



TOM KELLY

Globalization of the digital advisory solutions

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PROFILE

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He is an Agricultural Science graduate, with experience in research, advisory and education. He leads the agricultural education and farm advisory services in Teagasc. He is the former chairman of EUFRAS (European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services) 2013 -2019. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Agricultural Extension at University College Dublin. He is a member of the Agricultural Science Association and the Irish Grassland Association. In 2019 Tom was awarded an international Fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry.

Tom has participant in EU-EIP innovation subgroup and EU SCAR AKIS Strategic Working Group He has experience of many EU funded research projects including AgriSPIN, LIAISON, FAIRshare, IPM Decisions, IPM Works and i2connect.

The idea that digital solutions can be globalised has many challenges but also benefits so it merits serious research and discussion.

So what do we mean by globalisation? In this talk I will define globalisation of digital advisory as tools and services which are potentially useful and useable in different farm advisory contexts across the continents. We have seen that in many farmers in countries advances in digital technologies and data management which have improved the productivity and profitability of farmers in there contexts through precision Ag., Big Data applications and communications technology. Advisors along with the commercial supply industry including digital service providers have played their part in supporting this at many differ levels from training, advocacy, animation and even to provision of bespoke new tools and services to their clients.

However the digital divide exists and not just in developing countries, it exists at farm and at advisor level and is area of huge potential development and sustainability, this is recognised at EU and global policy levels and by advisor and farmer organisations. The globalisation of digital advisory solutions revolves around two main assumptions. Firstly advisors will use digital solutions to improve their capacity to provide better advice and services to the farmers they work with and secondly that farmers will value this enhanced advice and these services. So how can advisory organisations step up their digital capacity in terms of advice and services? they have limited resources to develop new digital tools and without a large demand driven user base it is difficult to justify the investment, the more common solution is to use commonly available applications (spreadsheets, social media platforms, calculators, mapping freeware etc.) to advance incrementally. Within EUFRAS we recognised for some time that there is a lot of duplication of effort and expense providing newer and better digital services without much interaction between advisor organisations or advisors. This is a wasted opportunity which was recognised and addressed in new H2020 funded coordination and support action call and a successful project now in its second year called FAIRshare. The project has two main actions:

1. To develop a platform which will allow advisors upload the digital tools and services that they use and also to see other digital tools and services used by other advisors and learn from their experience and approach.
2. To support 40 different advisory services to use the platform and to improve their access to digital tools and development of services with funding available for planning, adaption, translation, training and motivational interactions with other farmer and advisors.

In the last few Covid 19 months we have all seen the benefit of improved digital services, this has helped the advisory and teaching professionals deliver valued services safely and remotely to farmers. I am happy to say that there has been a huge response from advisors to ensure that the reduced face to face and public gatherings would be replace by increased efforts using the digital capacity which is at our disposal. I would like to present some evidence from the FAIRshare project and from recent data which would support the view that this change is in itself a global digital transition and a digital leap or step change for both advisors and farmers.

