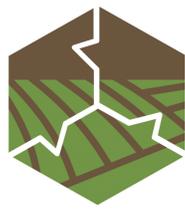




AGRIDEMO



FARMDEMO



PLAID

Country Report for Italy

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Topics of demonstration

- Arable crops
- Horticulture
- Fruit growing
- Biomass
- Viticulture and oenology
- Olive production
- Orchard crops
- Organic farming
- Forestry
- Soil conservation and protection
- Plant protection
- Precision agriculture
- DSS
- Livestock

Providers and purpose of demonstration

In Italy the majority of on-farm demonstrations are organization-led but in organic farming the organizations behind demo activities are farmers related while in conventional farming it is almost exclusively led by university or other public institutions. Their purpose is mainly the dissemination of innovation for the increase of sustainability (any aspect of it: economic, social or environmental). Commercial companies, such as inputs or machinery providers, have an increasing role and their demo activities have clear commercial objectives. Organic sector is aiming at sustainability with a stronger focus on area approach, public health and rural development.

The vast variability of purposes of the demonstrations is observed, but the underlying reason for this activity is the transfer of innovation from research entities to the farmers. The access to the innovative technologies allow the farmers both to pass to a more cost-effective production process and to face topical environmental challenges, including climate change, soil-related problems, plant and animal diseases.

History

Demonstration activities in agriculture started in Italy in the mid XIX century, promoted by the National Ministry for agriculture together with the Education Ministry. At that time they were implemented at regional level, identifying a demo farm per area, linked to a school for practical agriculture, where more relevant cropping systems for the area were implemented. Such a structured activity went on till the First World War and, partially between the two wars.

In the 60's the innovation concept was launched again, mainly linked to new inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, seed etc.) and several demo activities were offered by regional agricultural development agencies, mainly, but also by universities and research institutes often sponsored by input manufactures. In the 90's the majority of demo activities remained mainly linked to regional agencies but have been drastically reduced in recent years due to limited public finances.



Types of Demonstrations

In order of frequency the activities are:

- practical demonstration in the field (i.e. machinery, tool, products, varieties)
- open farm events and guided visits
- technical issues presentations and workshops
- demonstrative trials

Access Issues

Gender: 75-90% of the demonstration participants in Italy are male. The lack of female participation can be explained by the special character of agricultural sector. There were not observed any limits for including women into demonstration events.

Age: Fairly diverse ages observed. There were not detected any prevailing age groups. The demonstration activities in Italy are involving as many young participants as experienced once.

Geography: Demonstration is mostly concentrated in Northern Italy. The most active regions concerning research and demonstration are Emilia-Romagna, Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto and Piemonte. There are also two important research stations and demonstration activities in Southern Italy, in Puglia and Basilicata. Emilia-Romagna is the region showing the greatest variety of research and demonstration activities concerning different agricultural value chains and different types of providers.

Other Issues

Demonstrative activities are not coordinated within different regions, even if they are united by the same topic. The demonstration activity in general seem to be quit reduced and strictly related to research projects funded by EU.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Focus on specific crops / single technologies except for organic farming
- Regional level of organization of demonstration activities, lack of real supra-regional network
- Lack of the farmers initiative in organization of demonstration activities: the leading role of institutions except for organic farming
- Organic farming sector seems to be more active in sharing knowledge and involving farmers in demonstration activities
- Demonstration activity in many cases is strongly connected to research and innovation projects funded by EU programmes



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