

# Regional sustainability transitions FarmPath Visioning Process



Teresa Pinto-Correia, Helena Guimaraes, Annie McKee

## THE QUESTIONS

What are the desires for agriculture and other land based activities in 20 years by those involved in the activity?  
How can we reach these desirable futures?

In order to address these question we undertook a visioning process in 7 regions across Europe:

1. Aberdeenshire (North East Scotland)
2. Plzensky region (Czech Republic)
3. Baden-Württemberg (Germany)
4. Montermor-o-Novo (Portugal)
5. Pays de Rennes (France)
6. Pazardjik and Plovdiv (Bulgaria)
7. Imathia (Greece)

The same goal and the same visioning process



## WHY A VISIONING PROCESS?

- While creating visions, perceptions about alternative futures are ordered.
- When large scale questions exist on how driving forces may play out in the longer-term future, visions help to explore the implications of a range of different futures.
- When shared among stakeholders they improve communication; hence they increase understanding

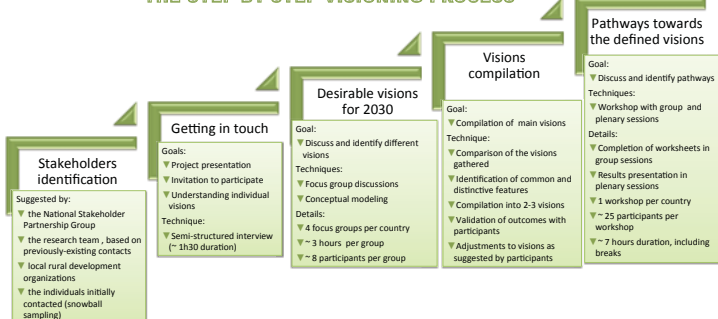
## HOW DID IT OCCUR?

In FarmPath we considered that a well-structured participatory processes towards a joint construction of visions and pathways would lead to higher awareness of the drivers in place, but also of the possible roles of different actors and institutions.

Therefore we developed a step by step approach towards » » »

- » » » the mobilization of stakeholders;
- » » » the transition from individual to group visions; and
- » » » a shared reflection of what needs to be done for these visions to become reality.

## THE STEP-BY-STEP VISIONING PROCESS



## WHO WAS INVOLVED?



## WHY WERE THEY INVOLVED?

One of the goals of FarmPath was » » »  
» » » to support adaptive and reflexive capacity in rural issues at multiple scales.

For this to happen we promoted » » »  
» » » A social learning process that is, a systematic learning process among multiple actors who together define a purpose related to the agreed necessity of concerted action at a variety of scales

This means that » » »  
» » » Farmers and other stakeholders became experts, instead of users or adopters of scientific recommendations

Recent trends have shown the need for co-design, where knowledge is developed in a complex, interactive design process with a range of stakeholders involved through a process of social learning

## THE PROCESS

- Social learning has occurred in each case study region, involving multiple actors, from different spheres. This learning is more clearly identified in some regions than in others, but the co-construction of visions and of pathways, resulting from the whole process, inherently contributes to social learning.
- We are certain that this social learning has only been possible due to the use of suitable and tailor-made tools. A well-structured and facilitated process, where the leading role is clearly defined, has been a critical factor in the progression of the shared construction of knowledge. This critical factor also encompasses the attitude and behavior of the research team. Only when these are open to the science-practice dialogue, can such crucial dialogue take place and be successful.

## THE VISIONS

More than 50 visions about the wishes for agriculture and other land-based activities in 2030 were gathered, across the seven European regions. Even considering the large differentiation of the regions considered, there are many similarities in the way these visions can be grouped, when we grasp their main focus:

Environmental constraints are expressed, but the focus is on farming production and productivity as a key strategy.

Emphases strongly in the reinforcement of rural values and lifestyle.



Not all regions have produced one vision within one of these groups. Some regions only produced two visions, and some others produced more than one vision in one of the groups. Furthermore, it may be considered that many visions have elements of all three groups.

The quality of the landscape and of the environment, or natural resources, are expressed as the wished outcomes.

## EXAMPLES

### In Czech Republic



One vision entitled "Agriculture for the countryside", stresses cooperation and networking amongst farmers, and another "Lively Countryside", emphasizes multifunctionality and a diversified community. Therefore both visions in this region centered on rural communities.

### In Portugal



Both visions have the Montado as a central condition for future sustainability. The Montado is the extensive silvo-pastoral land use system characteristic of Southern Portugal, and in both visions its maintenance is considered as fundamental.

## THE PATHWAYS

In order to achieve the visions, transition pathways were identified. These were summarised as:

Regardless of the farming system there are certain features considered as essential to maintain, or re-activate the social and economic role of agriculture.

The need to acknowledge the shift away from production as the sole driver of land use and rural dynamics, towards a complex interplay of other drivers.

Maintenance or re-emergence of farming activities

New concepts of farming, farmers and rural areas

Innovation in farming

Overall policy and institutional change

Considered to be achieved through innovative mindsets and practices

The conditions that must be established at the macro level, framing the activities to be developed in rural areas.

For further information about the visioning process, transition pathways and associated policy recommendations, please see the handbook:

'Facilitating Sustainability of Agriculture at the Regional Level: Principles and Case Studies from across Europe', published by FarmPath.



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