



Working together towards 'good farming'

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Background

- Research looking at on-farm demonstration programme
 - Focus on learning and change in relation to:
 - Features of successful demonstration
 - Soil assessment (as industry best practice)
 - Working together (e.g. benchmarking, collaborative working)
 - Significance of host farmers (e.g. characteristics, approach, etc.)
 - Two case study 'Monitor Farms'
 - Participant observation
 - Interviews
 - *Research ongoing*



Key concepts

- Demonstration farms critiqued as:
 - Places where farmers may reinforce or redefine perceptions of what it is to be a ‘good farmer’ (Burton 2004)
 - Places where farming is presented, discussed, and communities may be invited ‘back-stage’ (Goffman 1959)



Initial conclusions (1)

- Demo farms as platforms for formalized ‘hedgerow farming’
- Two-way interaction between displayer and observer

“There’s some quite strong characters that come along to [the demonstration farm] and they are never afraid to say what they are thinking. But that’s good...there’s always a good bit of banter from the community group back and fore, and [the host] doesn’t always get an easy time.”

- Importance of selection towards cultural precedent-setting and trust
- Venturing deeper ‘back-stage’ over time

“That’s why I’m going to the Monitor Farm, is to find out what his chemicals, his fertilizer, his seed, what he’s doing, to see if I can get ideas to improve what I’m doing.”



Initial conclusions (2)

- Shift in culturally acceptable ways of working with others
- Farmer knowledge and perceptions challenged through demo and discussion

*“We’re very lucky that the two host farmers are trying to integrate things with each other’s business that show the collaboration and I think that’s a real way – I think **that’s how farming should evolve, is people work together, share costs, share ideas.**”*

- Demo meetings contribution to cultural shift towards openness and info sharing
- Also being shown through engagement in social media

*“It’s quite often the case , not so much the meeting you’re at, **it’s the people you meet at it. What you learn. Who you learn from.**”*





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“The act of information gathering has become a status symbol in itself”

(Burton 2004)

Thank you for listening

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