On-Farm Experimentation Community Info No. 25

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On-Farm Experimentation Community (OFE-C)

International Society of Precision Agriculture (ISPA)

Thanks to my monthly co-editor Christian Huyghe, Scientific Director Agriculture INRAE

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Open position in On-Farm Experimentation

The ITAP Research unit (Technologies for the Agriculture of Tomorrow) has an early career research position open at the moment to research and support the use of on-farm experimentation in the agroecological transition. The post details are available on the INRAE website (in French). See the position's description here.
The candidate will work with a dynamic group of researchers in Precision and Digital Agriculture based in Montpellier, France. The successful candidate does not necessarily need to be proficient in French, but does need to commit to learning and working in French. As this is an OFE position, interaction with growers (non-english speaking) will be expected. For further details, please contact Dr James Taylor (james.taylor@inrae.fr).

The IPMWorks European project

IPMWorks is a European-wide farm network demonstrating and promoting integrated pest management strategies. Coordinated by Nicolas Munier-Jolain (INRAE, France). This network gathers 31 partners from 16 countries across Europe. These partners cover the following roles: Farmers' organizations; Applied research, advisory and extension services; Academic research on social sciences; Academic research on agronomy (*sensu lato*) and environmental science; and Training organizations. Beyond the very rich on-farm resource, the project builds an extensive toolbox, that is continuously enriched, thanks to the diversity of partners. To learn more about the IPMWorks project, follow this link.

A French network in a problem-solving approach

Sugar beet production in western Europe is under threat because of the damages due to the impact of viruses that are transmitted by peach aphids. Since 1993, this threat has been under control by the use of neonicotinoids in seed treatments. Due to French regulations, this pesticide has been withdrawn from all crops since 2018. In absence of protection, major yield losses were observed in 2020 (-27.4%) due to early aphid arrivals. A derogative regime for sugar beet was set, that went to an end after the decision of the European Commission Justice Court in January 2023. In order to identify levers and combinations of levers to reduce the damages due to aphids and viruses, a large on-farm experiment network has been established across all the French sugar beet production since 2021. The levers under test are companion crops, flower strips to promote biological regulations, biocontrol, and aphid predators (eggs and larvae). New tolerant/resistant hybrids are also under test.

This on-farm experiment is also adapted to show the options to farmers and to discuss these options. To learn more about this initiative, you may follow this link (website in French).

The first Agroecosystem Living Labs symposium in October 2023

The first Agroecosystem Living Labs symposium will be organized as a side event of the international Adaptation Futures 2023 to be held in Montreal in October (2-6 October 2023 in Montréal, Canada). The Agroecosystem Living Labs, jointly organized by Agriculture and AgriFood Canada and INRAE-France, will be in a hybrid format and will offer the possibility to share experiences across the world. On-farm experiments are one form of such participatory approaches. Thanks to the work of the scientific committee, the most valuable papers will be published in a special issue of an international scientific journal. To visit the COnference Website, follow this link.

Inspiring from other sectors

Observational research often perceived as inferior
The main barrier to the publication of observational research is a perceived inferiority to randomised designs with regard to the reliability of their conclusions. This commentary addresses this issue and makes a set of recommendations. It analyses the issue of research reliability in detail and fully describes the three sources of research unreliability (certainty, risk and uncertainty). Two of these (certainty and uncertainty) are not adequately addressed in most research texts. It establishes that randomised designs are vulnerable as observation studies to these two sources of unreliability, and are therefore not automatically superior to observational research in all research situations. Read more 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.