



Methodology and process facilitating the National Practitioner Groups during Covid-19

In PPILOW project participatory approach is crucial to ensure that project outcomes are broadly supported and respond to the needs of society. 'National Practitioner Groups' (NPGs) are organized, consisting of broad range of actors, representing the whole value chain, from farmers to retailers. In the original project, frequent live meetings were planned. However, they were limited by Covid-19 breakout. NPG facilitators had to be creative and flexible in order to perpetuate the functionality of the NPG.

Involvement through online meetings

Involving actors and engage them online was particularly challenging. In particular, it was difficult to create online a collaborative group, without leaving any space for informal interaction, crucial when forming new groups. Especially farmers from marginal areas had a lower interest to participate. Additionally, during these online meetings more intervention from the facilitators was needed to ensure that all actors participate in the debate. Choosing an easy platform is important for guaranteeing meeting quality and participation.

Otherwise, online meetings were often more accessible, as participation did not require transport.

Methods for online meetings

Methods for making online meetings more interactive are:

1. the use of polls or other voting systems, as this requires everybody to participate;
2. the chat function helps to involve actors who are not comfortable to take the word in the discussion;
3. the use of breakout rooms can help interaction in smaller groups.

We found that following these tips, while encouraging phone calls with actors, has led to good results.



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Conclusion

It is important for next years and future projects to rethink participatory methodologies as a whole, by evaluating a combination of ONLINE and IN PERSON meeting.



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