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Support of Learning and Innovation  
Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

Agricultural Knowledge Systems In Transition :  
Towards a more effective and efficient support of Learning  
and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

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# **ORGANIC DATA NETWORK**

**LINSA Case Study Report: Europe**

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**OCTOBER 2013**

Project Number: 266306  
FP7 – KBBE – 2010 –4



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FP7 — KBBE — 2010 —4

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<b>Project funded under the Seventh Research Framework Programme of the European Union</b>		
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# 1. SUMMARY

The European Organic Data network consists of a core group of members who formed an OrganicDataNetwork project, and stakeholders, including data collectors and end users, who are involved with organic market data in Europe. The network emerged to enable access to relevant organic market data and seeks to involve stakeholders in the network formation by conducting surveys and hosting workshops.

There is no organisation or structure that enables access to relevant organic market data, so individuals have established personal networks to supply their data needs. The collective sum of these networks is called the organic data network. The reliance on personal individual networks means that entry is difficult and a lack of connections forces many to live with inadequate data. The people with whom the organisation could be developed may be physically distant from each other and quite possibly unknown to each other. Many of the problems associated with organic market data can be attributed to the ad hoc and unstructured nature of the network. To address these problems, an EU FP7 research project called OrganicDataNetwork was formed and has served as the SOLINSA access point to the network. The aims of the OrganicDataNetwork project include establishment of a self-sustaining network of stakeholders with an interest in organic market data.

The findings in this report are primarily based around five main interactions between the network and SOLINSA, and especially on an action plan that was developed during a two-day workshop that was hosted by the SOLINSA project. The action plan is a roadmap for implementing measure to take the network from its existing state to a state that was identified by network members as desirable. The network members who took part in the participatory processes were approximately evenly distributed between partners in the OrganicDataNetwork project and members of the wider network. Efforts were made to include a broad spectrum of participants from both developed and less developed markets in Europe. Because of the unstructured and ad hoc nature of the existing network, the primary support need of the network is the establishment of an office: either an individual, institution, or a commission, to oversee and provide the driving force for network development and maintenance. To achieve these goals, the network needs both funding resources and a legal basis for existence. The roles of the OrganicDataNetwork project will include lobbying decision makers at the EU level for allocation of funding to establish the office, and for implementation of appropriate regulation.

A range of tasks were identified that will be initiated by the OrganicDataNetwork project but which should also be continued if the establishment of a coordinator office is successful. In that way, the actions of the OrganicDataNetwork project will provide the basis for the transformation of the existing network into the desired network. The tasks include the creation of internal and external communication platforms to address the difficulty of the geographic dispersal of the network; to identify standardised methods of data collection based on best practice, and to implement and disseminate these methods in the form of handbooks and data templates. The European organic data network faces a unique set of challenges in that there is a recognised need for change, but the geographic dispersal and the seemingly incompatible systems within individual countries and regions, make the prospect of network establishment unlikely without external intervention. The interactions between the organic data network and SOLINSA appear to have been successful in that the network has a reasonably clear plan for network development after the interactions with SOLINSA have come to a close.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

The organic market data network formed because there is no organisation or structure that enables access to relevant organic market data. Individual members of the network established personal networks to address their data needs, which makes entry difficult and forces many to live with inadequate data. The people with whom the organisation could be developed may be physically distant from each other and quite possibly unknown to each other. So the network needs to become formalised and organised so that a range of problems, such as access, data consistency, and overall market competitiveness with other markets, can be solved.

There are three clear groupings of members of the network. Firstly there is the core group of stakeholders who have taken on the task of establishing a formal network and formed the OrganicDataNetwork project. Then there are the people identified as 'key stakeholders' who have been invited to participate in the network formation. Finally there are the data collectors for whom no structures are yet in place to allow them to participate at all. The power relations are clearly hierarchical: leader; core group; invited stakeholders; potential future members. This hierarchy is in itself not bad since the size of the informal fragmented network would make a fully participatory process of network formation unwieldy. Concentrating on the wishes and needs of a smaller group of key stakeholders is more efficient, although is less participatory.

Members of the formal AKIS system, in particular universities and advisors, are often end users or processors of data, and so are also members of the organic data network. These relationships are necessarily at the individual level since the organic data network has not yet reached the degree of formalisation that institutional relationships are possible. People within the AKIS system also provide services due to expertise in analysing organic market data, and the results of their work tend to be distributed more widely and freely than other organic market data: in particular that which is privately owned.

The conventional and formal AKIS provides a unique service in the existing organic data network in that they have both expertise in data processing and distribution. Furthermore, members of the formal AKIS have an overview of both the types and forms of data that is needed to create a complete description of the organic market. This overview is similarly quite unique. The AKIS however has little competence in organic market data collection, and the challenge for those attempting to develop the organisation will be to merge the competences of the AKIS with the capabilities of the data collectors.

The aims of this analysis are: to describe the support needs of the organic data network, which were identified during the interactions as part of the SOLINSA project; to describe the current and desired states of the network; and to outline the action plan for the network to progress to its desired future after the interactions with SOLINSA have ended.

### 3. METHODS

The data presented in this report was collected during five main interactions with members of the organic data network. Participants in these interactions were approximately evenly distributed between partners in the OrganicDataNetwork project and members of the wider network. Efforts were made to include a broad spectrum of participants from both developed and less developed markets in Europe.

The 1st interaction was an online meeting, which took the form of an open discussion. There was an attempt to use online meeting software, but there were problems with bandwidth, so the interaction changed to a skype conference, which restricted the amount of interactivity.

The 2nd interaction was a session at the organic trade fair (Biofach) in Nurnberg. This session took the presentation and question format followed by an open discussion. The advantage of meeting in Nurnberg was that stakeholders were able to meet face to face, which is not always practicable with the dispersed European network. The disadvantage was that it was impractical to use any other format than presentation/questions, which is less than ideal for participation.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> interaction was a workshop held in conjunction with an OrganicDataNetwork project meeting in England. This workshop oriented itself towards an assessment of the current situation, and particularly focussed on problem identification. Network development was not explicitly included in the discussions as the participants wished to concentrate on problems with actual data collection (which is their core business). Participants were asked to brainstorm the problems faced by organic market data collectors, and then to evaluate each of the problems according to how urgent the problem is to solve, and how easy it is to solve the problem. In this way, a prioritised list of problems was created.

The 4<sup>th</sup> interaction was a workshop hosted at FiBL in Switzerland. This workshop adopted a future search methodology, which was operationalized using the theory of Kelly's repertory grid. Participants were invited specifically to discuss network development and to assess existing and desired states. Furthermore, attempts were made to develop an action plan to operationalize the transformation from existing to desired state. The method involved each participant thinking of a characteristic of the existing network, and then defining it by nominating the opposite of that characteristic. The characteristic and its opposite then became the poles of a construct. The next step was to place the existing network along the continuum defined by the construct and to place the desired network along the same continuum. In that way, the existing network and the desired future network, and their relationship to each other, were accurately described. The final step was to create an action plan, with actions for each point to transform the existing state to the desired state.

The 5th interaction was, and is, an ongoing discussion on a web forum that has been established for that purpose.

## 4. RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Constraints and opportunities for the organic data network

The constraints of the European organic data network are dispersion across Europe, which in turn means dispersion across different cultures. There is little or no consistency in the system of data collection or reporting, which makes comparison between systems virtually impossible. Even if a data owner were willing to adjust their system to a European standard, it may be extremely difficult to do so for technical reasons. Furthermore, until there is a system of network governance, it remains unlikely that data owners will be willing to adjust their systems to meet a European standard.

The primary need for support is in the area of governance. The network has been characterised by an almost complete absence of governance and management. This ad hoc approach is probably representative of the newness of the organic sector. As the organic sector has grown, the data needs have also grown and informal interpersonal networks have formed to address these needs. Any institutionalisation that did take place was on a local, or at best regional, level. With continued growth of the sector, these informal and ad hoc arrangements have been found to be insufficient and disadvantageous to the whole sector, so formalisation efforts to address this deficiency began in 2011. The interactions as part of SOLINSA have identified several tasks related to governance, and in particular to the formalisation of the network, that are seen as urgent.

Primary among these tasks is to secure permanent resources from the EU for coordination. The OrganicDataNetwork project should collectively lobby EU bodies to convince them of the importance of committing long-term resources to network integration and for the creation of a network coordinator position (which could be either a network manager or a standing committee). Included in this key task is to specifically lobby Eurostat to support EU regulation that will both commit resources and establish a legal basis of governance. Lobbying should also include the promotion of the establishment of a permanent session on data collection at the International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR).

Within the OrganicDataNetwork, the people should be sought who are best placed, and best connected, to lobby for a permanent session. Steps to implementing this recommendation could be for the OrganicDataNetwork project coordinator to initiate meetings with Eurostat and the European Commission Directorate General – Agriculture (DG Agri): Meetings which should ideally take place sooner rather than later. Tools to enable such lobby work include using the outcomes of SOLINSA workshop 3, which was a statement about who should be responsible for the collection and dissemination of organic market data and recommendations. The coordination of such lobby work remains the task of the OrganicDataNetwork project coordinator in collaboration with project partners and other stakeholders.

A second task is to establish a legal basis in EU regulations to target specific data from sources with data proximity. To achieve this goal, it was found that it is first necessary to identify which stakeholders are missing and who should be involved. Partners within the OrganicDataNetwork project will be asked to engage with collection bodies and key decision makers to motivate their involvement and thereby create a positive alliance rather than resistance. Specifically, partners will develop an engagement strategy for each, such as collection bodies, policy makers, producers, and retailers, and then choose the most important stakeholders to engage with first. The tools required for this task are incentives in

the way of offers of mutually beneficial information exchanges and by pointing out the mutual advantages of fraud prevention.

In summary, the primary support needs for the continued establishment of the network and its maintenance in the long term are support in lobbying for long term funding and for the implementation of a legal basis in EU regulations. These tasks have already commenced within the OrganicDataNetwork project.

## 4.2 Mechanisms of network development

The network is slowly becoming institutionalised, but the level of institutionalisation remains low. There is no formal membership, no voting structures and few means of establishing dialogue with the people responsible for the network formalisation. Decision making, communication and problem solving approaches are very much top down. That is not in itself a bad approach to network formalisation. The network has existed informally for decades, and in this case, a core group of strong personalities have decided that 'something needs to be done'. There have been efforts at participatory approaches, but these are also by invitation, and the agenda is decided from the top down. It is possible that other communication and decision structures will be established as the network develops. Institutionalisation and stakeholder participation are likely to increase as the network becomes more established and stable.

The main authority figure is the leader of the group that has taken on the task of establishing the network and the leadership style is very much top down. In many ways, this is a good thing since the drive to make the establishment of a formalised network is constant. On the other hand, the top down approach is not good for motivation of others who are interested in participating. Potential volunteer participants are easily deterred if they feel that they are not taken seriously. During the participatory interactions that took place as part of SOLINSA, some additional (i.e. in addition to the network establishment tasks identified in the previous section) tasks were identified that should contribute to network development in the future. Both of these are related to overcoming the communication difficulties inherent in the widely dispersed network at the European scale.

The first of these is to establish a permanent online discussion forum, with the subsidiary task of making the forum self-sustaining so that it continues to operate after the OrganicDataNetwork project has finished. This task is closely tied to the tasks of establishing long-term network coordination. Included in this task is to create a space for country profiles, which is related to needs. The support required would be to initiate an assessment of needs and especially to initiate a common need by publicising the advantages of participation. This forum has been opened as part of the OrganicDataNetwork project and efforts have commenced to gain the critical mass necessary for the forum to become self-sustaining.

The discussion forum will be supplemented by the establishment of skype (or similar) groups for exchange. These groups have not yet been created and it is envisaged that they will enable bimonthly coordinated exchanges with and rotating chairs (to reduce the load on individuals). Specifically, the project coordinator should initiate the skype group and assign the task to project partners to identify the most important people in each country so that specific tasks or issues can be assigned to country teams. Chairing of the exchanges should use the rotating chair principle to share the burden between countries. Initiation of the

working groups and the establishment of a dialogue with customs, as part of the creation of these groups, would be the task of the standing committee (or network coordinator), so the OrganicDataNetwork project should lobby the EU to commit resources. The task of establishing these exchanges is however beyond the scope of the OrganicDataNetwork project, but could be considered for a follow up project. The timing for implementation therefore is after the OrganicDataNetwork project which is scheduled to end at the beginning of 2015. The required tools would be the skype group, while the project website (including the electronic forum) with country profiles would also serve this task.

In summary, network establishment and development is the area in which the organic data network is in most need of support. The initiation efforts to establish communication platforms will be used as a start of network development, and the intention is to lobby for resources so that centralised coordination is possible into the future when the OrganicDataNetwork project comes to a close.

### 4.3 Learning approaches, methods and tools

Learning within the network of organic market data collectors and disseminators has been very much ad hoc in the past. Efforts to formalise the network are ongoing and include the establishment of an online forum to enable information exchange. LINSAs workshops have also played a role in formalising the network, which will provide a means of formalising learning. There are no clear plans to coordinate or manage learning within the network. Coordination and management of learning are seen as secondary problems to be addressed. Solutions to issues such as comparability of market data, unavailability of data, and simply failure of network members to communicate with other members are seen as the most urgent issues. The workshop held in March 2013 had the goal of using participatory methods to identify problems, so could be seen as an attempt to coordinate and manage learning. This is however an early step in the formalisation of the existing extremely fragmented network. The following learning approaches are therefore the ideas that were proposed during the SOLINSA interactions as desirable to implement once the network has become more formalised.

One innovation to address the lack of data collection is to develop innovative ways (for example apps) for data collection on broader basis. This task appears to be best addressed as a new project, so organisations such as TP organics could be approached to lobby for such a project. The suggestion would be to pilot the approach in one country and use the successfully developed innovations throughout the European context. This topic will be raised informally at the next OrganicDataNetwork project meeting to gauge interest among project partners. Interested partners will be intrinsically motivated to look out for opportunities

A further innovation is to collaborate to create a handbook and toolbox: including the creation of an online data input template. A first step is to identify common ground priorities, and the partners in the OrganicDataNetwork should collectively suggest to Eurostat that enabling consistent data inputs is desirable. The format of a data input template should be based around a survey to identify and/or compare who collects what data: a task which has already been addressed as part of the OrganicDataNetwork project. Further steps towards achieving this task include finding agreement on a common ICT format for central collation/access; and critiquing each other's methods to get consensus on best practice (which is a task already underway in the OrganicDataNetwork project) and then using best practice information to identify the preferred approach. Tools to enable this task include the

electronic forum that was described under ‘mechanisms of network development’ and the case studies in the OrganicDataNetwork project. Case study leaders should initiate round tables at the national level, and attempt to establish these round tables as permanent.

Both of these innovations contribute to a larger goal of implementing a system for collecting relevant data. Specific tasks towards achieving this goal are that the project coordinator should assign the task to project partners to identify the most important people in each country. The process would be to survey them as to needs/priorities; develop recommendations from survey; create an event to present/agree on recommendations; recruit them into the forum; and then each country should report on its policy environment/challenges. This task however is beyond the scope of the OrganicDataNetwork project, but could be considered for a follow up project or should be included in the tasks of the position that is suggested to be created in section 4.1. The timing for implementation therefore is after the OrganicDataNetwork project, but the tasks are at least partly covered within the synthesis report of the OrganicDataNetwork project, so the future efforts would build on this existing base. The tools in existence are the synthesis reports, which are effective tools for engaging with the group; and the electronic forum described in section 4.2. Both synthesis report and the electronic forum would be improved by translation services, but this is expensive and not within practical reach.

In summary, the establishment of learning approaches, methods, and tools is dependent on the network attaining some degree of formalised structure as described in section 4.1. However, the efforts of the OrganicDataNetwork project have the potential to provide a basis for learning to be speedily established in the future if network development efforts are successful.

#### 4.4 Tasks, roles and emerging quality needs for the knowledge and skills of actors and institutions

The fragmented nature of the network, and the ad hoc means of learning, have created the situation where there are serious problems in the exchange of organic market data, which negatively impacts the sector as a whole. There is emerging recognition of the need for more efficient knowledge exchange, which is providing the drive to formalise the network. The problems include lack of comparability of data, unwillingness to share data, incomplete and inaccurate data, and data needs that are not being met at all.

The key recommendation from the interactions is the need for a top-down implemented position to coordinate and administrate the network. This person, or body, would have a range of tasks and roles, but mainly to organise, coordinate, or implement the tasks outlined above. An alternative would be for this process to occur from the grass-roots level and be bottom up, but that has not happened in the decades since organic production has become significant. The food market is dynamic and super-competitive, and the organic market is comparatively new and small. Not only that, but the organic market needs to compete with a product differentiation that can be seen as ideological rather than tangible. The spread across Europe, with the vast differences in organic market development, and the associated differences between the market data problems in the various regions mean that a bottom up organisation is unlikely without the intervention of a motivated catalyst.

A further issue, and an urgent task of any future coordinator, is a case of establishing momentum within the fragmented network so that key players become involved and enable the slowly formalising network to become stable in the long term. The knowledge needs are

reasonably well known, and the means of meeting the needs is also understood to some extent, but willingness and feasibility of stakeholders to take these steps is not clearly evident. Education and training are not provided within the existing network. The network has existed in a fragmented form for a long time, but is too new to be in the position to provide education or training to its members. The formation of a more formalised network is intended to address exactly that problem.

## 4.5 Support measures which are most effective and cost efficient

There appears to be considerable consensus that the existing system is inadequate and must be changed. There is however a lack of agreement about what changes can be made, and the atmosphere is that the situation just is how it is, and there's not much to be done about it. A concern is about how the costs associated with the additional workload would be met if organised data collection and distribution were to be achieved. Depending on the control bodies' size, these would run into tens or even hundreds of thousands of Euros, in each case every year, and as far as we are aware there are no statutory funds available to support this work.

A cost effective support measure could be that the task of formalisation of the organic data network is adopted by the academic world, who could then encourage collaboration with data collectors. The advantage of choosing this group of people is that management structures are already in place in the academic system and academics possess, or have access to, the wide range of skills needed for network development and can therefore potentially provide a unique service in the existing organic data network. Furthermore, scientists may have an overview of both the types and forms of data that is needed to create a complete description of the organic market. This overview is similarly quite unique.

The AKIS needs data, which in turn means that it needs data collectors who have the motivation and capacity to communicate their data. Members of the AKIS however have little competence in organic market data collection, and the challenge for those attempting to develop the organisation will be to merge the competences of the AKIS with the capabilities of the data collectors. In this way, the AKIS members behave similarly to any other member of the LINSAs. The role of the AKIS will however change into more of a leadership role as the LINSAs become more structured.

## 4.6 Evaluation criteria for assessing the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of support measures

### 4.6.1 Effectiveness

The support received by LINSAs is via an EU policy instrument: FP7 research program, and the LINSAs core is specifically, a collaborative project targeted to a special group (such as SMEs), so the funding (of €1 500 000) comes from the European commission. The funding is to start the network, but one of the findings of the SOLINSAs interactions with the network is that permanent funding is needed to maintain the network over time. The future funding should be sourced from outside the EU research framework. This has implications on the evaluation. One of the findings of the start of the project is that a permanent office should be

established to take the place of the project and encourage network development after the life of the FP7 project. The 'real' evaluation is of how successfully a coherent form of the network has been initiated and how successfully future funding instruments have been explored.

The period of initial funding is for 3 years, finishing 2014. Following on from a previous (failed) EU project (EIS FOM FP5-LIFE QUALITY). The EISFOM project took a top down approach, and attempted to convince Eurostat to implement change. The project achieved all of its deliverables, so from an EU perspective it was a success. But it didn't improve organic market data availability or quality, which was the main objective. The new OrganicDataNetwork tries a bottom up approach, but one that still needs a head.

There are strict evaluation criteria from the EU, based on milestones and deliverables. These are however evaluations of whether deliverables are reached. The real evaluation, of whether the network has been established in the long term, is not particularly closely evaluated. The evaluation of the success in network development that takes place is internal in the project and not particularly explicit. From a cost effectiveness viewpoint, this is quite questionable.

Evaluation is then at two levels. The precise and thorough evaluation is whether the project reaches its specified objectives in meeting EU targets (effectiveness for the supporter)? It's very clear whether the objectives will have been met. The other level is the less precise evaluation of whether network development was effective. There have been no real evaluation criteria about the long term sustainability of the network itself, and also none about the effectiveness in establishing long term funding. These would be good things to have included. The project members are reluctant to be too public on the success in case of less than anticipated results. The project is more likely to publicise successes in meeting deliverables.

#### **4.6.2 Cost efficiency**

The project level effectiveness will be reviewed positively on the basis of timeliness of producing deliverables. The 'real' cost effectiveness will however be in the long term network establishment. This will be difficult to assess in the short term because it will only be after the project has finished that the longevity can be examined. There will however be indicators. For example: Has it found funding? Or how many people are using the structures that have been established as part of the project? So the short answer is that it's too early to say (but I confess to being a bit pessimistic).

### **4.7 Operational tools that AKS actors (policy actors) could use to improve support and to enhance the capacity of involved actors**

The most obvious opportunity is for the formal AKIS system to be involved in the formalisation of the organic data network. This potential can be realised through two competences that exists in the AKIS. One is in data processing, such as informing those engaged in organisational development about which data types and forms are useful to collect, and in which form data can be compared and analysed. The other potential is for the AKIS to become involved in the organisational development process itself. Members of the

formal AKIS are in the position to find resources to enable establishment of a structured organic data network.

From an institutional perspective, the lack of structure within the organic data network forms a major barrier to interaction. It is not possible to create formal agreements because there is nobody with either the mandate or responsibility to make such agreements. There are few explicit barriers to connection with the formal AKIS at an individual level. Many relationships and connections are already established, as members of the AKIS who have a need for, or a supply of, organic market data interact within their personal networks.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The European organic data network faces a unique set of challenges in that there is a recognised need for change, but the geographic dispersal and the seemingly incompatible systems within individual countries and regions, make change difficult. Stakeholders rely on personal individual networks, which means that it is difficult for new players to enter the network and many actors are forced to operate with inadequate data. Even in the existing network, the members are often geographically distant from each other and operate within sometimes starkly different systems. Many of the problems associated with organic market data can be attributed to the ad hoc and unstructured nature of the organic data network.

While there is almost universal agreement about the need to establish a self sustaining network of stakeholders with an interest in organic market data, the prospect of network establishment appears unlikely without external intervention. There have been few steps in this direction and the primary support need of the network is the establishment of an office: either an individual or a commission, to oversee and provide the driving force for network development and maintenance. To achieve these goals, the network needs both funding resources and a legal basis for existence. The roles of the OrganicDataNetwork project will include lobbying decision makers at the EU level for allocation of funding to establish the office, and for implementation of appropriate regulation.

The tasks that were identified during the interactions with SOLINSA will be initiated by the OrganicDataNetwork project but should also be continued by the coordinator office once it has been established. In that way, the interactions between SOLINSA and the organic data network have provided a potential basis for the transformation of the existing network into the desired network. Some tasks, such as the creation of communication platforms to address the difficulty of the geographic dispersal of the network have been initiated already, while others, such as to identify standardised methods of data collection based on best practice, and to implement and disseminate these methods in the form of handbooks and data templates have not yet been sufficiently developed as to be able to be implemented. However, the interactions between the organic data network and SOLINSA appear to have been successful in that the network has a reasonably clear plan for network development after the interactions with SOLINSA have come to a close.

## 6. APPENDICES

### 6.1 Appendix I Organic Data Network: final SOLINSA workshop report

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## 6.1.1 Context:

This workshop is part of a different EU FP7 project called SOLINSA (Support Of Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture), which has an interest in studying how network development can best be supported.

## 6.1.2 Aim:

The aim of this workshop was to describe the organic data network, which is the network of all collectors, distributors, users, and other stakeholders of organic market data in Europe and to envision how the network can be improved. The final aim was to find ways that the OrganicDataNetwork project, which is an EU FP7 project that started in January 2012, can contribute to network development.

## 6.1.3 Methodological approach:

In the workshop we used the future workshop methodology, which includes stages of critiquing, visioning, operationalization, and implementation to create a work plan. In the critique and visioning phases, we relied on the repertory grid theory of George Kelly, which suggests that complex systems can be described using a finite set of constructs, and that these constructs can be defined by identifying the extremes of the construct. Application of the method enabled the identification of clear points of improvement that could be the focus of the following workshop phases. In the operationalization phase, we brainstormed actions that could be used to achieve this future state. The final outcome of the workshop was the creation of an action plan to guide the realisation of the actions that were identified.

The workshop was based around five pre-defined categories under which the constructs could be located: Scale/scope; Function; Integration; Knowledge flows; Governance. This report will be structured around those same categories.

The existing network was described with the placement of the existing organic data network (shown as orange octagons) on each of the construct scales shown in the figure under each category. The desired state of an ideal network is shown on the same scales as green octagons. The distance between the existing and the ideal network can be understood as the degree of change that is needed in the transition from the current to the ideal states. The action plan is designed to support the existing organic market data network in this transition from the existing state (in orange) to the desired state (in green). The action plan concentrates on those constructs that were deemed by workshop participants to be the most important, but flow on benefits are considered to be likely for related constructs in each category.

## 6.1.4 Governance

### Recommendations

#### 1) Eurostat to provide national government authority

Specific tasks:

The key task is to lobby specifically on EU regulation to both to commit resources and to establish a legal basis of governance including the promotion of the establishment of an EU level coordinator (which could for example be a standing committee or an office)

Included in this task is the establishment of a permanent session on data collection at ISO FAR. Within the OrganicDataNetwork, the people best placed to lobby for a permanent session are Helga Willer and Diana Schaack as a representative of AMI.

Steps to implementing this recommendation could be for the OrganicDataNetwork project coordinator to initiate meetings with Eurostat and DG Agri: meetings which should ideally take place before the end of September 2013.

Tools include using the statement and recommendations, which remain the task of the OrganicDataNetwork project coordinator in collaboration with project partners and other stakeholders, as a starting point for negotiations.

#### 2) Collaborate to create handbook and toolbox including the creation of an online data input mask.

Specific tasks:

A first step is to identify common ground priorities. The OrganicDataNetwork should collectively suggest to Eurostat of the desirability of enabling consistent data inputs. The format of a data input mask can be based around a survey to identify/compare who collects what (a task which has already been addressed as part of the OrganicDataNetwork project).

Tools to enable this task include the Organic Data Forum and the case studies in the OrganicDataNetwork project. Case study leaders should initiate round tables at the national level, and attempt to establish these round tables as permanent.

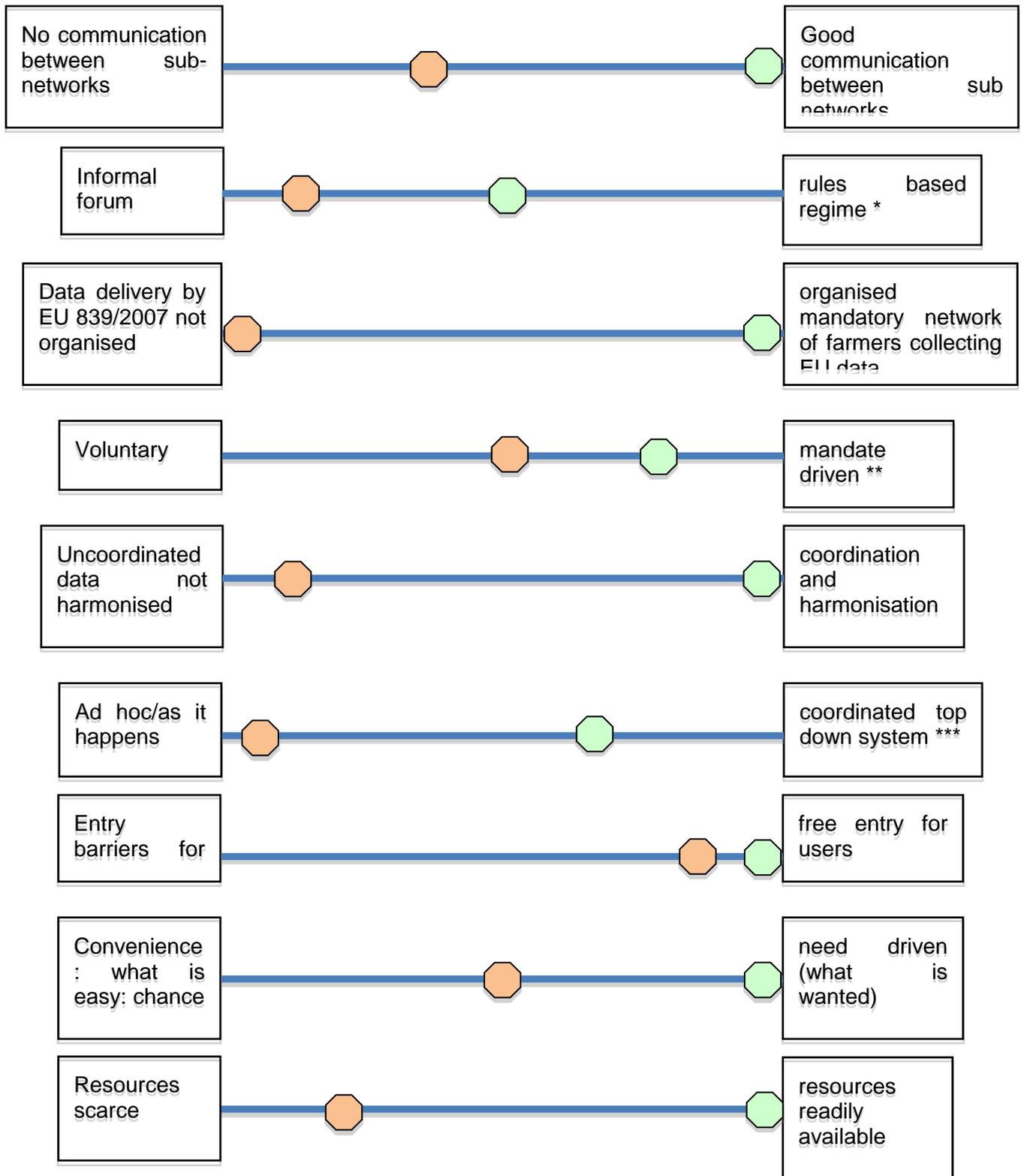
This issue should be discussed at the project meeting in Montpellier in September 2013. The issue should be discussed further as part of the dissemination discussions at the meeting in Estonia.

### Description of existing and desired states

The constructs used to describe the scale and scope of the existing network were the continuums between:

1. No communication between sub-networks through to flowing communication between sub networks;
2. Informal forum through to rules based regime;
3. Data delivery by EU 839/2007 not organised through to organised mandatory network of organic farmers collecting EU data;

4. Voluntary through to mandate driven;
5. Uncoordinated data not harmonised through to coordination and harmonisation;
6. Ad hoc/as it happens through to coordinated top down system;
7. Entry barriers for users through to free entry for users;
8. Convenience: what is easy: chance through to need driven (what is wanted); and
9. Resources scarce through to resources readily available.



\* Both are needed

\*\* Mandate should reflect needs

\*\*\* Consistent but flexible

## 6.1.5 Scale/Scope

### Recommendations

#### **1) Develop innovative ways (for example apps) for data collection on broader basis**

Specific tasks:

This aim tends towards a new project. TP organics could be approached to lobby for such a project. The suggestion would be to pilot the approach in one country.

This topic should be raised informally at the OrganicDataNetwork project meeting in Montpellier to gauge interest among project partners. Interested partners will be intrinsically motivated to look out for opportunities

#### **2) Establish a legal basis in EU regulations to target specific data from sources with data proximity**

Specific Tasks:

Identify which stakeholders are missing who should be involved: Project partners should be asked to engage with CBs and key decision makers to motivate their involvement and thereby create a positive alliance rather than resistance. Specifically, partners should develop an engagement strategy for each (e.g. CBs, Policy makers, Producers, Retailers) and then choose the most important stakeholders to engage with first.

Tools required are incentives in the way of offers of mutually beneficial information exchanges and pointing out the mutual advantages of fraud prevention. Establishment of financial incentives is also desirable and is covered in this report under 'governance'.

Specific Tasks:

The coordinator of the OrganicDataNetwork project, in consultation with the steering committee, should 'tweak' the statement made after the Newbury workshop. Furthermore, commentary should be added to the statement that explains and placates.

The timeline for the adjusted statement and explanations should be within the existing publication program of the statement.

The tools required for this step are the statement itself, and the Organic Data Forum to provide a platform for the statement.

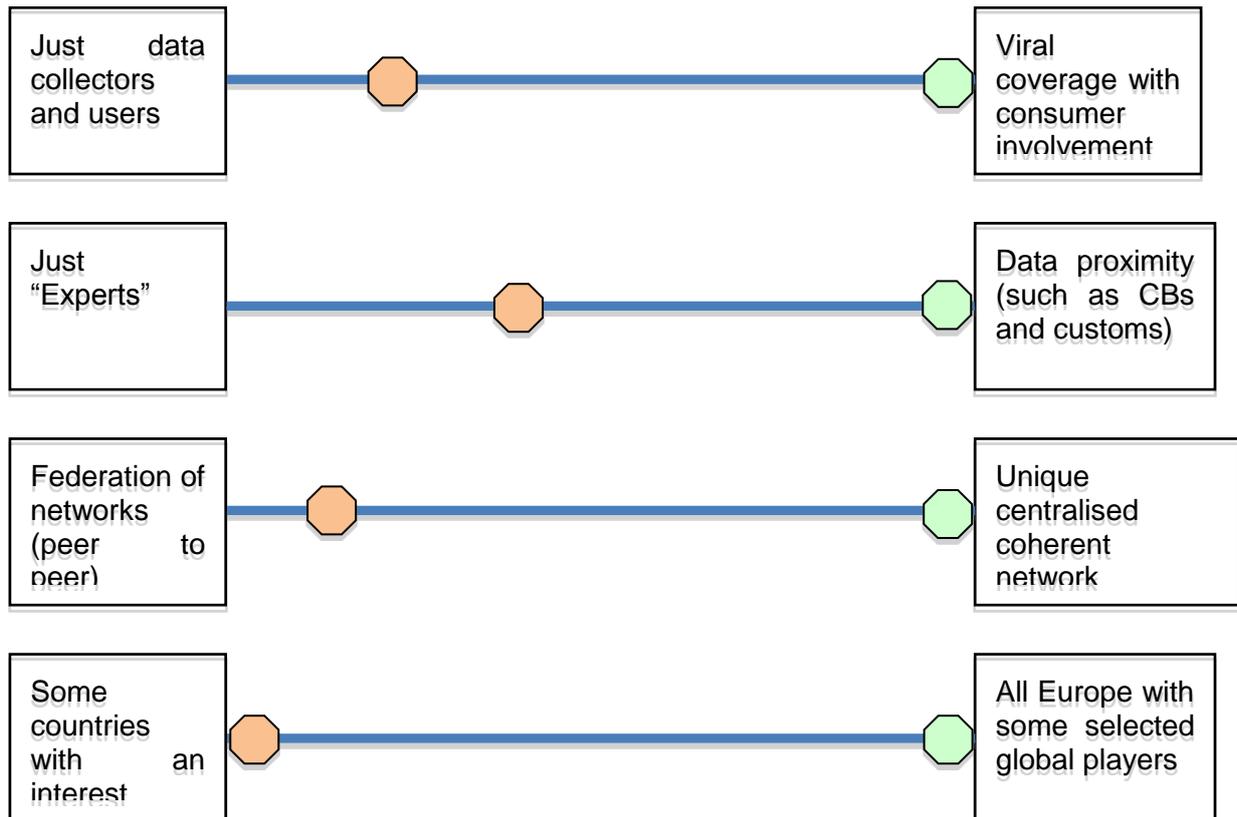
### **Description of existing and desired states**

The category of scale/scope covered questions such as who is in the network and who is it for; how big is the network; which types of actors are in the network; and what is the geographical coverage of the network.

The constructs used to describe the scale and scope of the existing network were the continuums between:

1. Just data collectors and users through to viral coverage with consumer involvement;

2. Just “Experts” through to data collection by those with data proximity (such as CBs and customs)
3. Federation of networks (peer to peer) through to a unique centralise coherent network; and
4. Some countries with an interest through to All Europe with some selected global players.



## 6.1.6 Function

### Recommendations

#### 1) Implement system for collecting relevant data

Specific tasks:

The project coordinator should assign the task to project partners to identify the most important people in each country. The process would be to survey them as to needs/priorities; develop recommendations from survey; create an event to present/agree on recommendations; recruit them into the forum; and each country should report on its policy environment/challenges.

This task however is beyond the scope of the OrganicDataNetwork project, but could be considered for a follow up project. The timing for implementation therefore is after the OrganicDataNetwork project. The tasks are however at least partly covered within the synthesis report of the OrganicDataNetwork project, so the future project would build on the existing base.

Tools in existence are the synthesis reports, which is an effective tool for engaging with the group, and the forum: particularly if the forum becomes more effective. Both synthesis report and forum would be improved by translation services, but this is expensive and not within practical reach.

#### 2) Secure financial resources

Securing financial resources is covered in the section under 'governance'.

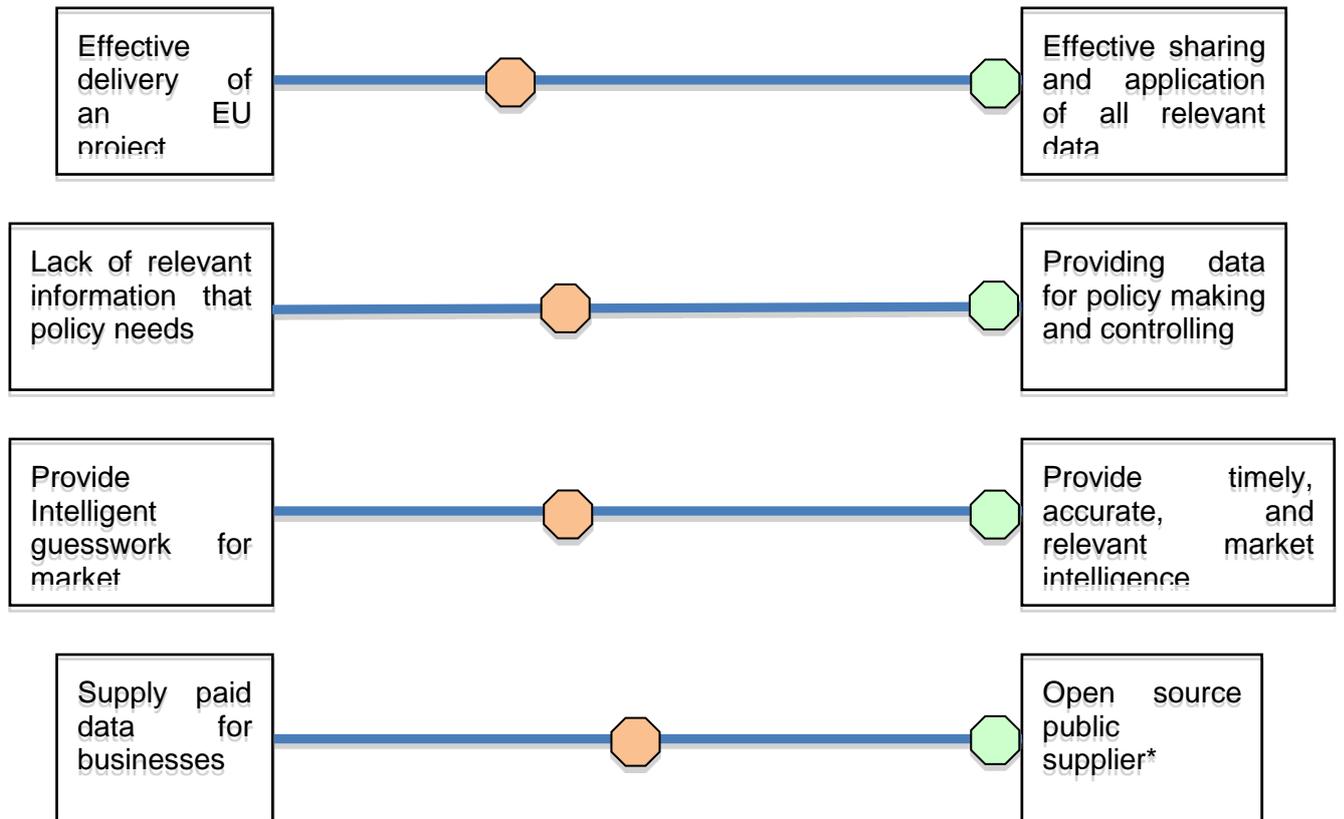
#### 3) Create a handbook and form/ISO

Creating a handbook and other functional tools for harmonisation and consistency is covered in the section under 'governance'.

### Description of existing and desired states

The constructs used to describe the function of the existing network were the continuums between:

1. Effective delivery of an EU project through to effective sharing and application of all relevant data;
2. Lack of relevant information that policy needs through to providing data for policy making and controlling;
3. Provide Intelligent guesswork for market transparency through to provide timely, accurate, and relevant market intelligence; and
4. Supply paid data for businesses through to open source public supplier of data.



\*network data should be open source but there needs to be scope for commercial collection of data.

## 6.1.7 Integration

### Recommendations

#### 1) Secure permanent resources from the EU for coordination

Specific tasks:

The project should collectively lobby EU bodies to convince them of the importance of committing long-term resources to network integration and for the creation of a network coordinator position (which could be either a network manager or a standing committee).

#### 2) Establish a permanent online discussion forum

Specific tasks:

An online discussion forum has been established, so the goal is to make the forum self-sustaining so that it continues to operate after the OrganicDataNetwork project has finished. This task is closely tied to the tasks of establishing long-term network coordination.

The forum should contain country profiles, which is related to needs.

The support required would be to initiate an assessment of needs and especially to publicise advantages of participation to initiate a common need.

#### 3) Establish skype groups for exchange with coordinated exchanges (bimonthly and rotating chairs)

Specific tasks:

The task of establishing an electronic communication process among stakeholders shares a large overlap with recommendation 1 from the 'function section'. The project coordinator should initiate the skype group and assign the task to project partners to identify the most important people in each country so that specific tasks or issues can be assigned to country teams. Chairing of the exchanges should use the rotating chair principle to share the burden between countries.

Initiation of the working groups and the establishment of a dialogue with customs would be the task of the standing committee (or network coordinator), so the OrganicDataNetwork project should lobby the EU to commit resources.

This task however is beyond the scope of the OrganicDataNetwork project, but could be considered for a follow up project. The timing for implementation therefore is after the OrganicDataNetwork project. The establishment of the skype group could be discussed at the project meeting in Montpellier.

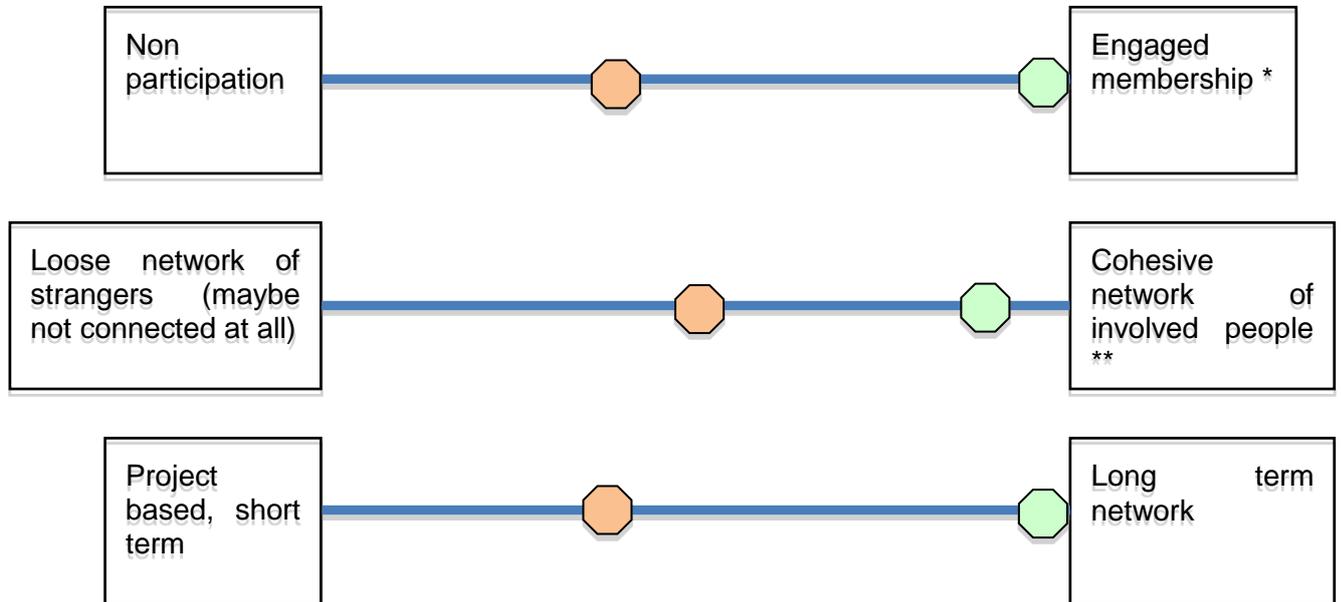
The required tools would be the skype group and the website (including the electronic forum) with country profiles would also serve this task.

### Description of existing and desired states

The constructs used to describe the scale and scope of the existing network were the continuums between:

1. Non participation through to engaged membership;

2. Loose network of strangers (maybe not connected at all) through to cohesive network of involved people; and
3. Project based, short term through to a long-term network.



\* Which shows that it reflects needs

\*\* Leave space for different opinions

## 6.1.8 Knowledge Flows

### Recommendations

- 1) Create a handbook, toolbox and dissemination material**
- 2) Establish a permanent session at IFOAM/ISOFOR conference**

Specific tasks:

There is a large overlap between the actions to operationalise these goals with the actions recommended under 'governance'. The themes listed here can therefore be seen as additional points to be considered during the governance actions.

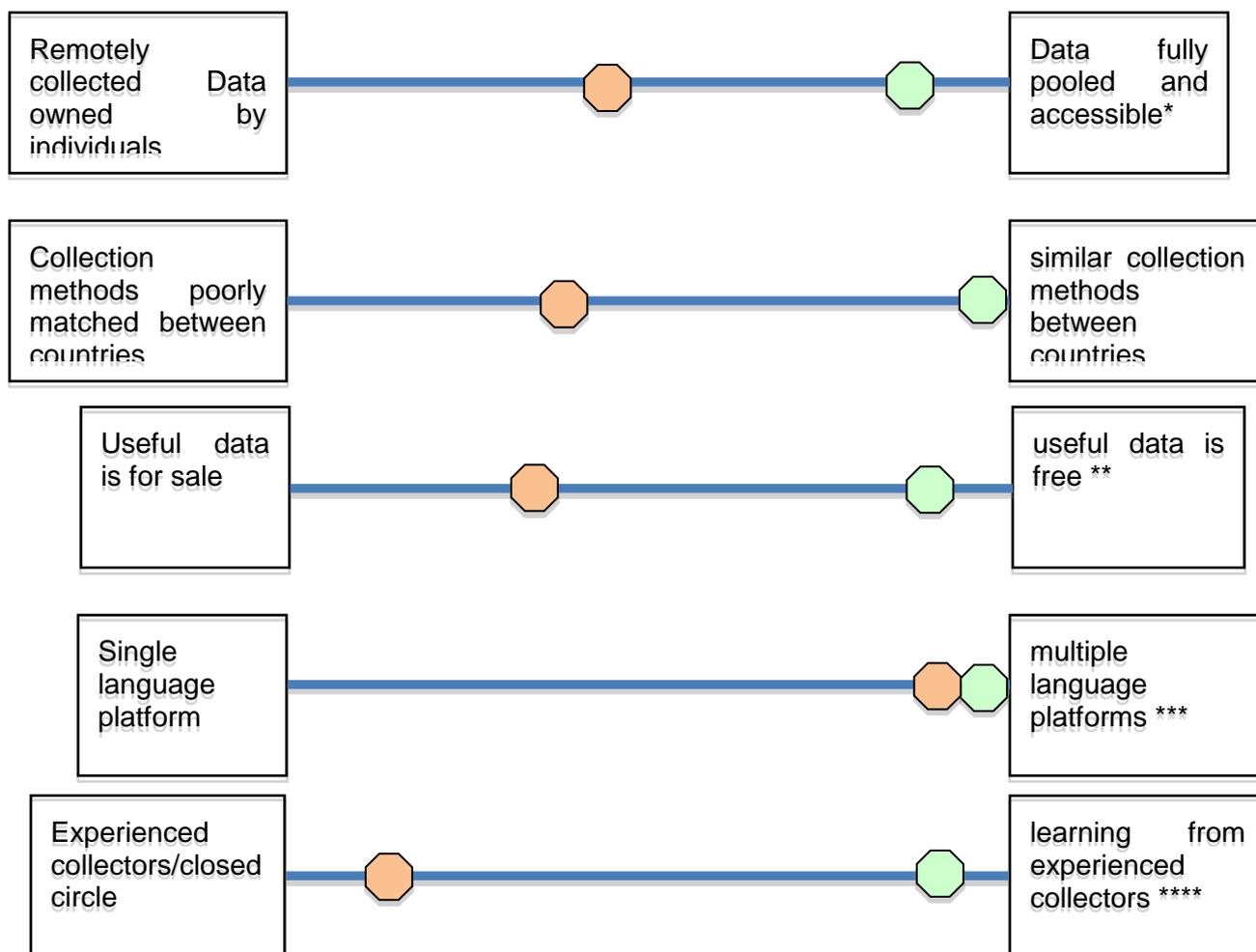
Tasks include

- To agree on a common ICT format for central collation/access (which is analogous to the creation of a Eurostat mask).
- To critique each other's methods to get consensus on best practice (which is a task already underway in WP5 of the OrganicDataNetwork project).
- Use best practice information to identify the preferred approach

### Description of existing and desired states

The constructs used to describe the scale and scope of the existing network were the continuums between:

1. Data collected remotely and owned by individuals through to data fully pooled and accessible;
2. Collection methods poorly matched between countries through to similar collection methods between countries;
3. Useful data is for sale through to useful data is free;
4. Single language platform through to multiple language platforms; and
5. Experienced collectors/closed circle through to inexperienced collectors learning from experienced collectors.



\* Not necessarily for free: commercial confidentiality

\*\* Free at point of use, but somebody has to pay

\*\*\* Google translate

\*\*\*\* Must be earned at least to some extent

## 6.1.9 Workshop agenda

<b>Wednesday, July 10</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Topic</b>
12:00		Lunch together at FiBL restaurant
13:00	30'	Introduction of participants Objectives of the workshop Short description of SOLINSA project by Heidrun Moschitz
13:30	90'	The <b>critique phase</b> : Here, the network is examined critically and thoroughly: What characteristics it has; who is included; its governance structures; and anything else that is important The “funnel principle” of the method is that the group must work its way from a very broad basis to the essential points.
15:00	30'	Coffee break
15:30	90'	The <b>visioning phase</b> : Participants imagine the ideal organic data network and place it according to the characteristics identified in the critique phase.
17:00	30'	The <b>rating phase</b> : This short session will be used to rate the importance of each characteristic.
17:30		Finish work for the day
19:00		Dinner in restaurant Monti
<b>Thursday, July 11</b>		
8:30	30'	restart
8:45	60'	In the <b>operationalizing phase</b> , the transformed ideas from the visioning phase are checked and evaluated with regard to their practicability.
10:00	30'	Coffee break
10:30	60'	In the <b>Implementation phase</b> , the solutions found in the operationalizing phase are written down and analysed according to the questions of: who does when, what, where and how (action plan)? This note-book of duties is the log book for the subsequent realisation of the solution concepts.
11:30	30'	Summary and closure
12.00		End of the workshop: Lunch at FiBL for those who can stay

## 6.2 Appendix 2 Synthesis reports

### 6.2.1 Level of Learning

#### Method:

The methods used have been a telephone conference with a core group of network members, discussions with individual members, and participation in the network's online forum

#### 1. What is the LINSAs approach to learning:

##### • To what extent, and in what way, is learning coordinated, managed and/or formalised?

Learning within the network of organic market data collectors and disseminators has been very much ad hoc in the past. Efforts to formalise the network are ongoing and include the establishment of an online forum to enable information exchange. Until now, the newly established forum receives very little traffic but a planned workshop at the Biofach 2013 exposition, and a workshop to be held in March 2013 is expected to increase traffic. These workshops themselves are expected to also play a role in formalising the network, which will provide a means of formalising learning.

There are no clear plans to coordinate or manage learning within the network. Coordination and management of learning are seen as secondary problems to be addressed. Solutions to issues such as comparability of market data, unavailability of data, and simply failure of network members to communicate with other members are seen as the most urgent issues. The planned workshop in March 2013 has the goal of using participatory methods to identify problems, so can be seen as an attempt to coordinate and manage learning. This is however an early step in the formalisation of the existing extremely fragmented network.

##### • What are the tensions between formalised explicit (codified) approaches to learning and non formalised implicit learning approaches?

There are no real tensions that can be observed between formal and non-formal learning. Until now, all learning within the network has been informal and based on interpersonal relationships as individuals seek solutions to specific problems. It appears that all stakeholders agree that some degree of formalisation is necessary and will be of benefit to all. On the other hand, there appears to be some doubt about whether the formalisation process can achieve a critical mass that will enable the network to maintain, in the long term, the structure that it is gaining. This is closely related to the findings on governance and the difficulties of establishing governance structures when (virtually) none have been in place in the past.

The network formalisation process is participative, although with participation concentrating on key stakeholders. That means that, although there are no apparent tensions yet, the change that occurs when structures are put into place will mean that some existing non formal learning approaches are challenged.

**• What are the structures and mechanisms of learning? (is an AKS structure evident? What are the: communication patterns, communication infrastructures, retrieval information systems, intellectual property rules, validation of information protocols?)**

There are no existing structures or mechanisms of formal learning except for the newly established webforum. Any communication that takes place within the network is informal and based around interpersonal relationships. There is a structure of information exchange in the form of an annual publication called 'World of Organic'. Representatives from countries within Europe submit country reports which are centrally collated and distributed. The publication of 'World of Organic' is a private undertaking and, although central to information exchange within the network, has not been formally part of the network. This is in part due to the lack of formalisation in the network.

Intellectual property has traditionally been a barrier to learning within the fragmented network. Data is expensive to collect, and data owners are reluctant to share it unless they receive some benefit from sharing. This reluctance is a direct cause that learning takes place through interpersonal networks in which knowledge sharing is the result of bilateral negotiation.

**2. Can individual, social and organisational learning be identified?**

**• If so can they be separately characterised?**

Individual learning in the past has occurred through interpersonal contacts between members, which are mutual and individually negotiated rather than enabled through any organisational structure. Social learning is hardly evident within the existing network, except through occasional professional trade fairs such as Biofach (individual learning also takes place at such events). Organic market data is however not the focus of these events and plays a secondary role. The current processes of network formalisation are intended to enable social exchanges by creating a structural framework. Formalised organisational learning has not taken place in the past, with the possible exception of the publication of 'world of organic', which is information transfer rather than learning.

**What are the emerging needs for knowledge and skills in the LINSAs?**

The fragmented nature of the network, and the ad hoc means of learning have created the situation where there are serious problems in exchange of organic market data which negatively impacts the sector as a whole. There is emerging recognition of the need for more efficient knowledge exchange, which is providing the drive to formalise the network. The problems include lack of comparability of data, unwillingness to share data, incomplete and inaccurate data, and data needs that are not being met at all.

**How well equipped/competent are the actors and institutions to meet these needs?**

The capability of actors to meet the needs is not disputed. The issue is more a case of establishing momentum within the fragmented network so that key players become involved and enable the slowly formalising network to become stable in the long term. The knowledge needs are reasonably well known, and the means of meeting the needs is also understood to some extent, but willingness of stakeholders to take these steps is not clearly evident. The formation of a more formalised network is intended to address exactly that problem.

**To what extent is education, training and professionalization needed and provided?**

Education and training are not provided within this network. The network has existed in a fragmented form for a long time, but is too new to be in the position to provide education or training to its members.

**How much priority does the LINSAs assign to learning and identifying current and future learning needs?**

Identification of current and future learning needs is inherent in the participatory process of network formalisation. The goal of the upcoming workshop in March 2013 is explicitly to identify problems with organic market data collection. In that sense, it is clear that identifying learning needs is of the highest priority in this network at this stage.

**3. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points**

- Learning within the organic data network has been based on negotiated interpersonal relationships
- Formal learning structures are new and not yet utilised.
- Learning and knowledge needs are among the main reasons that the network formed.
- Formalisation of the network is a prerequisite for formalisation of learning within the network
- The need for learning is recognised but stakeholders have found it difficult to establish any workable form of formal and stable network to enable learning.

## 6.2.2 Governance

### Method:

The methods used have been a telephone conference with a core group of network members, discussions with individual members, and participation in the network's online forum

#### 1. How is the LINSAs governed/managed?

The network has been characterised by an almost complete absence of governance and management. This ad hoc approach is probably representative of the newness of the organic sector. As the organic sector grows, the data needs also grow. Informal interpersonal networks formed to address these needs, and what institutionalisation that did take place was on a local, or at best regional, level. With continued growth of the sector (9% growth from 2010 to 2011), these informal and ad hoc arrangements have been found to be insufficient and disadvantageous to the whole sector. Formalisation efforts to address this deficiency began in 2011.

- **To what extent is the network governance inclusive/democratic?**

The simple answer to this is that the network is not democratic at all. The formalisation process of the network is top down and participation is by invitation only. The challenge will be to establish a network that is sufficiently stable to become self-sustaining if the drive from the top were to cease.

- **To what extent is the LINSAs institutionalised?**

The network is slowly becoming institutionalised, but the level of institutionalisation remains low. There is no formal membership, no voting structures and few means of establishing dialogue with the people responsible for the network formalisation. Institutionalisation is likely to increase as the network becomes more established and stable.

- **How are communication, decision making, problem solving actioned?**

Decision making, communication and problem solving approaches are very much top down. That is not in itself a bad approach to network formalisation. The network has existed formally for decades, and in this case, a core group of strong personalities have decided that 'something needs to be done'. There have been efforts for participatory approaches, but these are also by invitation, and the agenda is decided from the top down. It is possible that other communication and decision structures will be established as the network develops.

- **Do actors have sufficient skills/competencies for network governance?**

In the case of the core group of key stakeholders, it appears that the competencies are present and the will is also present. The network is new, so it could be expected that stakeholders who take voluntary roles in the management of the emerging formalised network will be those who have the skills to do so.

#### 2. Who has authority/control?

The main authority figure is the leader of the group that has taken on the task of establishing the network. It's fair to say that this person is very much a top down leader, and any work that is delegated is checked for approval before being considered to be complete. In many

ways, this is a good thing since the drive to make the establishment of a formalised network is constant. On the other hand, the top down approach is not good for motivation of others who are interested in participating. Potential volunteer participants are easily deterred if they feel that they are not taken seriously.

- **What are the power relations: inside LINSAs and inside/outside LINSAs. Who is excluded from the LINSAs and why is he/she/they/it excluded? What are the different levels of governance**

There are three clear groupings of members of the network. Firstly there is the core group of stakeholders who have taken on the task of establishing a formal network. Then there are the people identified as 'key stakeholders' who have been invited to participate in the network formation. Finally there are the data collectors for whom no structures are yet in place to allow them to participate at all. The power relations are clearly hierarchical: leader; core group; invited stakeholders; potential future members. This hierarchy is in itself not bad since the size of the informal fragmented network would make a fully participatory process of network formation unwieldy. Concentrating on the wishes and needs of a smaller group of key stakeholders is more efficient, if less participatory and therefore with more risk.

### **3. How does the governance approach affect network efficiency and /or effectiveness of the LINSAs?**

The network is in the formation stage, so the strongly hierarchical approach is quite efficient. The risk of course is that the outcome of the process, which will be a formalised and structured network, may not meet the needs of those who were excluded from the formation process. It is possible that the network will form to be more inclusive of the members (as yet there is no formal membership), although the future form of the network remains unknown.

### **4. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points**

- The network is new and is characterised by top down governance in its formative stages.
- Establishment of governance structures is in response to the existing ad hoc network failing to meet the needs of stakeholders.
- There are advantages (efficiency) and disadvantages (demotivation) to the top down approach.
- The future governance form of the network is unknown and under discussion.
- Participation is so far by invitation only.

## 6.2.3 Degree of interaction

### **LINSA:**

The European level LINSA does not have a name but if it did, it would be called the Organic Data Network. Organic market data in Europe (and elsewhere) is notoriously difficult to access, mainly because of the expense and effort that goes into collecting it. Personal networking is the method of choice of accessing data in the very many cases in which data is not openly published. There is however little networking between the personal networks, despite the clear advantages that would be gained by doing so. Everybody involved with organic market data agree that some central organisation, some standardisation, or in other words, a structured network is what would be needed. But no such network has arisen. An EU project is attempting to initiate some organisation in these fragmented individual networks, which collectively form the case study network. The people involved in the network do not realise that there is a network, mainly because of its fragmented nature, lack of organisation, lack of a name, and the small scale of the individual networks. This need not be the case in fragmented networks, since contact with one or more key players can alert an individual that a network exists. The case of the organic data network however is that there are no key players.

The organic data network meets many of the characteristics of a community of practice except that there is little sense of community. The practice is what they have in common. The learning part of LINSA is clear enough, and the innovation comes in that the formalisation of a fragmented network is in itself innovative. The sustainable agriculture requirement for classification as a LINSA is satisfied by the concentration on organic agriculture, which holds sustainability as a fundamental concept.

### **Method:**

Maintaining contact with a forming and fragmented European level LINSA is not easy because most of the players haven't met each other and have had no obvious cause to meet. The initial contact and first workshop consisted of a telephone conference with a selection of people, each with a personal network, but all unknown to each other. Several of the participants expressed interest in bilateral communication among themselves, so the initial contact appears to have identified communication needs that were not previously manifested.

#### **1. What are the mechanisms of network development?**

#### **2. What are the processes of innovation and learning and how do they occur?**

- Mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire (characteristics of a COP)
- Participation and reification
- Boundary work (boundary objects, brokers, boundary interactions)

The mechanisms for network development have been largely based round chance meeting, although attendance at the annual Biofach conference increases the chances of meeting and provides a networking opportunity. The network building activities as part of the SOLINSA and OrganicDataNetwork projects are early attempts to install network development mechanisms.

Due to the fragmented nature of the network, there have been limited opportunities for innovation and mutual learning. An innovation will be the installation of network development mechanisms.

The primary boundary object is an artificially created electronic coordination centre that was formed as part of the OrganicDataNetwork project. More specifically, the organic data forum provides the platform for mutual exchange. The top down formation of the forum has meant that it has not been extensively used until now. There is a contradiction here. The network needs some catalyst for it to come together and deliver its potential, and the catalyst has to be in the form of a personality or organisation. Such a catalyst will only engage in that activity if it has an interest and an individual agenda. That means that some degree of top down organisation is necessary at the start. The concept of Communities of Practice suggests that they should be created and managed from the bottom up. It appears in the case of the organic data network that the initial creation is unlikely without some top down initiation.

### **3. Should the LINSAs be considered as a COP, NOP, constellation of practice, innovation network?**

I think the network can best be considered a community of practice. There are no formal structures in place at all, and any communication or contact that does take place is based around the shared practice of organic market data collection, processing or distribution. Mutual engagement and joint enterprise occurs only within very limited subnetworks because of the extremely fragmented nature of the network.

### **4. Are there any things revealed about the degree of integration that were unexpected?**

It was expected that there would be a very low degree of integration, which would in turn hamper the ability to be innovative.

### **5. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points**

Extremely fragmented

Limited scope for innovation

Need for cohesion

Cohesion needs a catalyst

Network establishment is itself an innovation

## 6.2.4 Level of innovation

### 1. Do the LINSAs display characteristics of incremental or radical innovations?

The network itself does not inherently display characteristics of innovation, which are hampered by its fragmented nature. The innovation that does occur is primarily on the level of building small personal networks to solve the problem of lack of availability of organic market data. Often these personal networks are very informal in nature, with personal relationships often being the only way to access required data. These innovations are primarily incremental. On the other hand, efforts to establish a more organised network, or in other words, to attempt to join the many small individual networks can be seen as a radical innovation.

### 2. How do LINSAs support socio-technical transition to sustainability?

The establishment of a network of those involved with organic market data will enable those interested in changing to organic farming or processing methods to make informed decisions. Until now, such change has often been made in the absence of reliable data. The network will both enable change, by providing data, and enhance the chances of survival of businesses that change. The notion that transition to sustainability is supported is however reliant on the proposition that organic methods are sustainable.

### 3. Is the LINSAs a novelty, a niche or a change in the regime?

The organic data network can be considered to be a change in the regime.

### 4. Is the LINSAs focused on incremental innovation, mobilising and applying existing knowledge in given contexts or it is a network that 'breaks the rules' of dominant socio-technical systems and builds up new economic spaces endowed with their own rules, actors, and artefacts?

The LINSAs aims towards radical innovation, in that formalisation of the network in bringing together the small individual networks will change the organic market data landscape. It is not so much a matter of creating space, but structuring and ordering an existing space by initiating creation of rules, enabling actors, and utilising artefacts.

### 5. Are there any things revealed about the level of innovation that were unexpected?

The network establishment process was initiated in response to the problem that the existing lack of structure in the individual networks meant that innovation was difficult. It was not surprising therefore to find that that was the case. The unavailability of data however forced individual innovation, in the form of creating personal networks, which was not completely expected. In that way, it can be seen that the establishment of the network is a result of learning from, and mimicking, the strategies taken by the individual network members.

### 6. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points

- Individuals face a common problem
- The problem is common, but individuals are often in competition
- Innovation is to form small networks to address problems
- The innovations are successful
- A radical innovation is to dramatically increase the scale.

## 6.2.5 Scale

**1. What type of “association” is the LINSAs?: Degree of formality; degree of complexity; diversity of actors involved: types and role in the network; approximate number of nodes; geographical coverage; diversity of activities performed.**

The organic data network is a completely informal association with no membership formalities, no representation, and no unified presence. The degree of complexity remains unknown although it appears to be simply a form of social network but without major nodes. Individual networks have formed to address the problem of unavailable organic market data and these networks appear to have no clear boundaries (they merge with neighbouring networks). In that was the geographical coverage is principally unlimited although it appears that there are regional limitations because of regional similarities in the data availability problem.

The LINSAs is relatively homogeneous in its membership with all members sharing a common interest in the collection, processing and distribution of organic market data. The network is problem centred and is therefore quite limited in its activities: it addresses the problem that it was formed to solve. On the other hand, its existence is that solution to the data availability problem.

**2. How is LINSAs structured?: 1st level characterises a simple network; 2nd level characterises links between networks;3rd level characterises networks of complex networks**

This is a difficult question. Until now, the network has no known structure, although efforts to create some structure are ongoing. The organic data network is a collection of small informal networks that have not yet been unified. The fragmented nature of it means that it could be argued that it doesn't exist because it has not yet been named or described. It is essentially a network of simple networks that are interlinked but remain unknown to each other.

**3. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points**

- Informal.
- A network of specialised actors.
- Its existence solves the one problem it was formed to solve.
- Interlinked networks that are unknown to each other.

## 6.2.6 Origin and function

### 1. How did the LINSAs evolve (diverse, emerging) and into what form?

The LINSAs came (or is coming) into being as a reaction to the formation of a many small individual networks that themselves were created to solve a specific problem, namely the unavailability of organic market data. In most European countries, Organic market data is not collected centrally and, in the absence of official data sources, accessing data is often dependent on the maintenance of a relationship with private collectors (usually certifying bodies). Data collectors and those seeking to access the data have therefore formed informal networks, which is essentially how the data channels came into existence. This localised network formation has proven successful on the individual level although there remain very many gaps in the available organic market data. The organic data network LINSAs is forming to apply the principle that was developed on the local level on a larger scale, and thereby to seek to enhance the availability of organic market data.

### 2. What are the policy principles, policy instruments and financial arrangements? Do these affect the success of the LINSAs?

I am not aware of any policy principles or policy instruments that are relevant to the formation of the organic data network. Network formation is supported financially through European Union financing of the FP7 project: OrganicDataNetwork, which includes the task of initiating contact between stakeholders and providing a platform for stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experience. The intention is that the EU project should take the role as a catalyst: initiating network formation and putting structures in place that will continue after the project has ceased.

### 3. What are the tasks and roles of actors and institutions? Are professional advisory services involved?

The professional advisory services involved in the formation of the organic data network are the partner organisations that make up the OrganicDataNetwork project. The partners are primarily a group of academics, but with some participation by representatives of SMEs.

The tasks allocated to the project are

- 1) the establishment of a web based communication and exchange forum
- 2) Organisation of two stakeholder workshops. The first workshop will focus on problems in data collection and data harmonisation as well as examining issues of fraud. The second workshop will focus on finding solutions to the problems identified in workshop 1.

The web forum and workshops will combine to enable the establishment of contacts between stakeholders from different European countries, different data types (price, production, domestic, and international trade), and different organisation types (private, semi private, state run, and NGOs).

### 4. Has there been any evaluation of effectiveness and cost efficiency of support arrangements? If so what criteria were used?

There are no explicit evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in place to assess the cost efficiency of support arrangements. The effectiveness of the network building efforts will be part of the reflection that takes place during the course of the project.

#### **5. Summarise your findings with 4-6 key bullet points**

- Many small informal networks
- Formed in response to a need
- External top-down cohesion into larger more formal network
- Showed no sign of happening bottom up
- Externally financed

## 6.2.7 Links to the AKIS

### Method:

Methods used have been interviews, informal conversations, two workshops, and through scanning web presence and an interactive web forum. That said, the questions were not specifically addressed during these interactions, but the answers have rather been gleaned in the course of addressing other issues that were pressing for the LINSAs. For example, key points for the LINSAs are the questions of who will have the responsibility for collecting organic market data, and what mechanisms can be designed to facilitate collection. The formal AKIS system was mentioned several times during the ensuing discussion: thereby revealing links and potentials.

### Linsa connections with the formal AKIS system

**• What are the LINSAs connections with the formal AKIS system? Formal or informal connections at individual or institutional level? Do they use AKS research? Advisory services? Education and training?**

The organic market data network is difficult to describe because it is ad hoc, formed by personal relationships, and has no structure. The network formed for precisely the reason that there is no organisation or structure that enables access to relevant data, so personal networks are used. Members of the formal AKIS system are often end users or processors of the data, and so are also members of the organic data network. These relationships are necessarily at the individual level since the organic data network has not yet reached the degree of formalisation that institutional relationships are possible. People within the AKIS system also provide services due to expertise in analysing organic market data, and the results of their work tend to be distributed more widely and freely than other organic market data: in particular that which is privately owned.

**• What are the opportunities for connection to the AKIS? Do they engage in any joint activities/ partnerships with AKIS? Are there boundary organizations? Brokers? Spanners?**

The most obvious opportunity is for the formal AKIS system to be involved in the formalisation of the organic data network. This potential can be realised through two competences that exist in the AKIS. One is in data processing, such as informing those engaged in organisational development about which data types and forms are useful to collect, and in which form data can be compared and analysed. The other potential is for the AKIS to become involved in the organisational development process itself. Members of the formal AKIS are in the position to find resources to enable establishment of a structured organic data network.

**• What are the barriers for connection to the AKIS? Lack of familiarity? Irrelevant knowledge? Access issues? Different language? Different value system? Absence of common means of validating knowledge claims?**

From an institutional perspective, the lack of structure within the organic data network forms a major barrier to interaction. It is not possible to create formal agreements because there is nobody with either the mandate or responsibility to make such agreements. There are few explicit barriers to connection with the formal AKIS at an individual level. Many relationships and connections are already established, as members of the AKIS who have a need for, or a supply of, organic market data interact within their personal networks.

### **Significance/Relevance of AKIS**

- **How effectively does the conventional AKIS meet the needs of the LINSAs? Do they provide relevant information? Does it meet emerging needs for knowledge and skills in the LINSAs?**

The conventional and formal AKIS provides a unique service in the existing organic data network in that they have both expertise in data processing and distribution. Furthermore, members of the formal AKIS have an overview of both the types and forms of data that is needed to create a complete description of the organic market. This overview is similarly quite unique. The AKIS however has little competence in organic market data collection, and the challenge for those attempting to develop the organisation will be to merge the competences of the AKIS with the capabilities of the data collectors.

- **Does the Linsas want to connect to the AKIS? Or are they already getting sufficient support/knowledge from elsewhere?**

The LINSAs doesn't really exist in a sufficiently organised form that it can be seen to have collective goals. Certainly some individual members of the organic data network can, and do, connect with the AKIS, and some members are part of the AKIS. On the other hand, some owners of organic market data are reluctant to part with it and see the formal AKIS as simply another potential customer. What is clear is that the AKIS is not a sufficient source of knowledge, and that network members find their data wherever they can.

- **How important/relevant is the AKIS to the LINSAs? Are there other knowledge systems which are more relevant eg health care, energy, food justice?**

The AKIS has the potential to be of fundamental importance to the LINSAs: especially in the role that it can take in organisational development.

- **How does the LINSAs value or judge the AKIS? What is important to the Linsas when they look for information (scientific credibility, inspiration, validation of their own knowledge and beliefs)?**

It's not really possible to speak on behalf of the LINSAs. LINSAs members seek data of sufficient quality to meet their needs. The AKIS has the potential to help define the quality and how it could be achieved

- **What are the views of the AKIS representatives? Does the AKIS need LINSAs? How do they value LINSAs?**

The AKIS needs data, which in turn means that it needs data collectors who have the motivation and capacity to communicate their data. For that, the LINSAs is needed. In this way, the AKIS behaves similarly to any other member of the LINSAs. The role of the AKIS will however change into more of a leadership role as the LINSAs becomes more structured.

### Key points

- The LINSAs are unstructured, with individuals within the AKIS in the role of network members.
- The AKIS has the potential to contribute to structuring the network.
- Individuals within the AKIS have competences (e.g. organisational development; an overview of data that is needed) that are lacking in the LINSAs.
- Formal relationships between the LINSAs and the AKIS need a structured LINSAs.

## 6.2.8 Effectiveness and cost efficiency

### **Method:**

Methods used have been interviews, informal conversations, two workshops, and through scanning web presence and an interactive web forum. That said, the questions were not specifically addressed during these interactions, but the answers have rather been gleaned in the course of addressing other issues that were pressing for the LINSAs.

### **What type of support does the Linsa use/look for?**

- **External/ direct support/'hard' support measures - policy instruments and funding support, financial instruments etc. Who provides support? What is provided?**
- **Internal/indirect/'soft' support - support they have received from each other, mentors, volunteers, facilitation, enhancing communication and linkage etc**

The LINSAs are widely dispersed, were created in an ad hoc way, and have no observable structure. This dispersal and absence of structure leads to the support needs of the LINSAs, which must come from outside. The reason is that each individual member of the LINSAs establishes a personal network to address their data needs, which makes entry difficult and forces many to live with inadequate data. The people with whom the organisation could be developed may be physically distant from each other and quite possibly unknown to each other. So the support needs in organisational development are many and can be summarised as needs for funding resources for establishing the formalised network, for expertise in establishing the LINSAs, for on-going funding of data collection, and for ongoing maintenance of the network.

### **Effectiveness (impact) for all kinds of support discussed in the first question.**

- **To what extent do the different types of support help the LINSAs to achieve its goals? (or achieve innovation and learning?)**

The support structures given by the OrganicDataNetwork project have contributed to the initial stages of network establishment, which is generally accepted as being what is needed.

- **What are the benefits of the different types of support- in terms of outcome and outputs and how have these been measured?**

One support measure in network establishment has been the initiation of a web forum for ongoing discussion of the effectiveness of the support from the Organic Data Network project for the LINSAs. The outcomes have not been assessed, but it appears that the forum gives a platform for members to voice disagreement, and therefore, for the coordinators to react.

- **Who are the beneficiaries of different types of support? Individuals, a small group, a community, wider society?**

The first line of beneficiaries are all those who deal with organic market data in Europe. The expectation is that the organic sector has suffered from insufficient organic market data, which means that the principal beneficiary in the case of project success, will be the organic sector as a whole. A concern is that we do not generate any barriers or disincentives for farmers or businesses to become organically certified by adding to the workload/time commitments (especially in terms of record keeping or reporting) that are already associated with meeting the EU organic regulation/standards.

- **How long/how often has it taken to achieve any benefits from the different types of support? (Intensity of support)**

The benefits of the support are not yet observable.

- **What would have happened without the different types of support? Are the different types of support evaluated (externally or internally)? How? In terms of outcome and outputs? Have any indicators/criteria of effectiveness been used?**

A failed previous study shows that the inadequate status quo is likely to continue without external support.

### **Cost efficiency**

- **Is the level of support commensurate with the benefits derived? In your opinion or in the opinion of the LINSAs members?**

There appears to be considerable consensus that the existing system is inadequate and must be changed. There is a serious lack of agreement about what changes can be made, and the atmosphere is that the situation just is how it is, and there's not much to be done about it. A concern is about how the costs associated with the additional workload would be met if organised data collection and distribution were to be achieved. Depending on the Control Bodies size these would run into tens or even hundreds of thousands of Euros, in each case every year, and as far as we are aware there are no statutory funds available to support this work.

- **Is the support beneficial for some groups (LINSAs members only) but not for others (e.g. society)?**

There are many (the vast majority) of data users who are difficult or impossible to reach. While it is likely these people will benefit from improved market data as a whole, they are unlikely to gain direct benefit from organisational development.

- **Has there been any attempt to evaluate the cost efficiency of the support? How? What outcome?**

There has been no attempt as yet to evaluate the cost efficiency of support. An evaluation is planned for the end of 2014.

- **What are the costs to the LINSAs of seeking support - do they spend a lot of time/resources looking for support? Is this an effective use of their time?**

The LINSAs members spend considerable time and resources looking for quality organic market data. The aim of developing the network as an organisation is that fewer resources could be given to searching for organic market data.

### **Key points**

- Evaluation of effectiveness is difficult in diffuse and unstructured networks.
- A concern is that efforts to make the network work in one part (in this case: data users) should not disadvantage members in other parts of the network (in this case: farmers).
- Efficient use of resources relies on organisational structure, so initially resources are invested in creating structure.