

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM: SWITZERLAND

Participatory methods for consolidating a community of practice network: The example of a Swiss network to promote high stem fruit trees

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High-stem cultivation combines ecology and native fruit production in a living system, thus contributing to the diversity and ecology of the cultural landscape and to the economic viability of high trunk cultivation. A Swiss network (Hochstamm Suisse) was formed in 2000, in collaboration with environmental NGOs, but relies heavily on engagement by its farmer members to remain financially viable and to achieve its stated goals. Continuing engagement is dependent on giving a voice to the farmers in the network, which leads to feelings of ownership. Within the MIXED project, several lessons have been learned which might be applied in similar networks seeking to engage, include, and give feelings of ownership to their members.

The chosen strategy was to invite members of the network to participatory activities: In this case a back-casting ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287\(03\)00039-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287(03)00039-9)) workshop and a workshop to establish a dynamic learning agenda (<https://knowledgehub.fit4food2030.eu/resource/dynamic-learning-agenda-dla>), although other participatory methods could have been equally effective.

The key to the success of the network consolidation was in the selection of highly active and visible participants with strong and varied opinions. In this way it is expected that the opinions of more moderate people are covered as well, assuming that nothing would be said that doesn't anyway come up in discussion between the people with the strong opinions. The moderate network members thereby gain feelings of ownership and inclusion, while the selected participants not only act as delegates but also as multipliers.





ABOUT MIXED IN SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland MIXED is implemented jointly by Hochstamm Suisse and FiBL. The project focuses on fruit trees and livestock with the involvement of one group of farmers practicing MiFAS (Mixed Farming and Agroforestry Systems).

ABOUT THE PROJECT

MIXED (Multi-actor and transdisciplinary development of efficient and resilient MIXED farming and agroforestry systems), an EU-project, is supporting the development of European Mixed Farming and Agroforestry Systems (MiFAS) that are more efficient and resilient to climate changes.

7M€ BUDGET	19 PARTNERS	10 COUNTRIES
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Swiss farms are small structures and can be characterized as 'family farming'. A typical Swiss tree production system includes around 100 fruit trees per hectare. More extensive fruit tree production also exists, with for example 20 trees per hectare but here the focus is rather on the 'intensive' and 'typical' system. The Swiss MiFAS is primarily engaged in North Western and Central Switzerland.



MIXED partners from Switzerland:

FiBL

