On-Farm Experimentation Community Info No. 26

Mar 7, 2023

On-Farm Experimentation Community (OFE-C)

International Society of Precision Agriculture (ISPA)

Co-editor of the month

Thanks to my co-editor of the month Dr. Myrtille Lacoste who is an Independent consultant in OFE, Montpellier, France

Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Farmer-Centric OFE

We are glad to announce the open access publication of the *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Farmer-centric On-Farm Experimentation - Digital tools for a Scalable Transformative Pathway***.** This conference was organized by INRAE-#DigitAg and the ISPA OFE-C (International Society of Precision Agriculture, On-Farm Experimentation Community). #OFE2021 was conducted in a hybrid format from October 13th to 15th in Montpellier (including one day dedicated to a workshop to develop policy propositions) and was preceded by a round of four webinars in May 2021. Find the proceedings here.

New report on Farmer-Centric Data Governance

The potential benefits of digital agriculture are prolific. However, farm data is generally collected by others, and smallholder farmers rely on external resources, like weather data, and proprietary tools that provide specific advisories. Farmers face a paradox: while the use of data holds much potential, control over power, resources, and data governance challenges raise the possibility that farmers do not benefit from their own data. This report contains six Deep Dives and nine Case Studies to provide user-centric approaches to data governance that places farmers and their communities at the center of data gathering initiatives and aims to reduce the negative effects of centralized power. Read more here.

A more promising theory of change

Interesting piece in The Conversation from Assoc. Prof Phillip A Loring (Guelph University) reinforcing the importance of farmer-centric OFE. "*There is no doubt that regenerative agriculture and other agroecological practices can help address climate change, including by sequestering carbon in the soil. But, at a time when innovation and diffusion of new ideas are urgently needed, fostering an ethical agroecological space where people can experiment and share is a more promising theory of change than creating mechanisms to enforce uniformity and exclusion.*" Full article available here.

Apparently, On-Farm Demonstration is not On-Farm Experimentation

There is "*a project involving 400 farms and around 40 villages in the Deux-Sevres region of western France, where scientists are experimenting with different techniques to cut pollution.*" GREAT!
"*We have demonstrated that conventional farmers can reduce nitrogen and pesticides by a third without*

loss of yield, while increasing their income because they lower their costs" BRILLIANT!!
"*Even the farmers who participated in the experiment and saw the results with their own eyes did not noticeably change their practices*" THEY WHAT????
Full article available here.

Every farmer should be doing on-farm research

The Natural Resources Defense Council is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. It works in the US, Canada, China, India and Latin America. In their latest report entitled REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE: FARM POLICY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY Policy Recommendations to Advance Regenerative Agriculture, they stress that "*On-farm research is a key ingredient of regenerative agriculture, important for developing techniques and solving problems*". Full report available here.

Event: International Forum on Agroecosystem Living Labs

Announcement of International Forum on AgroEcosystem Living Labs 02-06 October Montreal, Canada. A side event within the Adaptation Futures 2023 Conference in Montréal, Canada, from October 2 to 6, 2023. Submission deadline is March 30th 2023. Learn more here.

Open OFE position

This is a reminder that the OFE position at INRAE is still open. Details here.

Inspiring from other sectors

"[Victoria] *Sweet's book God's Hotel: A Doctor, a Hospital and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Medicine explains how, after reading about the medieval healer Hildegard of Bingen, she came to the conclusion that, to better describe the aims of recovery, we should resurrect Hildegard's medieval concept of viriditas, or "greening" – to be healed is to be reinvigorated by the same force that gives life to trees as much as it does human beings. She, too, observed that the work of the physician is much more like that of a gardener than it is like a mechanic*." This connects with the idea of OFE Engineers who guide the unique change process on farms. Rather than it being a purely reductionist engineering process, it also points to 'problem-finding' using indigenous, tacit, and scientific knowledge, as opposed to problem solving with pre-defined perspectives on the solutions. Article in The Guardian available here.

This letter was prepared by Louis Longchamps, co-chair of the ISPA OFE Community
Should you have something to share with the Community or the Community leaders, let us know here.