

PRESS RELEASE

Smart-AKIS Recommendations for mainstreaming Smart Farming in Europe are now public

Horizon 2020 project Smart-AKIS delivers policy recommendations leveraging 30 months of exchanges between stakeholders

Brussels, 13 July 2018 – The EU Horizon 2020 project **Smart-AKIS** (www.smart-akis.com) released Policy Recommendations for mainstreaming Smart Farming in Europe. **CEMA**, the trade association representing the producers of agricultural machinery in Europe, is a partner of the project and contributed to the Policy Recommendations.

Smart-AKIS is a Thematic Network whose overall objective is to close the research and innovation divide in the field of Smart Farming. In the course of its 30 months of activity, Smart-AKIS has fostered the exchange between research, industry, extension services and the farming community to disseminate direct applicable research and commercial solutions, and to capture grassroots-level needs and innovative ideas. Through its activities, the project gathered insights on the barriers and incentives for the adoption of Smart Farming Technologies (SFT) as well as on the needs from end-users and other stakeholders in the value chain, such as researchers, industry and advisors. These findings are now coherently presented in the Policy Recommendations.

CEMA welcomes the release of the Policy Recommendations, appreciates the focus on the need for a farmers-centred approach when developing and mainstreaming STFs, and embraces the core message proposed: “Ultimately, Smart Farming Technologies are another tool, not an end in themselves, supporting farmers in the agricultural process, based upon the agronomist science principles and knowledge”.

The Smart-AKIS Recommendations develop in three domains:

1. Enhancing innovation-driven agricultural research within the EIP-AGRI ecosystem

Smart-AKIS follows the EIP-Agri’s multi-actor approach, with the implementation of an interactive innovation model to engage with different stakeholders at all levels, and the use of the Agricultural Innovation and Knowledge Systems (AKIS).

The Recommendations underline the need for an increased participation by farmers to projects and to **demonstrations** on the use of SFTs in the framework of Thematic Networks. This should include field visits, cross-visits, set-up of demo-farms, etc., thus mixing different types of approaches for engaging with them: online and digital tools, but also direct contacts and peer-to-peer demonstration activities.

The role of advisory services as facilitators and brokers should also be reinforced, as their closeness to farmers allows them to be effective transferring actor for the practical information collected by the Thematic Networks. Training activities should then be combined with common and more

integrated platforms, easier for the end-user to reach and consult even after the single project's termination.

2. Future research in Smart Farming

The analysis performed by Smart-AKIS underlined a number of knowledge gaps in Smart Farming Research at the European level. Knowledge gaps were identified particularly between the measuring of the status of crop and soils on the one hand, and using that information to make practical decisions in farming on the other hand. Measuring tools should also be tailored to different cropping systems. The Recommendations also highlight the need to support research on reactive technologies (variable rate fertilization, pesticide, seeding and tillage), as well as to develop robots for weeding, precision spraying and selective harvesting. An emphasis is put on the search of technical solutions to improve collaboration on data collection, standardization and management.

3. Recommendations for mainstreaming Smart Farming, addressing potential solutions to overcome technical, economic and social barriers identified

The Policy Recommendations identify four main categories of “blocks” to Smart Farming adoption in Europe: **value for money, the “3 Cs problem” (connectivity, complexity and compatibility), agricultural data fuelling growth, Smart Farming support strategies.**

The fact that Smart Farming is a relatively new business sector, means that a structured business model for the Smart Farming market is yet to be set up. Therefore, the high initial investment needed to set STFs up, seems to be linked to uncertain value for financial returns. Farmers and advisors demand more **empirical-based evidence of the economic benefits linked to the use of STFs in yield performance**, and on a more efficient use of inputs. For such evidence to be successful in engaging farmers, the community would welcome in-field evidence and demonstration of results coming from impartial and non-commercially biased actors.

The Recommendations underline the need to increase transparency and fair contracting schemes by agricultural industry and retailers alike, as a means to build trust and fully exploit the agricultural data economy potential. In this sense, CEMA is glad to highlight how the Recommendations specifically indicate the recent **EU Code of Conduct on agricultural data sharing by contractual agreement** proposed by the industry and the farmers community as a fundamental step in this direction and an example of successful collaborative action within the sector.

Integrated farming systems require a level of interoperability that does not yet exist. The Recommendations thereby highlight that initiatives that develop standards for smart and interoperable farm machines, such as the **Agricultural Industry Electronics Foundation (AEF)** and the **AgGateway Global Network**, in which CEMA industries are at the forefront, should be further promoted.

The Smart-AKIS Policy Recommendations were first presented during the project's Final Conference, held in Brussels on 27th June 2018. The event gathered more than 100 participants from all over Europe and representing DG AGRI officials, agricultural practitioners, researchers and industry leaders.

Additional information and the complete Policy Recommendations available at:
<https://www.smart-akis.com/index.php/2018/07/04/smart-akis-recommendations/>

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CEMA (www.cema-agri.org) is the European association representing the agricultural machinery industry. With 10 national member associations, the CEMA network represents both large multinational companies and numerous European SMEs active in this sector. CEMA includes 4,500 manufacturers of agricultural equipment producing 450 different types of machines, and generating an aggregated annual turnover of more than EUR 28 billion. 135,000 people are directly employed in the sector, with a further 125,000 people working in distribution and maintenance.