



AGRIDEMO



FARMDEMO



PLAID

Country Report for UK

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Topics of demonstration

The UK can be divided into 4 Countries England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the topics of demonstration are very similar.

- Arable; grasslands; cereals
- Potatoes
- Beef; Dairy cattle
- Sheep
- Pig
- Climate focus
- Soil health
- Fruit
- Agroforestry
- Renewable energy
- Nature/biodiversity; Pollinators; Peatland Conservation
- Deer

Providers and purpose of demonstration

The majority of on-farm demonstrations are initiated by organisations (except in England), although the farmers actively choose to offer their premises to host the demonstrations. The organisers are increasingly encouraging the farmers to lead the choice of demonstration topic, in some cases a management team for the demonstration farm discuss and select the topic. Increasingly local farm advisor groups are engaged to act as facilitators to ensure smooth running of the actual events.

The purpose of the demonstrations are diverse but often with an underlying slant towards increasing farm profit. Some demonstrations are undertaken to highlight topical problems and solutions whether recurring e.g. seasonal annual animal husbandry issues or problem solving e.g. flooding, soil health, disease outbreaks. Whilst others showcase innovations both from current research projects or commercially available new products or management systems.

History

Historical Agricultural Demonstration differs between the 4 Countries, but appears to be largely Government run and funded or Educational Institute run and either publically or Government funded. It must be remembered that historical documents and accounts are more readily available for this type of demonstration. Farmer initiated and run demonstration may have been word of mouth and therefore the documentation for these types of demonstration may be more difficult to source or missing.

The precursor to Demonstration farms were Model farms, starting in the Nineteenth century. These farms were experimental, demonstrating improvements in agricultural techniques, efficiency and building layout. Model farms were started by wealthy landowners. After this government bodies and educational establishments took on the task of agricultural demonstration.

Types of Demonstrations

- On-farm
- Off-farm – data analysis and practical demos
- Workshops
- Field walk
- Discussion groups
- Focus groups
- Monitor farms - benchmarking
- Field lab – soil analysis
- Agricultural shows
- Agriculture Technology
- Young farmers – stockmanship

Access Issues

Gender: Women are observed as underrepresented at meetings, maybe this a reflection of the gender divide in the different industry sectors? Some programmes (e.g. Farming Connect) recognise the influential role of women in family farms and target their inclusion to demonstration events, the emphasis is on family friendly.

Age : Fairly diverse age groups are observed in all countries. The older generation attend to gather information, parent/children attend to share new innovations especially if embarking on a period of change, students and new entrants attend to gather knowledge. It's not clear if the key decisions makers are the ones actually attending demonstrations.

Geography: In most Countries the demonstrations are concentrated in more productive areas. Although Wales has a good geographical coverage, many demonstrations activities in NI were concentrated in the East around research Institutes, whilst in England less demonstrations are seen in the North. In the North West Scotland and Islands there is little demonstration activity reflecting less agriculture but also the logistics of travel.

Other Issues

Historical regional differences can be a problem, and these can be traced back through several generations. These barriers discourage exchange between communities, often outside facilitators can help. But these are sensitive issues that take time to overcome.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Demonstrations taking place on farms in the UK are increasing in popularity
- Organisations are establishing networks of like-minded individuals wanting to exchange innovations
- Monitor farm programmes led by farmers, for farmers where the emphasis is on practical farming and good business decisions rather than theory
- Availability of funding for farmers to host their own demonstrations may encourage them to take the initiative.
- The use of social media to encourage participation is increasing attendance.
- Innovative use of technology may help remote communities to become involved.



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