Success factors of innovation networks: Lessons from agriculture in Flanders

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INTRODUCTION

GENERATION OF INNOVATION

➢ Networks become increasingly important as external sources of innovation

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OBJECTIVE

➢ To gain insight into the network characteristics critical for successful innovations within the agricultural sector in Flanders
Methodology

Case study approach
Flanders

In-depth interviews with
- 38 farmers
- 23 network coordinators

Focus groups
- 7 focus group discussions, reaching 48 farmers

Total: 109 respondents

NVIVO
FINDINGS: How does a network, through its network characteristics, cope with the four innovation characteristics
1. THE INNOVATION PROCESS IS UNCERTAIN

NETWORK AS A NET FOR NEW KNOWLEDGE

- Become early aware of changes and opportunities
  - Multiple contacts = higher chance to discover new things
1. THE INNOVATION PROCESS IS UNCERTAIN

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2. THE INNOVATION PROCESS IS KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE

COMMUNICATION

- Distant communication hinders creativity
- Face-to-face communication

- Sietinet, producer association kiwi berry, private consultant
3. THE INNOVATION PROCESS IS CONTROVERSIAL

SELF INITIATED COALITION

- No third party INITIATOR

- Third party can FACILITATE
  - Introduction of product/market innovation via close collaboration among farmers and market
4. THE INNOVATION PROCESS CROSSES BOUNDARIES

SURPASS INNOVATION AT AGRICULTURAL LEVEL

- System innovation
  - Consumers harvest own fruit/vegetables/flowers
Conclusions

- Multiple contacts
- Knowledge providers part of network
- Face-to-face communication
- Third party facilitator, feeling of ownership by members
- Look further than own company
- Active coordinator responsible for inviting members and preparation of agenda
- Stability in network coordination improves network success rate
- Concise groups
- Homogeneous expectations of the members

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Future research

Quantitative measure of innovation capacity
Comparison with other sectors
Thank you for your attention!