KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE & POLICY

Sageguard: the farmer's decision maker

From a generic concept to a target-oriented design

Creating an online user-friendly tool to provide recommendations and advice for industry stakeholders that included farmers was a task identified within the EU project iSAGE (Innovation for Sustainable Sheep And Goat Production in Europe). The content was already contained within the ORC's PG (Public Goods) Tool. But what about a toolbox – how should it look and function?

ORC's PG Tool, an Excel-based sustainability assessment, was adapted during the iSAGE project to help assess sheep and goat farms across Europe. Sustainability themes were identified and clustered under 5 overarching dimensions: Livestock, Environmental integrity, Economic resilience, Good governance and Social wellbeing. Shaping the idea was only a matter of matching the PG Tool with a suitable framework – and possibly function and functionality. We knew that the function of the Toolbox should be to provide practical

The Sageguard Cards as a finished product

decision making. We also understood what the functionality should be: it had to be user-friendly. We decided that the generic concept of 'user-friendly' could be translated into 'portability' because the main users were farmers, and their principal activity was not sitting in front of a computer. So, the equation was "PG Tool : x = practical decision making : portability". Why not have waterproof cards held together by a metal ring like a keyring? Farmers could use these cards in the field as an offline resource helping create a sustainable system. And when online, they could explore them with the addition of further useful resources in our Sageguard.net platform. To make the transition from offline to online smooth, we added QR codes, links and numbers that link back to the iSAGE website from the cards.

The name Sageguard is clearly a pun: our guidelines aim to safeguard the environment through embedding sustainability as a sage practice – as the iSAGE name suggests.

FURTHER READING
1. iSAGE project website: www.isage.eu
2. iSAGE Sageguard website: sageguard.net
3. ORC iSAGE Toolbox presentation: tinyurl.com/uvwz35f7
4. ORC Bulletin 132, pg. 8: tinyurl.com/4au5kpu7

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