AgriFoodResults

European Initiative for a better use of results of agri-food research

Conceptual framework
for dissemination of research results

SEPTIÈME
PROGRAMME-CADRE

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Acknowledgement

Table of Contents

Introduction

If research results are not seen by the potential users as intellectual products, which provide tangible or at least perceivable benefits for them, the spending on funding of research will be considered as useless. Such benefits can include exploitable knowledge for new products, processes, services, systems and markets; systematic approach to support decisions; new knowledge for more advanced thinking; input for better informed decisions. The chance of research organisations to get public or private funding for further research activities is increasing if they can demonstrate their capability of supplying practical benefits through their research work to more and more potential users (European Commission, 2007), (AUTM 2006). The Innovation Flagship of Europe 2020 strategy emphasis also that "the results of publicly funded research should be made more accessible and available" (European Commission, 2010). It is therefore "more important than ever to deliver the so-called "fifth-freedom', which is not only movement of the researchers bur also the free movement of innovative ideas." The potential users are: the industry including the SMEs - who have specific priorities, requirements and limitations -, the policy makers and authorities, the mediator organisations, the consumers and the research community. This list of potential users indicates clearly that the scientific excellence is an important outcome of the research work, but scientific results in their usual format serve mainly one user group only, the research community. Therefore dissemination of research results must not be restricted to the scientific community; it should cover a far broader target audience. There are well established practices within the scientific community for making research results known and available for other researchers such as publishing scientific articles, books, making presentations, training students, etc. Although some of the professionals working for authorities, public institutions and in other areas of policy making use research results from the same sources and in the same format as they are provided to the scientific community, but they represent only a smaller part of the policy makers' group.

For enhancing their use within other users' groups than the researchers results have to be converted into practice oriented knowledge and solutions, information and data, which meet the needs of the targeted user group. They need to be presented in an easily understandable format, phrased in a user friendly style and made easily accessible for the potential users.

It is well known from the marketing of commercial goods and services that for achieving successful sales it is not enough to make these products and services available only at a few places, which are convenient for the people, who produce them, but well designed, systematic activities are necessary to offer them at the right place, in the right time, in the right quality, in the right quantity and at the acceptable and affordable price for the potential users (customers, consumers). Dissemination activities should not be limited to making results accessible at certain places such as scientific journals, conference proceedings and the internet, which waits for potential users to find and visit these places themselves, but an active approach has to be followed to make the potential users aware of the results offered by the researchers. This basic concept is true also for offering research results for utilisation for the above mentioned user groups. Thus dissemination of research results by research organisations can be interpreted as an activity, which is very similar to the marketing of products and services of commercial organisations. Even if the there are also significant differences between the two types of activities, researchers can largely benefit from the application of the systematic approach of marketing to the dissemination. This can highlight the role of the consistent strategy and the different elements and their relationships in the well designed dissemination process.

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Conceptual framework for dissemination of research results
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1. Similarities in dissemination of research results and marketing

Marketing is focusing the activities, products and services of the organisation on serving the needs and expectations of the customers, consumers at a higher level than the competitors can offer and on achieving this at a profitable level. It facilitates the exchange of the products and services between the organisation and its client, which results in added value for both parties. Marketing includes the identification of the needs and expectations of the clients and predicts their foreseeable needs and allocates the necessary resources for meeting them.

Dissemination works to a certain extent on similar principles as marketing. Here the product is the research result, the potential user is the client. As customers and consumers of products are not uniform and they have to be segmented (EURAB 2004), the users' of research results are similarly not uniform and they should also be segmented.

In the majority of publicly funded research projects - the direct users are not the funding bodies themselves. Therefore it is essential that the benefits of the research results provided to the different groups of users should be considered, understood, specified clearly by the researchers at the design phase of a research project. This needs to be revised and updated regularly with the progress of the research. The implementation of the dissemination activities and their results should be properly recorded and feedback should be collected from the users on the benefits and weaknesses of the outputs of the research so that the value generated by the research can be demonstrated to the decision makers of the funding organisations and evidences can be provided for the evaluators of the future research proposals.

Following this logic based on the similarity of a dissemination plan to a marketing plan the following main steps should be applied during the development of the dissemination plan:

- Analysis of the needs of the different users' groups;
- Establishing the dissemination objectives;
- Defining the dissemination strategy;
- Design and implementation of the dissemination activities and the necessary resources;
- Review and evaluation of the dissemination activities, their results and impact;
- Implementation of corrective actions (adjustments) as necessary.

Several elements of dissemination of research results can be interpreted as a specific application of marketing of the results of the research and the research services.
In this document the design of the dissemination activities will be analysed from the aspects of the lessons, which can be learned from the marketing of products and services. The aspects related to the definition and implementation of the dissemination plan are described briefly in the procedure and a template for the development of a dissemination plan, which is presented in the Annex of the AgriFoodResults Guidelines, so they are not discussed here in details.

This study is focused on the design and implementation of the dissemination activities on a

AgriFoodResults

similar way than that is carried out at the marketing mix, e.g. it is focused on the use of the "dissemination mix".

2. The dissemination mix

In its simplest form the marketing mix deals with the aspects of the product and product choice policy (Product), the price policy (Price), the product distribution policy (Place) and the communication policy for preparing the market (Promotion). At services a key aspect "People" has to be considered as well. Thus some of the typical questions described in the basic marketing literature (Guide for Business Strategies 2010, Gate 2 Growth, 2002) can be adapted and interpreted for the dissemination activity.

Product

As it was defined earlier the product is the research result, which can be made available for users outside the organisation in which the researcher is employed. A research result will behave as a product when it is converted from the original science oriented format to a practical format, which can be used by the targeted users.
Key questions to be considered:

- What is the product?
- Who are the targeted users?
- Which needs of the targeted users can be served by the result and what are the benefits of using this result for them?
- How they will use the result, the intellectual product?

The quality of the intellectual product is represented by the applicability of the result as a solution for a problem, or an expert opinion for developing new policies, tools or methods or as an input for informed decision and changed behaviour.

Price

At research activities a major part of the price considerations should be carried out at the design phase of the project, when the results are not available yet, just forecasted only. This is true for nearly all privately funded research and mostly for the publicly funded ones as well, since the feasibility of the budget is a significant aspect of the evaluation and acceptance of the project proposal. However some of the decisions related to the price of the product have to be made when the results are nearly ready or available. At publicly funded projects it is the responsibility of the research manager to ensure that a sound balance will be ensured between the free, publicly available results and the fee earning technology transfer.

Key questions:

- What are those results, which form an intellectual property, that need IP protection for future exploitation?
- What are the results, which will be made available freely to the public or to a restricted audience?

- What are the results that we transfer to the users for a fee?
- What are the costs of converting the research results from its original scientific format to a practically applicable format meeting the needs of the users?
- Are these costs covered by the original funding?
- Do the users need individual adjustment, personal support, activities on their site to make the exploitation of the results possible and/or effective?
- What are the costs of these services?
- What are we offering within the price quoted?
- What is the price of the competitive "products", "services"?
- What is the principle of calculation of the price
  - customer focused (e.g. what can the client afford)?
  - competition based (e.g. how the benefits and price of our "product" look like compared to that of the competitors)?
  - cost based (e.g. should all costs, which are not covered by the available funding be repaid from the price)?
- What are those cost elements that are included into the price calculation?
- Do we offer a price reduction?

Place

Similarly to the distribution channels at commercial products and services the dissemination / communication channels are the means, steps through which we ensure that the new knowledge, information, service will be available for the target audience/ users in the right time, right place and at an affordable price/cost. Sometimes we use direct "sales", sometimes we use physical places where a choice of the research results products is available, e.g. conferences, brokerage events, etc, and sometimes we use the virtual "stores", e.g. the internet. The notion of the right quantity is not applicable for research results.

The main dissemination (communication) channels are the following:

1. Personal, personalised for the users, direct
2. Personal, non-personalised for the users, direct
3. Physical delivery of the information holders to the users
4. Internet
   4.1 Web-site, passive
   4.2 Web-site, active
       4.2.1 e-mails
       4.2.2 webcast
       4.2.3 podcast
5 Media
   5.1 radio
   5.2 television
   5.3 trade journals, newspapers
   5.4 scientific journals
6 Networks
   6.1 working parties,

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6.2 advisory boards
6.3 technology platforms
6.4 innovation clusters
6.5 industry networks – food industry federations
6.6 research networks
6.7 thematic clubs, associations – (local food, slow food, etc.)
6.8 NGO networks
6.9 social networks, Linkedin, Twitter

Networks have a specific character, since through the interaction between their members they can significantly contribute to the comprehension and absorption of the new knowledge and enhance the gradual development of the experience, which is necessary to the successful application and exploitation of the results. Therefore networking represents a dissemination channel in itself, but networking tools can be applied in other dissemination channels as well.

Dissemination actions and tools (Promotion)

They can be described by a similar approach as promotion in the classical marketing. Dissemination actions are the activities and practices, which are carried out to deliver the intellectual product through the selected dissemination channels with the selected dissemination tools to the targeted users. There is a general lack of knowledge of successful practices for transferring knowledge to food industry SMEs and other potential users. While for successful practices on transferring knowledge to SMEs a detailed guideline was prepared recently in the TRUEFOOD project (2009) the recommended activities for the other groups are not covered and the systematic design and implementation of the dissemination activities was also not covered. The objective of the set of guidelines in the AgriFoodResults project is to fill in this gap.

The dissemination tools are the different means of knowledge transfer representing different formats, structure and style of presentation of the content related to the new knowledge generated by the research to ensure its proper perception and absorption in the right quality, adjusted to the needs and level of knowledge of the target audience/ users.

Dissemination tools can be used through a specific or several dissemination channels. Tools can be for example research summaries and guidelines which can be delivered to the users physically in printed forms, on electronic data holders (CDs, pendrives), electronically through the internet on a passive way - website or on active way - e-mails, webcast, podcast.
Seminars and conferences can be organised with personal attendance or through the web as web- conferences, on-line conferences. The dissemination tools for research results grouped by the main types and their dissemination channels are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1:

Dissemination tools
(for promotion of the use of research results)
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Dissemination channels / Dissemination tools	Personal, persona-lised, direct 1.	Personal, non-persona-lised, direct 2.	Physical delivery of information holder		Internet 4		Electronic broad-casting (radio, television) 5.	Networking 6.
			Printed 3	Electronic data holder CD, DVD, pendrive	website, passive 4.1	active webcast, podcast, e-mail 4.2		
1. For personal interactions								
1.1 personal discussions, meetings	x							
1.2 chatting on events, group meetings	x							
1.3 expert consultations	x							
1.4 on the job trainings, apprenticeships	x							
1.5 transfer of personnel	x							
1.6 expert panels to support specific users	x							
1.7 events organised by the researchers. workshops, seminars, conferences		x			web-conferences, on-line workshops			
1.8 trainings organised by the researchers		x			webinars			

AgriFoodResults

Dissemination tools \ Dissemination channels	Personal, persona-lised, direct 1.	Personal, non-persona-lised, direct 2.	Physical delivery of information holder		Internet 4		Electronic broad-casting (radio, television) 5.	Networking 6.
			Printed 3	Electronic data holder CD, DVD, pendrive	website, passive 4.1	active webcast, podcast, e-mail 4.2		
1.9 events organised by others. workshops, seminars, conferences		x			web-conferences on-line workshops			
1.10 exhibitions, fairs		x						
1.11 practical demonstrations		x						
1.12 brokerage events		x						
1.13 study tours		x						
1.14 panels, industry working parties – to the fellows, interest group members		x						
1.15 open days		x						
2. For written information								
2.1 flyers, brochures			x	x	x	x		
2.2 research summary sheets			x	x	x	x		
2.3 guidelines, manuals			x	x	x	x		
2.4 booklets on specific subjects			x	x	x	x		
2.5 research reports, studies			x	x	x	x		
2.6 books			x	x	x	x		
2.7 posters			x	x	x	x		
2.8 recommendations			x	x	x	x		
2.9 inventories of successful cases			x	x	x	x		

Dissemination tools \ Dissemination channels	Personal, persona-lised, direct 1.	Personal, non-persona-lised, direct 2.	Physical delivery of information holder		Internet 4		Electronic broad-casting (radio, television) 5.	Networking 6.
			Printed 3	Electronic data holder CD, DVD, pendrive	website, passive 4.1	active webcast, podcast, e-mail 4.2		
2.10 conference proceedings			x	x	x			
2.11 expert opinions			x	x	x			
2.12 self-check tools, benchmarking tools			x	x	x	x		
2.13 strategies			x	x	x	x		
2.14 newsletters			x	x	x	x		
2.15 annual reviews, reports			x	x	x	x		
2.16 softwares				x	x	x		
2.17 databases			x	x	x	x		
2.18 research publications			x	x	x	x		
3. For audio-visual tools								
3.1 videos				x	x	x		
3.2 e-learning tools					x	x		
3.3 web 3D hotspots				x	x	x		
4. For mass media								
4.1 Articles in trade press journals			x	x	x			
4.2 press releases			x		x			
4.3 press conferences		x					x	
4.4 radio interviews, reports					X		x	
4.5 TV interviews							x	
4.6 press articles			x		x			

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			Printed 3	Electronic data holder CD, DVD, pendrive	website, passive 4.1	active webcast, podcast, e-mail 4.2		
4.7 TV films					X		x	
4.8 Expert discussions, TV, radio					x		x	
4.9 Education programmes, radio					x		x	
4.10 Education programmes, TV					x	x	x	
5. For networking								
5.1 Collective research	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
5.2 Cluster innovation activities	x	x	x	x	x	x		x

Key questions related to the use of dissemination practices and tools:

- How should we convince the target user group to pay an interest and make a use of our research results/intellectual product?
- How shall we convince the specific user to use/buy our research results intellectual product?
- What is the objective of the communication activity within the dissemination?
  - Statement, announcement – creation of awareness;
  - Transfer of information;
  - Creation of image;
  - Initiation to act;
  - Transfer of knowledge;
  - Personnel explanation, convincing the potential user.

People

In provision of any types of services, particularly at marketing of research results and services people play a crucial role (Macure et al., 2004). In communication and transfer of research results to the industry and to the policy makers personal interaction can significantly improve the effectiveness. Intermediaries can significantly contribute to the success of communication and knowledge transfer of research results (TRUEFOOD, 2009).

Key questions to be considered:
- How can we establish personal contacts with the users?
- Do we have skilled staff in communication?
- Do we need to involve external experts such as intermediaries?
- Do they understand the needs and the language of the users?
- Do they have multiple skills from several disciplines?
- Which are the most appropriate forms of personal contacts of personalised or non-personalised tools at the current stage?

3. Conclusions

The experiences from the design and implementation of marketing plans can be used for improving the dissemination of the research results. The concept of the marketing mix can be adapted for dissemination as the dissemination mix – where research results are the equivalent of products, price is the fee for the transferred knowledge, dissemination channels – e.g. the activities to deliver the results to the right place are the equivalent of the place and the dissemination activities and tools are the equivalent of the promotion. This approach provides a structural framework for the design and implementation of the communication of research results. The practical recommendations for the communication activities to the different target groups are described in the following guidelines of the AgriFoodResults project:

D4.1   Guide on good practice for dissemination managers of food research projects
D4.2   Guide of good practice for communication towards food SMEs
D4.3   Guide of good practice for communication towards policy makers
D4.4   Guide of good practice for communication towards consumers
Annex: Template for preparation of a Dissemination Plan

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