



Prospects for Farmers' Support:
Advisory Services in European AKIS

AKIS and advisory services in the Republic of Slovenia
Report for the AKIS inventory (WP3) of the PRO AKIS project

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Executive summary

The main aim of the report is to provide a comprehensive description of the Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS) in the Republic of Slovenia, with a particular focus on agricultural advisory services. The description includes history, policy, funding, advisory methods, and a section on how the Farm Advisory System (FAS) was implemented.

This report represents an output of the PRO AKIS project (Prospects for Farmers' Support: Advisory Services in the European Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems'). It is one of 27 country reports that were produced in 2013 by project partners and subcontractors for compiling an inventory of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems. AKIS describe the exchange of knowledge and supporting services between many diverse actors from the first, second or third sector in rural areas. AKIS provide farmers with relevant knowledge and networks around innovations in agriculture. Findings from the 27 country reports were presented at three regional workshops across Europe in February and March 2014, discussed with stakeholders and experts, and feedback integrated in the reports

Agricultural production in Slovenia is predominantly taking place on small-scale farms. This is also reflected in terms of standard output distribution: almost 70% of farms fit into the class of 2.000 - 5.000 € of standard output. The demographical and educational structure of farm managers present a challenge: 30% of them are older than 65 years and only 1.3% of farm managers have completed their studies on agronomy on university level. And additional important issue is small family farms low market orientation.

The structure of the institutions that form AKIS in Slovenia is diverse. In general, they can be classified into six groups according to their aims and contribution to agriculture. The first three groups are comprised of a) the public sector with the Ministry for Agriculture and affiliated bodies, b) 18 research and education institutions and c) a group of public institutions that provide public services. The other three groups are private interest-driven institutions that consists of a) farmer-based organisations, b) private advisory organisations, and companies and c) NGOs. Cooperation and knowledge transfer among AKIS actors is very diverse and it varies from traditional strong cooperation to more a declarative relationship.

A publicly financed advisory service operates within Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia and is well recognised by the farmers. It is organised within eight territorial Agricultural and Forestry Institutes and 59 local units and employs over 300 advisors with different type of specialisation. As such, it is very accessible to all farmers, especially to small farmers. One of the key characteristics of the Slovenian FAS is centralisation. FAS and public service in forestry are assigned to two public institutions which hold a very strong political position. As a result the private consultancy market is undeveloped, even though initial changes in this sector did occur.

It is necessary to stress that the public FAS has always had a very important role in the development of Slovenian farms. At the same time, there are several content and structural changes that have already began or will need to be implemented in a greater extent in the near future.

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List of Acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems
CC	Cross Compliance
CAFS	Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia
EAA	Economic Accounts for Agriculture
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
OGA	Other Gainful Activities on the Farm
FADN	Farm Accountancy Data Network
FAS	Farm Advisory System
FASservice	Farm Advisory Service
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OB	Operational Bodies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OGA	Other Gainful Activity
RDP	Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013
RS	Republic of Slovenia

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1 Main structural characteristics of agricultural sector

Slovenia, which has been a member of EU since the enlargement wave in 2004, is situated in the SE part of Europe and has approx. 2 million inhabitants. According to OECD classification, 7 of the Slovenian statistical regions are predominately rural (11.889, 2 km²; 58% of territory) and 5 are intermediately rural (8.383, 8km²; 41.63% of territory). Slovenia has 211 municipalities, out of which 11 have the status of city municipalities.

Agriculture as an economic activity accounts for 2.46% of GDP in 2010. Slovenian GDP is substantially lower in comparison to other countries – 17.200 EUR/capita and is likely to decline in the near future due to unfavourable economic conditions in Slovenia. The trend will continue to influence the Slovenian labour market, marked by the increasing rate of unemployment. From this perspective, the agricultural sector is important as it employed 8.8% of the labour force in 2010 (and 9.2% in 2009). The total farm labour force was 208,490 people (76.500 AWUs) in 2010.

Slovenia is characterised by a varied land level and climate conditions and so subsequently varied conditions for farming. In 2010, 74,650 of agricultural holdings utilized 482,650 ha of agricultural land (representing 23.8% of total area, while arable land covered 8.4% of total area), bred 518 thousands of livestock units, and employed 76,500 people in full time employment. Agricultural production takes place on predominantly small scale farms (with average farm of 6.47 ha): one third of Slovenian farms operate on 2-4, 9 ha of land, followed by 27% of those with 1-2 hectares, and 23% of 5 – 9, 9 hectares. The size structure of Slovenian farms partially explains the problem of achieving the economies of scale in agricultural production and is also reflected also in the terms of standard output distribution. Almost 70% of farms fit into the €2000 - 5000 of standard output.

The general orientation of the Slovenian agricultural sector towards livestock production is also visible with respect to agricultural output, where 52.9% of €194 million is assigned to crop production with forage plants being most prevalent and 47.1% to animal output (with cattle and milk production being most prevalent).

Slovenian farms are run by managers who are often older and have a poor educational background. The ageing structure of Slovenian agricultural managers is highlighted in contrast to some of the other countries analysed, the dominance of older managers – 30% of them are older than 65 years. 26% of managers are between 55 and 64 years old and 25% between 45 and 54 years old. Among the younger age group, 13% of managers are from 35 and 44 years old, while 4% fall below this ageing threshold.

Regarding their educational background, the data shows the prevalence of a low educational level: in 2010, 37% of agricultural managers had only primary education and another 50% completed secondary education (but not necessarily with an agronomic focus). Among all managers those with only practical experience in agricultural production are most prevalent (65%) or have passed some short practical courses (27%). Only 1.3% of managers have completed studies of agronomy at the university level (Agriculture Census 2010). The information on the use of computers for farm management is more optimistic, as in 2010 it reached 10% (1% in year 2000; Agriculture Census 2010).

Another significant characteristic of Slovenian farms is low market orientation. Just 40% of family farms sell most of their products through different direct or indirect market chains to retail chains and food processing industry. The other 60% of family farms mainly produce agriculture products for their own use or sell their products to end consumers on the farm.

Nevertheless, the structure is diverse between products (i.e. 80% of raw milk is sold to domestic and foreign dairies, whereas just 25% of honey officially reaches the market) (Udovč, 2012).

Agriculture cooperatives are the most common and traditional form of business cooperation in the agriculture sector. They have 16,500 active members and employ 3,022 people. Traditionally, their primary focus is on the purchase and sale of agricultural products. Recently more specialized cooperatives (e.g.: forestry, fruit growing, etc.) and alternative networks based on close cooperation between farmer and consumer have emerged (Udovč, 2012).

Since 2005, 18 groups of producers of the products protected within quality schemes were established (6 of them for ECO products, 11 for products protected within EU food quality schemes, and 1 within national quality schemes). Despite the high financial support of producer groups (establishment and operation), just a few of them managed to establish common marketing, and only some of those products are present in most stores (Udovč, 2012).

2 AKIS Characteristics

The structure of the institutions that form the advisory service within agricultural knowledge and information system (AKIS) in Slovenia is diverse. In general, they can be classified into six groups according to their aim and contribution to agriculture. The first three groups are comprised of a) the public sector with the Ministry for Agriculture and affiliated bodies, b) 18 research and education institutions and c) a group of public institutions that provide public services. The other three groups are private interest-driven institutions that consist of a) farmer-based organisations, b) private advisory organisations, and companies and c) NGOs. As presented further on in detail, the organisations of all six groups operate at the national level, and some of them also a the regional or territorial and local levels. Regarding the geographic point of actors division, it is important to stress that regions in Slovenia still do not perform their political and economic functions in terms, common to EU regions. Consequently, institutions' territorial units operate on territories that diverge from the official regional division of the country. For this reason the term "regional or territorial level" is used.

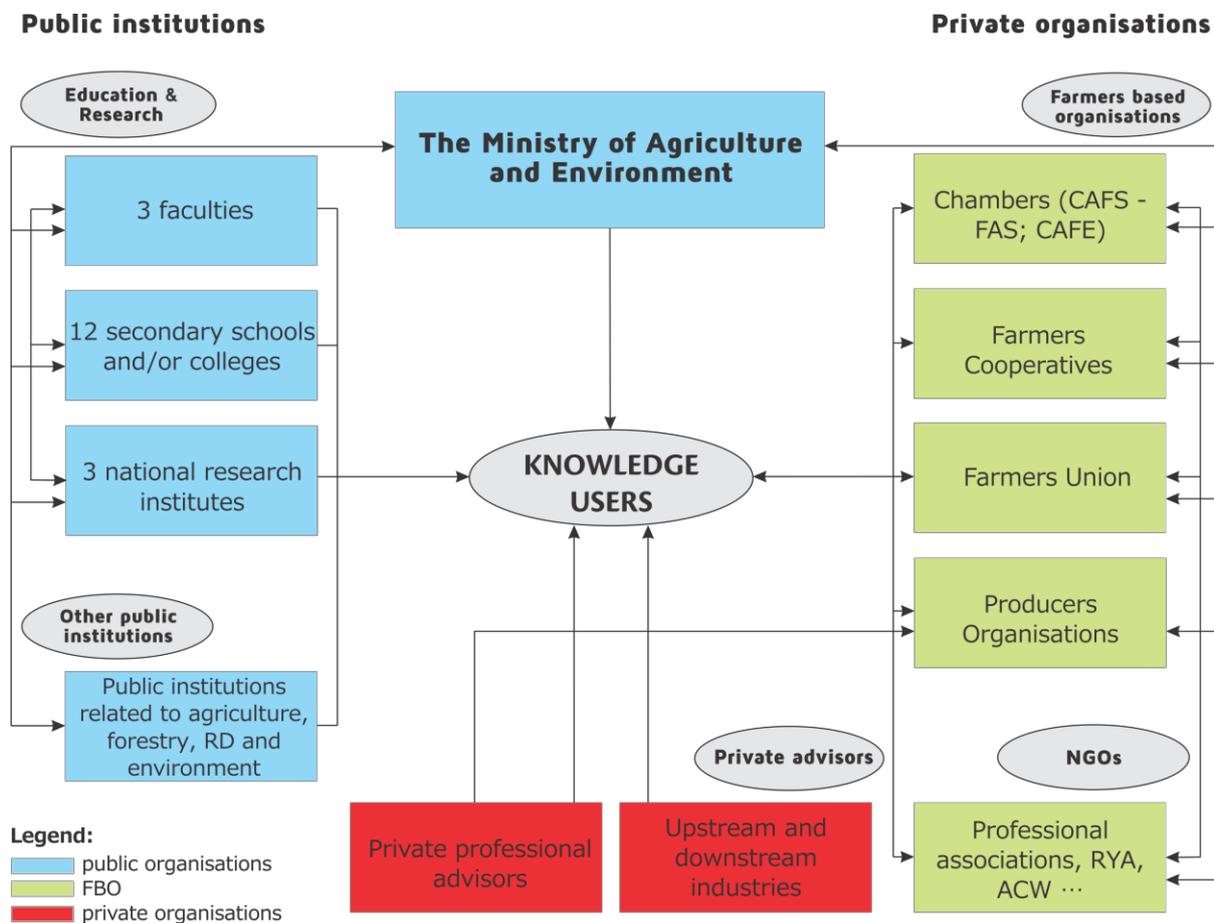


Figure 1: Overview of AKIS actors in the Republic of Slovenia

Public Institutions

The Ministry of Agriculture and Environment is a government institution that performs tasks in the field of agriculture. Its affiliated bodies in the field of agriculture are the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, Slovenian Environmental Agency, Inspectorate of the RS for Agriculture, Forestry, Food and Environment, and The Administration of the RS for Food Safety, Veterinary and Plant Protection. Given the small size of the Republic of Slovenia, its ministries operate just at the national level, although some affiliated bodies have territorial units. Public services in agriculture are implemented by different public and private organisations, such as the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (CAFS), and Slovene Forest Service.

Research and education institutions; there are 15 educational institutions in the field of agriculture in Slovenia; three faculties operate within two universities (Biotechnical Faculty and Veterinarian Faculty within the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Maribor), the other 12 institutions are secondary schools and/or colleges. Faculties operate on the national level and later at the regional or territorial levels. Key national research institutes are the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia with two experimental centres, Slovenian Forestry Institute and Slovenian Institute of Hop Research and Brewing.

The Slovene Forest Service was established by the state in order to perform a public service for forest owners, irrespective of ownership. Its main tasks and activities are forest management planning, silviculture, forest protection, forestry technique, forest wildlife and hunting, hunting reserves with a special purpose and also public relations, and education of forest owners. The organisation's headquarters are situated in Ljubljana, while its numerous units are spread all over the country (regional and local units and forests districts).

There are also some **other public institutions** that contribute to agriculture knowledge and information exchange such as: public institutions officially responsible for public services on rural development, forestry, nature preservation (e.g. national parks) and regional and regional/local institutions involved in rural development, and other issues important for the development of their territory (e.g. local development agencies). The situation differs from region to region.

Private Organisations

Farmer based organisations: there are two agriculture chambers - CASF and Chamber of Agricultural and Food Enterprises. The first chamber represents farmers and forest owners and the second represents companies and entrepreneurs in the business of production and processing of agricultural and food products. The latter has already transformed into a voluntary association though membership for farmers and forest owners in CASF is still obligatory. In addition to representing members' interests, CAFS co-established 8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes. Through those institutes and local units, CAFS performs public farm advisory service (FAS) as well as other activities, such as research, implementation of services of national interests, trainings, seminars and promotion activities.

The second group of farmer-based organisations, based on voluntary membership, consists of: Cooperative Association of Slovenia, territorial or local cooperatives, and Farmers' union. Cooperative Association of Slovenia is a voluntary umbrella organisation of cooperatives with 73 members and works just on national level, the same as the Farmers' union. The agriculture cooperative is the most common and traditional form of business cooperation in the agricultural sector. Its primary focus is on the purchase and sale of agricultural products,

and operates at national, territorial or local levels. As an intermediate link between producers and retail chains and consumers they also play a role in AKIS in terms of farmers' adaptation to market conditions and demands.

Besides these there are also some organisations/associations of farmers within the agriculture and food processing sector (e.g. producers of food products protected within EU or national food quality schemes, eco products, small cheese producers, goats and sheep breeders, etc.). Most of them are non-commercial organisations/associations and their scope of activities for members differs, though all of them provide some technical support, organise promotion activities and events etc. Quite often FAS advisors and persons employed at regional and local development institutions provide support in the implementation of their annual programme.

Private professional advisors: The small size of market for private advisory services in Slovenia is due to the centralization of advisory service within the two organisations mentioned above, but the situation started to change a few years ago. Today, there are private consultants that provide help to different producers' groups with the main focus on marketing and organisation; additionally some veterinarians give support to farmers on basic agricultural issues.

An important channel of support to farmers are also upstream and downstream industries - advisors employed by commercial producers of seeds, farm machinery etc. and advisors that help farmers to meet technical standards i.e. quality standards, labelling requirements etc. set by purchasers.

Non-governmental sector: This is a diverse group of entities with different interests and political power that in some cases also facilitates development. There are two traditional groups: Slovenian Rural Youth Association with 52 local associations and Association of Country Women with 80 local associations. In addition to the above mentioned, there are also professional associations, NGOs that focus on environmental issues, etc. NGOs organise different seminars, excursions, events, and round tables, but in general they are non-commercial organisations. Quite often FAS advisors and people employed at regional and local development institutions provide support in their annual program implementation.

It is a fact that knowledge and innovation transfer from research institutions through FAS and interest organisations to the end user, the farmer, is low and insufficient. All public institutions also agree that they do not have sufficient information on farmers and forest owners' actual needs – reverse information flow is also not operational. There are several reasons for the lack of cooperation between institutions. One of the key issues is the research system which promotes basic research. Researchers are not stimulated to do applied research as they do not contribute to indicators that they have to reach to preserve their status. Another obstacle is a system that does not allow people without researcher status (such as most of FAS advisors) to be involved in research projects financed by EU or national funds.

Some bilateral written agreements on cooperation between institutions exist but are not fully implemented in practice; at least there is no long-term systematic tool. In line with obstacles mentioned in previous paragraphs, most of the research cooperation takes place between faculties and research institutes. As far as support to FAS advisors in solving farmer's problems is concerned, all faculties and institutes provide support if they are asked for it. It is common practice that each year researchers prepare seminars for FAS advisors.

Another issue is that the key focus of education programmes in faculties and secondary schools is technology, whereas students do not get enough knowledge of farm management (economy) and sustainable management. The whole knowledge (priorities) chain must be rebuilt.

On a national level, legal ground documents for change in AKIS are strategic documents that determine Slovenia's vision and goals in agriculture by 2020 - Resolution on strategic guidelines for the Slovenian agriculture and food sectors by 2020 – “Food for Tomorrow” and Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020. This is also reflected in the first draft of Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia for period 2014 – 2020 (version July 2013). In line with article 36 the support to European Innovation Partnership is predicted and key partners (food processing industry, NGO, farmers, consultants and researchers) are clearly stated. The obligation to encourage this process probably rests on research and education institutions.

3 History of the advisory system

In the seventies, extension services in Slovenia were organised on three levels: 1) field advisors within agricultural cooperatives on municipality level, 2) advisors - specialists on regional level within seven regional agriculture institutes (today in the structure of CAFS) and, 3) on the level of the Republic of Slovenia (at that time part of former Yugoslavia) – by the Republic Centre for Farm Advisory Service operated under Agricultural Institute of Slovenia. There were approximately 100 experts from the institute, faculties and cooperatives working together as expert groups. At that time (data reference to year 1972), advisory service within agricultural cooperatives was co-financed by the municipality (in average 20 %), and the other two segments of the FAS were co-financed by funds from the Republic of Slovenia.

In 1972, the Cooperative Union of Slovenia (for agriculture) was established and three years later the services of Republic Centre for Farm Advisory Service came under its authority. In the following year the first Regional Agriculture and Animal Breeding Centre (i.e. an institute with specialized advisory service) was established.

In 1992, after the adoption of the new legislation on cooperatives, FAS was organised as a public administration within ministry for the field of agriculture, though the slow process of transition of the advisors (official employment status) from the cooperatives to regional agriculture institutes began a few years earlier. The key issue was that advisory services should be available to all farmers, not just to members of cooperatives. This point was probably also the beginning of the slow separation process of the advisory services and research and education institutions.

At the turn of the century, CAFS was established to represent and protect the interests of agriculture, forestry and fishery. It was constituted in May 2000 after the adaptation of The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry Act in June 1999. Regional institutes, formally independent legal entities, became part of its organisation's structure and so all different types of advisors were united in one institution and this led to the acquisition of a legal status.

Today CAFS is the umbrella interest organisation of natural and legal people in the Republic of Slovenia engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishery. Its central task is to protect and represent their interests, to consult with them and accelerate economical and environment friendly activities. Its preferential tasks are the acceleration of the development and the improvement of economic conditions, the assurance of specialist services operation, the co-formation of legislation, the improvement of social conditions of life, keeping settlements in Slovenian rural areas and the promotion of the Slovenian agriculture at home and abroad. Its specialist services are agricultural advisory services, selection and monitoring production in stockbreeding, forestry advisory service, and centres for fruit-growing and nursery.

4 The agricultural advisory service(s)

4.1 Overview of all service suppliers

FAS in Slovenia is centralised and is organised within a national chamber of agriculture.

CAFS operates on three levels. The first level is the Chamber's Headquarters in Ljubljana, the second level consists of 13 district subsidiaries established throughout Slovenia (see Appendix 2), and 59 local units operating on a local (third) level. Such a divided organisation structure provides accessible services in every part of the country.

The organisational structure of CAFS is divided into general sectors (coordination of elected bodies, PR & international cooperation and general affairs), and the Sector for Agriculture and Forestry. The latter consists of four sectors (livestock production, plant production, rural development, forestry and renewable sources) and provides three public services: FAS, selection and monitoring production in stockbreeding, and public forestry service.

FAS operates within the Departments for Agricultural advisory at 8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes, although farmers can also get support in 59 local units throughout Slovenia.

Table 1: Structure of FAS within Agricultural and Forestry Institutes

Institute	Description
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Celje	11 branches, 13 locations, 54 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Kranj	5 branches, 10 locations, 22 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Ljubljana	13 branches, 21 locations, 46 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Maribor	1 branches, 3 locations, 23 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Murska Sobota	4 branches, 12 locations, 39 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Nova Gorica	9 branches, 15 locations, 45 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Novo Mesto	8 branches, 9 locations, 44 advisors
Agricultural and Forestry Institutes Ptuj	5 branches, 6 locations, 37 advisors

Source: Report on the state of agriculture, food, forestry and fisheries in 2011, page 100.

Core tasks of FAS are defined in Agriculture Act and Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry Act (OJ RS No. 41/99 and 25/04) and are further defined in detail in the annual Programme of Activities and in the financial plan. The programme is confirmed by the government.

4.2 State involvement in advisory services: public policy, funding schemes & financing mechanisms

FAS is funded from different sources according to the annual plan of service agreed by the government. Nevertheless, the majority of funds are provided from national funds, though its share and the total amount for public service is gradually reducing.

Funds that were available for FAS in 2003 added up to €3,331,367,55, and €9,898,479,00 in year 2010 when the budget was the highest in last decade. Compared to year 2010, budget for year 2013 (€7,135,318,00) is 28% lower.

Table 2: Scope of work in financial sources of FAS in 2013

Activity and financial source	No. of work hours	Share (in %)
FAS financed by public funds	304.928	62,90
FAS financed by user (subsidy campaign)	57.200	11,80
Commercial activities (projects, other activities for ministry ...)	122.634	25,30
Total	484.762	100,00

Source: Negotiation baseline MAE and CAFS on work plan for 2013; data presented on XXVII. Conference of Public Farm Advisory service.

4.3 Methods and Human resources

FAS advisors are divided into two groups: agriculture advisors that are specialists and advisors that operate on the field - generalists. Agriculture advisor specialists operate in the agriculture sectors or on expert fields and give advice to the farmers from the whole territory of each institute (region), and exceptionally also from the wider territory. One of the adviser specialists per institute is also qualified for FADN issues. There are 78 such specialists in 8 Institute's Departments for Agricultural Advisory. Agriculture advisors that operate on the field are located at the local units, which are the dislocated units of the Institute's Department for Agriculture Advisory. The number of advisors in a local unit depends on different criteria – number of farms, size and the development of the area, etc. At the local units there are 180 field advisors and 44 advisors for farm family and gainful activities (OGA).

Table 3: Educational structure of agricultural advisors

Level of education	Number	Share
Doctorate (XI)	4	1,21
Master of Science (VIII)	12	3,64
University degree (VII/2)	180	54,55
Higher education (VII/1)	55	16,67
College degree (VI)	78	23,64
Secondary school degree (V)	1	0,30
TOTAL:	330	100,00

Source: Vision of Public Farm Advisory service in period of Common Agriculture Policy 2014 – 2020. XXVII. Conference of Public Farm Advisory service.

4.4 Clients and topics / contents

FAS is provided to all types of farmers and forest owners. The methods used by FAS are all considered typical/classic, thus they use: one-to-one advice on the farm, one-to-one advice outside the farm, small group advice on the farm (study tours for a specific group of intersects), and small group advice outside the farms, printed handbooks and brochures (Manual for meeting cross-compliance requirements, Catalogue of calculations for management planning on farms in Slovenia, Fourth Edition, August 2011, etc.). Farmers can also contact the advisor or the specialist via telephone or e-mail. As for the use of internet options, they are set simply. On their webpage one can find their contact information and information on seminars and events, though just some basic expert guidance, recommendations and brochures are available there.

FAS in Slovenia provides a wide scope of services to farmers and forest owners. They are presented in the table below.

Table 4: FAS priority tasks and share of work for its implementation in year 2013

Priority task	No. of work hours	Share (in %)
1. Technological and environmental advisory and protection of production sources (e.g.: improvement of competitiveness, education on environmental topics, information and education of farmers - CC, implementation of RDP, etc.)	183.362	62
2. Farm management consultations and business cooperation (e.g.: gainful activities on the farm, producers' cooperation, establishment of social entrepreneurship, quality schemes, economic issues including FADN, etc.)	34.900	12
3. Implementation of CAP (e.g.: information campaign on CAP, subsidy campaign and support to farmers when filling forms)	65.200	22
4. Fostering of development potential of the agriculture and rural areas (e.g.: support to societies on the field of agriculture, organisation of national competitions, natural disasters and risk reduction system, etc.)	14.000	5

Source: Negotiation baseline between MAE and CAFS on work plan for 2013; data presented on XXVII. Conference of Public Farm Advisory service.

One of special tasks of FAS is Project “Traditional Slovenian breakfast”; the key goal of this free breakfast for 84,692 children in 707 locations (data for year 2011) is the promotion of quality local food and an increase of consumption of local products in public institutions; all employees of CAFS are involved in the organisation and delivery of free apples and milk to children in the kindergartens and primary schools.

FAS is also involved in the preparation of national strategies and supporting documents for its implementation. One of these is the Catalogue of Calculations for Management Planning on Farms in Slovenia, a key document for the farm business plan.

As indicated before, the scope of work of FAS has greatly changed in the last couple of years. Data presented in the next table on the one hand shows a fivefold increase of commercial services which is due to the gradual reduction of available funds for FAS, while on the other hand it shows the decrease in the advisory support to farm management and restructuring (OGA), as well as a decrease in the technical support to different agriculture societies (societies of producers, young farmers’ organisations, etc.). The reduction of the support to CAP implementation is to a certain extent also the result of ending the programming period.

Table 5: Comparison of scope of work divided by tasks in years 2010 to 2013 (in working hours)

Year	Implementation of technical issues	Support to increase farm income	Implement. of CAP	Networking and cooperation	Commercial services
2010	109.374,00	33.500,00	254.302,00	27.868,00	23.397,00
2011	251.194,00	40.515,00	89.133,00	24.309,00	45.017,00
2012	247.559,00	39.929,00	87.844,00	23.957,00	44.365,00
2013	220.964,00	14.741,00	71.193,00	17.908,00	122.634,00
Index 13/10	2,02	0,44	0,28	0,64	5,24

Source: Negotiation baseline MAE and CAFS on work plan for 2013; data presented on XXVII. Conference of Public Farm Advisory service.

As presented in Table 5, all agricultural advisors have at least college equivalent qualifications and the major share of employees have university degrees.

The key issue in all public sectors is also the average age of employees and this result comes from the restriction of employment in the public sector. This approach prevents the employment of young people that would bring new knowledge and new approaches to the service. Consequently, the adoption of FAS to the changing market situation and different farmers' needs would be even harder.

4.5 Linkages with other AKIS actors / knowledge flows

As clearly stated by all parties involved - FAS, MKO, and research and education institutions linkages between different AKIS actors on knowledge flows and also on joint research are very low. All system players also agree that their awareness of farmers' and forest owners' needs is getting weaker. Cooperation between institutions basically relies on good relations between the individuals. However, the information technology allows farmers to find information on the Internet and they often prefer direct contact with producers or organise visits to farms with advance technology by themselves. One of the reasons for the situation could also be the absence of demonstration centres and technology innovation centres at advisory and research institutions in Slovenia.

There are several reasons for the lack of cooperation between institutions. One key issue is the research system that promotes basic research. Researchers are not stimulated to do applied research as they do not contribute to indicators that they have to reach to preserve their status. Another obstacle is the fact that the system does not predict greater involvement of people without researcher status (as most of FAS advisors are) in research projects financed by EU or national funds.

Apart from this, it is necessary to point out that institutes and faculties provide support if asked for, organise seminars for FAS employees each year and that there are several other joint activities such as publishing handbooks, brochures, etc. Hopefully the next programming period will reinforce cooperation between all AKIS actors within the European Innovation Partnership.

¹ One expert pointed out good cooperation between Slovenian Forest service advisors and Slovenian forest Institute.

4.6 Programming and Planning of advisory work

The Annual Programme of Activities and the Financial Plan of CAFS is the main document of this institution and is approved by the council of CAFS. It contains all Chamber activities, including the operation of public services within the organisation.

Annual Programme of Activities and the Financial Plan of FAS is also confirmed by the government. In the programme for 2013, seven priority tasks are defined:

- Management, planning, monitoring and control of public FAS (programming, development of IT tools, etc.)
- Consulting and education on technical, economic and environmental fields of agriculture activities (personal and group consulting, seminars and trainings for farmers and consultants, publications, cooperation with different institutions, etc.)
- Consulting and support for preparation of development programmes and projects (preparation and coordination of development programmes and projects, implementation of FADN and National Vocational Qualifications, etc.)
- Consulting and support for implementation of agriculture measures
- Consulting and support for organisation and management of professional organisations (producer groups, associations, etc.)
- Activities in the field of agriculture and agriculture related regulations

Advisors work plan is based on the annual programme and is coordinated by the central office in Ljubljana. Procedures for reporting are uniform and set in the protocol. Advisors submit reports on special forms in e-versions which are archived for their own statistics and are inaccessible to the control system.

5 Characteristic of Farm Advisory System (EC reg)

Table 6: Overview of organisations creating the AKIS

Provision of service				Source of financing								
Status of the organisation	Type of organisation	No. of organisations	No. of advisors	Public funds			Farmers			Private	NGO	Other (specify)
				EU funds	National funds	Regional funds	Farmers' levies	Farmers' contribution	Billing services	Other products (inp., outp.)	Foundation	
Public sector	Advisory department of the Ministry of agriculture											
	Local/regional agencies											
	Other (specify)											
Research and Education	University											
	Research Institute											
	Other education bodies (specify)											
Private sector	Upstream industries											
	Downstream industries											
	Independent consultant											
	Private agricultural advice company											
	Farmers' owned advice company											
	Other (specify)											
Farmer based organisations	Farmers' cooperative											
	Chambers of agriculture	1	330		7.135.318	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Farmers' circles/groups											
	Other											
NGO												

Note: Negotiation baseline MAE and CAFS on work plan for 2013; data presented on XXVII. Conference of Public Farm Advisory service.

5.1 Organisations forming FAS

The Farm Advisory System (FAS) in Slovenia is organised within CAFS and operates in eight regional agricultural forestry institutions and 59 local units are very accessible to all farmers, especially to small farmers. Advisors are employed in 8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes (independent legal entities co-established by CAFS), although FAS is coordinated by central office in Chamber's Headquarters. FAS control is organised as a separate service within CAFS.

In addition to the official national FAS there are several institutions and organisations that provide different support to farmers. They can be divided into four groups: institutions officially responsible for public service on rural development, forestry, nature preservation (publicly financed), regional and local institutions involved in rural development and other issues important for the development of their territory (financed by municipalities or funds from different projects/funds), and private companies providing support to farmers (commercial activities).

Officially CAFS is responsible for also providing advice to forest owners, though just three of their advisors are forestry specialists. Support in this field is also provided by the Slovenian Forest service. Activity is financed as a public service (almost 100 %). One of the reasons for the situation is that this institution is also in charge of the supervision for this sector (conflict of interests).

The later organisation is responsible for providing expert support to forest owners in forest management, although all economic issues regarding the forests are managed by the Farm Advisory Service (FAService) within CAFS. The institute is organised within the Central Unit in Ljubljana and has 14 regional units. Regional units are divided into local units, and furthermore into Forest Districts (see Appendix 2). The Slovenian Forest service employs 813 people, of which 688 are forestry experts. In the year 2011, their advisors provided 71,605 working hours of support to forest owners (approx. 13% of work hours of FAS within CAFS).

There are very few private companies and private consultants that provide support to farmers on basic agriculture and forestry issues, as the market for this type of service is centralised. The biggest reason for this is the political influence of national institutions. However, the consultancy support to the organisation and management of producers groups, marketing, etc. is established.

5.2 Evaluation of implementation of FAS

The implementation of FAS base to the national legislation is determined in the Agriculture Act (OJ RS No 45/2008), the Act on Forests (OJ RS No 106/2010) and Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry Act (OJ RS No 41/99 and 25/04) and strategic documents that determine Slovenia's visions and goals in agriculture by 2020 - Resolution on strategic guidelines for the Slovenian agriculture and food sectors by 2020 – “Food for Tomorrow”. The latter is a strategic umbrella document for all stakeholders in the agricultural and food sectors and establishes a partner relationship, whereby the responsibility for the development is assumed by agricultural and food companies, farmers, farmer organisations, local communities, educational and research institutions, civil society and the Government. The strategy is also the on-the-ground document for the implementation of the Strategy Europe 2020 and the CAP.

As clearly stated in the Position paper² for Slovenia and National development programme, the professional competence of farmers should be improved. Therefore one of the five fields of intervention in the national RDP for 2014 – 2020 is “advice, education and innovation”. Together with the amendment of the Agriculture Act and the Act on Forests that are in progress, they form the grounds for structural change in FAS and FAS System implementation.

The current system of a public FAS organised within CAFS with a wide network of local offices and advisor specialists for different sectors is stable and an established system that is “user friendly” to farmers, especially to small farmers. It is also necessary to stress that consultancy sector in agriculture in Slovenia is a very centralized market. In addition to farmers' conservatism, the key reason for this situation rests on strong political and sectorial power of chambers.

Due to structural changes in the agricultural sector and the drastic changes in the economic situation, the FAS and FAS system need to be changed. It is important to maintain a certain scope of current public FAS and public services in agriculture. It is possible that the FAS in Slovenia will exceed EU standards for SMR and GAES. Changes that are already in progress and the start of implementation of RDP 2014-2020 (option of voucher system for specialised advisory service) will result in the establishment of a pool of private specialized consultants.

Based on expert opinions, the reduction of funds for this public service is faster than in other sectors, but with the rationalisation and larger focus intervention available, funds could still be sufficient for national needs. The gradual reduction of funds, however, gives FAS the opportunity to transform and adapt to the changing situation.

As it is also presented in the previous chapters, FAS staff and employees in the public sector that provide public services in agriculture and forestry are already partly involved in providing other services and work on different projects founded by different sources. In subsequent years this will become even more important.

² For each EU member state Commission Services prepared position paper on development of Partnership Agreement and programmes for the period 2014-2020.

6 Summary and Conclusions

Agricultural production is taking place predominantly on small scale farms and is also reflected in the terms of standard output distribution. Almost 70% of farms fit into the category of €2000-€5000 standard outputs. Slovenian farms are (often) run by ageing managers with poor educational backgrounds (30% of them are older than 65 years) and only 1.3% of farm managers have completed their studies on agronomy at the tertiary level.

The structure of the institutions that form AKIS in Slovenia is diverse. The first three groups are comprised of a) the public sector with the Ministry for Agriculture and affiliated bodies, b) 18 research and education institutions and c) a group of public institutions that provide public services. The other three groups are private interest-driven institutions that consists of a) farmer-based organisations, b) private advisory organisations, and companies and c) NGOs. Cooperation and knowledge transfer among AKIS actors is very diverse and it varies from traditionally strong cooperation to more declarative relationships.

In chapters that refer to the FAS and FAS system, it is clearly stated that the adaptation of service to the changed market situation must accrue and this is also the issue in research, especially in the education sector. The focus of research is on the basic research while work on the applied research is significantly smaller. Another issue is that the key focus of education programmes in faculties and secondary schools is on technology, though students do not get enough knowledge of farm management (economy) as well as sustainable management. The whole knowledge (priorities) chain must be rebuilt.

Also the supply chain should be organised as a system of strong interdependent stakeholders. It is not possible to have a successful food processing industry without farmers that will cost-effectively grow quality agricultural commodities. Farmers will need to put more efforts into adopting to the market conditions.

CAFS is the key farmers-based organisation, but farmers' membership in this organisation is defined by the law. It is an organisation that represents farmers' interests (to the government and society) while on the other hand it provides public FAS including implementation of CAP and national regulations (in the name of the government) to the farmers. According to an expert opinion, this organisation has strong political power and it has a very difficult task in balancing farmers' interests with government's interests.

FAS has operated within CAFS for over a decade and is well recognised by the farmers. It is organised within eight territorial Agricultural and Forestry Institutes and 59 local units and employs over 300 advisors with different types of specialisation. As such it is very accessible to all farmers, especially to small farmers. In addition to the EU regulated basic requirement, Slovenia's FAS provides a wider scope of services such as economic diversification, FADN, support to agriculture associations, organisation of different national competitions, etc. Its Annual Programme of Activities is confirmed by the government who also provides funds for the implementation.

One of the key characteristics of the Slovenian FAS system is centralisation. FAS and public services in forestry are assigned to two public institutions with very strong political positions. As a result, the private consultancy market is undeveloped. Changes in this sector started and will be in greater scope implemented in the next RDP programming period. It is necessary to stress that the public FAS is important and some of today services must be preserved, yet opening the market for private consultants could contribute to faster development of farms as well as to the development of advisory services.

An information campaign on subsidies and later support to farmers is one of the tasks performed by FAS advisors. Farmers can enter data in digital information systems themselves or exclusively with the help of FAS advisors (CAFS). One could argue that this is a monopoly situation, as the service is (this year) in paid in full by farmers, but others claim that this is part of the advisory services to farmers (directing the development of farm) that assures efficiency in measure implementation. It is also a common opinion that FAS advisors put too much importance and time into subsidy campaigns instead of work on the development of farms.

All institutions, including CAFS, agree that FAS advisors competence and knowledge will need to be improved in addition to more close cooperation with farmers. The situation on the market, at least as big farmers are concerned, has changed. Although farmers are relatively conservative, it is evident that the most successful farmers are willing to pay for good advice and that they are able to find information on new technologies by themselves (e.g.: via the internet, compare offers of different technology producers or visit farms with advanced technologies). Another issue is that farmers need support that will provide an holistic approach to the farm development, therefore support must be provided by a group of experts that cover all relative issues. This amongst others is one key change that must also be adopted in FAS.

The key issue in all public sectors is also the average age of employees, which results from the restriction of employment in the public sector. This approach prevents employment of new young people that would bring new knowledge and new approaches to the service. Consequently the adoption of FAS to the changed market situation and different farmers' needs would be even harder.

On the national level, legal grounding documents for change in AKIS are strategic documents that determine Slovenia's vision and goals in agriculture by 2020 - Resolution on strategic guidelines for the Slovenian agriculture and food sectors by 2020 – "Food for Tomorrow" and Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020. This also reflects in the first draft of the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia for period 2014 – 2020, as in line with the article 36 the support to European Innovation Partnership is predicted and the key partners (food processing industry, NGO, farmers, consultants and researchers) are clearly stated. The obligation to encourage this process probably rests on research and education institutions.

Lastly, but not of least importance is the fact that Slovenia must clearly define its priorities. It is not possible to achieve a higher level of self-supply with food and at the same time protect the major share of land with very strict environmental measures (e. g.: Natura 2000). We must find some kind of compromise. In addition, it is also necessary to ensure coherent politics (planning) of different sectors (e.g.: forestry and rural development) and lead consistent long-term politics in the sector as well as with AKIS on all levels, as structural changes are a long-term process.

7 Acknowledgement of partners and reflection on methodology

The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, within which the advisory service for agriculture operates, is an independent organisation, yet financed from public funds. As such it is obligated by the law to publish the Annual Programme of Activities and Financial plan, and also an Annual Report. Official information is therefore accessible, although just a few pieces of research have been published on this topic.

The FAS is centrally organised and regional units do not have much autonomy, so information is provided on a national level. More detailed research of the situation would need to be officially approved by the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia.

As stated in chapter five, there are several public and private organisations that provide advisory services in agriculture in Slovenia. On the one hand this leads to the duplication of services (especially within public organisations), but on the other hand several independent service providers means there is competition and fostering of the development of services. Bearing this in mind it is hard to precisely evaluate the quality of work and results of public advisory services in agriculture.

The comprehensive questionnaire for the survey was prepared to conduct a detailed, and also comparable, survey in several countries. Due to the different systems and with national specificities the significant reduction of the questionnaire to a table with key information has simplified our work. Even without this, detailed information on advisory system in the country was drawn from structured interviews with national experts. As official information provided by the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia is publicly available, we wanted to get additional information from the experts that work in institutions that are each from its own side closely connected to public advisory service. All five national experts that were interviewed have been working in this field for several years and have excellent references. A list with names of institutions and interviewed experts is in Appendix 3.

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9 Appendices

Appendix 1: List and Contacts of key Organisations Forming AKIS

Name of Organisation	Status (public/R&E/ private/FBO/NGO)	Website
Agricultural Institute of Slovenia	R&E	http://www.kis.si/
Association of Country Women	NGO	http://agri.bfro.uni-lj.si/zveza/?q=splosno
Chamber of Agricultural and Food Enterprises	Private institution	https://www.gzs.si/slo/panoge/zbornica_kmetijskih_in_zivilskih_podjetij
Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia	Public institution	http://www.kgzs.si/
Cooperative Association of Slovenia	FBO	http://www.zadruzna-zveza.si/
Farmers' union	FBO	http://www.zadruzna-zveza.si/
Institute of Hop Research and Brewing	R&E	http://www.ihps.si/
Ministry of Agriculture and Environment	Public institution	http://www.mko.gov.si/
Slovenian Forest Service	Public institution	http://www.zgs.si/
Slovenian Forestry Institute	R&E	http://en.gozdis.si
Slovenian Rural Youth Association	NGO	http://www.zspm.si/
University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty	R&E	http://www.bf.uni-lj.si/
University of Ljubljana, Veterinarian Faculty	R&E	http://www.vf.uni-lj.si/
University of Maribor , Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences	R&E	http://www.fk.uni-mb.si/fkbv/

Appendix 2: Organisation Structure of CAFS and Slovenian Forest Service

Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia

Chamber's Headquarters in Ljubljana

13 district subsidiaries established throughout Slovenia and

59 local units operating on a local level

8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes

Slovenian Forest Service

central unit in Ljubljana

14 regional units,

93 local units

408 forest districts

Graph of district subsidiaries



Graph of regional units



Source: CAFS and Slovenian Forest Service web pages

Appendix 3: List of Interviewed Experts

All interviewed experts have been for many years professionally involved in agriculture and rural development as researchers or experts on national and international level:

- Stane Kavčič, PhD., agrarian economist and professor at Biotechnical faculty and farmer
- prof. Emil Erjavec, PhD., agrarian economist and professor at Biotechnical faculty
- Jože Prah, Slovenian Forest Service
- Davorin Koren, responsible for rural development, Triglav national Park
- Tomaž Cunder, researcher at Agricultural Institute of Slovenia.