effect!
- ✓ At the national level, allow for the creation of a list of themes around which exchange schemes are organised; with each theme responding to key needs of young farmers.



- ✓ Design for young farmers, not for yourself;
- ✓ Learn from others;
- ✓ Make sure that your design is flexible, both in length of stay and in case of mismatches between participant and host.

3.4. Choose your size and grow

The needs of participants have changed over the decades (and those of the hosts have remained relatively similar). The main reasons for these changes are the ease of travelling overseas, the arrival of the internet and new media. These developments have made the more general objectives of exchange schemes (cultural exchange, experiencing agricultural life out of your comfort zone) become relatively less important. Instead, acquiring purely technical or business development knowledge has again become, relatively speaking, a more prominent need that participants aim to fulfil. It is important to adapt to such changes and to address the right needs. Furthermore, specific societal trends can trigger new needs for farmers. Examples such as the Italian Slow Food exchange scheme show that demand can trigger strong and quick growth. The scheme which started in Italy in 1989 in one region, quickly grew during the 1990s and has gained international status.



Political and administrative developments like visa requirements may also influence the decision making process of participants. Therefore, be prepared for (sudden) changes in the number of participants your organisation has to handle. An example is SUSP in the Netherlands, where many management hours were spent on visa-related problems that affected the numbers of participants.

There is a wide range of destinations for the participants: schemes vary from focusing on purely domestic exchanges to the more classic destinations further afield on the North American and Australian continent. Remarkably, few participants come from (central) Asian countries, nor travel to these destinations.

- ✓ Start small and grow sustainably;
- ✓ Remain flexible in your organisation (but fix costs!).



4. Objectives and effective exchange schemes for young farmers

4.1. *Really make it work!*



The intervention logic of a scheme is the assumed relation between activities and (how these will lead to) expected effects. For exchange schemes, this logic often goes unmentioned. Most schemes consider the act of leaving one's comfort zone (the farm/village/town or even country where one has been raised) and submerging oneself for a prolonged period of time in a completely different reality, as the central logic, which underlies the effectiveness of the scheme. In doing so, a participant is forced to open up to new experiences and learning. The earliest example of this reasoning is the Danish Travel to Farm scheme.

Most commonly used classic exchange scheme	Alternative types
The logic behind the physical exchange is that enhanced learning is obtained by taking the participant out of his/her comfort zone.	Mentoring schemes do not focus on the geographical dimension and aim to achieve the learning effect through direct, one-to-one contact between mentor and mentee, without any travelling abroad.



- ✓ Describe the logic behind the exchanges you organise and keep questioning it!
- ✓ Share it with your (potential) participants.

4.2. *Does your audience hear you?*

To effectively communicate the value of an exchange scheme, the use of the internet is particularly relevant. Websites, social media and newsletters are part of (almost) every exchange scheme, no matter what size. The ease with which young farmers can gather information about exchange possibilities through online tools increases the number of potential applications. But do not get lost in the 'scattergun approach' by doing everything a bit, but nothing properly! It is better to focus on specific means which you really believe to work, than for example having a Facebook page that is never updated.

The general needs analysis shows that young farmers also follow technological trends, which means websites and social media are growing in importance. Also, the use of these means of communication is relatively cheap and easy and offers unlimited outreach possibilities, although reliable and fast internet access is an important condition.

Also, do not forget about the advantages of traditional means of communication when promoting your scheme; in particular face-to-face contact through conferences, presentations (e.g. in schools), events and fairs. Participants agree that these means are still very effective, especially when partner organisations and former participants are involved. It may well be that investing in such specifically targeted means proves to be more time/cost efficient than the broad use of modern communication tools. Good examples are the agricultural school visits organised by the Austrian ILP programme. Every year the scheme manager presents their programme and invites partner organisations. The very high number of applications to go to Austria following the participation of the Austrian partner demonstrates the effectiveness of such visits.

A sound communication and publicity approach may also help you in attracting more funds and bringing sponsors to support your organisation.

Most commonly used classic exchange scheme	Alternative types
In classic exchange schemes, the effect of the age of the host has never been investigated.	In mentoring schemes, the experience is that younger mentors are more effective than older mentors in communicating the message (Get Mentoring in Farming).



- ✓ Make yourself visible on the internet and social media, but do not lose focus;
- ✓ Visit agricultural schools and young farmers associations and become known;
- ✓ Involve experienced participants;
- ✓ Don't forget 'traditional' means, such as farmers' journals to reach young farmers.

4.3. *Keep in touch!*

The existence of an alumni organisation through which participants can meet and share experiences afterwards is much appreciated and appears to result in more lasting lessons learnt, compared to schemes where all contact is lost after returning from the exchange event. Active alumni also may contribute significantly to the stability of the scheme and running the organisation of it, so in a way a scheme manager may recruit his/her own successor.



Alumni are the best source of publicity for each and every exchange scheme. Even without organised connections, they tend to promote exchange participations among their networks. In that sense, they follow the snowball principle of spreading information. Bringing a certain structure into such advertising and information campaigns, as well as encouraging those who are less active in sharing their experiences, can bring huge value for money. A good example is the Latvian LYFC scheme which also involves alumni in the organisation of its forum. This is usually followed by very active follow-up communication directly after the event.



- ✓ Stay in contact with alumni;
- ✓ Encourage alumni to share, and possibly publish, their experiences;
- ✓ Ask alumni to be involved in the work of the exchange scheme.

5. Managing exchange schemes for young farmers efficiently

5.1. *Stay small, but stay connected!*

The management of exchange schemes usually depends on a very limited number of persons, who are often volunteers with varying amounts of time available. Managerial qualities and devotion to the cause of the scheme vary enormously. Continued contact with national young farmers' organisations, agricultural education institutes and groups of agronomists give the management additional support, backup and continuity. Ideas such as the attempt of the Brazilian ISC scheme to also establish links with universities are examples of formal and informal links.

A network of international partners strongly facilitates smooth internal processes and enhances the efficiency of a scheme. The cooperation with partner organisations speeds up the application process, improves the selection of host farmers, allows for quick responses to any problem that may arise during exchanges and harmonises working procedures. The general rule is: the more transparent and quick the application process, the more attractive the scheme is to new participants. Potential obstacles are the administrative burden of the application, the speed of payments/reimbursements to participants and the bureaucratic demands related to 'third-party' financing (e.g. Erasmus).

There is no general rule that determines the best legal basis for the organising entity of a scheme. Private companies, public organisations and mixtures of both have been shown as lasting options for handling formal aspects of employment, liabilities, taxes and so forth. Your objectives, your sources of funding and the demands of your sponsors are the most important factors determining what choices to make if you start a new scheme. Schemes like R-ETA in Hungary and Odyssée Agri in France show that small, private companies (one person) are possible, whereas NAJK-Wereldboeren in the Netherlands is an integral part of the Dutch Young Farmers' Association, a non-profit organisation.



- ✓ Be shrewd when hiring staff or volunteers: most classic exchange schemes handle some 200 participants per year, per staff member;
- ✓ The Grow Abroad World Alliance (GAWA) is the most far-reaching effort of exchange organisations to work together, standardise and harmonise procedures and establish quality standards. They are open to new members that comply with their general rules of conduct. Reaching out to such organisations provides visibility, as well as structures and frameworks to build on, without any loss of independence.



- ✓ Stay close to young farmers' movements and agricultural education institutes;
- ✓ Broaden your network to include international partner organisations in inbound countries;
- ✓ Link up with GAWA and/or similar initiatives;
- ✓ Be careful of the administrative burden of 'third-party' financing.

5.2. *Make it (in)sure(d)*

Health insurance and liabilities are a major area of improvement and risk in the world of exchange schemes. Several schemes have only very soft requirements with regard to adequate insurance for health and other damage risks (third-party liabilities).

Most commonly used classic exchange scheme	Alternative types
In classic exchange schemes, liabilities are dealt with very differently, ranging from signed documents to no statements at all.	In mentoring schemes, there is a code of conduct to clarify liabilities and responsibilities. Make both parties sign it! (Get Mentoring in Farming).

Another serious problem is posed by national or supranational (EC) regulations on travel and work. This makes it difficult for participants of exchange schemes to remain/be treated different (i.e. as trainees) from regular immigrants. Where (most) exchange participants travel abroad (in the EU and worldwide) to learn by doing as trainees, immigration authorities tend to consider them as foreigners entering the country with the objective of working as employees.



- ✓ Inadequately insured hosts and participants may be a major risk to your organisation. Prevent risks and make basic health and liability insurance compulsory.



- ✓ Make complete, adequate health insurances compulsory for participants;
- ✓ Check the legal aspects of liability for the participants, host farmers and your organisation.

5.3. *Keep it simple and transparent*

Complicated and unclear application and selection procedures are an absolute turn-off for your potential participants. Try to learn from procedures in other schemes and only deviate where necessary. Easy and similar (to other application forms in your country) design facilitates the application for participants, results in higher satisfaction rates and also reduces your workload in answering questions and revising errors. The British GMiF programme is a good example of starting with a simple online registration form. This is followed by a face-to-face (or telephone) interview with a mentor manager at SFEDI who then confirms by email if the applicants are in the system. A similar routine is followed by the British Nuffield Farming Scholarships, which is another good example of 'simple and transparent'.

Online application possibilities, as well as online databases with search engines to find suitable matches between host and participant are considered efficient and attractive management and selection tools. However, these online steps, which might even include live chat functionality, should always be followed by a personal, face-to-face interview (in person or on Skype) between the staff of the scheme and the applicant (either host or



participant). This face-to-face step is unanimously considered critical in ensuring successful matching and to manage expectations. It also overcomes the widespread problem among young farmers of having slow or no internet access.



- ✓ Take a two-step approach: 1) online registration ensuring the widest access to your potential candidates and 2) face-to-face interviews for the final selection of participants (use online video calls if distances are a major problem);
- ✓ Use simple applications procedures that are, where possible, similar to other applications known by potential applicants.

5.4. Monitor and evaluate

Monitor and evaluate your hosts, your participants and the use of all your communication and publicity measures. Formulate qualitative and quantitative targets and allow staff to dedicate time to measuring them. It is very important to make targets measurable, so use numbers. For example: 'increase the number of applicants 5% annually'. Such a target can be monitored and assessed after one year. If the target has not been reached you should ask yourself what went wrong. Were the reasons related to external developments or do you need to adapt your strategy? Were you not able to communicate the benefits of participation sufficiently clearly, or did you simply not target the right needs? Targets should be set at least on an annual basis and have a clear deadline. Using the example above, it is not sufficient to set a target to increase numbers of applicants by 5% without adding the word 'annually'. This is needed to know when to measure the target and leaves no room for interpretation. The observed exchange schemes use different forms of monitoring. The British Tesco Future Farming Foundation is a good example of using feedback from participants, along with information about the application process. In addition to annual targets, it is beneficial to set both long-term (e.g. 5 year) and very short-term targets. These short-term targets should be more operational, such as 'visit five schools before September'. All short-term targets should support the fulfilment of the medium- and long-term targets. Review your targets regularly.

Many schemes do not have well set up monitoring databases. Experiences are stored 'between the ears' but are not passed on. Participants may be required to report back after completion, but the results are hardly used. Host farmers are followed routinely on an annual basis: some schemes include visits to the farms, others maintain contact through email and telephone.



- ✓ Offer tools to participants that measure their growth and increased skills, offer contact with other participants or producers and provide access to online knowledge;
- ✓ Demand feedback from hosts and participants after the exchange. It may not only help you to comply with funding requirements; but also offers you tips on how to improve your services.



- ✓ Build your database with information on success factors, website visits, evaluation scores, feedback of participants, etc.;
- ✓ Draft clear targets in the short-, medium- and long-term and link them to each other;
- ✓ Regularly assess the degree to which your targets are being met;
- ✓ Evaluate your hosts annually.

6. Ensuring a sustainable 'long-lasting' exchange scheme for young farmers

6.1. Cherish your staff!

The sustainability of exchange schemes depends to a large degree on the continued dedication and devotion of the scheme's staff. Often, these are volunteers and former participants that spend many hours on the maintenance of the organisation. Their sustained presence is crucial, as are their networking abilities: both for promoting the scheme and finding potential hosts and participants, as well as for funding (see below). Examples are found among many schemes, e.g. Odysée Agri in France and IRE in Australia.

6.2. Document your work

Parallel to the permanence of your staff, it is important to document your work well. Storing detailed descriptions of working methods, legal procedures and other routines helps to safeguard the future of your organisation, even in the case of staff suddenly leaving.



- ✓ Well-organised exchange schemes are more popular among participants and hosts.



- ✓ Put important information on how to run the scheme on paper. Possibly become ISO certified;
- ✓ Keep track of what you are doing so that it remains replicable for future staff.



6.3. Raise funds!

An important factor that determines the life span of a scheme is the availability of funds, or a stream of annual funds that cover the minimal expenditures of the scheme. Many schemes nowadays depend on the fees of participants and hosts to cover not only their own expenses but also the organisational costs (roughly one-third of all schemes, e.g. Odysée Agri in France and R-ETA in Hungary). However, in the majority of the schemes other actors, both private and public, are also financially involved. Corporate and private sources that support a scheme appear more interested in financing leadership & mentoring type schemes. National governments and EU funds are usually behind the classic types of exchange schemes. An interesting example is shown by the Nuffield Farming Scholarships scheme where, in each participating country, a range of mainly private donors (consisting of past scholars, individuals, businesses, organisations and charities etc.) is gathered to pay the expenses involved.



- ✓ In some countries, the costs of the exchange may be tax deductible;
- ✓ Combine the participation in an exchange scheme with earning educational credit points, Youth Pass etc.



- ✓ Be aware that contributions of participants give little financial security for the next year and year after;
- ✓ Diversify your funding sources;
- ✓ Search for financing possibilities within the National Rural Development Programme of your country.

6.4. Publish and gain recognition

Publishing the experiences of participants contributes to the reputation of the exchange scheme and increases its appeal to future participants and sponsors. The key factor is that your participants are happy with their experience. If they are happy, they will tell others about it. However, to gain recognition on a larger scale, it is important to support participants in sharing their experiences. Publish their stories and experiences on a regular basis and open the stage for them to tell their story. This will have a positive impact on your scheme, your application numbers and the access to financial support. An example is the large British WWOOF exchange programme, which encourages hosts and participants to share their experiences on social networks by writing blogs and posting pictures.

Classic exchange scheme	Alternative types
In general, there is no explicit focus on the publication of exchange experiences and results.	In leadership schemes, the public presentation and publication of the results of an exchange is essential. They reach a large audience and are well-read. It contributes to the status of the organisation (Nuffield Farming Scholarships).

A large majority of the exchange participants agrees that the impact of exchange schemes goes beyond that of the world of the host family and participant. Some decades ago, the arrival of foreigners to work on a farm would have an impact on a whole community. Nowadays, in most western countries this level of impact has decreased enormously. However, the long-term impact on the people involved; the participant and host, remains unchanged. And as stated previously, there are many countries not yet served by exchange schemes, where this impact might still happen.

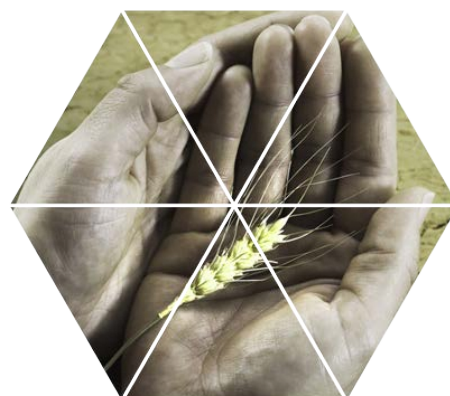


7. Final remarks

Exchange schemes matter. They have been meeting the needs of hosts and travelling participants for more than a century. Their objectives and design have changed relatively little through time. The same applies to the basic needs that young farmers have: to leave the parental farm temporarily, see the world and learn how to put theory into practice.

However, when it comes to the details, the needs of young farmers have changed and diversified enormously. Hence there is an ever growing demand for tailor-made, up-to-date exchange mechanisms that offer young people anything from a day's visit from an entrepreneurial mentor, to a year-long stay at an organic farm somewhere abroad. There is therefore no need for a standard type of exchange scheme. Instead, schemes should be flexible in what they offer and communicate closely with their potential participants.

Working within a(n) (inter)national network of partner organisations in inbound and outbound countries is a logical consequence. Schemes build their own networks and find organisations to cooperate with in countries abroad to match outbound and inbound efforts. The Grow Abroad World Alliance goes a step beyond that and constitutes a worldwide initiative, benchmarking working standards and procedures for exchange. They offer valuable information and experience, but also constitute a potential common force that speaks up for the interests of all involved in the exchange of young farmers.



The existence of commercial, private schemes, non-governmental organisations and other mixtures of public and private involvement suggests the reality of market mechanisms in which exchange schemes compete for potential participants and hosts. Indeed, competition does exist and competitive behaviour was mentioned in the inventory of exchange schemes. As for all competition, its functioning should favour the quality of the service and hence the once in a lifetime experience of exchange participants.

This guide intends to be helpful to current and future scheme managers. It could also serve to make sponsors and funding agencies aware of the vast benefits of exchange programmes for young farmers. These young farmers are worth it.

