



Case study reports: United Kingdom CS2



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1. Background

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) AHDB is a statutory levy board. Its purpose is to make agriculture and horticulture industries more competitive and sustainable through factual, evidence-based advice, information and activity. AHDB coordinate a Farm Excellence Programme for knowledge exchange (KE) which includes Monitor, SPot (potato) and Strategic farms (research). They operate in the following sectors: Beef & Lamb, Cereals & Oilseeds, Horticulture, Dairy, Pork, Potatoes.

AHDB Monitor Farms bring together groups of like-minded farmers to improve their businesses by sharing performance information and best practice around a nationwide network of host farms. There are some 19 MF nationwide in England with additional ones in Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland. The AHDB Monitor Farms have a specific focus on sharing performance information and economic benchmarking with a local group of farmers. Monitor farm principles mean there is open discussion and audience participation. Although not specifically demonstration farms the event format involves a farmer meeting and usually a field walk/demonstration but this depends on topic, and season. They are free to attend (although all farmers pay a levy through AHDB).

Funding and Governance

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is a statutory levy board, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain and managed independently of both commercial industry and of Government. AHDB is funded by its levy payers. AHDB is investing £2 million in knowledge exchange activities in 2018/19. Average levy payments per farmer are £40/tonne for arable farmers, and £4/head for livestock. The Knowledge exchange team at AHDB coordinate and manage the KE activities. They are supported by a board of farmers.

Evaluation

There is a yearly evaluation of Monitor Farms. The 2018 survey found that 78% of farmers involved in AHDB's Monitor Farm programme who completed the survey believe it has helped them improve their business. Other highlights from the Monitor Farm programme include:

- 94.9 per cent said it was a good use of their time
- 63.6 per cent said it improved their business decision-making
- 89.7 per cent valued the opportunity to share experience and openly discuss issues in a non-commercial environment
- 91.7 per cent said the meeting topics were relevant to their businesses
- 83.1 per cent said the project improved their technical knowledge.

Farmers also continue to value the Monitor Farm programme having an independent, locally relevant, farmer-led agenda. Compared with previous years, the Monitor Farm project seems now to be attracting younger farmers. Those with ten or fewer years of farming experience made up 19.3 per cent of respondents to the survey, compared with an average 9.3 per cent over the last three years

Actors and networks

There are 7 regional Knowledge exchange (KE) officers in England who facilitate some 19 MF nationwide in England. There are also AHDB regional benchmarking officers who work with MF farmers supporting them with benchmarking tools and these tend to operate with monitor farm farmer groups.

How it works

Monitor farm host farmers are selected through a rigorous selection process with a number of interviews. Each monitor farms runs for three years and will host a series of meetings with local farmers. The topics for the meetings are agreed amongst the farmers who attend the first meeting. All farm meetings are open and free. They are facilitated by the KE regional manager and hosted by the farmer.

Event Farm and location

The Farm is a traditional mixed farm and has been a Monitor farm since June 2017. The farm, located in the South West of England, is made up of 180ha of predominantly owned land. The arable rotation includes winter wheat, oilseed rape, spring beans, winter and spring barely and grass leys. Key challenges for the farm are the threat of ryegrass, inconsistent bean yields, rape establishment, pyrethroid resistance and managing the farm's heavier soils. Succession is motivation for becoming a monitor farm. The farmers' trials link to the AHDB strategic farms.

Event: Summer meeting

Interviewees: host farmer (farm level) and regional officer (programme level)

2. Method

In line with the Methodological Guidelines, three main data sources are used: a background document and interviews at Programme and Farm level to analyse structural and functional characteristics, and event tools and surveys to analyse event level participation and learning, as follows:

1. A background document for every case study was completed by the AgriDemo-F2F partner who carried out the case study.
2. Interviews with representatives of programme/networks (level 1) and farm level interviews with demonstrators/hosts (Level 1) to reveal how the functional and structural characteristics enable learning. Analysis of these interviews is reported in Sections 3 and 4. Data is sourced from interviews with 1 Programme member (the regional KE officer for Monitor Farms who also facilitated the event), and a Monitor farm host farmer. The analysis followed four themes: (1) Coordinating effective recruitment of host farmers and participants; (2) Appropriate demonstration and interaction approaches; (3) Enabling learning appropriate to purpose, audience, context; (4) Follow-up activities.
3. Event tools and surveys (level 3) to reveal peer to peer learning processes. Event details and analysis is reported in Section 5. This data is sourced from 17 pre-demonstration participant surveys, 3 post-demonstrations surveys for participants, 1 pre-demonstration facilitator survey and an event observation tool completed by an observing researcher. This data is mainly used for the analysis of learning processes and learning outcomes related to the specific event and overall comments on the effectiveness of the event.

Finally, partners reviewed the case study reports to prepare their workshops with different stakeholders related to the case studies. These workshops aimed at validating the data presented in the case study reports and to discuss on key characteristics related to effectiveness of demonstrations. The workshop for the UK case studies was held on the 19th of October, 2018.

3. Structural characteristics

T1: Programme/network level

1. Goals and objectives

AHDB Monitor Farms bring together groups of like-minded farmers to improve their businesses by sharing performance information and best practice around a nationwide network of host farm. Through the network AHDB is trying to improve the productivity, the competitiveness, the efficiency of UK farming across all sectors apart from poultry (Programme Level Interviewee).

Want to learn more about, that they want to improve but the theme is around improving the business of the monitor farm and we hope that through those discussions and debates and meetings, that the attendees will also take back management practices, tips and so on, back onto their own farms (Programme Level Interviewee).

In the AHDB KE activities there are two types of farms, strategic farms and monitor farms. Strategic farms are closer to research and innovation and act more like demonstration farms showing innovations and their workability.

Strategic farms are a bit like demonstration farms really, bringing R&D onto the farm on the farm scale and showing farms how the work manifests itself in real life (Programme Level Interviewee)

Monitor farms have more farmer-led agendas undertaking meetings for discussion and debates on living case studies and issues of their farms as business enterprises. The target is peer learning, knowledge and experience exchange to improve their farming activities.

Monitor farms are more farmer-driven, farmer-led agendas, so the farmer using the monitor farm as a live farm for 3 years as a live, living case study and issues of the day and the farmers decide the agenda of the topics they want to discuss, that they want to learn more about, that they want to improve but the theme is around improving the business of the monitor farm and we hope that through those discussions and debates and meetings, that the attendees will also take back management practices, tips and so on, back onto their own farms (Programme Level Interviewee).

2. Actors involved

There are 7 *regional Knowledge exchange (KE) officers* in England who facilitate the MFs. The Knowledge exchange team at AHDB coordinates and manages all the KE activities and responsible for KE/sharing of the R&D derived from farmers' farm as well as other organizations, professionals in the industry.

Monitor farm farmers are selected through a rigorous selection process with a number of interviews. There are several criteria concerning the host farmer selection. In most cases the host farmers are not targeted by network actors but they apply to be a monitor farmer.

Together the knowledge exchange officer and the host/monitor farmer are the main organizers of MF meetings, although in this MF, the farmer's agronomist is involved in the "demonstration activities (and a steering group member), assisting the host farmer.

My agronomist and I decided what we are going to show people and then X (knowledge exchange manager) just facilitates it. (Farm Level Interviewee)

Experts are also invited to present at meetings. Depending on the topic, sometimes other actors, such as members of the industry; agronomists, bankers, accountants, marketing managers, are invited to be involved. Their involvement is under the premises that they contribute for the topic of the monitor farms and not for personal interests i.e sales etc.

Primarily, the farmer, ourselves (AHDB) facilitating the meeting and making sure everything sticks to time, but there's usually a technical specialist from the AHDB or a 3rd party organisation and they're

there really as a point of knowledge for the topic of the day, but the emphasis is on ... and maybe that other third will be members of the industry; agronomists, bankers, accountants, marketing managers ... and they're there to ... to offer their knowledge into the system. We are very clear that they shouldn't be there to use the monitor farms as sales. (Programme Level Interviewee).

They make an effort to bring together relevant people as explained here:

It tends to be standalone but if there were joint topics of interest, we would quite often involve other organisations, for example, if we were holding a meeting on nutrient management on a monitor farm in Dorset, we would also invite and they'd probably contribute to the meeting, the local Wessex Water body and the Natural England Catchment Sensitive Farming Group to bring together an integral team really (Programme Level Interviewee).

3. Funding

The programme is funded by AHDB as part of their KE activities.

4. Governance

At programme level, when asked in MF farmers are involved in the overall development of MFs at the programme level they replied "No. Just a monitor farmer, like quite a few others" (Farm Level Interviewee)

T2: Farm level

1. Funding

There is no funding for Monitor farmers, and AHDB are keen not to use commercial funds to support MFs, as was pointed out

...a key point of the AHDB is that because we are levy funded by farmers, there is no commercial funding or bias or angle to what we do, so if they come to talk about something on one of our farms, they know it is totally neutral in terms of any persuasion (Programme Level Interviewee).

2. Governance

At MF level, each MF has a steering group, the farm group is composed of 3 farmers, the MF's agronomist and an AHDB representative (the KE officer)

3. Topic selection

Every topic of the meeting is selected by a monitor farmer is formed and adjusted jointly with the organizers, the host farmer and the steering group, in a way that secures a successful meeting. The criteria for choosing a specific topic relates to emerged and or existing issues on the host farmer's farm, which at the same time interest and attract participants.

According to both farm and programme level interviewees, the steering group is actively involved in topic selection. The contribution of the host farmer to topic selection is important, but the decision is always a collective process throughout the steering group. The steering group harmonises / keeps balance between each host farmer's interests and motivations and the whole group ones.

We are always asking from feedback from the whole group saying 'what sorts of things do you want to think about, guys?' and at this sort of time, actually, now we have sat down with the steering group and said ... I'm planning the next winter's meetings and I've said 'what do you want to talk about, guys?' (Programme Level Interviewee).

When you know what people turn up for, you know what works. That is why, when you run a programme the first year, and see what attracts people ... (Farm Level Interviewee).

4. Participants

The intended audience of the monitor farms' meetings is mainly farmers. However the contribution from industry/supply chain actors, traders, agronomists, is quite valuable. A reason is that the improvement of the whole businesses and the whole industry is intended through these meetings. A significant percentage (66%-75%) of the meetings' attendees are actually farmers (Programme Level Interviewee).

4. Functional characteristics

T1: Coordinating effective recruitment of host farmers and participants

1. Incentives

Farmers are not paid to take part. The main cost to farmers is their time but they derive other benefits. The Programme funds extras such as soil testing or specialised equipment.

The main cost ... theoretically, the only cost to the monitor farmer is his time or her time, because the more they put into it and prepare for meetings, in terms of providing the information about the business and setting things up to discuss, the more they'll get out of it, come the meeting. (Programme Interviewee)

2. Motivations for host farmers

The Programme Interviewee observed several qualities that host farmers had that motivated them to take part. These consisted of being open-minded to the fact that they could make improvements on the farm and work in collaboration with other farmers, rather than in competition with them. The Programme Interviewee highlighted the business opportunities associated with being involved with the project, such as opening up the farm to experts and expert information.

They realise they're not the best at doing everything, they welcome what other people think, they like the idea that their farm will become a source of experts coming in ... a source of information ... a source of attention ... a focus of attention and there will be benefits associated with that that will ultimately improve their business. (Programme Interviewee)

This view is reinforced by the farmer's comment:

Farming can be very insular and I'm always receptive to other people's ideas and in turn, I don't mind telling people what we do as long as they tell me what they do and hopefully you know, I can achieve best practice, whether I'm doing it correctly or there's a better way of doing it, I'm quite happy to be told. So it's done for my own personal benefit but also, if there's 10-20-30 of us, if we all go home with a different idea I always think it's worth the while (Farm Level Interviewee).

3. Motivations for participants

Both the Farmer and Programme Interviewee considered farmers' natural interest to be a key motivator for participants, and agreed that learning about other farms first-hand from the farmer was preferable to just observing other farms from a distance. The Programme Interviewee also observed that the nature of AHDB – that it is funded by farmers, not external sponsors – means that demonstrations are an unbiased environment in which farmers can ask questions and discuss issues.

Farmer's we're all very nose-y really - you always - saying that in jest but that's the truth really, everyone likes to look around someone else's place and see what they're doing. You often see what's happening over the hedge but when you actually go to the farm and talk to the farmer you understand how they're doing it, why they're doing it, instead of just looking at it (Farmer)

I think to be fair there's an element of nosiness, that's a natural human instinct, but I think now the programme has been running 4 or 5 years, they realise that they come and can talk about things with people and it will be useful to them. And I think another thing - and this is a key point of the AHDB is that because we are levy funded by farmers, there is no commercial funding or bias or angle to what we do, so if they come to talk about something on one of our farms, they know it is totally neutral in terms of any persuasion (Programme Interviewee)

When asked what discourages people from attending demonstrations the issue of time came up:

I think a time is a big one, undoubtedly. You know as farms have got bigger, labour has got more expensive. Kit has got bigger, and fewer so that they are pushed, so that it's difficult to get off the farm (Programme Level Interviewee)

Regarding recruiting in 'the hard to reach' or those who have never attended a demonstration event before, the programed interviewee acknowledged that this is a hard group to attract even with financial incentives.

4. Target audience

Both Farmer and Programme Interviewee considered the main intended audience to be other farmers and farm managers. They added that anybody in related to the industry, such as agronomists or traders, were welcome to attend.

We do get a few trade people a long - a few agronomists, a few independent traders and what have you but they're here for their own benefit really. But it's of benefit to the whole industry really. But it is really aimed at other farmers (Farmer)

The intended audience is definitely farmers, farm managers ... but it's anybody really that's part of the industry for the greater good. It's a ... some of the work we do can be for the benefit of employees and how they do their work ... and improving the skills across the whole industry, finances and so on (Programme Interviewee)

5. Advertising and recruitment

Local farmers were targeted via email, as were those who had attended previous events and given their emails. The Programme Interviewee claimed the best way of attracting an audience to an event is selecting the right topic, adding that for more specific topics there will be a smaller turn out, although these events are still valuable to those that do attend.

When we have our winter meetings, I think we're just trying to get the right topic ... we've had all sorts of things this time ... from precision to farming to ... I think our poorest attended meeting was one on business succession, but that really only applied to people like us who were family farms ... but it was very relevant to those that attended (Programme Interviewee)

T2: Appropriate demonstration and interaction approaches

1. The nature of interaction

Both farmer and programme interviewee described the nature of interaction as 'mostly bottom-up', as the ideas and materials come from the farmers themselves.

I think what the farmer's doing - you know there's lots of scientific research going on - most of it is driven by people with commercial interest, whereas when a farmer or AHDB is involved,, it's not commercial interest or what have you ... it's certainly more meaningful and at the end of the day, just because I'm growing a certain variety of wheat out there, I'm not losing anything if someone else decided to grow that ... (Farmer)

Mostly bottom up in my particular role because we are looking to them [farmers] to come up with the ideas (Programme Interviewee)

2. Involving farmers in the learning process and the demonstration programme

Host farmers are involved in both the network programme and in individual demonstrations via the steering group, which decides on topics and issues to be addressed, as they explained:

Farmers are part of a steering groupIn this farms case, he's always involved. In our world that would be the case for all our farmers ... we have a steering group, so it's not just farmers but as a group we just decide this is what we are going to talk about this winter (Programme Interviewee)

The host farmer involved participating farmers in individual demonstrations as much as possible, as this gives him a better understanding of what participants want from a demonstration

We always look for ideas and always say what would you like to see ... but although I can drive the programme myself, I think it's important to run a programme that attracts other people. The more people that are involved in the process, the better (Farmer)

3. Focus

The Farmer described the network as 'Whole farm', whereas the Programme Interviewee described the network as 'In between' whole farm and single focused in its approach.

4. Design

Both the Farmer and Programme Interviewee described the network as exhibiting 'a mixture' between 'Experimental' and 'Exemplary' practices. Both expressed a preference for this approach because, as the Farmer expressed, it is a better reflection of the reality of the farm.

Works for us to be honest, we're a farm not a show farm. I think a mixture works for us. Some of that is off the back of the fact we are a mixed farm, so we have livestock. And some of what we do on the arable side influences the livestock and vice-versa, that's why it's more of a whole farm approach (Farmer)

I like ... I think it works well a mixture really (Programme Interviewee)

5. Group size

The Programme Interviewee felt that 25-30 was the optimal group size, and that 40-50 was too many people. Both Farmer and Programme Interviewee felt that when the group got too large the demonstrations become less effective, either because they lose intimacy or people find it harder to engage with the demonstrator. The Farmer added that despite this, they never turn people away who wish to attend.

We've had between 20 and 50 and it depends what the subject is. I think there's an upper limit, because if you get too many people, they start talking amongst themselves and what have you ... so you've got to pick the topic carefully to get the correct number of people along. We never turn people away, no matter how late they turn up we always say 'come along' ... (Farmer)

12 is too small, 25-30 is about right ... when we start getting 40 or 50 come to meetings, that's too many. You lose the intimacy and the discussion that you would get with a smaller meeting (Programme Interviewee)

T3: Enabling learning appropriate to purpose, audience, context

1. Facilitating interaction and learning: structure, content and techniques

The Programme Interviewee was clear that although a little theory was important, the most effective way to run a demonstration was to get the participants involved in an activity.

I think it's discussion. It's a mix of a little bit of theory but importantly getting out ... I think if they can get out and kick a tyre or feel some dirt, that's their life, they're practical people, ultimately. Even if it's a financial one, I've done a meeting on banking, you can give them a financial exercise to work out - as long as they're doing something, that's OK (Programme Interviewee)

I'm quite instrumental in making sure it's not death by PowerPoint ... we will structure it so there are breakout sessions. Having said that we will, depending on the knowledge of the speaker, we will then adjust it accordingly to make sure it's not an awful meeting (Programme Level Interviewee).

The Farmer, on the other hand, did not cite any preference for the structure of the day, but did feel that timing and weather played an important part in participants' engagement.

Timing is important. We launched last year in the middle of the afternoon. This year we are going for the evening which I think suits people, on the longest day really ... I think as long as the weather's nice, hopefully people will turn up (Farmer)

The Farmer described the additional material provided for the launch of his monitor farm, including full details about the farm.

Yes, well last year because it was the launch, we provided full details of the farm to everyone, you know, size, what we do, machinery inventory, we bombarded them with information really ... because people, well we did a SWOT analysis first of all, that was a real eye opener because what somebody saw as a strength other people thought was a weakness ... and I just thought, 'how do I get my head around that then?' (Farmer)

Both the Farmer and Programme Interviewee cited 'Participants ask questions & talk openly' as the most important for effective demonstrations. It was clear the farmers enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in discussions, and that this made for a more relaxed and positive learning environment. The Farmer added that most of the farmers that attend know each other now, and so talking openly has become easier and even more beneficial to knowledge exchange.

Because when you get a group of farmers together and the ... most of us know each other now, familiar faces, so when you become familiar, you become more comfortable to ask a question which you might think is a bit silly, but if you ... certainly, people have become more open in the last year ... (Farmer)

Farmers love participating - as you say they're all important though. Well, I think if they're talking and interacting by inference they're open and they're ... I think they're more relaxed and that's a better learning environment (Programme Interviewee)

There were also a comment about the importance of food and catering.

Food helps [it does help] ... and it helps the meeting, because it relaxes them, it's the focus of the meeting. We don't give them very much, a bacon roll or a sausage roll or something [pasty and a pint] pasty and a pint, something like that ... but just something that they can talk over, really does make the meeting, it facilitates the discussion ... and another thing is keep our tea time breakout groups.. (Programme Level Interviewee)

This was backed up by the observation tool.

2. Taking into account variation in learning

Variations in learning were taken into account by both the Farmer and Programme Interviewee. The Farmer emphasised his effort to get everybody involved, even those who don't say very much or who sit at the back. The Programme Interviewee considered the process of having break-out sessions and small discussion groups to be an effective way of engaging everyone, regardless of learning style.

We try to mix it up. Some people turn up and don't say a thing which is a great shame because everyone has something to input and I try and involve them if I can ... to a certain extent. We've changed venues from our original meeting place because that was always ... if you sat at the back you were out of the way then ... and people didn't know you were there. Personally, I mean, I don't know everyone that comes but you get to know them, which makes it easier for me to involve them in what we're talking about (Farmer)

We have got farmers to think about the different types of people that they are ... I suppose where we have employed it, is this, is this insistence on having breakouts and interaction rather than just chalk and talk ... so that we, we believe, irrespective of the type of person that they are, from a learning point of view, it's better to do it through discussion ... (Programme Interviewee)

T4: Effective follow-up activities

1. Follow-up activities and materials

Both Farmer and Programme Interview expressed an effort and interest to stay engaged with participants after events. The Programme Interviewee mentioned legacy meetings and return visits to the monitor farms.

We will have legacy meetings ... sometimes and go back on an occasional basis. And we also hope that the participants here will - when we go to another farm with another set of issues and topics, which will be similar but slightly different - we hope they will follow it on (Programme Interviewee)

In regards to follow up material, there are considerable resources on the website. Each monitor farm has their own page, and each meeting has a report which includes slides used and links to anything of interest discussed in the presentation.

Our website has a page for each monitor farm, and each meeting has a meeting report which I write for each meeting and if there were any things ... speaker slides up there, or links the speaker referred to, a tool or a paper ... there will be a link to that tool (Programme Interviewee)

2. Assessing impact

According to the Programme Level Interviewee the meetings themselves as well as the engagement of the attendees on the lessons of the meeting are evaluated by AHDB

Yes. We [officers] do a formal process every year where we ask what was your best meeting and worst meeting, why, what would you want more of, what would you want less of ... so that's a formal questionnaire (Programme Level Interviewee).

When asked if they assess if participants have engaged with/acted on the lessons of the demonstrations. The Programme Level Interviewee said

Yes .It's a difficult one to evaluate, but as part of the monitor farm survey we ask them questions like 'do you think you are better at decision making?' ... 'have you made changes as a result of coming to our farm meetings? If so what?' ... so we have got some examples of changes farmers have made as a result of the farm programme (Programme Level Interviewee)

The Farmer also mentioned an evaluation at the end of the event, in which participants were asked if they had learned anything, although he observed that it would be more worthwhile to follow up a year later and ask what practical changes they had made.

We ask whether they've learned anything but we almost need to follow up and ask 'in the last year what changes have you made to your business?' (Farmer)

The Farmer's impression was that there was no attempt to assess the impact of events on the wider farming community. The Programme Interviewee cited their questionnaire as a means to hear from people who are attending meetings directly, but observes that it is only by chance that they hear stories from other members of the farming community who may have been impacted by the events without directly attending one.

I don't know how we can evaluate that to be honest (Farmer)

We always like to hear the impact of the monitor farm programme so the questionnaire will pick up on people attending meetings and directly ... it's really by chance that we hear of other stories, that people haven't even been near a monitor farm, but as a result of that they've done something that they've read in the paper and so on (Programme Interviewee)

5. Event analysis: effective peer learning characteristics

Event Farm and location

Event date: Summer meeting, 26th June 2018

Topic: Benchmarking in arable farming (Observation tool)

The group consisted of 20-30 participants of which 17 filled in the pre survey and 3 the post survey. There was a striking gender imbalance (99% male and limited female engagement at the event).

Participants age - work in local area	grain merchant farmer	farmer and contractor	Area manager and self-employed seed sales	farm adviser	farmer manager	Student industrial placement	total
21						1	1
no						1	1
23			1				1
yes			1				1
25	1						1
yes	1						1
48	1						1
yes	1						1
unknown	1				1		2
yes	1				1		2
51		1					1
yes		1					1
59	1		1				2
yes	1		1				2
62	1						1
yes	1						1
39				1			1
yes				1			1
55	1						1
yes	1						1
46				1			1
yes				1			1
28	1						1
yes	1						1
64	1						1
yes	1						1
47						1	1
yes						1	1
70	1						1
yes	1						1
total	9	1	1	1	1	1	17

According to available data, the participants of 26th June meeting, were mostly farmers (71%) with supply chain actors, student, adviser and farm workers also attending (Pre demonstration survey participant). Almost all of the participants (95%) worked at the local area where the meeting took place (Pre demonstration survey participant). There was an obvious gender imbalance (99% male and limited female engagement at the event) during the specific meeting (Observation tool). According to pre survey demonstrator it was possible for everyone who wanted to participate to take part in the meeting. Moreover the participants were not targeted in any way for this specific meeting (Pre survey demonstrator). The interviewed participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have actively been involved during the whole demonstration process (Post participant's survey). According to the post participant's survey, participants were part of the same network. However this is based on a very few available data, as only two out of seventeen attendees of the Pre demonstration survey participant completed the post participant's survey.

According to the observation tool, there were no direct comparisons and comparative layouts between plots or crops

Benchmarking had the overall issue of the whole farm performance in mind, but the focus of the demonstration was really only around 3 fields and 3 crop types (Observation tool)

1. Roles

In this specific event, the knowledge exchange officer was acting as a demonstrator. S/he was facilitating together with the host farmer the event. S/He actually promoted the discussion and question articulation as

well as the rewording and summarizing of the main issues. S/he has received training to act as a facilitator (Pre survey demonstrator). During the event, s/he actively collected of the attendee's feedback, in order to arrange future meetings.

Follow up monitor farm events were mentioned. The network facilitator wanted input from the group as to what they wanted to focus on next, but attendees weren't that forthcoming and no one volunteered any suggestions (Observation tool).

As already mentioned the host farmer was facilitating the event, together with the knowledge exchange officer (Observation tool). The host farmer actively shared his own experience and knowledge during the meeting. Finally, the host farmer's agronomist was actively engaged during the specific meeting processes as he was intervened for more informative and in-depth answers (Observation tool). They shared the roles.

2. Costs and Accessibility

Events are free. The travel time of farmers to reach the demo farm, ranged from 5 to 180 minutes, with an average time close to 40 minutes (Pre demonstration survey participant). On the one hand, 9 out of ten participants interviewed have rated their effort to participate as negligible or little. The remaining participants (12%) have rated their travel effort to participate as quite some effort or great effort (Pre demonstration survey participant). We cannot draw any clear conclusion in relation to the organization of the specific event and the farm location. Some participants traveled for 180 or 60 minutes rated their effort to participate as quite an easy one (very little effort or little effort) while others who traveled for 60 minutes rated their travel effort to participate as quite a burden (some effort or great effort). So the effort rate may be also related to other factors i.e participants motivations, free time etc apart from travel distance.

Time management and general organisation was very good – ran to time Plenty of scope for open discussion and a nice number of people to allow this to happen without getting out of control or running over time (Observation tool)

T1: Learning processes

1. Communication initiation by participants

When in the whole group between about 40% of the participants had no problem sharing their knowledge and/or experiences related to the topic. Participants were enthusiastically encouraged to share their thoughts and pose questions (by facilitator and host farmer). There was no small group work. There was a lot of time for questions, more than 20% of the total time. Loads of questions were directly asked by participants and there was lots of interaction and inclusion of almost all participants.

	participant answers				
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	not applicable
I had the feeling that I could share my own knowledge as relevant information.	0	1/3	0	2/3	0
I asked at least one question during the demonstration.	2/3 yes				
I shared my own point of view at least once during the demonstration.	2/3 yes				
I felt encouraged to ask questions during the demonstration.	0	0	2/3	1/3	0
When there were any discussions, I felt comfortable sharing my opinion.	0	0	1/2	0	1/2

2. Interactive knowledge creation

Hands-on opportunities and other multi-sensorial experiences

There was no demonstration of any hands-on activity nor could participants try one out.

Participants could see up close and were able to touch the crops.

Discussion opportunities and negotiating conflicting points of view

Equal role between the host farmer and the facilitator from the network. The facilitator

asked the host farmer questions. The host farmer engaged and drew on his own experiences and questioned his agronomist to give full and informative answers. Open discussions are stimulated and given a lot of time. Most participants are involved. For example: 'Farmers as experts' Q&A – 'would you cultivate?' 'what are you drilling with?' created a debate and some disagreement which led to nice discussions. Shared critical points of view were clarified/rephrased so more people could understand. Participants were invited to ask questions about benchmarking figures and questioned

techniques used on the farm. There was a huge amount of disagreement and alternatives suggested. The facilitator did a very good job of rewording and summarising them. Topics included for example: 'how did you deal with weeds?'

Moving around the farm on the trailer gave many opportunities for informal exchange between participants and was a good way to seeing the farm in context (Observation tool).

There was some nice discussion when traveling in between fields/sites. Participants seemed to know each other's farming contexts and remembered each other from previous meetings (Observation tool).

	participant answers				
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	not applicable
In my opinion, there were interesting discussions during the demonstration.	0	0	2/2	0	0
If participants didn't agree with each other during discussions, somebody (demonstrator/other participant) tried to reach a consensus between them.	0	0	2/2	0	0

3. Engagement during the event

Participants all seem to know each other well, but are not close friends. There was some nice discussion when traveling in between fields/sites. Participants seemed to know each other's farming contexts and remembered each other from previous meetings. The demonstrator acts open and friendly, but not as close friends with the participants. He displayed a good use of jokes/humour. The demonstrator knew peoples' farming contexts and their names. He used their contexts (e.g. what crops they had and their successes/failures) to prompt conversations/examples. He invited participants to share their stories if relevant to the discussion.

	participant answers				
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	not applicable
I felt actively involved during the whole demonstration process.	0	0	1/2	1/2	0
I felt like the demonstration increased my ability to rely on myself as a farmer.	0	1/2	0	1/2	0
I could relate well to other participants (because they have an agricultural background similar to mine).	0	0	1/2	1/2	0
A lot of the other participants are part of the same farmer network as me.	0	0	1/2	1/2	0
I felt like I could trust the knowledge of (most of) the other participants .	0	0	3/3	0	0
The demonstration felt like an informal activity to me.	0	1/3	2/3	0	0
I thought the host farm was comparable enough to my own farm .	0	0	0	2/3	1/3
I had the feeling the demonstrator was like one of us .	0	0	1/3	2/3	0
I had the feeling I could trust the demonstrators knowledge .	0	0	1/3	2/3	0
I got along very well with the demonstrator .	0	0	0	2/3	1/3

T2: Learning outcomes

Explained knowledge was sufficiently understandable. Discussion of new knowledge was supported by real life/credible examples but because the group were experienced, knowledge was not repeated in different ways (as just once was enough). No hands-on skills demonstrated. Common methods or ways of thinking on farming were questioned and alternatives were extensively elaborated on in group. There was a huge scope to question methods and ways of thinking. This was actively encouraged by the facilitator who prompted the group when things went quiet – “we are here to challenge x!”. Examples: discussion of different methods to eradicate black grass and times of the year to conduct drilling. Common methods or ways of thinking on learning were not questioned. The facilitator stated that he intended for the participants as main learning goal of the day to be able to share best practice.

What would you ideally like to learn today?	participant answers				
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	not applicable
Open mind to how knowledge may benefit my business; How to farm better; how to improve farm profit; Other people's opinions and ideas; Local farming priorities and challenges; Establishment techniques and chemical use; Current local area agricultural development; No particular targets					
The demonstration met my expectations regarding what I wanted to learn.	0	0	2/3	0	1/3
The demonstration exceeded my expectations.	0	2/3	1/3	0	0
I felt surprised at some point(s) during the demonstration.	1/3	2/3	0	0	0
I obtained a clearer understanding of the topic(s) demonstrated.	0	1/3	2/3	0	0
I have the feeling I learned something new (knowledge, skill, practice, etc.).	0	1/3	2/3	0	0
I thought about how I could implement some of the ideas and practices on my own farm.	0	1/3	1/3	0	1/3
I reflected on my own point of view at some point during the demonstration.	0	0	3/3	0	0
I learnt about the principles underlying a practice.	0	0	1/2	0	1/2
I thought about how we learn something new on demonstrations (e.g.: teaching methods).	0	1/2	0	0	1/2
I thought about why I went to learn about the topic(s) of this demonstration.	0	0	2/2	0	0

T3: Overall comments on the effectiveness of the event

With an average of 4 on 5, participants rated the event overall as effective. Everyone would recommend the demonstration.

Observed main strong points of the event:

It was a very well-organised event. The host farmer and facilitator were very good communicators and both very enthusiastic. The host farmer was very open about benchmarking figures and was happy to share these (even when they weren't positive or things had gone wrong). He is pretty close to being a perfect farm demonstrator – open, honest, uses humour, good public speaker. Time management and general organisation was very good. Movement around the farm on the trailer gave good opportunity for informal exchange between participants and was a good way of farmers/participants seeing the farm in context. Good catering (food and drink) which we believe appeals to attendees and encourages them to come back again.

Observed main improvements:

The use of materials/handouts might have improved access to the data during the event.