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Guidelines

Why and how to include policy
makers in on-Farm
Demonstration Actions





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DISCLAIMER

This guideline is intended to support NEFERTITI hubcoaches and networkleaders to proactively involve policy makers in their activities, giving some methodological and practical recommendations (and support material).

1. Introduction

If we want Demo Farms to be embedded in Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems, then involving policy makers in demonstration activities is a matter of key importance for their proper acknowledgment and support in the innovation ecosystem.

Through the involvement of policymakers, from the local to the international level, demo activities can gain in visibility and, consequentially, funding and relevance.

Demo farms activities are important because they have the capability to aggregate farmers and their counselors in an innovative environment; through demonstrations, farmers can experiment, innovate, learn and exchange best practices and networking between each other.

If a demo activity is organized in a way that excludes relevant actors of the innovation quadruple helix (eg. limiting the demonstration to farmers and those promoting the innovation), the potential for the new solution to be actually adopted could be undermined.

The involvement of policy makers has the potential to activate relevant instruments that can better support the innovation, favoring a fertile ground for its broader uptake (eg. specific regulation, support schemes, dissemination and training).

2. The target group: Who should we consider as a policymaker?

Policymakers are, as their name suggests, people who make the policies, people that can play a main role in helping and funding demo activities; not only, they can be the actors that “step-up the game” by spreading best practices, examples and achievements through their political and technical network and role.

Indeed, the path to sustainability pass through the innovations and achievements of demo activities.

Policymakers can be important regardless of their institutional standing: a member of a Local, Regional or National government, a member of the National Parliament or of the European one, they can all be precious to boost the farmers (and innovation) cause.

In fact, policy makers that can be valuable for Demo farming, are not just elected politicians but also those who more generally manage policy instruments that can create benefits for the agricultural world (in particular for innovation and technology transfer) and, vice versa, those who can receive inspiration from demonstration activities: Officials/Officers in charge of specific policy tools (eg. Financing Programmes, Rural Development Measures), Tech Clusters managers (acting as mandated by public bodies) and so for all the figures that finance or define policies to support innovation and technology transfer.

NEFERTITI WP6 can provide partners with a list of relevant contact persons in different States and Regions.



3. Relevant approaches to raise awareness in “Policy-makers”

Obviously, the only way to involve policy makers is inviting them to the event.

Inviting is not efficient itself but some preconditions are beneficial and can improve the chances to grab the attention of our target group.

- **Focusing as much as possible the scope of the involvement**

First of all, and as always, the event must be clearly focused.

The focus should be well explained and be connected with relevant systemic approaches or sectorial challenges. Ideally, it should allow connections with specific legislative or programming opportunities.

- **Assure the involvement of other relevant actors from the quadruple helix**

Experts and members of academia can bring a more scientific and a broader approach to demo activities.

For this reason the ones dealing with relevant topics should be invited, in order to give broader legitimacy to the Demo activity: their presence can give more legitimacy capital to farmers, for the involvement of policy makers and for the dissemination of knowledge. Indeed, it is also useful to build the theoretical body of the event and to produce reports and articles.

Moreover, it is also important to involve the business sector in the demonstrative and divulging activity: business representatives could be interested in your proposals and findings and eventually establish mutually convenient partnership or collaboration. Besides, policymakers will be interested in listening to the business point of view on the topic that the event deals with: the business sector is important for politicians, for their re-election and in light of the lobbying actions that they are already exposed to.

- **Address the invitation to the right contact person**

Do not expect that your invitation is correctly processed if you send it to general emails or secretariat contacts. Make sure that you know who the right contact is and make a personal invitation, explaining the need and interest for involvement.

4. Recommended steps to properly involve “Policy makers”

Step 1 – Pre-invitation

Two or three months before the event, policy makers and all the other guests should be invited: the best way to do so (if a direct network contact is not an option) is by sending an email to their offices.

In the email there should be well (and briefly) specified the topic, the ratio, the program (better if explained in a well-made brochure) and the participants to the event.

Particularly, to catch potential-guests attention and interest, it is important to highlight the peculiarities or uniqueness of the initiative - e.g. significant industrial or commercial partners, degree of innovation of the demonstration, potential for the territory/sector, etc.

Highlight also the possibility to get involved in a panel debate or discussion where they can share views, ideas and concerns with other actors (members of academia, representatives of the business sector, civil society, etc.). The voice of farmers should be also highlighted.



Generally, if the policy maker is an elected politician it is recommendable to give him a “spot in the light”, somehow visible; for example by inviting him to join a panel debate or asking him for a speech/introductory speech.

In case that the policy maker is a more technical figure, instead, it could be positive to include him in the activity: this could be done by giving him an actual part in the Demo activity or even in a key of “personal gains” for him. The Demo event could add something in the professional life of the technician, maybe he could use it to collect some useful material for his job.

Step 2 – Formal invitation

Once you have well identified your target person or group, you can proceed with a formal invitation. NEFERTITI has developed a template that can be adapted to the scope. It is available as an annex in the last page of the guidelines.

Step 3 – On-site support

In general, the best way is to make things as smooth as possible, here are few indications:

- Simplify to the maximum and make the place where the activity takes place visible.
- Provide an explanatory brochure of the activity/ies and the theme of the event.
- The logistical aspects of the event should be well organized, for example it could be good to indicate a person to specifically support the policy maker (instructing them on the purpose and possible benefits of the presence of the guest).
- Generally, if the event is supposed to last long, it is recommendable to schedule a coffee break, with a small catering provided, to make the event and the information provided more digestible and to encourage informal networking.
- In case that the event begins before and ends after lunch, it is suggestable to schedule and to provide some refreshing for a lunch break.
- In any case, it is good to schedule an informal parenthesis where the guests can network and where a small catering should always be provided: it makes the event more appealing to policy makers and networking goes easier as drinks flows!

Step 4 – Follow up

The goal of the event is to promote demo farming and so it has to be understood as instrument in that direction. As all the instruments it is there for a certain goal and for this reason, after the initiative there should be an appropriate follow-up (including any specific meeting) to assess the solutions demonstrated and to understand what stimulus it can give to the public sector.

The integration of innovation into policy or regulatory initiatives, targeted funding, training, etc. should be monitored.

INVITATION TEMPLATE

Name
Adress
Phone number
Mail adress

Topic: Invitation to demo activity

[place], [date]

Dear [name],

With great pleasure, I would like to invite you for an event on the demo farm [name] in [location]. On this event, the host farmer will demonstrate [topic of demonstration]. Farmers, advisors, researchers, suppliers (etc.) will share their knowledge and discuss with each other. This event is a good opportunity to get aware of the knowledge exchange dynamics between farmers, how farmers are learning and change their systems, and also to get aware of the current innovation processes in the [type of sector] sector.

[paragraph about local situation, developments and demonstrations]

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the NEFERTITI project (www.nefertiti-h2020.eu). We work with 32 partners from 17 European countries. The overall objective of NEFERTITI is to establish an EU-wide highly connected network of demonstration and pilot farms designed to enhance knowledge exchanges, cross fertilization among actors and efficient innovation uptake in the farming sector through peer-to-peer demonstration of techniques on 10 major agricultural challenges in Europe.

In 2019, the first year of demonstration activities, we have organized 267 demo events all across Europe. These events were attended by 12.000 participants, of which 50% was a farmer. The innovations presented and demonstrated during demo events came from researchers (38%), farmers (36%) and supply chain companies (26%).

We hope that we can welcome you on our demo event on [date] in [place]. Such that you can experience yourself what a useful event this is and hear from farmers what they think of the event.

With kind regards,

[name]
[contact details]



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