

Keyword: University Of Gloucestershire

Studies from University of Gloucestershire add new findings in the area of agriculture and sustainability

According to recent research from Cheltenham, the United Kingdom, "Reduced tillage systems potentially provide both environmental and economic benefits. However, the system is not universally applicable and requires a higher standard of overall management than ploughing, the conventional form of tillage, particularly with respect to maintenance of yield and soil structure, straw and stubble treatment, grass weed and slug control."

"As such reduced tillage systems are non-prescriptive and require new ways of learning compared to more simple conventional techniques. This article examines the technical and social dimensions of such learning through a study of farmers practicing reduced tillage in U.K.. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out with 12 farmers implementing reduced tillage and four promoters associated with an initiative supporting them. The results show that a community of reduced tillage farmers, motivated by different interests, has been emerging in U.K.. Individual farmers are learning at the farm level through experimentation and adaptation, and have used a variety of networking devices to take this learning and validate and reflect on it by interacting with others with the same experiences. The networks were also found to extend to researchers and some agronomists. Thus the individual activity of on-farm learning, the technical dimension, is accompanied and enhanced by a process of social learning, the social dimension. However, there are barriers to this social learning, which themselves are intimately connected with the technical complexities of the system. The results show that not all farmers are willing to share their experiences," wrote J. Ingram and colleagues, [University of Gloucestershire](#).

The researchers concluded: "The difficult nature of reduced tillage, and the high management standards needed to implement it well, has made some farmers reluctant to engage in networks due to fear of criticism from other farmers, desire to protect their new found knowledge from competitors, or poor regard for the standards of farmers new to the system."

Ingram and colleagues published their study in the Journal of Sustainable Agriculture (Technical and Social Dimensions of Farmer Learning: An Analysis of the Emergence of Reduced Tillage Systems in England. Journal of Sustainable Agriculture, 2010;34(2):183-201).

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