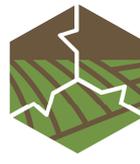




AGRIDEMO



FARMDEMO



PLAID

Country Report for BELGIUM

Hanne Cooreman (ILVO)¹, Lies Debruyne (ILVO)², Marleen Gysen (Innovatiesteunpunt)³

¹ hanne.cooreman@ilvo.vlaanderen.be
² lies.debruyne@ilvo.vlaanderen.be
³ marleen.gysen@innovatiesteunpunt.be



Flanders research institute for agriculture, fisheries and food



voor landbouw en platteland

Topics of demonstration

- Crop protection
- Biodiversity and nature management
- Soil fertility management
- Machinery
- New crops
- Low input farming
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Animal health management
- Animal nutrition
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency issues

Providers and purpose of demonstration

Main 'models' for on-farm demonstrations:

- European and regional projects: mostly temporary demonstration farms. Examples in Flanders/Belgium are: Dairyman (Interreg), EuroDairy, GoedGerund, GoedgePAST, ...
- Demonstrations by experimental research centers/farms. Flanders has made the strategic choice to host on-farm demonstrations through applied research farms, rather than on commercial farms. These research farms have several demonstration plots and sites, and often cooperate with local farmers to host demonstrations. Demonstrations cover a wide range of topics.
- Demonstrations by farmer networks: most common examples are the organic farm networks ('Biobedrijfsnetwerken').
- Demonstrations initiated by commercial suppliers (of machines, seeds, plant protection products, etc), together with farmers on their farm.

History

Mid 1850's, politicians, scientists and notables agreed that change in agriculture should start at the farmer, at the base. Therefore, the Belgian government invested in education and advisory and opted for a demonstrative approach: "First see, then do".

Hygiene is an important incentive

From 1920 on, the dissemination of agricultural knowledge across the whole country became important, in the beginning mainly boosted by farmers' organisations like Boerenbond. Later on, the Ministry of Agriculture also played an important role in advising farmers. They organized lectures, demonstrations, the installation of trial fields, mainly for the control of resources and food safety and hygiene.

Continuous training

Because of more risky investments, farmers nowadays are forced to follow specialized training, organized by farmers' organisations, governmental institutes as well as commercial companies.



Types of Demonstrations

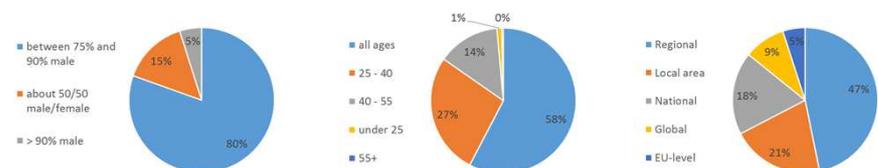
In Belgium, the two main types of demonstrations are:

- Demonstrations on 'commercial' farms
- Demonstrations on experimental, research farms

Main methods are discussion groups, field walks, demonstrations of machinery.

As main reasons for organizing demonstration activities are mentioned: information gathering and sharing, knowledge creation, innovation development, research implementation, innovation uptake and improved environmental conditions.

Access Issues



Distinguishing Characteristics

- Mainly on commercial farms and experimental farms
- Organisations often establish networks of like-minded farmers interested in exchanging information on innovative practices
- There are more demonstration activities in the field of crop production than in animal husbandry
- Audience comes mainly from a regional level
- The use of social media to inform and motivate farmers to attend demonstration activities becomes more important

Furthermore, we identified several informal networks (relatively small in size), which were more informal groups, consisting of farmers that know each other personally.



The PLAID project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727388.
The AgriDemo-F2F project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 728061