



**SOLINSA**  
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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# **CHARTER FOR GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES, THE FRENCH LIVESTOCK INSTITUTE**

## **LINSA Case Study Report: France**

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# 1 SUMMARY

## 1.1 LINSa description

The Charter for Good Agricultural Practices promotes the quality of the cattle profession in France. It accompanies farmers in their practices (traceability, herd's health, food, milk quality, animal welfare and environment), helping them to meet the expectations of both their partners and citizens. The Charter is the leading farmer quality assurance scheme in Europe and brings together 105 000 farmers: over 90% of milk and over 77% of beef produced in France come from a farm that adheres to the Charter. The Charter benefits from the expertise of engineers from the French Livestock Institute and about 2500 technicians from extension organisation and food industry. It was launched after the mad cow crisis in a context of mistrust between food production and society; after twelve years of existence, the Charter needs to define new actions and strategies to answer food chain's, farmers' and society's needs.

## 1.2 Main findings

The study of the Charter was conducted using different research methods: individual interviews with members of the LINSa, literature reviews and 5 workshops involving 20 to 90 members of the LINSa.

Our main findings are the following:

- The Charter is completely embedded in the AKS: it was created, developed and supplied by the AKS. Consequently connections are rather high. AKS stakeholders are strongly involved in its coordination, facilitation and decision process.
- The Charter is a widespread national disposal, with regional implementation, involving a high number of farmers. The governance is professional and interprofessional.
- The Charter is a global scheme but focuses on individual farmers. It uses a rather top-down approach to convey its technical innovations.
- The Charter deals with incremental changes, as it helps most of the French farmers to make their practices evolve through a set of 41 items connected to six areas.
- Learning is the reason of existence of the network: helping farmers to develop better practices and to communicate with the citizens
- The Charter provides different levels of learning: regional coordinators, technicians, farmers
- The Charter evolves towards sustainable development through a progressive evolution of the content of the Charter, which infers continual learning. Stakeholders are consulted to define a content which fits the expectations of the general society
- The Charter has to deal with a strong inertia due to the large amount of members.
- The Charter exists thanks to different kinds of supports but is facing financial uncertainty.

- The Charter works in symbiosis with the AKS: the AKIS uses the LINSAs to convey some evolutions and the LINSAs use the AKIS to benefit from technical and financial supports.
- A monitoring system and a follow-up dashboard enable to set efficiency indicators

The Charter case study shows how incremental changes can be slowly conveyed within farming systems and stresses the fact that LINSAs developing among the AKS also have specific needs which cannot be found within the AKS. The SOLINSA approach enabled to show the role of participatory methods in the learning processes and to compare the difference between researchers' expectations and LINSAs' ones.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Description of the LINSAs:

The French Charter of Good Agricultural Practices in Cattle production is a national quality scheme which belongs to farming organizations.

105 000 farmers commit to 41 good practices, organized in 6 chapters (Animal traceability, Animal health, Feed hygiene and traceability, Dairy production hygiene, Animal welfare and human security, Environment protection). - [click here to have details on the 41 practices](#).

The enrolment of each farmer is assessed every two years, by regular advisers, specifically trained. During their visit, they evaluate each of the Charter's sections with the farmer, they help him to define paths for improvement, and indicate if he can enroll immediately or continue to participate in the Charter.

The general quality of the scheme is monitored by a certification body which carries out controls at farm and technical organization levels.

The Charter of good practices involves a diversity of actors:

- 105 000 livestock farmers
- 2500 advisers from extension organisation, food industry (dairies, meat industry, farmer associations)
- 500 extension and food industry organisation
- 21 regional facilitators of the scheme (inter-professional bodies)
- A national team (Livestock institute, national Farming organisations, Dairy and meat interbranch organisations)

Many links are established with:

- The AKS: members of the Charter are also members of it. Moreover the technical subjects are built according to research works lead by the AKS (at least partly)
- More and more connections are made with other groups, even at a European scale (formalized links with a Belgian charter for instance)

### 2.2 Why is it a LINSAs?

The Charter of good agricultural practices is a LINSAs regarding the following aspects:

- It deals with sustainable agriculture through the content of the requirements and the practices of the farmers;
- It produces new knowledge about sustainable agriculture for the farmers members of the Charter (evolution of the requirement);
- Many stakeholders are involved and share knowledge (technical, organisational,

learning processes etc.) within the entire network.

The Charter may be considered at the border of a LINSAs, because of its rather low level of involvement in sustainable agriculture. This is due to the fact that more than 100 000 farmers are involved in the scheme; therefore the level cannot be too high. We selected all the same because of:

- The really large scale of its application (national scale) and the fact that the Charter is evolving to adapt to social demand: it sounded interesting for us to analyse how a national scheme could incrementally have an impact on sustainable development by inserting sustainable items in its requirements;
- The fact that it is a multilevel network (local, regional and national): we wanted to analyse the communication and articulation between the different scales.

## 2.3 Main aims of the analysis:

The analysis of the Charter had two main goals:

- Answering the SOLINSA project's needs: analysis of some characteristics of the functioning, as scale, origin & function, governance, level of learning, level of innovation, link with AKS, efficiency & effectiveness of supports.
- Answering the LINSAs' needs: analysis of new horizons for the Charter in a context of financial decrease; ways of improving the communication and the internal organisation of the network.

## 3 METHODS

After having chosen the Charter among a series of other potential LINSAs, we conducted preliminary interviews and did literature reviews in order to analyse the needs of the LINSAs. As the French Solinsa Team is part of the national team of the network (professional and technical organization, and coordination of the monitoring), we already had some ideas of these needs. The expectations of the Charter's members were not the same as the SOLINSA project's needs, but we chose to concentrate on the LINSAs' needs and to answer to SOLINSA project's needs thanks to individual interviews.

We then organised a series of workshops with some members of the Charter.

The first workshop (15.11.12) concentrated on the improvement of communication and professional organization within the network: analyzing what could be done in order to have a better professional organization and a better communication within the network. The second workshop (14.06.12) focused on the identification of key-factors for the future of the Charter. The third workshop (9.10.12) was about describing the factors previously identified

in different categories called “dimensions”. People had to identify which aspects/evolutions of the factors could happen. The fourth workshop (24.10.12) aimed at creating different scenarios for the future of the Charter, based on the combination of the dimensions set during the previous workshop. The fifth workshop (13.03.13) was about identifying actions which could help the development of the preferred scenario elaborated during the previous workshop, and to break the worst scenario.

Strong contacts were kept with the LINSAs during the whole project. We also took part to some internal meetings of the network, in order to understand better its functioning.

## 4 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Mechanisms of network development, learning and innovation processes and connections with the formal AKS systems

#### 4.1.1 Opportunities for the Charter:

The Charter for good agricultural practices can count on the following points:

- 105 000 farmers involved, giving power and legitimacy to the LINSAs
- Embeddedness in the AKIS, which provides high education level and skills of scientific and technical members of the AKS (applied researchers and advisers)
- Support of the food chain, especially the dairy chain, which offers to the Charter opportunities of development and support
- A link between producers and consumers is needed, and the Charter can offer it
- Quality schemes are supported by the ministry, which offers to the Charter political support
- Increasing interest in sustainable development within the society and the suppliers, giving to the Charter more legitimacy regarding its environmental chapter
- A voluntary scheme built by the farmers, for the farmers, which enables to the farmers to keep the governance of the Charter’s content

#### 4.1.2 Constraints for the Charter:

However the Charter also has to cope with some constraints:

- Inertia due to the fact that 105 000 farmers are involved in the Charter : changes take lots of time to be applied

- Lack of financial security at middle term, triggering off difficulties to work on long term basis and to motivate people
- Decrease of financial supports, forcing the actors to do “as much with less money”
- Decrease of the farmers number and agricultural surfaces, which forces the Charter to play a role in facilitating installation among young farmers
- Requirements are too closed to the legislation, giving opportunities to enemies of the Charter to criticise it.

### **4.1.3 Support needs for successful LINSAs:**

To be successful, the Charter has specific needs:

- Financial support: time is needed in the regions and at the national scale.
- Manage to involve all farmers: nowadays still more than 30% of the French farmers have to be reached.
- Political support: the Charter is not the first priority of the farmer representatives and would benefit from a better support and communication in different situations where farmer are in relations with the state, the local governments, the medias or the public.
- Communication skills: in order to valorise the work of the farmers in the AKS and also in the general public.

### **4.1.4 Network development**

About 90% of the dairy farmers and 65% of the suckler farmers are involved in the scheme. The requirements evolve every 3 to 4 years. Legislation and new expectations from the society can trigger off these evolutions. Therefore, the Charter can be compared to a technical tool, which takes into account the main points farmers have to respect. For instance, new elements were added in 2003 (hygiene regulations), 2007 (cross compliance, calves breeding, traceability) and 2012 (human security, sanitary security, environment). Each evolution of the scheme is an opportunity to collect the views and expectation of the food chain partners and of consumer and citizen associations. The involvement of the food industry and a support by the administration are the main keys for the quantitative success of the Charter.

The Charter has to find its way within a dilemma:

- on the one hand to gather most of the French livestock farmers, and help them to slowly evolve in their practices
- on the other hand to take into account all the expectations of the general society, of the administration, and of the food chain actors.

Small steps involving as many farmers as possible are the main tendency.

#### 4.1.5 Learning and innovation processes

- Mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire

On the one hand, farmer who engage in the Charter have no specific links among them but share three main objectives (according to annual assessment system):

- Improving their practices (the Charter has become a social technical norm)
- Making them better known to the general public
- Answering to an advisor demand

On the other hand, advisers and facilitators involved in the scheme share objectives and have developed specific ties: training, meetings at national and regional level.

- Participation and reification

The main knowledge activities are organised on and around the specifications of the Charter and the evolution of the specifications. Which practices promoting in the Charter, which level of requirement? Knowledge is created from stakeholders' consultations, exchanges in experts, advisers and farmer groups about the main objectives of the Charter and the precise content of each chapter and practice.

The elaboration of a new version of the Charter demands about 18 months of collective knowledge building and decision making.

- Boundary work

The main “boundary object” is the Charter itself: a 12 pages leaflet, describing the 41 good practices the farmers commit to follow. The precise content of the Charter is defined through an interactive process involving:

- The assessment system showing the practices of the farmers and of their advisers
- Meeting with the different stakeholders, including the dairy and beef industry, the retailers, the consumer and citizen associations, the regulation makers;
- Technical work and expert consultations;
- Synthesis, negotiation, decision making.

#### 4.1.6 Connections with the formal AKS

The Charter is strongly embedded in the AKS and connections are formalized in the general organisation quality book:

- All members are inside the AKS. The steering committee is composed of members from the farmer unions labours, the interprofessionnal bodies and some technical organisms. As the LINSAs involves about 105 000 farmers, the AKS can use the Charter to spread new knowledge and techniques among farmers. It mainly concerns new laws or legislation points which farmers have to follow but are not always aware

of.

- The French Livestock Institute, which is part of the AKS, is in charge of the coordination and the follow-up of the scheme.
- Regional organisations (members of the AKS) take care of the implementation of the Charter in the region.
- The technical offices in charge of the visits in the farms are also AKS members.
- The financing is ensured by the 3 members of the AKS: the two interprofessionnal bodies (meat and milk) and the National Livestock Confederation, which gathers the different livestock farmer unions.

## 4.2 Learning approaches, methods and tools used in LINSAs

Learning and innovation are central at two levels:

- To build the requirements which constitute the Charter
- To support each individual farmer to share the objectives and fulfil the scheme.

### 4.2.1 Different types of learning approaches

Different types of learning approaches can be identified:

- *Technical learning* is the first and the most obvious level of learning in the Charter. Technical learning is considered at the farm's scale: each practice described in the requirements concerns the farmer on his farm. Each farmer engages in a process of individual learning, with the help of advisers. On the other hand, as requirements are built at the national scale, the Charter can also be considered as a collective learning process, well organized.
- *Social learning* is also essential as the Charter gives the opportunity to farmers, or at least to some of the farmers to better understand the general society views and expectation and to learn how to share ideas with citizens, how to explain their jobs and their practices.
- *Organisational learning* is an important part of the learning process: the organisation of a scheme for 105 000 farmers, 2500 advisers is not an easy thing, even in the structured AKS. Rules were progressively elaborated, quality scheme and software built, assessment system structured ... at regional and national levels. Each facilitator, each advisor involved in the scheme had to learn to build such a functioning, or to deal with it. The organisational learning is permanent as the scheme permanently evolves.

## 4.2.2 Evolution of the learning approach

The Charter is driven by the AKS, the general process of learning and innovation is integrated in the AKS structure. If different kinds of knowledge are mobilised, the scheme is rather structured, due to the large scale of the Charter. 105 000 farmers would be difficult to manage with only non codified rules.

- Informal interviews and media analysis are used for stakeholders listening, in a rather informal way;
- Scientists and advisers are regularly consulted to identify the main stakes and the set of solutions or practices that could be proposed to farmers;
- Farmers are consulted at local, regional, national level to propose ideas, select the most relevant and acceptable practices;
- A group of facilitators uses all these elements to propose, every 3 to 5 years a new set of requirements which is widely discussed among farmer groups at regional and national level and with the supply chain actors
- The decision is made by the representatives of the farmers (and not by scientists or advisers).

The combination of these consultations enables the Charter to answer to the reality and to meet society's expectations and farmers' needs.

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

The Charter provides different levels of education and training, all implemented by the AKS players. Innovations are transmitted during the trainings. As the Charter is spread all over France, an important effort of homogenization and coordination is needed. Actors and institutions involved in the learning processes have different tasks and roles:

- Regional coordinators, which are part of the AKS, follow a training led by the French Livestock Institute (member of the AKS).
- The regional coordinators then train the advisers, most of whom are also part of the AKS, who will visit the farms and see the accuracy with the Charter. They can't receive the agreement of "Charter adviser" if they have not followed the training course.
- Advisory services are provided by the advisers in charge of the visits. Thanks to this visit, the farmer gets information about the requirements and the evolution of the scheme and can choose to adapt his practices. If needed, some special services or training courses can be organized and require directly the involvement of the AKS (chambers of agriculture for instance).

### 4.3.1 Consequences for education and training

The Charter has specific needs regarding knowledge:

- Technical knowledge on the different contents of the requirements: the French Livestock Institute (idele) leads many development programs in the different areas which concern the Charter: identification, animal food, herd health, milk quality, animal welfare, environmental protection. As idele manages the Charter, it is easy to mobilise experts on these questions. Many exchanges with the inter-professional bodies also exist; they enable to take decisions considering all the political views.
- Financial support: Without money, no time is spent by the regional coordinator. As a consequence there is no transmission of the innovations and new learning processes among the farmers of the region.
- Nowadays still more than 30% of the French farmers have to be reached. That means 30% of farmers don't have access at the knowledge and innovation proposed by the Charter. The smallest farms are not as many to commit as the largest farms. This is mainly due to the fact that the Charter is promoted by the AKS actors, to the farmers in contact with them. The most isolated farmers have no opportunity to know the scheme, and to commit to it.

The food industry takes advantage of the learning processes of the Charter and builds its own requirements on the Charter. Thanks to these complementarities, each farmer (member of the Charter) receives the same knowledge and scale's savings can be made.

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

Support measures are very important but were particularly necessary at the beginning, when the Charter began to emerge. Thanks to these supports (technical, political and financial), it is now settled in the agricultural landscape and practices are evolving slowly, but the Charter still needs money, political and other supports to exist and evolve. Without the support, the Charter would not have lasted for 10 years in this way. Maybe it would have survived, but by concerning only a few farmers, or without visits on the farms (only a set of requirements with no assessment and no advice).

The Charter still benefits from different supports from the AKIS and is dependent on the different supports it can receive. In that sense, all the supports are necessary, but it is difficult to estimate which support are the most effective or cost efficient as all these supports are complementary:

- Technical support: especially the experts of the French Livestock Institute. Other technical organisations (health offices, veterinaries) or interprofessional bodies also bring some technical support on specific subjects.
- ➔ Technical support can take time because it involves the creation of partnerships.

- ➔ Technical support is the core of the Charter. The main boundary object (requirements) is based on technical aspects.
- Coordination support:
  - At the national scale: the French Livestock Institute in charge of the coordination, evaluation and follow-up of the Linsa.
  - At the regional scale: regional organisations provide regional coordinators who take care of the good functioning of the Charter in the region (link with the technicians, the farmers, the national level)
- ➔ Coordination and organisational supports are necessary to touch more than 100 000 farmers.
- Organisational support:
  - At the national scale: the French Livestock Institute
  - At the regional scale: regional coordinators but also the different organisations in charge of the visits in the farms: their advisers visit the farms and assess the correspondence of the farmer's practices and the content of the requirements. They are the core of the Linsa, as it could not work without this visit.
- Financial support:
  - At the national scale: the Livestock National Confederation and the two interprofessional bodies share the financing of the national coordination, the national coordination and the monitoring system.
  - At the local scale: the different organisms in charge of the visits finance the cost of the visit and the time of their technicians on the farms. Sometimes, they charge the farmer for the visit.
  - From 2000 to 2010, the Charter has benefited from public financial support.
- ➔ Financial support can be really hard to obtain, especially in the difficult economical context we are facing.
- ➔ Financial support enables the Charter to live.
- Political support: representatives of the Charter defend it at different scale (regional, national, sometimes European) and involve the potential stakeholders.
- ➔ Political support is necessary to manage a good settlement in every region and the use of the Charter by stakeholders.
- ➔

## 4.5 Evaluation criteria used for assessing the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of support measures that are exploited by LINSAs

The Charter is one of the less expensive schemes of its kind, as most of the cost is taken in charge by organisms which are already present in farmers' environment. Even if there is a lot of inertia because the Charter aims at touching every farmer, the Charter does have an impact on long term changes.

The cost efficiency of the support is made every year through reports for the supporters. The evaluation is made mostly through means indicators, and a little bit through results indicators.

A monitoring system enables the Charter to verify its good functioning. A dashboard compiling all the data concerning the farms' visits also produces follow-up elements. Indicators are calculated every year based on the audits and dashboard in order to follow the evolution of the progresses.

The monitoring system evaluates the coordination and organisation supports, externally by an accredited certified body, and internally by the French Livestock Institute.

The monitoring system does not evaluate the progresses made in the farms. Indirect indicators, based on the dashboard, are settled every year (percentage of farmers compiling one section, etc.). The steering committee bases some of its decisions on the conclusions of this follow-up.

As far as sustainability is concerned, the Charter does not provide radical innovation, but takes all the farmers towards better practices concerning environment aspects (water and soil protection, biodiversity, grassland preservation, energy consumption etc) but also social aspects (security, working skills etc.). These elements can be quantified through the Charter's dashboard which can illustrate the evolution of each farmer's practices. The monitoring system also gives an incomplete vision of the respect of these items. It helps the farmers to anticipate society's expectations regarding this topic, and also to improve their living conditions. Sustainability notions are transmitted step by step to the majority of French farmers. However economical aspects are linked to sustainability, they are not directly developed in the Charter: there are some advice to reduce the use of inputs, and the Charter represents the less expensive scheme of its kind in the country (for the farmer and for the whole branch).

## 4.6 Operational tools that AKS actors could use to improve support for LINSAs and to enhance the capacity of involved actors, in order to foster successful LINSAs

Now that the Charter is well settled among the farmers (75% of farmers), the challenge is to ensure its lasting and development according to farmers', food chain's and society's needs. The network is completely embedded in the AKIS and already benefits from its support, but some aspects could be developed to improve the relationship between the AKS and LINSAs in general:

- Political support and recognition of the LINSAs at the national and at the European scale, in order to prevent the development of other schemes based on distribution's expectations. Concretely it infers to speak about the network, to use it during the official meetings in France and Europe, to add value to the work done by the network etc.
- Ensure the economical living of the LINSAs by providing long term financial support, which enables actors of the Charter to make projects and undertake new actions. Concretely that means finding a solid and sure financial source.
- Deal with the question of attractiveness of the farmer's job in order to prevent the important decrease that agriculture has been facing for a couple of decades. Indeed if the tendency does not change there will be less and less farmers and consequently less means to accompany them. Concretely this point involves many aspects of the work: helping young farmers to settle (and previously giving them the wish of choosing this job), decreasing the cost of land and investments, insuring fair income regarding the time spent etc.
- Develop and add value to bottom-up knowledge in order to answer as much as possible to the needs of the users and to use the knowledge of farmers. Concretely it infers to consider and use other way of producing or learning, not only the well-know methods of the AKS, giving the chance to LINSAs situated outside the AKS to develop. Both the AKS and the LINSAs can take advantage of it.

## 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Evaluation of the process of the research

The Charter for good agricultural practices was interesting to study because of its original way of learning (respecting requirements as an advisory tool) and its size quite unusual for a LINSAs: it is a big network in terms of people involved (105 000 farmers) but also in terms of stakeholders involved (almost all the food chain actors have a link with it).

When we had to choose our LINSAs, we hesitated to select the Charter because of its rather low impact on sustainable development. Our work with them however showed how a high numbers of farmers can slowly been fostered to change their practices towards more sustainable agriculture (among other factors like milk quality or animal welfare). These incremental changes need of course patience and can be evaluated on a long term basis. On one hand these changes do exist, even if they take time; on the other hand the fact that the Charter involves so many farmers and stakeholders triggers off another difficulty: the willingness of the actors to add more and more sustainable development aspects in the requirements is often restrained by the farmers and unions who do not want new constraints to be respected.

This case study also showed us that the level of integration in the AKS may not be valid criteria to evaluate the difficulty for LINSAs to develop. Of course some aspects are facilitated: recognition, help from advisory system, etc. But even within the AKS, LINSAs can meet some difficulties to develop: financial cuts, difficulties to find long term supplies, etc. The skills needed by the network may also change during the life of the LINSAs.

Another important aspect of the meeting between the Charter and the SOLINSAs project is the discrepancy that can exist between researchers' and LINSAs' needs. Indeed LINSAs are not always interested in researchers' questions and we had to deal with a double goal during the workshops: answering LINSAs' needs (accompanying the LINSAs) and researchers' questions (studying the LINSAs). Co-working can be effective only if everyone finds its own interest, hence the necessity of analysing precisely the needs of the LINSAs before beginning the co-working. We observed this problem in our 2 LINSAs.

Finally the SOLINSAs project enables us to illustrate how participatory approaches can help the reflexion within a LINSAs: the Charter could test new ways of interacting within the network thanks to the workshops. The evaluation of the workshops showed the interest of the participants for sharing and discussing about the future of the Charter, the elements which may cause some disturbance etc. Moreover the workshops directly involved people into the decisions processes; the board of the Charter could take strategic decisions taking into account the points of view of other actors of the network. Nevertheless as participatory approaches involve people, some difficulties were met concerning actors availability.

## 5.2 Support needs include:

- Political support and recognition of the LINSAs at the national and at the European scale
- Ensure the economical living of the LINSAs by providing long term financial support
- Deal with the question of attractiveness of the farmer's job in order to prevent the important decrease that agriculture has been facing for a couple of decades
- Develop and add value to bottom-up knowledge in order to answer as much as possible to the needs of the users and to use the knowledge of farmers.

## APPENDICES

Some general information can be found on the website (translated in English thanks to SOLINSA project): [www.charte-elevage.fr/en](http://www.charte-elevage.fr/en)

LINSA reports prepared for the following analytical characteristics:

Scale;

Origin and function;

Integration;

Innovation;

Levels of learning;

Governance;

Links to the AKIS;

Effectiveness and efficiency.

# SCALE

## LINSA: Charter of Good Agricultural Practices in Livestock production

**Method: Daily involvement in the Linsa, meeting observation, documentary study**

**1. What type of “association” is the LINSA?: 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**

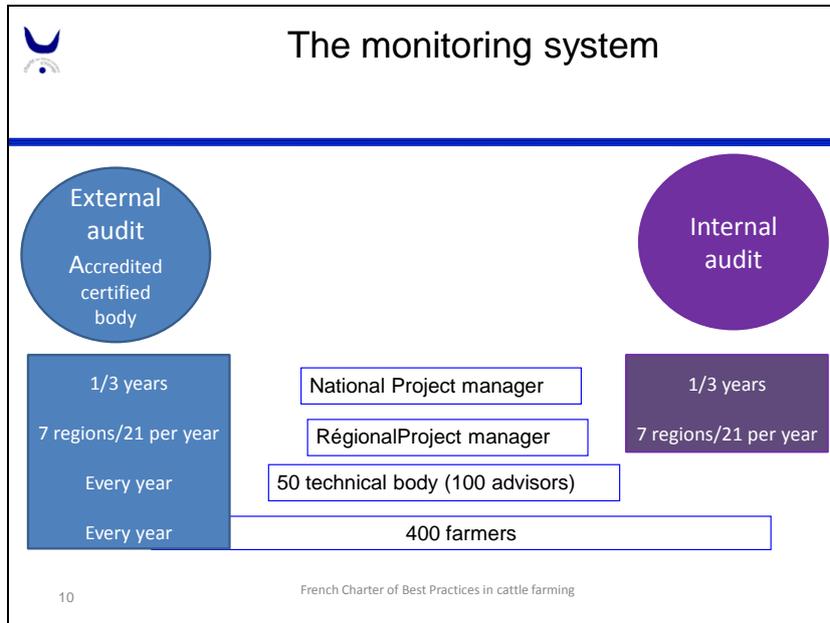
### **Degree of formality and level of complexity**

The Charter of good practices is a formal network, with a structured organisation, specific requirements and identified members. As it involves many players (see question 2) the degree of complexity and formality is rather high.

### **Diversity of actors involved:**

- 110 000 livestock farmers
- 3000 advisers from extension organisation, food industry (dairies, meat industry, farmer associations)
- 500 extension and food industry organisation
- 21 regional facilitators of the scheme (inter-professional bodies)
- A national team (Livestock institute, national Farming organisations, Dairy and meat interbranch organisations)

## A monitoring system insures the quality of the scheme:

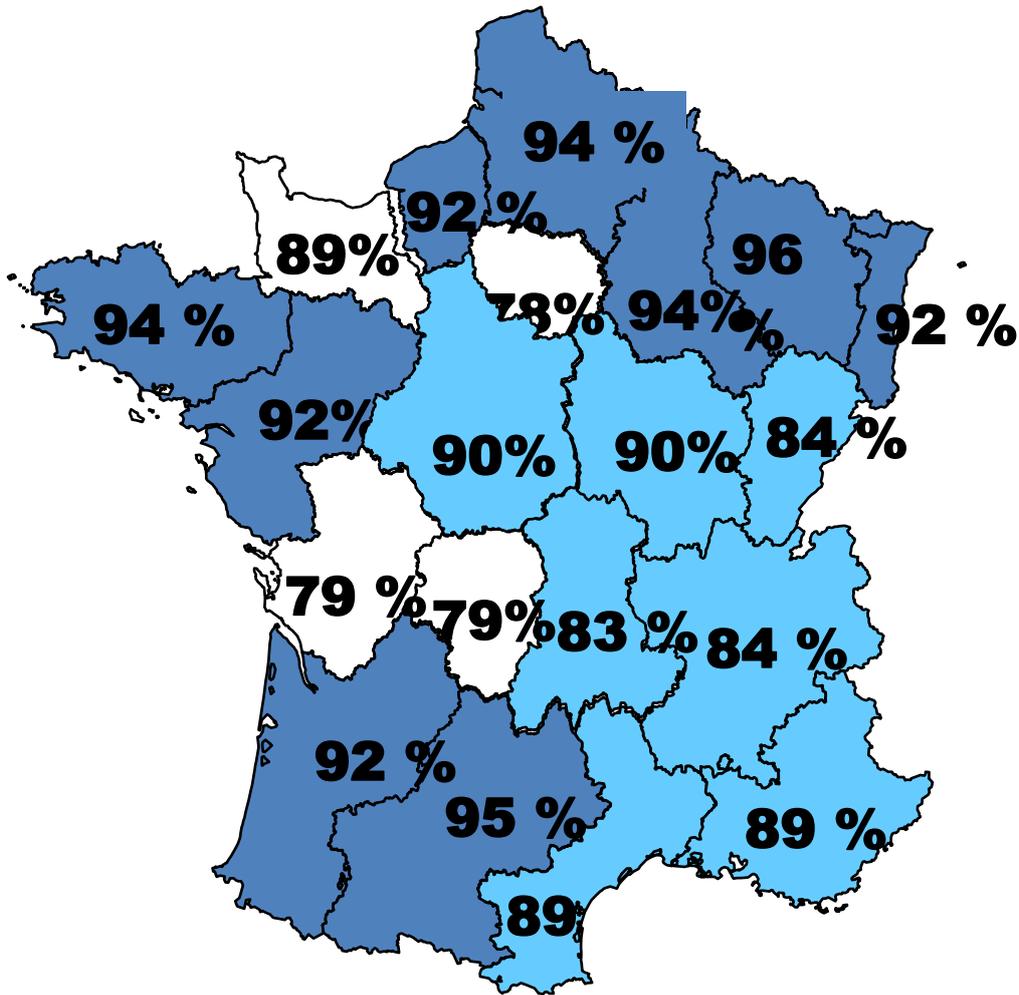


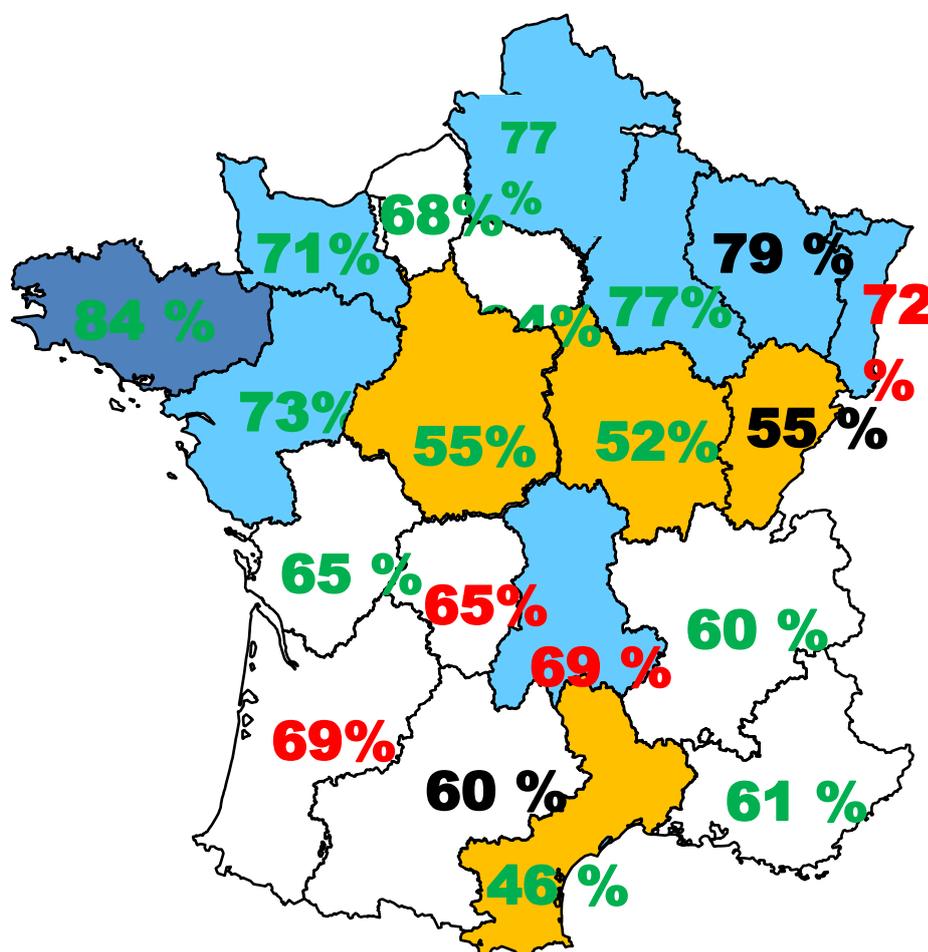
### Embeddedness :

The Charter is strongly embedded in the AKS. All members are inside the AKS. But it develops soft links with the consumers and citizens organisations which are consulted regularly and systematically at each redefinition of the content of the Charter (the requirements).

### Geographical coverage :

Farmers who are members of the Charter come from all France, especially from the dairy and suckling regions (West and Center). The commitment rate of farmers members of the Charter is different from one region to another (see below).





Percentage of Dairy farmers members of the Charter  
 farmers members of the Charter

Percentage of Suckler

## Diversity of activities

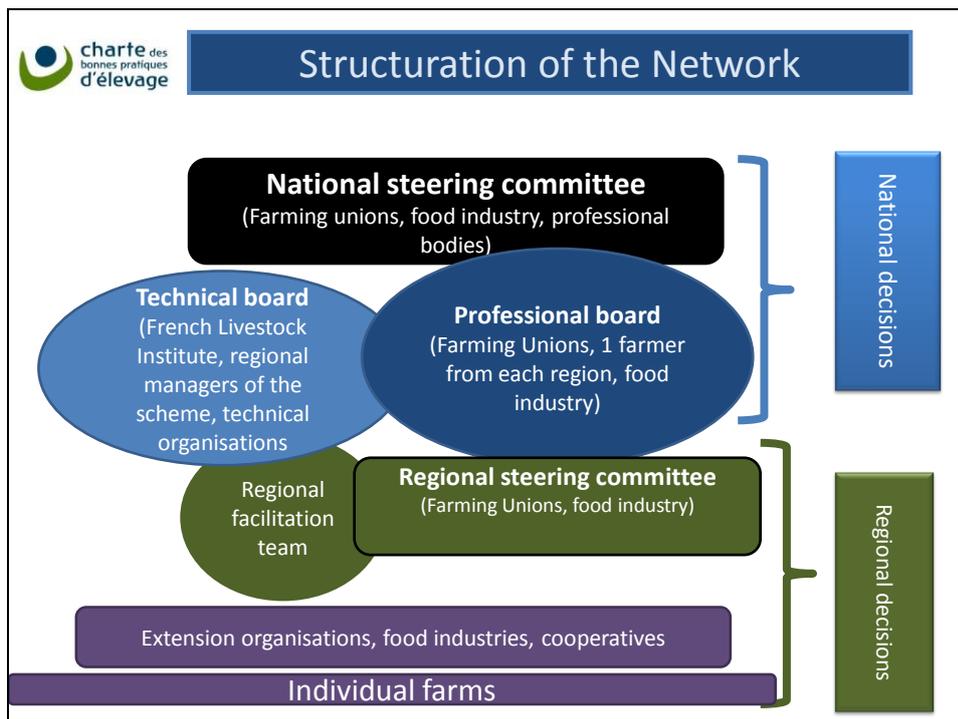
The LINSAs carry out different activities :

- Elaboration and management of a quality scheme (good practices for livestock farmers). The requirements were firstly elaborated in 2000, during the Mad Cow crisis, in order to re create confidence among citizen and farmers. Since then, the scheme has evolved every 3 or 4 years to take into account the citizen expectations. The scheme is elaborated by farmers (supported by a technical board of advisers and facilitators), after a consultation of the consumers' and citizens' associations.
- Technical support to farmers, in order to make them progress towards the requirements of the scheme and thus toward better practices. It can be compared with knowledge integration: one of the main goals of the Charter is to gather as many farmers as possible, and not to establish too strict requirements.
- Communication about the farmers' job (and about the Charter), to all the actors of the scheme (farmers, advisers, processors, retailers ...) and to the citizens.

Communication activities are carried out at farm level, towards larger events as agricultural fairs or shows, or through a website.

## Structure

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



## Connectivity, interactivity

The level of connectivity and interactivity between the players of the network is rather high. The organisation is both national (coordination) and regional (implementation):

- **Conception and professional follow-up :**
  - o The national steering committee is composed of professionals from the national professional organisations. It takes the decisions related to structure, organisation, functioning and communication.
  - o The regional steering committee is composed of professionals from the regional professional organisations. It is in charge of applying the decisions taken by the national steering committee, within the region. It benefits from the help of a regional project facilitator. Each regional steering committee

- sends one farmer to the professional board.
- The presidents committee brings together the presidents from the regional steering committees.
- The technical committee, composed from regional project managers, elaborates propositions to improve the functioning, technical aspects and watching of the disposal. They make proposals to the professional board. When needed, the national steering committee makes the final decisions.
- Operational implementation
  - Farmers are the target of the LINSAs. They sign the Charter if they wish to and if they respect the requirements. Each farmer is linked to an adviser from an extension body or from the food industry
  - Technicians from agricultural organisations provide a technical support to farmers and validate their commitment to the Charter. These local organisations are structured at regional level, in link with a regional steering committee composed of farmers, extensionists, and processors.
  - Regional project facilitators manage the Charter in the region (technical formations, data recording, coordination etc.) They regularly meet in the technical board with the Livestock Institute.
  - The National Livestock Confederation (CNE) manages the national coherence of the project.
  - The French Livestock Institute is in charge of the general facilitation of the scheme and provides technical expertise.

As it does not formalize in practise links with other networks, the Charter of Good practices would be characterised as a simple network. However, many links are established with :

- the AKS : members of the Charter are also members of it. Moreover the technical subjects are built according to research works lead by the AKS (at least partly)
- More and more connections are made with other groups, even at a European scale (formalized links with a Belgian charter for instance)
- ...

## Key findings

- A national disposal, with regional implementation
- Professional governance
- Wide spread disposal, and high level of farmers involvement
- Knowledge integration
- Sollicitation on citizen associations to make the scheme evolve

This characteristic is not covered in the WP2 report. Please consult these references:

Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay (Paperback) by Charles Perrow

Social Network Analysis for Organizations Author(s): Noel M. Tichy, Michael L. Tushman and Charles Fombrun. Source: The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct., 1979), pp. 507-519 Published by: Academy of Management Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/257851>  
(file on intranet site)

## ORIGIN AND FUNCTION, AND TEMPORALITY

### LINSA: Charter of Good Agricultural Practices in Livestock production

#### 1. Story of the Linsa, How did the LINSA evolve (diverse, emerging) and into what form? (D2.1, section 3)

The Charter of Good Practices was created in 1999, after the mad cow crisis. The idea was to build a scheme, made by farmers for farmers to help them to improve the quality of their farming practices and to make their job better known by the general public.

Initially, the scheme was an idea of the cattle farming unions, structured into the National Livestock Confederation. The confederation asked the Livestock Institute to help to build the technical content of the Charter.

At first, the idea was to build a scheme, to ask farmers to evaluate their own practices and commit to the Charter, with no specific structure. Practically it showed difficulties and very few farmers spontaneously committed. Consequently the leaders of the scheme decided to involve the AKS actors (agricultural chambers, cooperatives, food processors ...). The Livestock Institute organised the support of regional facilitators and trained trainers in order to enforce the capacity of the local advisers to support farmers in their commitment to the Charter.

The involvement of the food industry and a support by the administration were the main keys for the quantitative success of the Charter.

The number of farmers involved has increased until 2005 (120 000 farmers) and since then it slowly decreases, due to the reduction of farmers in France and restructuration. About 3000 technical advisers from different rural organisations got involved to draw this growing evolution.

The requirements evolve every 3 to 4 years. Legislation and new expectations from the society can trigger off these evolutions. Therefore, the Charter can be compared to a technical tool, which takes into account the main points farmers have to respect. New elements were added in 2003 (hygiene regulations), 2007 (cross compliance, calves breeding, traceability) and 2012 (human security, sanitary security, environment). Each evolution of the scheme is an opportunity to collect the views and expectation of the food chain partners and of consumer and citizen associations.

Since 2005, with 100 000 farmers in the scheme, the farmers leading the Charter have been proud of their success and of the farming practices. They started to structure communication with the general public : 1000 farmers met in 2005 under the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Charter has been presented in many national or regional shows, journalists have been invited on farms ...

The control of the scheme has been reinforced by the arrival of an external certification body since 2007. Beside, internal controls are made by the facilitation staff to attest the good functioning of the network. This double control gives credibility, and can be used as a communication tool.

Although the network still concerns only dairy and suckler cows, the idea spread over other

herbivores productions: goats and sheep now have a similar charter. Links with other productions (cereals, potatoes, apple etc.) brighten the view.

### **Main issues at stake, debates:**

The Charter has to find its way within a dilemma:

- on the one hand to gather most of the French livestock farmers, and help them to slowly evolve in their practices
- on the other hand to take into account all the expectations of the general society, of the administration, and of the food chain actors.

Small steps involving as many farmers as possible is the main tendency.. But the Charter has thus to deal with the image of being not very demanding, and to some associations, of remaining “within” the productive paradigm. On the contrary, and a bit contradictorily, some farmers or some Unions find the scheme to restrictive, with the risk for the farmers who don't commit to some of the requirement to have their productions refused by the food chain.

About 90% of the dairy farmers and 65% of the suckler farmers are involved in the scheme. But the smallest farms are not as many to commit as the largest farms. This is mainly due to the fact that the Charter is promoted by the AKS actors, to the farmers in contact with them. The most isolated farmers have no opportunity to know the scheme, and to commit to it.

### **2. What are the policy principles, policy instruments and financial arrangements? Do these affect the success of the LINSAs? (D2.1, section 4.6)**

The Charter of Good Practices is a professional scheme which has benefited from different financial sources and political supports.

- The National Livestock Confederation (CNE) (an association of farming unions) owns and supports the scheme.
- French government has long been a provider for the Charter, until 2010, through specific state and regional allocations. National and regional subsidies supported the facilitation of the scheme, the training of advisers, and in some areas the visits on farms. The whole cost of the scheme is about 12 M€ on which 4 million were supported.
- The interbranch associations of dairy and meat products have participated since 2012 to the financing of the Charter.

The Charter has also benefited from indirect support: the farmers who ask for subsidies to invest are sometimes encouraged to commit to the Charter. The strong involvement of all the AKS actors makes the scheme known and proposed to most of the farmers.

Moreover, the dairy industry and the farmer cooperatives put human forces into the scheme.

These financing have strong impacts on the LINSAs: with the decrease of the financing, means are less important and the question of durability of the scheme appears.

## **Key findings**

- An evolving process
- Some financial uncertainty
- A communication tool to answer to social expectations and law evolution
- A strong embeddedness into the AKS
- A dilemma : a scheme for all the farmers or a scheme promoting new ways of production

# DEGREE OF INTEGRATION

## LINSA: Charter of Good Agricultural Practices in Livestock production

- *Method: Individual interviews, World Café, informal knowledge from 10 years of co-management of the network.*

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

The Charter of good practices was built by farmers' organisations, as a collective answer to the mad cow disease crisis. The idea was to foster the quality and the security of cattle farmers' practices and to let it know by the beef and dairy industry, by the retailers, and by the general public.

The Charter was built by the farmers' organisation, supported by the extension system. As such it can be considered as a rather Top-Down approach.

The first steps of development was :

- To train advisers from the advisory services as from the beef and dairy industry in order to enable them to support the farmers towards the Charter
- To let most of the cattle farmers know about the Charter and will to join it.

Most of the development was made through :

- The involvement of the advisers who presented the Charter to the farmers and proposed them to evaluate their practices and to adhere to the Charter ;
- A state funding of the facilitation and advisory activities about the Charter.

National and regional facilitation teams were built to ensure the development of the scheme and operate organisation of trainings, cooperation among stakeholders, information, communication, decision preparation. The decisions are made by elected farmers, representative of each of the 21 regions and by 2 national presidents (also farmers, from the national organisations).

The dairy industry was the first sector strongly involved, followed by the farmers' advisory organisations and after 2003 by the beef industry. That can explain the evolution of the number of adherents to the scheme (see above): in the dairy sector during the first years, than in the beef sector. Nowadays, about 90% of the dairy farmers and 66% of the beef farmers belong to the Charter. The decrease on the number of adherents during the last years is linked to the decrease of the number of farmers in France, and partly to the evolution of the content of the Charter (more demanding).

## LEVEL OF LEARNING

### LINSA: Charter for Good Agricultural Practices

- *Method: Individual interviews, Workshops.*

#### 1. **What is the LINSA's approach to learning:**

- *To what extent, and in what way, is learning coordinated, managed and/or formalised?*
- *What are the tensions between formalised explicit (codified) approaches to learning and non formalised implicit learning approaches?*
- *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?)*

One of the main goals of the Charter is to help farmers to progress in their practices. Therefore, learning processes are really central in the LINSA: the challenge is to take 110 000 farmers to fulfil requirements and to be able to share information with consumers /citizens. The requirements are themselves selected by representative farmers to bring an answer to society expectations. The interpretation of these expectations is elaborated with the help of a group of facilitators and researchers and through formal consultation. The Charter itself (the set of requirements) is the boundary object which synthesises all these elements at a moment.

Knowledge is thus central at two levels:

- To build the requirements which constitute the Charter
- To support each individual farmer to share the objectives and fulfil the scheme.

Requirements are evolving according to new researches, to new legislations, to new social expectations. Since its creation in 1999, the Charter has evolved 4 times, showing dynamic and adaptation to the context. It was reviewed in 2003 to include regulations on the farming register and the emergence of Reasoned Agriculture. It was edited once again in 2007 to take into account regulations on the hygiene package, requirements linked to the conditionality of CAP subsidies, and to widen its scope to include veal farmers. The Charter defines good practices to be respected by all cow breeders whatever their production system and product destination, and has provided guarantees on the farming stage of the sector for over ten years.

The evolution of the requirements engages farmers to follow the new rules; otherwise they can't stay involved in the Charter process. Consequently, most of the French livestock farmers evolve towards better farming practices.

### **Process of learning**

The Charter is driven by the AKS, the general process of learning is integrated in the AKS structure. If different kinds of knowledge are mobilised, the scheme is rather structured, due

to the large scale of the Charter. 110 000 farmers would be difficult to manage with only non codified rules.

- Informal interviews and media analysis are used for stakeholders listening, in a rather informal way;
- Scientists and advisers are regularly consulted to identify the main stakes and the set of solutions or practices that could be proposed to farmers;
- Farmers are consulted at local, regional, national level to propose ideas, select the most relevant and acceptable practices;
- A group of facilitators uses all these elements to propose, every 3 to 5 years a new set of requirements which is widely discussed among farmer groups at regional and national level and with the supply chain actors
- The decision is made by the representatives of the farmers (and not by scientists or advisers);

### **Training process:**

Training process is formalized in the general organisation quality book.

The Charter is spread all over France. Therefore, an important effort of homogenization and coordination is needed. Trainings are being organised to allow about 2500 advisers to manage the scheme and help farmers to engage into the scheme:

- Regional coordinators follow a training led by the national team each time that the requirements are evolving. Some specific technical points can also justify the organisation of extra trainings.
- The regional coordinators then teach the advisers who will visit the farms and see the accuracy with the Charter. They can't receive the agreement of "Charter technician" if they have not followed the training.

The technicians then visit the farmers (every 2 years) in order to check if they can be part of the Charter. Thanks to this visit, the farmer is taught about new points of the requirements and can adapt his practices to progress.

Trainings are also organised on subjects like communication with the citizens, media training...

## **2. Can individual, social and organisational learning be identified? If so can they be separately characterised?**

**Technical learning** is the first and the most obvious level of learning in the Charter.

Technical learning is considered at the farm's scale: each practice described in the requirements concerns the farmer on his farm. Each farmer engages in a process of

individual learning, with the help of advisers.

On the other hand, as requirements are built at the national scale, the Charter can also be considered as a collective learning process, well organized.

**Social learning** is also essential as the Charter gives the opportunity to farmers, or at least to some of the farmers to better understand the general society views and expectation and to learn how to share ideas with citizens, how to explain their jobs and their practices.

**Organisational learning** is an important part of the learning process: the organisation of a scheme for 110 000 farmers, 2500 advisers is not an easy thing, even in the structured AKS. Rules were progressively elaborated, quality scheme and software built, assessment system structured ... at regional and national levels. Each facilitator, each advisor involved in the scheme had to learn to build such a functioning, or to deal with it. The organisational learning is permanent as the scheme permanently evolves.

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

- *How well equipped/competent are the actors and institutions to meet these needs?*
- *To what extent is education, training and professionalization needed and provided?*
- *How much priority does the LINSAs assign to learning and identifying current and future learning needs?*

The evolution of administrative legislations is one important factor for evolution. Indeed, the Charter focuses on some points of it, but also on other which go further than legislation. The French Livestock Institute (idele) leads many development programs in the different areas which concern the Charter: identification, animal food, herd health, milk quality, animal welfare, environmental protection. As idele manages the Charter, it is easy to mobilise experts on these questions. Many exchanges with the inter-professional bodies also exist; they enable to take decisions considering all the political views.

As the Charter is a network which promotes the development of better practices in farms, process of learning and learning transmission are one of the top priorities.

The technical committee of the Charter, composed of all regional coordinators and the national team, is in charge of proposing updates to the Charter. Three or four times a year, they meet in order to discuss the evolution of technical points and problems met on the field. The steering committee of the Charter then decides which way has to be followed.

Moreover, the Charter has been existing for more than 12 years. After having promoted good practices among farmers, the Charter now needs to enforce the communication with consumers and partners. Skills in this area are still missing.

## Key findings

- Learning is the reason of the network : helping farmers to develop better practices and to communicate with the citizens

- Evolving requirements which infers continual learning
- Different levels of learning : regional coordinators, technicians, farmers
- Global scheme which focuses on individual farmers
- Technical expertise within the network
- Technical, social and organisational levels of learning

# GOVERNANCE

## LINSA: Charter for Good Agricultural Practices

**Method: Individual interviews, Workshops, Internet review.**

### 1. *How is the LINSA governed/managed?*

- *To what extent is the network governance inclusive/democratic?*
- *To what extent is the LINSA institutionalised?*
- *How are communication, decision making, problem solving actioned? (see question 2)*
- *Do actors have sufficient skills/competencies for network governance?*

General organisation of the Charter is managed by the French Livestock Institute: technical coordination, political coordination, monitoring system coordination, software coordination and secretariat. This position enables the national team to work as a team. The French Livestock Institute has managed the Charter since its beginning, and knows well its functioning. Its aim is to coordinate the Charter, but not to take the decisions.

Management of the Charter is rather inclusive: technical board and experts are systematically consulted before making new propositions to the steering committee.

The Charter is strongly embedded in the AKS. All members are inside the AKS. The Charter is managed by the French Livestock Institute and constitutes a rather institutionalised network. Supply chain actors are systematically consulted before the main decision and play an increasing role in the decision making. Citizens associations are also consulted but not associated in the decision process.

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

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

#### **Authority**

The Charter is lead by a professional board: The national steering committee is composed of professionals from the national professional organisations and by representative of the dairy and meet supply chains. It takes the decisions related to structure, organisation, functioning and communication.

The presidents committee brings together the presidents from the regional steering committees. These 2 boards meet 3 to 4 times a year to study the suggestions of the technical committee, prepare and make decisions.

## Decision making

Decision process is rather inclusive, as the national steering committee and the presidents committee are looking for consensus within the structure.

When a problem appears, technical board works on the subject, so does the national coordination team; propositions are made to the national steering committee and the presidents committee, which take the final decision. Experts can also interfere in the process.

Once the national steering committee has established the common “rules”, each region can arrange its own functioning according to their needs and their situation; even so they have to follow the global scheme: there is some flexibility. In this case, the regional steering committee makes the decisions.

## Power relations

The Charter is owned by the Livestock National Confederation (LNC) and benefits from different financial supports (inter-professional bodies and LNC). The common goal is to develop the Charter together but the organisations have sometimes different interests. Consequently, some negotiations’ processes have to be made to fulfil everyone’s interests.

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

As the Charter is rather an institutionalised network, a strong inertia exists in the process of decisions making. The professional board puts the interests of the farmers in first position. But in order to have the scheme adopted and used within the whole sector, sector’s interests have to be taken into account too. Consequently, strong inertia can appear in the decision making process. Another source of inertia is linked to the number of farmers involved in the scheme : at each change in the requirements sets, 110 000 farmers have possibly to change or adapt their practices !!

## Key findings

- Professional and inter-professional governance
- Coordination by a technical institute
- Decision making process with inertia
- Different interests to satisfy

## EFFECTIVENESS AND COST EFFICIENCY

### LINSA: Charter of Good Agricultural Practices

- *Method: involvement in the Linsa's management*

### 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 Charter benefits from different supports from the AKIS:

- Technical support: especially the experts of the French Livestock Institute. Other technical organisations (health offices, veterinaries) or interprofessional bodies also bring some technical support on specific subjects.
- Coordination support:
  - At the national scale: the French Livestock Institute in charge of the coordination, evaluation and follow-up of the Linsa.
  - At the regional scale: regional organisations provide regional coordinators who take care of the good functioning of the Charter in the region (link with the technicians, the farmers, the national level)
- Organisational support:
  - At the national scale: the French Livestock Institute
  - At the regional scale: regional coordinators but also the different organisations in charge of the visits in the farms: their advisers visit the farms and assess the correspondence of the farmer's practices and the content of the requirements. They are the core of the Linsa, as it could not work without this visit.
- Financial support:
  - At the national scale: the Livestock National Confederation and the two interprofessional bodies share the financing of the national coordination, the national coordination and the monitoring system.
  - At the local scale: the different organisms in charge of the visits finance the cost of the visit and the time of their technicians on the farms. Sometimes,

they charge the farmer for the visit.

- From 200X to 2010, the Charter has benefited from public financial support.
- Political support: representatives of the Charter defend it at different scale (regional, national, sometimes European) and involve the potential stakeholders.

The Charter has specific needs:

- Financial support: time is needed in the regions and at the national scale.
- Manage to involve all farmers: nowadays still more than 30% of the French farmers have to be reached.
- Political support: the Charter is not the first priority of the farmer representatives and would benefit from a better support and communication in different situations where farmer are in relations with the state, the local governments, the medias or the public.
- Communication skills: in order to valorise the work of the farmers in the AKS and also in the general public.

### **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?)*
- *What are the benefits of the different types of support- in terms of **outcome** and **outputs** and how have these been measured?*
- *Who are the beneficiaries of different types of support? Individuals, a small group, a community, wider society?*
- *How long/how often has it taken to achieve any benefits from the different types of support? (Intensity of support)*
- *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?*

The supports are very important but were particularly necessary at the beginning, when the Charter began to emerge. Thanks to these supports (technical, political and financial), it is now settled in the agricultural landscape and practices are evolving slowly, but the Charter still needs money, political and other supports to exist and evolve. New versions of the Charter are elaborated every 4 years to help the farmers taking into account the new regulations or social expectations and to support the professional communication.

The collective cost of the scheme is evaluated at 60€ per farmer involved in the scheme, out of which 10 € are subsidized by the unions and interprofessional bodies and 50€ financed by the farmers or the firms.

Intensity: Financial support can be really hard to obtain, especially in the difficult economical

context we are facing. Technical support can also take time because it involves the creation of partnerships.

Without the support, the Charter would not have lasted for 10 years in this way. Maybe it would have survived, but by concerning only a few farmers, or without visits on the farms (only a set of requirements with no assessment and no advice):

- Technical support is the core of the Charter. The main boundary object (requirements) is based on technical aspects.
- Coordination and organisational supports are necessary to touch more than 100 000 farmers.
- Financial support enables the Charter to live.
- Political support is necessary to manage a good settlement in every region and the use of the Charter by stakeholders.

The beneficiaries of the subsidies can be separated in two parts :

- The direct beneficiaries: French Livestock Institute and regional organisms which use the money and the coordination/organisational support for their functioning.
- The indirect beneficiaries: the farmers of course (technical advices), but also the consumers because they benefit from the good practices of the farmers (environment, sanitary aspects, traceability, hygiene)

The main outcomes of the Charter are :

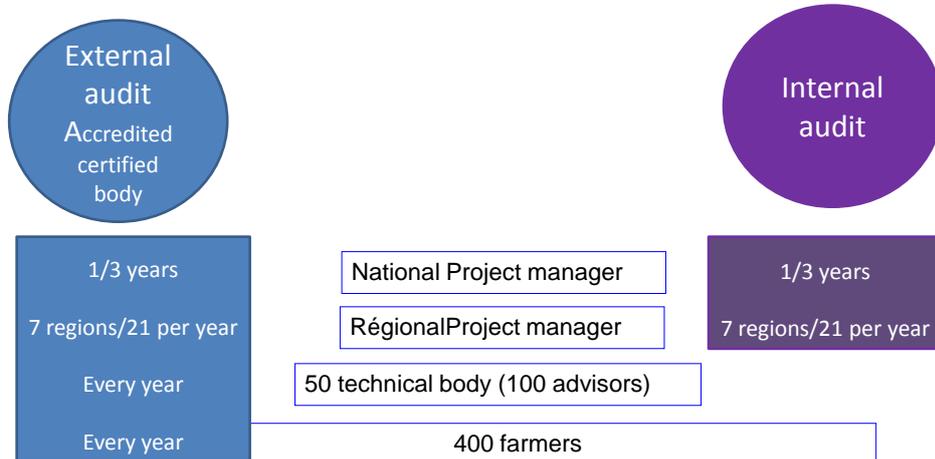
- The progresses of the farmers on their practices
- The production of different types of documents (technical brochures, references, etc.)
- Some communication events (annual meetings, articles etc.)

A monitoring system enables the Charter to verify its good functioning. A dashboard compiling all the data concerning the farms' visits also produces follow-up elements. Indicators are calculated every year based on the audits and dashboard in order to follow the evolution of the progresses.

The monitoring system evaluates the coordination and organisation supports, externally by an accredited certified body, and internally by the French Livestock Institute (see below).



## A monitoring system to insure the quality of the scheme



10

French Charter of Best Practices in cattle farming

The monitoring system does not evaluate the progresses made in the farms. Indirect indicators, based on the dashboard, are settled every year (percentage of farmers compiling one section, etc.). The steering committee bases some of its decisions on the conclusions of this follow-up.

### Cost efficiency

- *Is the level of support commensurate with the benefits derived? In your opinion or in the opinion of the LINSAs members?*
- *Is the support beneficial for some groups (LINSAs members only) but not for others (e.g. society)?*
- *Has there been any attempt to evaluate the cost efficiency of the support? How? What outcome?*
- *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 Charter is one of the less expensive schemes of its kind, as most of the cost is taken in charge by organisms which are already present in farmers' environment. Even if there is lot of inertia because the Charter aims at touching every farmer, the Charter does have impact on long.