

ABSTRACT

Innovation is a key element for the economic growth and the development of sectors and territories. It is also a major challenger for the agri-food system to increase its productivity and sustainability. The system of innovation is complex because of the diversity of actors involved and the heterogeneity of the relations they established. Fostering knowledge and innovation in the agri-food sectors requires a good understanding on the functioning of the system.

This is the aim of the research: contribute to better understand the functioning of innovation in the agri-food sector in the Autonomous Community of Valencia through an approach that combines the value chain, the sector and the territory analyze. The weight of the agri-food in the economic system, its influence in other areas because of its multifunctional nature and the importance of innovation as the engine of development justify this research that tries to contribute to explain how innovation happens.

The methodology used combines the bibliographical search, value chain analysis and statistical models such as logit and probit. Information and data bases used are the scientific literature on food consumption and value chain organization, input-output matrix for Spain and the Autonomous Community of Valencia, database for innovative and non innovative agricultural firms and territory variables at a local level. The thesis contains the five papers produced during the research.

Results show that (i) the agri-food system of the Autonomous Community of Valencia is moderately innovative and there are important differences between food industry and primary production, (ii) final demand is one of the drivers of innovation in the sector, (iii) efficient collective action, good governance and adequate mechanisms of information improve the performance of the value chain, (iv) the purchase of inputs introduces embedded innovation in the sector and (v) firms characteristics and variables of the territory in which they are located have an influence on the innovative behavior of firms.

The research has proven that firms whose legal form is co-operative show a mayor tendency to innovate and that the proximity to research centers and universities is also a relevant factor. Besides, rural areas do not impede innovation but the agricultural specialization of the territory has a negative influence.

Policy has a prevailing role in fostering innovation. The multiplicity of actors and factors involved in the process requires the coordination of different policies in order to create a friendly environment for firms to innovate. Policies should consider all the elements affecting innovation from a territorial approach and clearly oriented to results. The selection of priorities, the efficient use of the resources and the establishment of monitoring and control mechanisms should also be taken into account in the design of policies.