

COMAGRI Public Hearing

“Enabling innovation for sustainable agriculture”

16 March 2021

Panel 2: 'Enabling tools and processes for agriculture'

Statement by the European Commission, DG AGRI

Technological innovation – More than tools

- **Digital technologies** are one key to increase the sustainability performance of the agricultural sector and to reach **Green Deal targets**. They can **enable farmers** to work more precisely and efficiently, and thus to contribute to **reduce inputs**, such as fertiliser and water.
- In the **Communication on the Digital Decade**, **agriculture** has been identified as one key sector, where **digital solutions** can help to cut global **GHG emissions**.
- As reflected in the **European Strategy for Data**, in which agriculture forms an inherent part, the **effectiveness of digital technologies** strongly depends on **data and data technologies**.
- To use the potential of **data technologies** and “**big data**” in farming, **cooperation** is a clear advantage.
- Digital devices, e.g. in sensors and machines, and different data sources have to communicate in the Internet of Things. Therefore, **connectivity and data interoperability** are crucial factors in the digital transformation of the sector.
- A lot has been achieved over the last years. Not only under the EIP-AGRI digital solutions have been developed, but also under the Research and Innovation Programme **Horizon 2020** with investments of more than **100 Mio Euro into projects fostering digitalisation in agriculture**. Inspiring, and market-ready innovative **use cases can be found across Europe** covering various aspects of digitalisation.

The role of social innovation and social capital

- It is key, to consider **business models** and the **potential of social innovation** in the development of technologies. **Digital Innovation Hubs** bring regional innovators, end users and e.g. marketing experts together to **boost the uptake of innovative solutions**. There are frontrunners, but also regions, which still can exploit their social and innovation potential. Here, **stimuli** from actors with EU and regional experiences may form a key to success.

- Also **social capital - trust in particular** - is decisive in the digital transformation of the sector. **Trust in technologies, such as AI, trust in systems, and trust in data sharing.**
- Beyond **regulatory enablers**, supporting the data and digital economy recently proposed by the Commission, the **creation of trust** can hardly be achieved without **intermediaries trusted by the farmers**, like advisors.
- Overall, the way, **we communicate** about digital technologies in agriculture will influence the **creation of trust in them and subsequently their uptake.**

Digital technologies for all farmers and all types of farmers

- Digital technologies can serve the needs **of all types of farms.**
- To facilitate the **uptake** of digital technologies and their effective **deployment**, an enabling environment has to be created, including
 - impartial advisory services,
 - boosting innovation, and
 - **facilitated access to data.**

A number of stepping stones have been set at EU level, reaching from **stakeholder engagement in the fields of digital skills and data sharing** to the elaboration of a **digital declaration** with Member States.

Looking ahead – Programmes and instruments

- The Commission follows a **strategic approach** towards the sustainable digitalisation of the sector.
- Envisaging **complementarity** between programmes, under **Horizon Europe** tailored research and innovation is supported, and under the **Digital Europe Programme** the upscaling of innovation and its deployment.
- Key initiatives proposed by the Commission include
 - a **Horizon Europe candidate partnership “Agriculture of Data”**,
 - a **Common European Agriculture Data Space**, and
 - **Testing and Experimentation Facilities for AI** in agri-food.
- The Commission would welcome strong involvement of stakeholders and Member States in those strategic initiatives.
- Member States also have the opportunity to use resources under the **Recovery and Resilient Facility** to invest in the **roll-out of broadband**, as well as in **digital and data infrastructure** serving the needs of agriculture.

- Finally, the Commission proposal for the **CAP post 2020** foresees, that Member States elaborate a **strategic approach** to boost digitalisation in agriculture. A portfolio of measures allowing capacity building tailored to the situation in each country will be available.

Doris MARQUARDT