Balancing Objectivity and Subjectivity in Agricultural Funding: the Case of AKIS Measures

Naomi Di Santo , Roberta Sisto * , Vittoria Dragone , Vincenzo Fucilli

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Article

Balancing Objectivity and Subjectivity in Agricultural Funding: the Case of AKIS Measures

Naomi Di Santo [1], Roberta Sisto [2,*], Vittoria Dragone [1] and Vincenzo Fucilli [1]

[1] University of Bari Aldo Moro

[2] University of Foggia

* Correspondence: roberta.sisto@unifg.it

Abstract: The agri-food system is faced with numerous challenges of sustainability, calling for the improved evaluation of rural development projects. However, a gap exists in the comprehension of the application of both objective and subjective indicators in project selection criteria among regions. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring, in detail, the nature and utilization of objective and subjective indicators in the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) environment in Italy. The approach entails the analysis of documents, with a focus on data relating to the AKIS initiative across regions. The comparative approach is also used to establish the priority that regions assign to indicators. The results include the use of both objective indicators, such as the number of sectors covered, and subjective ones, such as innovation and responsiveness to local needs. Besides, the comparative approach emphasizes the complexity of the AKIS initiative with some domains tending towards objective indicators while others tend towards subjective indicators. The study contributes to the development of a composite framework for evaluating rural development projects and emphasizes the need for further research to develop evaluation methodologies further so that future frameworks will be standardized as well as sensitive to regional heterogeneity.

Keywords: content analysis; agricultural knowledge and innovation system; AKIS; evaluation; resource allocation

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the agri-food and forestry sector face various challenges, such as demographic growth, food security (e.g., ensuring the nutritional needs of future generations), and climate change (e.g., reducing pressures on natural resources at the same time) [1]. To mitigate the negative impacts of these challenges, the European Union promotes productivity and sustainability in the sector by encouraging the generation and dissemination of innovations in agri-food systems [2]. Different scholars [3,4] have investigated the crucial role of technological advancements and digitalization in improving resource efficiency and fostering sustainable, climate-friendly agriculture [5]. However, despite the growing importance of tools aimed at knowledge dissemination in agriculture, they have remained a marginal expense within the overall Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget for the 2014-2020 period [6]. Consequently, the adoption of new technologies in the agricultural sector has not reached the expected levels.

To achieve more appropriate solutions considering the sustainability transition as a priority in the policy agenda, different policy measures have been implemented. In particular, one is the European Innovation Partnership AGRI, implemented through the European Fund for Rural Development. The second consists of various Horizon 2020 Research Programs calls aimed at bridging the gap between research and innovation.

These research programs adopt a multi-actor approach, which enhances the practical relevance of scientific research by fostering close collaboration between researchers and practitioners [2] and

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both of them incorporate this approach within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) framework, promoting knowledge exchange and innovation in the sector.

Considering the need for an efficient allocation of resources, effective projects evaluation is crucial to ensure that fundings are directed towards the best innovations. This primarily involves the selection criteria used to allocate funds for agricultural innovation measures, particularly those related to AKIS. In addition, the AKIS strategy further amplifies the complexity of fund allocation based on selection criteria because there are principles and processes in place for selecting AKIS projects and distributing funds among various groups.

The challenges associated with funds allocation are particularly pronounced in countries like Italy. Indeed, as reported by Cristiano et al., [7] the Italian AKIS is a multi-actor, multi-level system, shaped by the division of responsibilities between the State and the Regions, as well as the Autonomous Provinces (Trento and Bolzano). This structure has led to the creation of 21 regional AKISs, each differing in organizational models, procedures, and content. This multifaceted framework results in varying levels of definition and coordination across regions, reflecting local cultural, political, and administrative contexts.

More practically, the selection principles to allocate resource for AKIS selection are set at the national level and vary only slightly between regions. However, at the regional level, selection criteria differ, each Italian region must establish rules and criteria for deciding which projects to fund within rural development measures. In this highly variable and rather complex situation, the aim of this study is to analyze the project selection process within AKIS, with the intent of understanding how objective and subjective criteria are used to address the specific needs of different territories. Specifically, the analysis focuses on the integration of these criteria and the impact of regional differences in resource management, with the goal of highlighting how political management that acknowledges local peculiarities can contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors, promoting regional growth.

More practically, the research question addressed in this article is:

RQ1: Do regions balance objective and subjective criteria in AKIS project selection to meet local needs?

To achieve the objective of this paper, a content analysis of the main documents from Italian regions has been implemented, contributing to the development of a comparative evaluation analysis. This structured approach provided a clear understanding of how the regions have approached project selection, shedding light on their alignment with the goals and requirements of the European Union's rural development strategy.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a better understanding of the debate of selection criteria and the AKIS concept, Section 3 describes the methodology used, the results will be presented in Section 4, while Section 5 and Section 6 provide a discussion and concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The debate of Selection Criteria

According to Scriven [8], the process of the evaluation includes four steps: defining the merit dimensions (how the object of evaluation is to be judged), determining the merit standards that specify the level of performance needed for every dimension, comparing the object's performance against those standards, and finally, integrating these comparisons into an overall assessment and judgment of value. This flow is the basis of any evaluative process, including the awarding of funding calls for AKIS initiatives. In this context, some of the entities under evaluation could be the entire proposal or parts of it (e.g., the project team or the budget and procured components), while standard evaluative criteria are different such as originality, relevance, and feasibility [9]. As different authors have pointed out [9,10], the criteria applied in evaluation processes are often unspecified or ambiguous, resulting in a lack of consistency, which undermines the clarity and

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credibility of funding decisions. Given these processes' intricacy and the finances' potential impact, resource distribution should adopt clearly definable, optimal, and just processes. In this perspective, the use of objective and measurable benchmarks can support analytically sound decisions, while acknowledging that every evaluation inevitably involves an element of judgment. For this reason, understanding the relationship between objective and subjective indicators becomes crucial [11]. According to Veenhoven [12], objective indicators are based on tangible facts and explicit assessments by external observers, whereas subjective indicators concern personal perceptions. Although both types have limitations, subjective data are indispensable for setting policy goals and assessing their overall success. A categorical rejection of subjective indicators risks leaving decision-makers with an information deficit, which is inevitably filled with personal impressions and unsystematic opinions. Therefore, integrating both perspectives represents an essential strategy to guide funding decisions in a conscious and balanced manner.

2.2. Current State of the AKIS Strategy

The AKIS is commonly defined as a network of people and organizations that work together to create, share, and use knowledge and information. The main goal of this system is to improve decision-making, solve problems, and promote innovation in agriculture [13]. The model relies on collaboration among various stakeholders, including researchers, advisors, farmers, foresters, and educators, who contribute complementary expertise to achieving project objectives [14]. The literature on AKIS has been increasing highlight the significant role of this initiative. As well a simply search in an academic database, such as Scopus, using keywords like "Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System" reveals an important increase in publications. Specifically, several aspects have been explored in the literature. Some studies have focused on advisory services, analysing their implementation and impact on farmers [15,16]. While others have emphasized the importance of community relationships [17] and the role of participatory approaches in addressing farmers' needs [18]. Although this increase in AKIS publication, to the best of our knowledge, there is a gap on the selection criteria of AKIS initiatives, particularly in the context of Italy, as previously mentioned. Specifically, in Italy, the AKIS is composed of nine key interventions designed to promote innovation and enhance the productivity and sustainability of the agricultural sector. These interventions, which are part of the European Union's Rural Development Policy, encompass a wide range of activities, from supporting innovation to providing advisory services [19]. Figure 1 summarizes the nine interventions of AKIS in Italy. Among these, SRG01 pays attention to the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) Operational Groups (OGs), which work towards stakeholder cooperation for innovative project implementation. SRG08 promotes the development, testing, and implementation of new research innovations to facilitate their commercialization in the agriculture, agri-food, and forestry industries. SRG09 promotes the formation of collaborative partnerships that seek to serve the needs of rural enterprises by constructively solving problems, promoting innovative practices, and strengthening collaboration through the AKIS. SRH01 helps agricultural businesses through the provision of advisory services; offering help in technical, management, economic, environmental, and social parts while also supporting the transfer of new ideas and findings. SRH02 aims at improving the training skills of the consultants to increase the professional and consequently, the advisory service quality to agricultural clients. SRH03 has the objective to enhance the competency of agricultural entrepreneurs as well as other professionals in agriculture related fields through training to enable them to better practice agriculture, animal husbandry, agri-processing, and rural development. SRH04 focuses on the marketing and public relations activities that communicate innovations and research results to stakeholders, both public and private, in the agriculture and forestry industries. SRH05 has advanced the knowledge and technology transfer through the implementation of education field trials, experiments, and demonstrations. SRH06 provides administrative support to the knowledge system actors for data capture, network monitoring, and digital tool development needed for complicated analysis.

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Figure 1. AKIS Interventions in Italy.

3. Methodology

To address the research objective, the methodological approach followed a multi-step structure that integrates two steps: qualitative content analysis and systematic comparative evaluation.

First step includes two analyses. Firstly, content analysis is conducted as a systematic and replicable technique for coding and categorizing textual to identify recurrent themes, principles, and criteria [20]. A comprehensive document analysis was conducted, specifically focusing on regional planning documents, with particular attention to the Complement to Regional Programming (CSR 23/27). Each CSR defines the regional development strategies that contribute to achieving the objectives outlined in European regulations related to the new CAP. The CSRs are documents that implement the national strategy (PSP) at the regional level. While they do not introduce new choices, they explain how the national strategy is adapted to the specificities of each region. This analysis encompassed the eligibility and selection criteria applied to projects funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) within the 2014–2022 programming period. These criteria pertain to specific "types of operations" embedded in the Rural Development Programs (RDPs) and include parameters such as sectoral relevance, geographical targeting, alignment with RDP priorities, measurability, and evaluability of project proposals. Second, a comparative analysis of regional documents was performed. More specifically, regional project calls were examined to assess how the formally defined criteria are translated into practical decision-making processes for project selection.

The second step applied a criteria-based analysis, wherein evaluative criteria were assessed. The evaluation of selection criteria was organized into two dimensions: the subjective versus objective nature of the criteria. Subjectivity refers to the influence of individual perceptions, values, or institutional biases on evaluation outcomes, while objectivity relates to the use of measurable and standardized indicators. The steps followed in this study are summarized in Figure 2.

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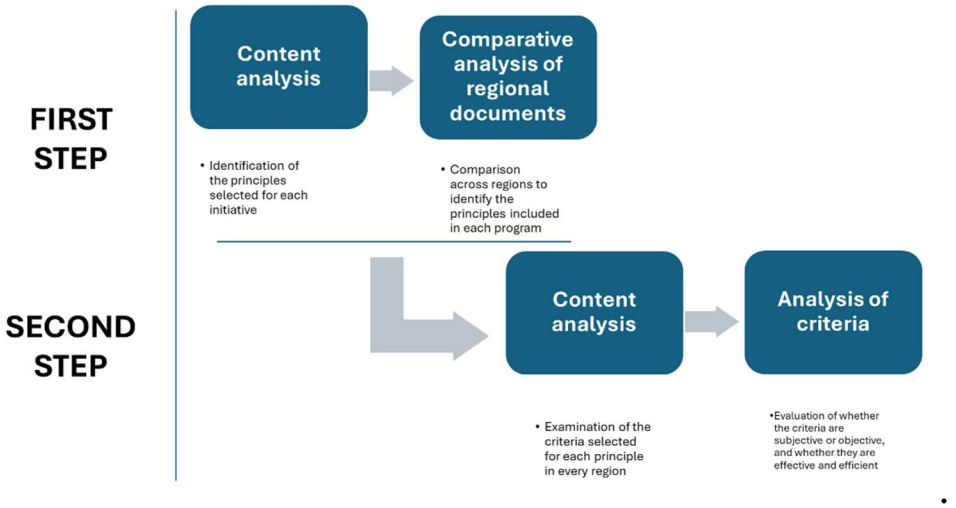

Figure 2. Methodological procedure.

3. Results

3.1. First Step

The Table 1 summarizes the principles on which Italian regions base the selection of AKIS initiatives. The table presents a column with the 9 AKIS initiatives, alongside which the principles used for selecting each initiative are listed.

Table 1. Selection principles adopted by the Italian regions.

COD	PRINCIPLES
SRG 01	01 – Partnership characteristics of the Operational Group (GO) in relation to the project
	02 – Reward for the presence of consulting service providers
	03 – Qualitative characteristics of the project
	04 – Quality of dissemination and communication activities of the results
	05 – Organizational and managerial capacity of the operational group
	05.1 – Reward for specific themes and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions activated
	06 – Sustainability
SRG 08	01 – Subjective characteristics of the partnership
	02 – Qualitative characteristics of the project
	03 – Quality of dissemination and communication activities of the results
	03.1– Characteristics of those accessing the consulting service
	04 – Only for the forestry sector: specific themes in regional programming to ensure coherence with regional forestry programming
	04.1– Alignment with intervention priorities (OS) to be used in the calls
	05 – Impact of the project in terms of stages of the supply chain involved (processing, conservation, storage, packaging, transformation, trade)
SRG 09	01 – Quality of the project
	02 – Quality of the project team
	03 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP

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	04 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the characteristics of the territories and/or supply chains to which the project refers
	05 – Connection with the PEI GO projects and with research and innovation projects supported by other EU, national, and regional funds
SRH 01	01 – Quality of the consultancy projects
	02 – Quality of the consultancy provider
	03 – Reward for specific themes
	03.1 – Evaluation of the consultancy recipients
	03.2 – Consistency of the proposals with the identified themes
	03.3 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the characteristics of the territories and/or supply chains to ensure adequate consultancy
	03.4 – Reward for specific themes and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions activated to address priority issues
	03.5 – Characteristics of the consultancy recipients
	R/03 – Characteristics of the consultancy service recipients
	P03 – Reward based on the recipient
	P04 – Reward based on the consultancy theme to ensure more targeted consultancy
SRH 02	01 – Quality of the project
	02 – Quality of the project team
	03 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP
	04 – Reward for specific themes and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions activated
	05 – Connection with PEI GO projects and/or with research and innovation projects supported by other EU, national, and regional funds
SRH 03	01 – Quality of the training project
	02 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP
	03 – Reward for specific themes/objectives and/or territorial impact
	04 – Characteristics of the training recipients in accordance with regional criteria for identifying rewards (localization, structural, managerial targets)
	04.1 – Characteristics of final recipients
	04.2 – Quality of the project team
	04.2 – Quality of the instructors
	04 .3– Quality of the training team
	04 .4– Characteristics of final recipients
	04.5 – Reward for territorial impact
	05 – Quality of the training provider in accordance with regional criteria for identifying rewards (e.g., previous sector experience, quality certification, etc.)
	05.1– Reward based on the recipient and the theme of the training
	05.2– Only for the agricultural sector*
	05.3 – Costs/Benefits of the proposal
	06 – Localization of the final recipients
SRH 04	01 – Quality of the project
	02 – Quality of the project team
	03 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP

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	04 – Reward for specific themes and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of activities based on regional and/or local needs
SRH 05	01 – Quality of the project
	02 – Quality of the project team
	03 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP
	04 – Reward for specific themes and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions activated
	05 – Only for the agricultural sector*
SRH 06	01 – Quality of the project; and/or type of activity
	02 – Quality of the project team
	03 – Consistency of the themes addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP
	04 – Reward for specific themes/objectives and/or territorial impact and/or type of activity
	05 – Characteristics of back-office service recipients (regional criteria for identifying rewards such as localization, structural, and managerial targets)
	06 – Quality of the back-office service provider (regional criteria for identifying rewards such as previous sector experience, quality certification, etc.)

Table 1 illustrates that while the principles applied by Italian regions in the selection of AKIS initiatives are largely consistent, each region retains the discretion to select specific principles to adopt for each strategy, thereby tailoring the initiatives to reflect regional peculiarities. This approach is further elaborated in Table 2, which presents a comparative analysis of the regional documents. Following the identification of the selection principles adopted by each region, an in-depth examination was conducted on the calls for proposals issued by the respective regions, with a particular focus on the selection criteria.

Table 2. Comparison of principles across Italian regions.

COD	PRINCIPLES	VALLE	PIEMONTE	LIGURIA	LOMBARDIA	P.A. BOLZANO	P.A TRENTO .	VENETO	F.V. GIULIA	EMILIA	TOSCANA	UMBRIA	MARCHE	LAZIO	ABRUZZO	MOLISE	CAMPANIA	PUGLIA	BASILICATA	CALABRIA	SICILIA	SARDEGNA
SRG01	**01**	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	02	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	03	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	04	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	05	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	05.1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	06	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SRG08	**01**	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	02	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	03	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	03.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	.1																					
	05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SRG09	01	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
	02	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
	03	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
	04	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
	05	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
SRH01	01	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	02	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	03.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	03.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	03.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	03.4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	03.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	R/03	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	P03	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	P04	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SRH02	01	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	02	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	03	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	04	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	05	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
SRH03	01	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
	02	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
	03	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
	04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04.2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04.4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	04.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	04.6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	05.1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	05.2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	05.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	06	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SRH04	01	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	02	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	03	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	04	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SRH05	01	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
	02	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
	03	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
	04	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
	05	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SRH06	01	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	02	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	03	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	04	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	06	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The comparative analysis of selection criteria across Italian regions reveals a structured yet flexible evaluation framework for rural development projects. Core principles, like partnership quality (SRG01), project innovation (SRG09), and service provider competence (SRH01), are common applied among the Regions. However, significant regional variations emerge in the adoption of supplementary criteria, particularly in the reward of thematic priorities, exemplified in Piemonte's forestry focus and digitalization in Lombardia, and the more peripheral specificity like mountain agriculture in Valle d'Aosta which show great regional adoption diversity in supplementary criteria. Such as with other regions, Lazio and Sardegna share the strong focus on local coherence and adaptation to regional agricultural priorities. Team quality and project quality seem to be the most widespread qualifiers which showcase the value derived from having a robust operational structure for the growth of these initiatives. Focusing on project sustainability is the approach taken by some other regions, particularly Autonomous Province of Bolzano, and by others like Veneto and Liguria whose focus is on the economic efficiency of the consultancy service provider. The links with research projects funded at a European and national level stand out as a defining feature for region integration within the broader systems of agricultural innovation. The rewards for specific themes or territorial objectives are especially evident in regions like Sardegna and Umbria, where local policies aim to address specific sectoral challenges, such as enhancing agricultural supply chains and promoting innovative actions for sustainability. Notably, northern

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regions exhibit more granular scoring methodologies, while southern regions prioritize social sustainability and local stakeholder engagement. These divergences reflect both contextual adaptations and strategic focuses within the shared EU policy framework.

3.2. Second Step

The analysis of the AKIS Initiative data reveals significant variation in the distribution of objective and subjective indicators across different selection criteria and regions (Table 3).

Table 3. Objective and subjective indicators across selection criteria.

AKIS Initiative	Total Criteria	% Objective Indicators	% Subjective Indicators	Region	For more details, see
SRG01 - EIP AGRI Operational Groups	27	38.89%	61.11%	Abruzzo Trento Bolzano Veneto	Table A1 in Appendix
SRG08 - Support to pilot actions and testing of innovations	17	47.06%	52.94%	Piemonte	Table A2 in Appendix
SRG09 - Innovation support services Art. 78	24	50%	50%	Toscana Piemonte Veneto Abruzzo Campania	Table A3 in Appendix
SRH01 - Advisory services	14	60%	40%	Campania Piemonte Abruzzo Emilia Romagna	Table A4 in Appendix
SRH02 – Training for advisors	5	80%	20%	Piemonte	Table A5 in Appendix
SRH03 – Training for farmers and other rural actors (private and public)	17	70.59%	29.41%	Veneto Marche Campania Toscana Lombardia Abruzzo Piemonte Emilia Romagna	Table A6 in Appendix
SRH04 – Information actions	9	90%	10%	Veneto Marche	Table A7 in Appendix
SRH05 – Demonstration	15	62.50%	37.50%	Veneto Piemonte	Table A8 in Appendix

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actions for agricultural and forestry sectors and for rural areas					
SRH06 – Back-office services for the AKIS	6	33.33%	66.67%	Veneto Toscana Piemonte Sicilia	Table A9 in Appendix

Considering the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (SRG01), a total of 27 criteria were used, with 38.89% being objective and the remaining 61.11% subjective. This criterium was found in regions like Abruzzo, Trento, Bolzano, and Veneto. In these areas, subjective indicators evaluate how the partnerships were structured or how original the proposed solutions looked. These indicators leaned on qualitative inputs, like the reputation of external experts or just how convincing the project seemed overall. Of course, some objective aspects were considered too, like how many farms or forestry businesses were involved. Moreover, considering the SRG08 — Support for Pilot Actions and Testing of Innovations—it involved 17 criteria, split more or less evenly: 47.06% objective and 52.94% subjective. Interestingly, this was only used in Piemonte. The design here seemed to value both concrete metrics, like how many pilot projects were actually carried out and more open-ended judgments, such as how much innovative potential a proposal might offer in a local setting.

Moreover, SRG09, which focused on Innovation Support Services, used 24 criteria, evenly divided between objective and subjective indicators. These indicators were applied in regions like Toscana, Piemonte, Veneto, Abruzzo, and Campania. While, for Advisory Services (SRH01), 60% of the criteria were objective, and 40% were subjective. The initiative was assessed in Campania, Piemonte, Abruzzo, and Emilia-Romagna. The emphasis on quantitative indicators, such as the number of trained advisors and the geographical spread of services, points to a data-driven approach. On the other hand, Training for Advisors (SRH02) leaned even more into objective metrics: four out of five criteria were objective. This was mainly observed in Piemonte, with attention on the delivery methods and trainer credentials. Training for Farmers and Other Rural Actors (SRH03) had a more mixed approach: 17 criteria total, with 70.59% objective indicators, used across different regions such as Veneto, Marche, Campania, Toscana, Lombardia, Abruzzo, Piemonte, and Emilia-Romagna. Furthermore, to assess the initiative titled SRH04 (Information Actions) it is possible to see that 90% of its nine criteria were objective. It looked mainly at concrete outputs, like attendance numbers at events. This was used in Veneto and Marche.

Moreover, the Demonstration Actions for the Agricultural and Forestry Sectors (SRH05) used 16 assessment criteria, 62.5% of which were objective indicators. It combined quantitative data, such as the number of events held, with qualitative aspects, like the effectiveness of communication plans and the level of stakeholder engagement. This measure was mostly applied in Veneto and Piemonte. Finally, among the Back-office Services for the AKIS (SRH06), two-thirds of its six criteria were subjective. This probably reflects the trickier nature of evaluating internal support structures, where softer, experience-based judgments often make more sense. This approach was used in Veneto, Toscana, Piemonte, and Sicilia.

4. Discussion

The results show that while some regions relied primarily on quantitative assessments, others preferred more subjective methods that were better suited to their specific local contexts. This highlights the need for evaluation systems in agricultural innovation to remain flexible, broad enough to capture diverse on-the-ground realities yet still focused on measurable outcomes where they matter most.

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The analysis of documents reveals important insights into the application of objective and subjective indicators, reflecting the complexity of selection criteria across different regions within the Italian context. This variation highlights the different approaches used for evaluating rural development projects and allocating resources.

The results show the different priorities in project evaluation, emphasizing how regions adapt their criteria to address specific territorial issues. For instance, areas like Bolzano and Abruzzo used objective indicators, such as the number of sectors or enterprises involved, which are easier to quantify. On the other hand, regions like Trento and Veneto applied subjective indicators, emphasizing aspects like innovation, technical expertise, and adaptability to local needs.

The distribution of objective versus subjective indicators highlights the differences within the AKIS initiative. Certain actions, like advisor training, were based on objective indicators, focusing on measurable variables such as participant numbers and the number of delivery methods. However, other actions, such as back-office services for AKIS, relied on subjective criteria, reflecting the need for a more flexible approach that accounts for the complexity of this initiative.

Moreover, the mix of objective and subjective indicators creates a comprehensive framework for evaluating rural development projects under the CAP. The findings of this study suggest that regions have different priorities when selecting projects. Some regions applied objective metrics, while others focused on subjective criteria, such as social and environmental sustainability, reinforcing the importance of evaluators. Indeed, while objective indicators play a key role in ensuring transparency and accountability, subjective indicators of the evaluation allow for a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in rural development.

6. Concluding Remarks

Policy makers are recognizing the intrinsic complexities of rural development, using a mix of objective and subjective indicators to create specific solutions to territorial needs. As highlighted in this paper, it is crucial that rural development governance does not reduce the allocation of resources to a statistical view but instead adopts dynamic evaluations requiring tailored, context-sensitive approaches. The criteria used in AKIS project selection have a direct influence on the types of projects funded, which in turn shape innovations within the agricultural and food systems. Indeed, the agri-food sector, being a complex and transversal system, includes a wide range of innovations, from the use of AI in crop planting to the final stages of food consumption. Therefore, the selection of specific indicators has an impact that extends not only to territorial development of specific regions but also to various interconnected sectors.

Despite the different insights offered by this paper, the study presents some limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. For example, the analysis relies on data from specific regions involved in the AKIS Initiative, particularly within the Italian context. Notwithstanding these limitations, the paper highlights the importance of including both objective and subjective indicators in evaluating rural development initiatives [12]. The findings suggest that regions should adopt a mixed approach to project selection and resource allocation.

Therefore, future research should focus on refining evaluation methodologies to create a standardized framework that remains flexible enough to account for the unique characteristics of each region, improving the accuracy and comprehensiveness of evaluations in rural development.

Author Contributions: For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “Conceptualization, X.X. and Y.Y.; methodology, X.X.; software, X.X.; validation, X.X., Y.Y. and Z.Z.; formal analysis, X.X.; investigation, X.X.; resources, X.X.; data curation, X.X.; writing—original draft preparation, X.X.; writing—review and editing, X.X.; visualization, X.X.; supervision, X.X.; project administration, X.X.; funding acquisition, Y.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.” Please turn to the CRediT taxonomy for the term explanation. Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy

Appendix A

Table A1. SRG01: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	Selection Criteria	Indicator	Region	Objective/ Subjective
Partnership characteristics of the Operational Group in relation to the project	Involvement of a plurality of agricultural, agri-food, and forestry enterprises	Number of agricultural, agri-food, or forestry enterprises involved in the project	Abruzzo/ Trento/Bolzano	Objective
	Organizational and managerial capacity	Lead partner with administrative/accounting skills in projects funded by the FEASR funds	Trento	Objective
		Presence of a consultancy center/expert consultant	Trento	Subjective
	Degree of diversification of sectors represented by the partners	Number of sectors represented by the partners	Bolzano	Objective
	Presence of one or more external experts collaborating with the G.O.		Bolzano	Objective
	Partnership	Quality of the partnership	Veneto	Subjective
Incentive for the presence of consultancy providers	Involvement of Consultancy Organizations	Number of Consultancy Organizations	Abruzzo	Objective
	Presence of a consultancy center or an expert consultant in		BolzanoVeneto	Objective

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	the specific sector of the project			
	Consultancy provider partners	Consultancy provider identified as the lead partner	Veneto	Objective
Qualitative Characteristics of the Project	Technical-scientific validity of the project	The project idea presents the main issue and proposed solutions in a fully adequate manner, with technical-scientific references and specificity concerning the regional context as specified in the call.	Abruzzo/Bolzano	Subjective
		Relevance of the needs and issues addressed	Trento	Subjective
		Level of specialization of the technical-scientific team in relation to the innovative solution	Trento	Subjective
		Degree of innovation and originality of the proposed solution	Trento/Bolzano	Subjective
	Methodological adequacy	Clarity in the description of the project objectives and consistency between objectives and planned activities.	Trento	Subjective
		Skills of human resources in relation to planned activities	Trento	Subjective
		Consistency of the implementation timeline with the volume of planned activities, also in relation to the CSR timelines	Trento	Subjective
	Cost analysis	Allocation within the budget of expenses, with a breakdown of actions for each partner, relevance, and appropriateness in relation to the planned activities.	Trento	Subjective
		Clarity and completeness of the submitted estimates and comparisons	Trento	Subjective

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	Involvement of agricultural/forestry enterprises in proposing project themes	Conducting surveys to analyze needs.	Trento	Objective
	Correlation between project content and Specific Objectives of Article 6 Reg. (EU) 2021/2115	Project content related to the conservation of natural resources, climate, and biodiversity.	Trento	Subjective
		Project content related to competitiveness, food, health, employment, and rural area development	Trento	Subjective
	Impact on the agri-food and forestry sector		Bolzano	Subjective
	Involvement of the agri-food/forestry supply chain	Number of stages of the supply chain involved.	Bolzano	Objective
	Project aimed at increasing digital skills, the dissemination of digital tools, and the availability of digital services in rural areas		Bolzano	Subjective
Quality of Dissemination and Dissemination of Results Activities	Presence and quality of communication plans	Adequacy of the objectives presented in the communication plan.	Trento	Subjective
		Consistency of proposed activities with the objectives presented in the communication plan	Trento	Subjective
		Type of stakeholders involved in communication and dissemination activities	Trento	Subjective
	Plurality of dissemination events or activities	Number of dissemination events or activities.	Bolzano	Objective
	dissemination of results	Quality of dissemination and dissemination activities, particularly through the communication channels of the CAP2030 Network.	Veneto	Subjective

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Organizational and Managerial Capacity of the Operational Group	Presence of an administrative lead partner		Bolzano	Objective
	Experience of the lead partner in projects supported by the European Union	At least one funded project.	Bolzano	Objective
	Completeness and clarity of the budget estimate		Bolzano	Subjective
	Involvement of farmers/foresters in proposing project themes (bottom-up)		Bolzano	Objective
	Presence of a SWOT analysis.		Bolzano	Objective
Sustainability	Environmental Sustainability in the Project		Bolzano	Subjective
	Animal Welfare		Bolzano	Subjective
	Social Sustainability		Bolzano	Subjective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRG01. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

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Table A2. SRG08: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	Selection Criteria	Indicator	Region	Objective Subjective
Subjective Characteristics of the Partnership	Level and quality of interactions among cooperation group participants and the involvement of partners in project activities		Piemonte	Subjective
	Presence within the cooperation group of the various skills necessary to develop activities and transfer project results		Piemonte	Subjective
	Stability of the partnership and the cooperation group's ability to become independent from public funding	Presence of stable forms of associated management (e.g., associations/consortia, etc.)	Piemonte	Subjective
	Number of involved owners or number of new owners associated with existing associative forms		Piemonte	Objective
Qualitative characteristics of the project	Clear description of the objectives the project proposal aims to achieve; consistency between objectives and planned activities; a realistic and feasible work plan, also considering the organization and coordination of activities.		Piemonte	Subjective
	Clear and adequate project documentation in terms of completeness and compliance (with particular reference to the eligibility of expenses), consistency between the documentary part and digital submission, and proper allocation of expenses between activities and partners.		Piemonte	Subjective
	Proportionality between investments and results.		Piemonte	Subjective
	area involved in the interventions subject to funding		Piemonte	Objective
	area covered by management contracts		Piemonte	Objective

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Quality of Dissemination and Communication of Results	Dissemination of project results in terms of quality, diversification of planned methods, appropriateness to project themes, and impact/effect		Piemonte	Subjective
Only for the Forestry Sector: Specific Themes in Regional Planning to Ensure Consistency with Regional Forestry Programming	The ability of project objectives to address issues or create opportunities for forestry sector operators.		Piemonte	Subjective
	Innovation content in terms of organization and subject matter.		Piemonte	Subjective
	Economic development effects derived from the project and the cooperation's ability to generate long-term stable impacts	Duration of the management contract beyond the prescribed minimum.	Piemonte	Objective
	Presence of actions for ecosystem services development		Piemonte	Objective
	Sustainable forest management (SFM) and/or traceability	Number of individual	Piemonte	Objective
	Quality of wood, woody fuels (ISO 17225), carbon footprint, and environmental sustainabilit	Presence/adoption of a certificate issued by a third party.	Piemonte	Objective
	Presence/adoption of product quality certification resulting from the application of a specific standard.		Piemonte	Objective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRG08. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A3. SRG09: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	**Selection Criteria**	**Indicator**	**Region**	**Objective/ Subjective**
Project Quality	Planned project activities	Number of activities	Toscana	Objective
	Overall project consistency, clarity, and concreteness of objectives and expected results		Toscana	Subjective
	Methodology for implementing the planned activities		Toscana/ Abruzzo	Subjective
	Completeness in describing the communication strategy		Toscana	Subjective
	Structuring of the project into activities that are coherent with each other and with the project objectives		Piemonte/ Veneto	Subjective

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	The project budget is realistic, and the ratio between the total requested resources and the planned objectives and activities appears appropriate		Piemonte/ Veneto	Subjective
	Completeness and level of innovation in the service offering in terms of provided support	Presence of a detailed information sheet for each type of proposed service	Campania	Objective
		Presence of a website with one or more sections dedicated to information and knowledge exchange	Campania	Objective
		Presence of one or more social media services with a sufficient level of periodic updates	Campania	Objective
		Presence of an e-learning platform to provide additional services alongside in-person activities and channels for interaction with participants	Campania	Objective
		Tools for third-party monitoring of service quality	Campania	Objective
Project Team Quality	Complementary and targeted composition of the project partnership		Toscana/ Veneto	Subjective
	Experience of the lead partner in coordinating cooperation projects		Toscana	Subjective
	Presence of a public or private research organization as a project partner with relevant expertise in relation to the project's objectives and activities		Toscana/ Abruzzo	Objective
	Presence of producer organizations, producer associations, cooperatives, consortia, or food districts as project partners with relevant expertise in relation to the project's objectives and		Toscana	Objective

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	activities			
	Presence of consultancy service providers within the partnership		Toscana/ Abruzzo	Objective
	Availability of the necessary competencies		Piemonte	Subjective
	Presence of equipment, services, and facilities required for the implementation of planned activities		Piemonte	Subjective
	Experience of qualified personnel in information activities		Campania	Objective
	Qualified teaching staff		Campania	Objective
	Qualification/experience of consultants		Campania	Objective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP	The project defines activities/services consistent with the objectives of the CAP 2023-2027	Number of CAP objectives covered by the project	Toscana/Piemonte/Veneto/Abruzzo/Campania	Subjective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the characteristics of the territories and/or supply chains the project refers to	The project defines the consistency of the services/activities it intends to develop with a clear reference to the territory and/or the supply chains involved, and their replicability		Toscana/Piemonte/Veneto/Abruzzo/Campania	Subjective
	Presence of AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems)		Campania	Subjective
	Ability to engage the target group based on the preliminary identification of specific topics and objectives		Campania	Subjective
Connection with the projects of the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) and those of research and innovation supported by other EU,	Clear, direct, and consistent connection with project		Toscana/ Abruzzo	Subjective
	dissemination activities of the EIP-AGRI regional OGs or research and innovation projects funded by other EU, national, and regional funds, and/or contributing to such organizations in collaboration with them		Piemonte	Objective
	Presence in the partnership of the lead partners of the OGs or research organizations responsible for research programs funded by other funds		Campania	Objective

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national, and regional funds				

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRG09. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A4. SRH01: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	**Selection Criteria**	**Indicator**	**Region**	**Objective/ Subjective**
Quality of Consultancy Projects	Completeness and innovation of the consultancy project in terms of available support	The score is assigned based on the presence of the following cumulative support tools: - Informational material: At least one detailed fact sheet for each type of consultancy. - Dedicated app: App developed by the organization for consultancy activities. - Website: Website with sections for information exchange and knowledge sharing.	Campania	Objective
	Completeness and innovation of the consultancy project in terms of the consultancy offer		Campania/Abruzzo	Subjective
	The project's ability to demonstrate the alignment between the support needs expressed by potential beneficiaries and the project's content		Piemonte	Subjective
	Logistics organization of the offered service	Presence of an operational office	Abruzzo	Objective
	Description of the project's objectives		Emilia	Su

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			Romagna	bjective
	Description and scheduling of activities		Emilia Romagna	Subjective
	Description and preparation of the final report		Emilia Romagna	Subjective
Quality of the consultancy service provider	Experience of the consultants	Number of years of experience	Campania/Piemonte/Abruzzo	Objective
		Number of consultancies	Campania	Objective
	Presence of recognized operational offices		Campania	Objective
	Environmental impact	Presence of quality certifications for the consultancy provider	Campania/Piemonte	Objective
	Quality of the staff	Presence of university professors, staff registered in a relevant professional register, and staff with a degree or diploma in agricultural subjects with at least 3 years of documented experience in the subjects of consultancy	Abruzzo/Emilia Romagna	Objective
Consistency of the proposals with the identified topics	Consistency		Emilia Romagna	Subjective
Incentives for specific	Consultancy hours for	Number of hours	Pie	O

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topics and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions taken to address prioritized issues	specific topics		mon te	bj ec ti v e
	Experience and training in the context of innovation and research	Curricula	Pie mon te	O bj ec ti v e

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH01. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A5. SRH02: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	**Selection Criteria**	**Indicator**	**Region**	**Objective/ Subjective**
Project quality	Quality of the training methods	Number of bibliographic references	Piemonte	Objective
		Number of face-to-face lessons	Piemonte	Objective
		Type of lessons (online, blended, in-person)	Piemonte	Objective
Quality of the project team	Experience of Professors	Level of education	Piemonte	Objective
	Final evaluation	Presence of customer satisfaction evaluation	Piemonte	Objective
		Level of accessibility of online content	Piemonte	Objective
		Stakeholders have a certification system	Piemonte	Objective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP		Number of CAP objectives covered	Piemonte	Subjective
Incentives for specific topics and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of actions	Inclusion of topics in the project		Piemonte	Subjective
Connection with the projects of the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) and/or with	Funding or project documentation		Piemonte	Objective

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research and innovation projects funded by other EU, national, and regional funds				

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH02. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A6. SRH03: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	**Selection Criteria**	**Indicator**	**Region**	**Objective/Subjective**
Project Quality	Presence of expert instructors	Number of hours	Veneto/Toscana	Objective
	Presence of degree-holding instructors	Number of hours	Veneto	Objective
	Training project with courses to be carried out in collaboration with the EIP-AGRI OGs benefiting from SRG01 intervention		Veneto	Objective
	Training project presented by a certified Training Organization		Veneto/Abruzzo	Objective
	Quality of educational materials and innovative tools		Campania/Toscana/Lombardia	Subjective
	Presence of additional training hours beyond the minimum required in the training project	Number of hours	Campania	Objective
	Clarity and completeness of the proposal		Toscana/Lombardia/ Abruzzo/Emilia Romagna	Subjective
	Structure of distance, blended, or in-person training		Toscana/Piemonte	Objective
	Involvement of industry entities in the training project		Toscana	Objective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the	Consistency	Number of CAP objectives covered	Piemonte/Lombardia/ Abruzzo/Emilia Romagna	Subjective

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general and specific objectives of the CAP	Experience of the service provider	Number of hours	Campania	Objective
	Adequate experience of the teaching staff		Campania	Subjective
Incentives for specific topics/objectives and/or territorial impact	Territorial coverage	Number of provinces	Veneto/Marche	Objective
	Adherence to the project's themes		Marche/Toscana/Lombardia/ Abruzzo/Piemonte/Emilia Romagna	Subjective
	Coaching		Marche	Objective
	Courses aimed at acquiring professional knowledge and skills for young people establishing businesses under the SER01 intervention	Number of students	Marche	Objective
	Availability of training sites in disadvantaged areas	Number of sites	Campania	Objective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH03. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A7. SRH04: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	**Selection Criteria**	**Indicator**	**Region**	**Objective/ Subjective**
Project Quality	Presence of a Service Charter		Veneto	Objective
	Completeness of documents		Veneto	Objective
Quality of the Project Team	Presence of certifications		Veneto/Marche	Objective
	Team composition	Presence in the team of a participant in seminars/workshops organized by the European CAP Network.	Veneto	Objective
		Presence in the team of a participant in at least one training course as per T.I.	Veneto	Objective
	Expertise characteristics	Level of education	Marche	Objective
Incentives for specific topics and/or objectives and/or territorial impact and/or types of activities based on regional and/or local needs	Territorial distribution	Number of municipalities	Veneto	Objective
	Territorial structure	Number of operational offices	Veneto	Objective
	Adherence to the project's themes		Marche	Subjective
	Impact of costs for activities outside the region and events	Percentage of contribution allocated to activities outside the region and events	Marche	Objective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH04. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

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Table A8. SRH05: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	Selection Criteria	Indicator	Region	Objective/Subjective
Project Quality	Completeness of the activities	Number of types of demonstration activities planned	Veneto	Objective
		Number of types of demonstration activities planned	Veneto	Objective
	Location of the demonstration activities	Number of activities carried out at private agricultural businesses	Veneto	Objective
	Ability of the project proposal to engage a high number of operators	Number of operators involved	Piemonte	Objective
	Budget consistency		Piemonte	Subjective
	Suitability of proposed equipment		Piemonte	Subjective
Quality of the Project Team	Presence of beneficiary certifications		Veneto/Piemonte	Objective
	Team qualification		Veneto	Objective
	Type of beneficiary	Level of education	Veneto	Objective
	Evaluation of experience gained in demonstration, experimental, and/or dissemination activities		Piemonte	Subjective
	Level of online accessibility		Piemonte	Subjective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP	Consistency	Number of CAP objectives covered	Piemonte	Subjective
	Inclusion of topics in the project		Veneto	Subjective
Incentives for specific topics	Execution method of demonstration actions		Veneto	Objective
	Territorial distribution	Number of municipalities	Veneto	Objective
	Inclusion of specific topics		Piemonte	Objective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH05. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

Table A9. SRH06: Selection Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

Selection Principles	Selection Criteria	Indicator	Region	Objective/Subjective
Project Quality	Quality of the drafted budget		Piemonte	Subjective
	Quality of the drafted proposal		Piemonte/ Sicilia	Subjective
Quality of the Project Team	Level of equipment provided		Piemonte	Subjective
	Technical characteristics of the research team		Piemonte	Subjective
Consistency of the topics addressed with the general and specific objectives of the CAP	Consistency		Piemonte/ Sicilia	Objective
	Inclusion of topics in the project		Piemonte	Objective

Source: This table presents the selection principles used to assess the AKIS initiative SRH01. It summarizes the indicators into objective and subjective categories, along with the regions where they are applied.

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