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<https://www.nextfood-project.eu/>



Nextfood - Educating the next generation of professionals in the agrifood system

Practice Abstract #29: Strengthening farm communities through education involvement

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Farm size increases across Europe, and simultaneously farming communities shrink. Large farms may be more challenging to manage in accordance with sustainable farming practices, and farm managers are often not in a position to hire employees to cover such a need. There is however a potential solution to this challenge. Research shows that strong farm communities, modern advisory services and access to information makes it easier for individual farmers to practice farming in accordance with guidelines for sustainable farming practices.

In the Nextfood project, we aim to shrink the gap between research, education and farming. We know that by involving students in action-oriented, real-life projects throughout their studies, they become much better prepared for working in those same real-life environments after graduation. In our project we study processes where students collaborate with stakeholders in society (farmers, food processors, policy makers, etc.). Based on reports from those stakeholders, we see that these collaborations are also very beneficial to them. This is so, because the students bring new information in addition to facilitating establishment of stronger communities by hosting meetings and workshops. Based on our experiences, we encourage all stakeholders in agrifood and forestry systems to engage with students, academics and advisors as much as possible. By bringing the education back into the fields where the real action is, we can hopefully strengthen our vital farming communities!