Workshop 1.7: Virtual realities and the future of distance learning in rural areas
Convenors: **Kirsten von der Heiden** and **Monica Commandeur**

Virtual realities and farming systems

Monica A.M. Commandeur

Alterra, Wageningen University, The
Netherlands

The exchange of scientific information is still dominated by articles in refereed journals and oral presentations, although in society there is a shift going on in the exchange of information from oral to visual. As scientist we need to relate to these developments. This contribution to the IFSA symposium is an exploration of visual representations of farming systems using fragments of two examples: the documentary 'Meat the truth' and a compilation of our own work about Corsican pig farming. In the discussion (and in our paper) we explore some options to validate these visual representations from a scientific perspective.

Virtual farming systems to communicate climate change impact data to farming communities

J-P. Aurambout, C.J. Pettit,
F. Sheth and I. Bishop

Future Farming Systems Research, Department
of Primary Industries Victoria, Australia

This paper describes a project developed to help communicate climate change impact on farming systems. Web enabled visualization products were developed for illustrating present and potential future farms. Our virtual farming system focused on a dairy farm in SW Victoria, Australia. The visualizations were integrated in Google Earth and made available online. Our interface allowed the creation of contextualized virtual farming systems that could be explored by users to obtain information on the local impacts of climate change. A stakeholder workshop was conducted to evaluate the capacity of each visualization help communicate climate change data and early findings are presented.

Establishment of a Finnish ICT rural village network

Silvia Gaiani

Department of Agricultural Economics and
Engineering, University of Bologna, Italy

Establishing a Finnish ICT Rural Network, made up of three rural villages, is currently the aim of an ongoing project at the University of Eastern Finland. Vuonislahti (Karelia), Kaamasmukka (Lapland) and Henriksdal (Ostrobothnia) are different in terms of traditions and languages spoken, but share the same challenges connected to the hardship of living in remote rural areas. The Finnish ICT Rural Network promotes a participatory use of ICTS and enables villagers to exchange best practices connected to their traditional activities and to promote coordinated socio-economic activities. My presentation illustrates the first results of this project, currently in its 2nd year.

Distance learning – A challenge for conventional curricula

Ehud Gelb, B. Gal and D. Wolfson

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Convention assumed Distance Learning (DL) to be an Information Technology solve-all. Now that "technicalities" are presumed to be mastered evolving complex challenges are manifestly dominant. Responsive individualized curriculum, lack of essential skills (reading, writing, reasoning and expression), supportive human interactions and economic viability to name a few. Incorporating "Distant" and "Rural" into DL substance leaves much to be desired – as does the lack of understanding DL's impact on social restructuring, community enhancement, employment consequences and additional spill-over. Conceptualization and integration of these constitutes a unique constraint and crucial concern.

Workshop 1.7: **Virtual realities and the future of distance learning in rural areas**
Convenors: **Kirsten von der Heiden** and **Monica Commandeur**

Knowledge – Source and product of rural learning processes

Verena Peer

Institute of Spatial Planning and Rural Development, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Austria

The factor knowledge in terms of "knowledge follows tasks" provides the potential to constitute region specific solutions for particular regional problems and situations. Knowledge originates through the conversion and integration of information, also defined as learning. There is not *the* overall learning process, but a distinction between: *formal*, *informal* and *collective* learning processes. The author surveys the potentials of regional as well as local actors to initiate and accompany learning processes in the rural area and the instruments applied. Among them the information and communication technology as well as co operations and networks attract special attention.

Distance education for rural people in developing countries: YAYÇEP experience from Turkey

Kürşat Demiryürek

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Turkey

The objectives of this paper are fourfold. First is to present the role and importance of distance education, especially the utilization of rural distance education, and then to discuss its effectiveness and limitations. Second is to present the experience of YAYÇEP (The Project of Extensive Farmer Education through Television) in Turkey. Third is to make suggestions about how to develop and implement similar projects for developing countries which will be used in the future. Four is to present conclusions and implications about effective use of rural distance education.

Agricultural distance learning curriculum for sustainable rural development in developing countries: A Nigerian perspective

Olanike Deji,
and Parto Teherani-Krönner

Gender and Globalization Division, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany

University agricultural education contributes to rural development. Gender responsive university agricultural distance learning curriculum developed through systematic, gender responsive, and participatory methodological approach can help to empower the agricultural professionals and extension workers (the intermediaries) with the gender balanced knowledge that could improve the socio-economic livelihood of the rural dwellers in Nigeria. Engendered distance learning and conventional face to face learning (blended learning) is recommended at the initial stage of the implementation of agricultural distance learning in the developing countries for effectiveness and sustainability.

The discourse on added value and adoption impediments of a distance learning-format in Brandenburg, North-Eastern Germany

Kirsten von der Heiden

AFoReg Communication, Germany

Qualification organisations in Brandenburg spent a lot of effort to trace out most relevant information needed by their participants. Qualification programmes in a distance learning-format in the rural Brandenburg are not brought into the market yet. Questionnaires have been directed towards two main addressee groups: a) farmers, extension workers and associations as potential learner groups, b) qualification and extension organisations which are considered as potential lecturer and teletutors in future learning settings in the thematic field of sustainable agriculture. The paper closes with a conceptual approach about fading in Blended-Learning values into the regional education management in Brandenburg.