



## ARIMNet2 YOUNG RESEARCHERS SEMINAR (29 May – 3 June 2016, Montpellier)

### Keynote presentation abstract

## Promoting innovations in agriculture - Changes in paradigms and modes of action?

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The adoption of innovations by farmers remains a powerful driver of change in agriculture and the promotion of innovations continues to be an important objective of public policies for the sector. This has been true for many decades in most countries of the world but ideas on the matter and modes of action in this domain have considerably evolved. One can even say that the change in ideas has resulted in true paradigm shifts, leading to controversies and confusion, as illustrated for instance by the current emphasis placed on the impact of research activities, in spite of the great difficulties involved in assessing precisely that impact. Similarly, the apparent unanimity today on the benefits of participatory methods and approaches appears fragile when one must decide, for a specific research activity, which actors need to be involved, for what purpose and how they can really participate. More broadly yet, many agricultural innovations, such as GMOs, the use of pesticides or the consequences of livestock management practices for domestic animals welfare, to cite only a few examples, have become the subjects of violent controversies involving many actors in society.

Thus, it is important to “sit back” and reflect. lessons can be learnt from the past through a reexamination of the ways ideas and paradigms on agricultural innovations have changed through time because it is those ideas which have shaped the modes of action in this domain involving farmers, researchers and many other actors. Older ways of thinking, i.e. past paradigms, have been criticized and abandoned because of their limitations. Yet robust lessons, still useful and relevant today, can be drawn from past experience based on those paradigms. In addition, the current dominant paradigm, based on the concept of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), has its own limitations which must be well understood when putting it into practice.