Stay in touch
Knowledge production and dissemination is of paramount importance to RUC-APS.

The website (www.ruc-aps.eu) is the first stop to learn about the project, its goals, its results, and related activities.

This newsletter (downloadable from the website as a PDF) provides summaries of the project progress.

For real-time, interactive knowledge exchange, we have set-up a twitter account (@ruc_aps) and a LinkedIn group (RUC-APS). Follow us and join our group. Let us know what you think about our work, ask us questions and share your knowledge with our network.

The RUC-APS consortium regularly organizes meetings and special sessions in connection with larger scientific and industry events. Stay informed about them via the previously mentioned channels. Come join us for live discussions!

Addressing knowledge mobilisation crossing boundaries in agri-food value chains: University of Plymouth leading research in knowledge management for RUC-APS project

Professor Shaofeng Liu, University of Plymouth, UK

In the context of agri-food value chains, effectively mobilising knowledge from one place, person, group, organisation or community to another has been recognised as a key challenge to the success of agri-businesses. In the meantime, knowledge is extremely important to individuals, groups, organisations and communities in the value chain. This importance has been highlighted by a number of well-known expressions, such as “knowledge is power” (i.e. individuals with more knowledge tend to have more decision power and influence), knowledge-based view (i.e. knowledge is the asset that provides organisations with competitive advantage), and “knowledge economy” (i.e. the whole economy is driven by knowledge). The RUC-APS project fully understands the challenge and the importance of knowledge mobilisation and hence has committed an entire work-package (i.e. WP2) to address the issue of knowledge mobilisation, with its focus on crossing knowledge boundaries, so that knowledge can be mobilised among stakeholders at different stages of the agri-food value chain.

The University of Plymouth (UoP) was selected to lead WP2 based on their expertise and strengths in knowledge management. The team, led by Professor Shaofeng Liu, has established its international reputation in the research area over the last three decades. Professor Liu is the sole author of the new book “Knowledge Management: An Interdisciplinary Approach for Business Decisions” published by Kogan Page. She is also the lead guest-editor for two journal Special Issues on the topic; one Special Issue on “Knowledge-based decision systems” with Journal of Decision Systems (2014) and the other on “Sustainable knowledge-based decision support systems for business performance improvement in real industrial environment” with Industrial Management & Data Systems (2016).
The RUC-APS team at UoP comprises of over 10 people with an excellent combination of experienced, middle career and early stage researchers. The team includes 3 Professors and Associate Professors (Professor Shaofeng Liu, Professor Phil Megicks, Associate Professor Lynne Butel), 6 Lecturers (Dr Dulekha Kasturiratne, Dr Yi Wang, Dr Sachin Kumar, Dr Carman Lopez, Dr Haiyan Lu and Dr Lucas Monzani) and 3 PhD students (Huilan Chen, Guoqing Zhao and Jiang Pan). The UoP team took on the challenge of knowledge mobilisation identified by the RUC-APS project and have successfully developed a crossing-boundary knowledge mobilisation framework customised for the agri-food value chain context. The framework consists of three key stages: (1) Identifying knowledge boundary types (e.g. syntactic, semantic and political); (2) Proposing appropriate boundary-spanning mechanisms (such as boundary spanners, boundary objects, boundary practice and boundary discourse); (3) Integrating the key components of the knowledge process to generate a comprehensive package of guidance for implementation (including key inputs, outputs and constraints of the process and resources required). The framework has been built upon a systematic analysis of literature, empirical data collection with stakeholders in agri-food value chains, evaluation of the framework using specific value chain cases and refinement of the framework based on feedback from evaluation.

We wish to thank all the RUC-APS partners for offering us opinions and advice during our meetings and field trips, especially for those partners who have hosted us on secondments and helped us reach wider communities through your valuable contacts and networks. Without your help, we would never have obtained the level of understanding about the configuration of the agri-food value chains, the knowledge mobilisation challenges in agricultural practice and the insights you have shared with us on bridging the gaps of knowledge sharing and learning. This knowledge mobilisation framework is the result of our joint effort, hence a shared achievement. It is also a proof of the excellent, cross-continent, truly international collaboration of the RUC-APS consortium!

We have greatly benefited from the secondments with partners, in particular with ALSIA and CNR-ISPA in Italy, BDI in France, FEDECOVA in Spain, INIA in Chile and UNLP in Argentina. On these secondments, apart from the face-to-face insightful discussion with our partners, we have also experienced agricultural food research in advanced labs and experimental investigation on demonstration farms. All field trips organised through our partners have enabled us to learn about food production practice first hand. Conducting secondments is one of the most exciting and enjoyable experiences of the project!

UoP have produced outstanding outputs from the WP2 work through publications and other dissemination channels. In the first three years of the RUC-APS project, we have:

- Attended and presented at eight conferences and symposiums, including 2019 Model-IT in Molfetta, Italy; 2019 ICDSST in Madeira, Portugal; 2018 EURO Conference in Valencia, Spain; 2017 PRO-VE Conference in Venice, Italy; and 2017 Food Brokering Event in Murcia, Spain.
- Published two book chapters.
• Contributed to one book on “knowledge management: an interdisciplinary approach for business decisions”. Part three of the book (four chapters) is dedicated to crossing knowledge boundaries which have integrated major research outputs from the WP2 of RUC-APS project.


• Developed teaching material based on the WP2 work for undergraduate and postgraduate taught and PhD training courses, impacting our future business managers, leaders and scientists.

Besides academic dissemination, the UoP has widely participated in impact activities that reach government, industrial and community audiences, including organising workshops and round table discussions with the Cornwall Council, Southwest Agritech consortium, Eden Project and Finistere Chamber of Agriculture. The “Sphere” Magazine edited by the Sustainable Earth Institute featured a two-page article on RUC-APS project and its WP2.

Looking ahead, the best time has yet to come when the RUC-APS project is entering its final year, with more matured thinking and ideas becoming reality. Most excitingly, the implementation of impact study is accelerating its pace into full swing. UoP will be hand in hand with all RUC-APS partners, look beyond the finish line of the project and we look forward to extending our well-established collaboration into a long future.