



Research, innovation and technology transfer in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkans: Phase II

Cross-country meeting: towards policy recommendations
11-12 May 2021

“Cross-country key findings and Recommendations on RITT in the WBs”

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Aims and objectives of the project

Main aim of the project:

- to enhance research, innovation and technology transfer (RITT) in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkan countries
- to facilitate RITT capacities related to green and clean technologies in the context of its contribution to the EU's Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

Main objectives:

- to identify needs, capacities and gaps in RITT
- to contribute to RITT's enhancement
- to facilitate the participation of the WB research entities and networks to European projects and networks, particularly within Horizon 2020 or COST.

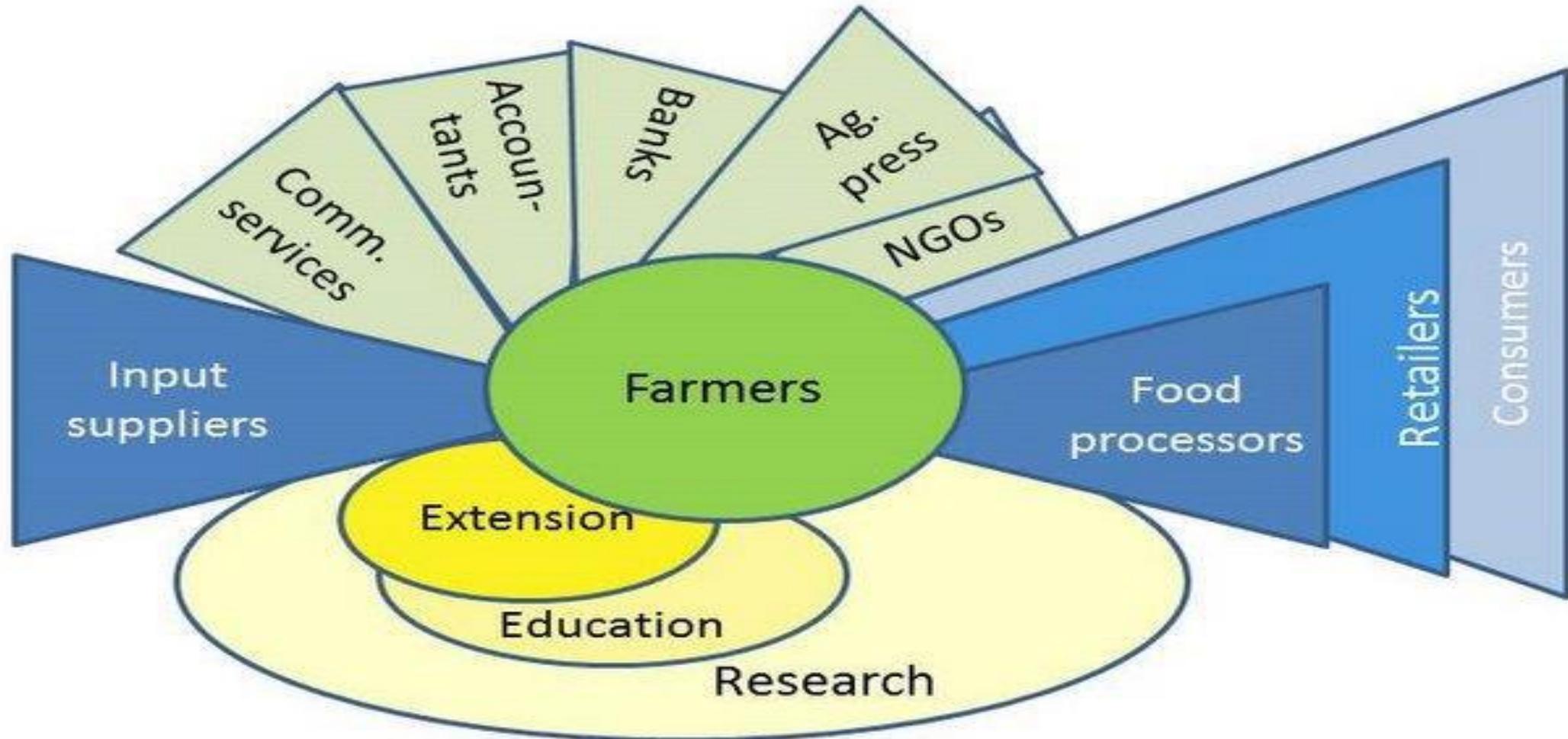
Key findings 1

- There are **different levels of political awareness** on the importance of agri-food RITT amongst WBCs.
- The **weak financial support** and the lack of funding tools are the most substantive barrier for RITT enhancement.
- **Research and education** organisations involved in agri-food RITT **lack satisfactory infrastructures**, encouragement and appropriate reward system.

Key findings 2

- **The strategic, regulatory and policy framework of RITT components are only partly formulated.**
- **AKIS is not formalized** neither can it be defined as an entity in the WBs
- The levels and layers of its formalization and composition vary significantly in the different countries/territories.

Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System AKIS



Key findings 3

- **Farmers** are holders of small size fragmented farms with low level of cooperative/collective organisation and representation.
- With the exception of extension, research, education and input suppliers, the **AKIS in WBs suffers from serious deficits** in its component parts.
- The role of **extension services is weakly supported** and characterized by different levels of formalization and organisational composition.

Key findings 4

- **External factors** like the EU, IPARD, Horizon and other international programmes **act positively on RITT enhancement.**
- **IPARD programme speeds up RITT** in the agri-food sector but **more targeted measures** connected to RITT are requested.
- The **spiral of innovation** needs a functioning AKIS structure and interventions at the critical phases of development and realization.

Key findings 5

- Awareness for and use of **green and clean technologies** are relatively low.
- The level of **governance arrangements for RITT is weak**, with deficiencies of coordination and communication.
- The **modes of governance are mostly regulatory**, rather than market-based, and not satisfactorily effective in supporting RITT.

Converging recommendations 1

- **Improvement of the financial support** to RITT and establishment of innovation funding structures.
- **Finalization of pending regulatory, legislative framework** for RITT - related strategies and policies like:
 - The finalization of the Smart Specialization Strategies

Converging recommendations 2

- The legislative and regulatory formalization of AKIS.
- The formalization of the extension services and their integration in AKIS.
 - ❖ The identification of roles for the extensionists and the involvement of human capacity building and certification.

Converging recommendations 3

- **Upgrading of both formal and non-formal educational programs** to raise awareness and knowledge-based research and innovation.

Specifically, to:

- include practical classes in the field of agriculture and food technologies.
- align educational programs with the needs of production and market.

Converging recommendations 4

- complement formal education with lifelong learning and training.
- introduce non-formal vocational training programmes.
- establish innovation hubs and technology incubators

Converging recommendations 5

- **Upgrading of the governance environment** of RITT establishing the appropriate necessary institutions and decision-making bodies.
- With regards to **external and international factors** for RITT enhancement, it is recommended to:
 - introduce an institutional EU programme for knowledge sharing with WB institutions.
 - request EU funding for dissemination of knowledge and innovation in partnership with the institutes of WBs.

Converging recommendations 6

- **Improvement of IPARD financial support**, introduction of RITT related measures and **improved targeting** of existing measures.
- For the facilitation of RITT capacities related to green and clean technologies it is proposed to **support the introduction of various forms of renewable energy sources** to replace fossil fuel.

A sample of specific action recommendations 1

- The connection of existing IPARD **measures of farm modernization and processing** with selection/evaluation criteria to support the adoption of Innovation & Technology.
- The **creation of training opportunities:**
 - to improve farmers' knowledge of modern/innovative and digital agriculture
 - to provide knowledge of farm management and business planning.

A sample of specific action recommendations 2

- The establishment of **Agri-food Centres of Innovation and Entrepreneurship** involving University/Research Institutions, Regional authorities, Farm organizations and the private sector.
- The enhancement of **internet broadband connectivity** in rural areas to facilitate farm digitalisation.

A sample of specific action recommendations 3

- The encouragement of the **creation of farmers organizations** to serve as farmers support groups and shared knowledge centres.
- The creation of the conditions for **easy access to inexpensive credit for start-ups** in the agri-food sector.
- The introduction and/or improvement of regulatory measures related to **easing access to land** through inheritance, purchase or tenancy.

Thank you for your attention!