



Horizon 2020
Programme



D4.11 – Strategy for network and knowledge reservoir sustainability

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1. Executive summary

Sm@RT is a multinational project committed to sharing knowledge and improving uptake of new digital technologies, which will help to increase the efficiency and sustainability of small ruminant (SR) farming systems in Europe and beyond.

Sm@RT has been collating information on all digital technologies used across small ruminant farming in Europe, then disseminating this to end-users through a series of national and transnational workshops. We have designed and distributed a survey among participants at the recent final seminar to understand end-user opinions on the network and identify preferred ways to maintain the network for the future.

1. Introduction

The Sm@RT team have built a considerable network of farmers, researchers and farm advisors across the 8 partner countries throughout the duration of the project. As the project is coming to an end, so we wanted to understand stakeholder's opinions about the project, in particular on the knowledge exchange approaches used during the Sm@RT project, whether the network was beneficial, and if they would like the network to be maintained, their preferred approaches for this.

2. Survey

The survey was designed by the Sm@RT partners, with 12 questions which included multiple choice, yes/no and own opinion questions. The first questions covered basic information such as country and stakeholder type, although no personal details were collected (e.g. name, address or farm etc). The next questions were designed to collect information on stakeholder's opinions of the network and its benefits as well as steps going forward if it was maintained. We also asked about topics that would be of interest for similar projects in the future and attendees overall experience of the network.

The survey was then distributed on the second day of the Sm@RT Final Seminar in July 2024. Questionnaires were then collected, collated and analysed by the WP4 team. The survey is shown in Appendix 1.

3. Results

A total of 82 surveys were completed, with each country of the project represented (no. of completed surveys per country: France = 20, Hungary = 8, Ireland = 13, Israel = 10, Italy = 15, Norway = 6 and UK = 10). There were more French farmers at the event as France had participants from all 3 production systems (meat sheep, dairy goat and dairy sheep), whereas other countries only have 1-2 systems. The survey covered a range of stakeholders, as shown in Figure 1, with over 50% being farmers.



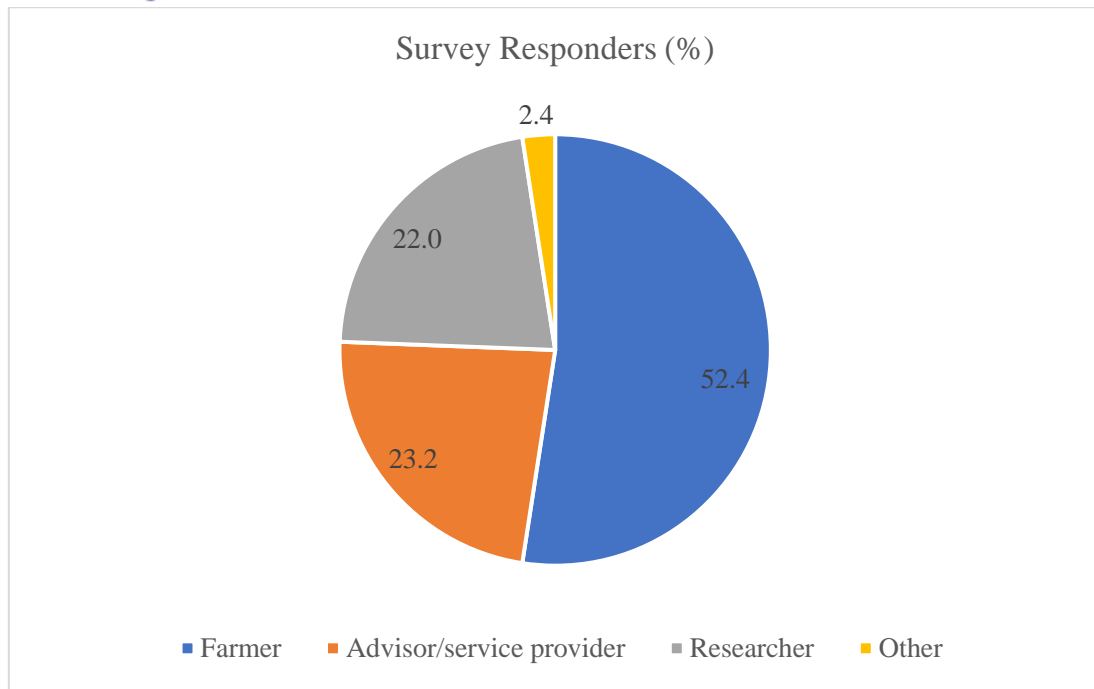


Figure 1. The type of people that took part in the survey, as a percentage.

The vast majority of people (73%) had participated in another Sm@RT project event and within that just under half of participants were “very satisfied” with the network. Additionally, all 82 participants responded “yes” when asked if they would like the network to be maintained. Participants were then asked how they would like to access the information from the network, as shown in Figure 2, the majority of respondents wanted to access information through the website or through farm demonstrations.

Farm demonstrations were also one of the preferred methods of learning about new technologies, with just under 70% of the 82 respondents selecting this method of learning, additionally 40% of respondents chose learning through presentations. Social media and handouts were the least favoured methods of learning about new technologies. Respondents were also asked how they would like to access information if the Sm@RT website was not maintained to which the majority chose a national website (64%) instead of a general EU wide website (32%).

Furthermore, the Sm@RT project has successfully created connections between participants with over 98% of people answering “yes” when asked if they had made contacts that they can/could keep in touch with.



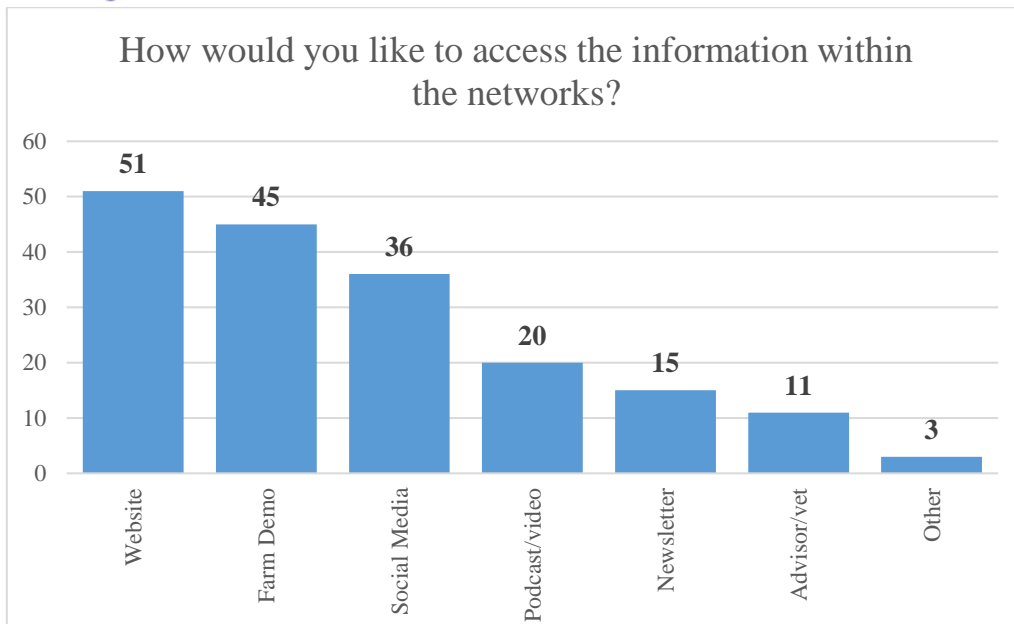


Figure 2. The percentage of respondents that would like to access information using each of the media options.

Respondents were also asked what type of projects they would like to see if future funding for a project similar to Sm@RT was to become available, for this question each participant was asked to tick their top three focuses, from the following list: Technology use, grass management, reproduction, biodiversity, carbon emissions, regenerative farming, predation and rangeland management. Results of the top three are shown in Figure 3 which show that a further focus on technology use was the most popular with 66% of the 82 respondents choosing this option as a focus for future funding, this was followed by grass management and reproduction. Biodiversity (28%), carbon emissions (27%) and regenerative farming (23%) were all ranked similarly following reproduction.



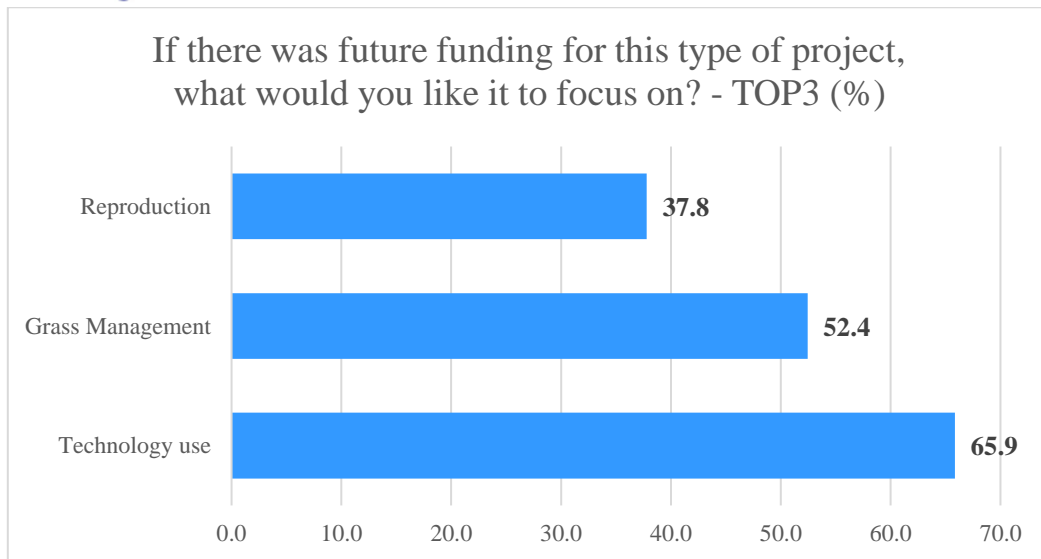


Figure 3. Top 3 ranked focuses for future project funding.

Finally, when asked what participants enjoyed the most during Sm@RT project, from a list of eight choices, the majority of respondents selected farm visits, this was followed by visits to other countries. A multi-actor approach, farm-demo workshops and transnational workshops all received similar votes (between 32-34%) as shown in Figure 4.

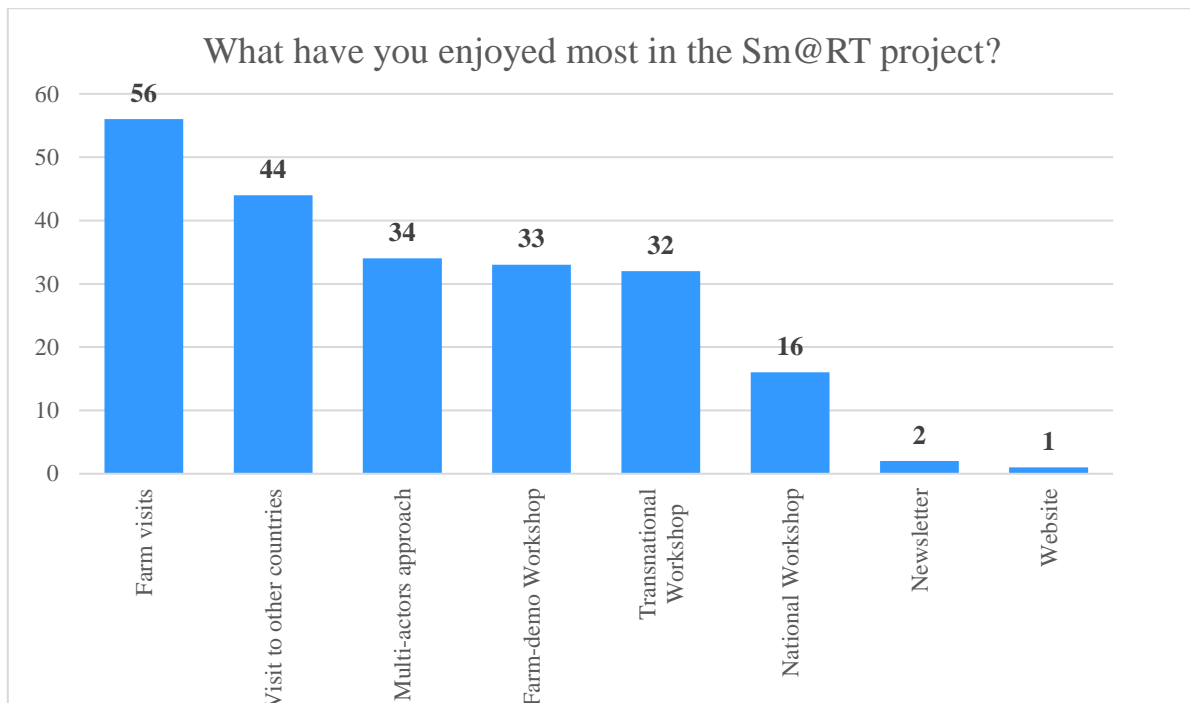


Figure 4. What participants enjoyed most about the Sm@RT project.





4. Final comments

There was a final area of the survey where people could tell us what they would change/improve about their experience of the network. Overall, comments were very positive about the Sm@RT project. For example, comments included “fantastic day, well organised” and “continue with similar project in the future”. The knowledge exchange aspect of the event was also successful which was shown by comments such as “very good way to share information across countries” and “really enjoyed the networking aspect”. It was also noted that participants would’ve liked “more farm visits” and “more farm demos/farmer interaction” which has been shown throughout the survey as one of the most enjoyed/beneficial aspects within the Sm@RT seminar.

5. Summary

All participants are very happy/ satisfied with the project, finding it overwhelmingly beneficial at both a local and national level. The majority of participants thought that they had gained new knowledge which they would use to change practice on their farm. Therefore, showing that the Sm@RT project is timely, and needed by the small ruminant farming community, who, with some support would be happy to use these new technologies on farm. Our survey shows that these projects are highly regarded by end users, and there a range of topics that they feel would benefit from this approach.

The best strategy for the network sustainability would to be a continuation of farm visits and farm demonstration, and continued access to information through national websites and not an EU-wide one, if access to the Sm@RT website with its knowledge reservoir was discontinued.





6. Appendix

Appendix 1. Questionnaire given to stakeholders at the Sm@RT final seminar July 2024

Sm@RT Questionnaire – Scotland Seminar July 2024



Tell us what you think about Sm@RT

1. Which country are you from?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Estonia | <input type="checkbox"/> Israel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> France | <input type="checkbox"/> Italy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hungary | <input type="checkbox"/> Norway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> UK |

2. Are you a:

- Farmer
- Advisor/service provider
- Researcher
- Other:

3. Is this the first time you've attended an event for the Sm@RT project?

- Yes
- No

4. On a scale of 1-5 (1=unsatisfied, 5=very satisfied) how beneficial have you found the network ?

- 1 2 3 4 5

5. Would you like the network to be maintained?

- Yes
- No

6. How would you like to access the information within the network?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm Demo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Podcast/Video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advisor/vet | |

7. What is your preferred method of learning about new technologies?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handout | <input type="checkbox"/> Advisor/vet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm Demo/testimony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> Podcast/Video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | |

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Sm@RT Questionnaire – Scotland Seminar July 2024



- 8. The current Sm@RT website may not be maintained, therefore how would you like to access the information ?**
- National Website
 - General EU-wide website
 - Other (please specify)
- 9. Have you made any contacts through the Sm@RT project that you can/could keep contact with in the future?**
- Yes
 - No
- 10. If there was future funding for this type of project, what would you like it to focus on?**
(Please tick top 3)
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology use | <input type="checkbox"/> Grass Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Emissions | <input type="checkbox"/> Rangeland management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Predation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regenerative Farming | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reproduction | |
- 11. What have you enjoyed most in Sm@RT:**
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm-demo Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-actors approach (share knowledge and issues with farmers, advisors, scientist, teachers) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transnational Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit to other countries | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm visits | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | |
- 12. What would you change/improve about your experience of the network?**
(and any other comments)

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