Evaluation cluster innovation

Mid-term evaluation in the Netherlands

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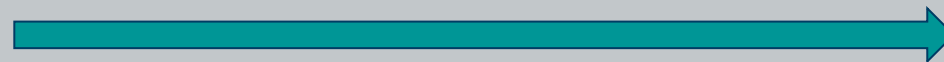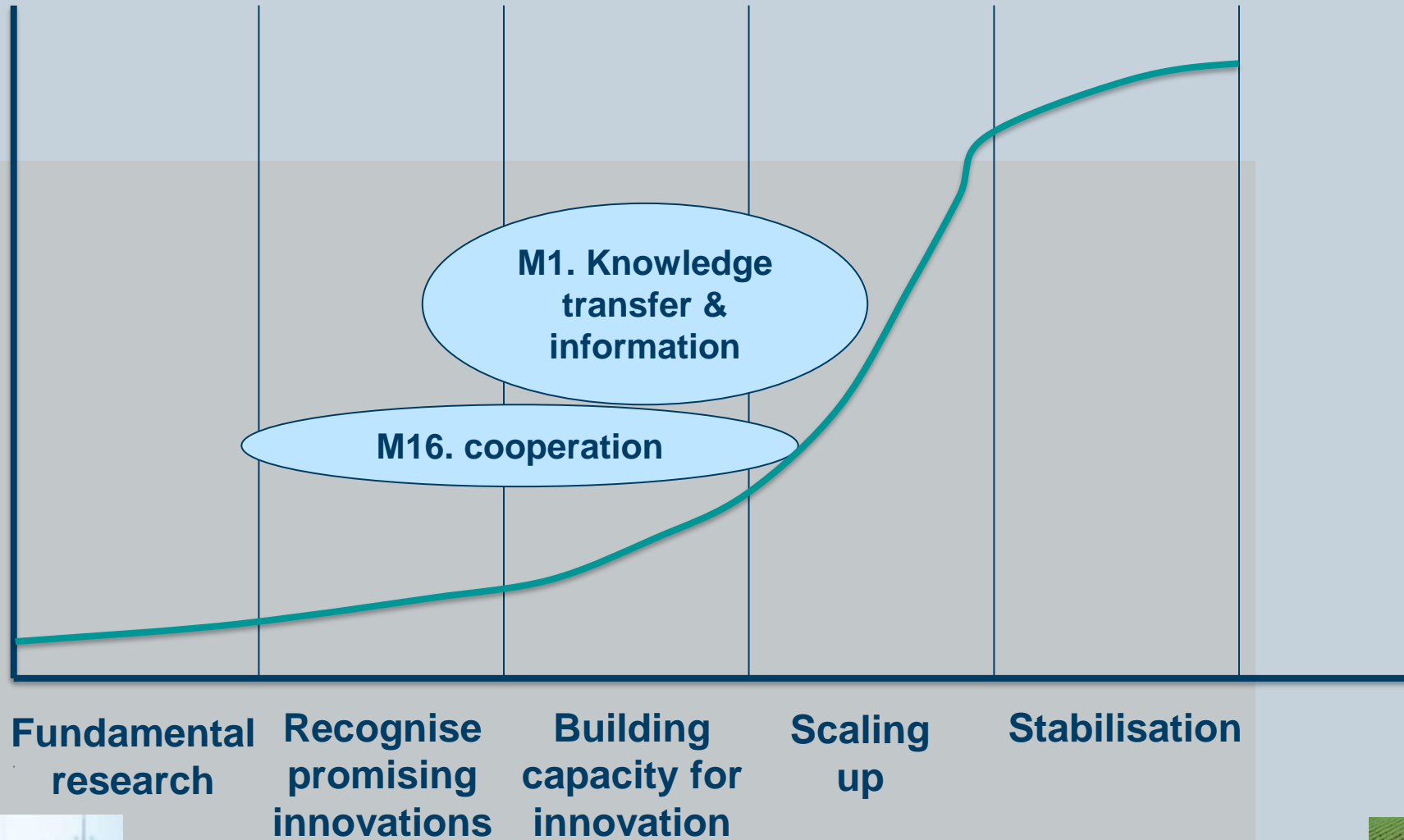
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Background

- The Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the 12 provinces founded the Direction Bureau, which coordinates the rural development program EAFRD.

- One of the tasks of the Direction Bureau is to commission evaluations and Ecorys carried out two evaluations. The objective of the evaluations were to judge the efficiency and effectiveness of the innovation part of the program, and to give recommendations to improve these elements.

- Both studies focussed on policy measures
  - 1. Knowledge transfer and information
  - 16. Cooperation

- Mid-term evaluation 2019: Are the instruments performing? Is the program potentially effective and addressing the right topics?

- Mid term evaluation 2022: What is the impact of the policy? What can we learn to do the ex post evaluation? What can we us for the national strategy for the new period?

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Background

- Definition: Innovations are new ideas, products or practices that can be successful and have been introduced into practice on a larger scale; it always starts with a new idea and it might improve existing products and methods.

- Innovation improves competitiveness while reducing costs and increasing quality

- Innovation is targeted towards sustainability goals

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Phases of innovation: S curve

M1. Knowledge transfer & information

M16. cooperation

Fundamental research

Recognise promising innovations

Building capacity for innovation

Scaling up

Stabilisation

Method

- Desk research:
  - Plans of action by 12 provinces
  - Workshop with the provinces to discuss the policy and measures

- Database with projects to gather information about:
  - Title
  - Goals
  - Partners
  - Expected result
  - We analysed all the projects, no specific technique used

- Interviews with
  - Applicants
  - Advisors
  - Jury
  - Policymakers

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Results 2019

- The 12 provinces had written different plans of action; some focussed on specific (regional) topics but most of them had a broad approach.

- Various specialised consulting firms tried to submit the same project in a couple of provinces.

- Some projects were very similar, for instance to sell bucks (male goat) meat. The researchers didn't know about the other project. The Direction Bureau analysed the projects, found the similarities and brought the applicants together.

- The majority of the projects just started.

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Results 2019

- We concluded this approach is not efficient:
  – Too much time spend to judge the quality of the same proposals by different provincial committees
  – Similar projects can learn from each other; it was better if they knew from each other beforehand.

- We recommended:
  – To distinguish between national needs and regional needs. And have a call on the national level for broad topics. And specific calls for regional topics.
  – To have project database with summaries of each project and make this public available
  – To organise workshops for knowledge sharing

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Results 2022

- Over half of the projects are carried out and some of them finished.

- We see successful projects with cooperation of research institutes (especially Wageningen University), farmers, and the food industry and retail. Success factors:
  – State-of-the-art knowledge of the university is used
  – Practical information: what works best for farmers
  – Retail information: what are consumers prepared to buy, eat and spent extra money for
  – Scale of the research by working together
  – Both measures M1 and M16 enhance cooperation

- Point of interest: some politicians dislike spending agricultural money for industry. They want all the euro's given to farmers.

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Results 2022

- Our recommendation 2019 has been followed:
  – There were national calls in the last two years
  – In the National Strategic Plan (2023-2027), innovation continues with national and regional calls for projects

- Having read the Green Deal and the SWOT-analyses of the Dutch agriculture, a complete transition is necessary.

- We are convinced the best innovation is a result of cooperation between universities, farmers, food industry and retail.

- The Dutch agriculture has to make a shift toward new products and processes, for instance less intensive life stock farming and more plant based protein sources. This also implies a new upbringing of customers to leave the steaks and eat more plant based products.

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Results 2022

- Results and recommendations for AKIS:

    – Impact analysis of innovation is hard and nearly impossible. It depends on real investment later on in time (upscaling of the S-curve).

    – Information of the composition of projects is important: research instituters, individual farmers, industry and retail

    – Information about the topics is important:
      ◦ Does it help competitiveness?
      ◦ Does it help to solve environmental problems? And which environmental problem in particular?

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