

Promotion of innovative agriculture through co-operative and work-integrated education

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Whether a co-operation between research and practice actually contributes to competitiveness and innovation in agriculture, depends on the partners involved, their relationships and modes of co-operation. Higher Education can act as an intermediary between farmers and agricultural producers on the one hand, and research on the other hand. Successful didactic concepts combine the learning objectives of students with current research topics and urgent needs of the practice field.

The workshop "co-operative and work-integrated education" aims at highlighting successful examples of co-operative and work-integrated education. Practitioners along the food chain, consultants, lecturers and researchers are invited to mutually exchange their experiences and expectations towards a fruitful co-operation. Individual options for successful joint activities of higher education and practice towards a competitive and innovative agriculture shall be generated and evaluated together.

A short input will serve as stimulus, followed by a moderated group dialogue and co-creation of procedural ideas.

As a starting point, insights into the cooperative education ("co-op") programmes "Sustainable Food Management" (LEB) and "Production Technology and Organization" (PTO) at the Institute of Applied Production Sciences, FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences, will be given.

In these programmes, students are trained to build bridges between university and corporate daily life right from the first semester. Within the PTO study programme full-time co-op means alternately attending a three-month block of lectures at the University of Applied Sciences and then implementing the learnings during three months with an industrial employer. This rotation continues throughout the programme. A training contract provides students with social and financial security during their studies. They are accompanied by committed entrepreneurs on their way through the degree programme and into the start of their career. The LEB study programme the work-study rotation is developed individually with an average of five enterprises along the entire food value chain. Students spend six weeks each in agriculture and direct marketing (1st and 2nd semester) and in the 3rd and the 4th semester

a total of four modules (each lasting six weeks) has to be work-integrated in processing and retail enterprises.

On the one hand, students profit from the numerous learning opportunities in the company and from each other's experience and career development. And, on the other hand, companies get new ideas and inspiration from student co-workers and the supervising faculty members and their links to topical research through theoretical input during lectures at University.

The workshop deals with the questions:

- What can be learned from previous co-operation experiences?
- What do different partners expect in a co-operation of research, education and practice?
- What could be done to enhance the benefit for agricultural partners?
- Which educational models and co-operative settings are suitable to promote innovation in agriculture?
- How can these findings be transformed into a concrete action plan for each workshop participant?

Participants will contribute or take the perspective of different stakeholder groups (practitioners along the food chain, consultants, lecturers and researchers). Diverging interests, expected benefits, pitfalls of cooperation and concrete opportunities for innovation will be discussed. Success factors will be derived and new options to promote innovation in an educational setting will be generated.