PRACTICE ABSTRACT NO. 12

Collective knowledge space and needed farmer engagements

Problem

Species mixtures in the European farming landscape have almost disappeared despite an increasing number of studies documenting their agroecological benefits.

Solution

Farmer collective knowledge are the key in redesigning credible and socially valuable strategies and to evaluate how it best fulfils the expectations of value-chain actors involved.

Outcome

11 Multi-actor Platforms (MAPs) were built across Europe in order to share knowledge on species mixture strategies through a codesign process.

Applicability box

Geographical coverage

Global, but with a focus on Europe

Application period

No specific period

Required time

No specific time requirement

Period of impact

Short term impact with long-term benefits

Equipment

General farm machinery, although more specialised equipment is available

Practical recommendations

- Re-introduction of crop diversity strategies within codes of good agricultural practice is the starting point. To succeed in this, knowledge exchange barriers between research and practice, and along the value chains, need to be broken providing an increased awareness and dialogue on valid species mixture use whilst securing implementation of locally relevant, practical and innovative solutions.
- Farmers are regarded as the key actors in designing viable and appealing species mixture systems and their input is crucial. The MAP approach creates a positive arena that can empower the farmers to create local solutions; increasing the success of crop mixture use in practice – also building up a wider network of agricultural actors in order to develop viable economic/business models.

Photo 1: Field of pea and wheat destined for chicken feed. Photo: R. L. Walker, SRUC, UK

Photo 2: combined grain from a barley, pea and oilseed rape intercrop for a separator prior to sale. Photo: R. L. Walker, SRUC, UK

Practical testing/ Farmers' experiences

Several events and visits hosted by satellite farms and at the central hub site have been used to stimulate discussion about species mixtures which might work well in a given situation for a particular end purpose (co-design).

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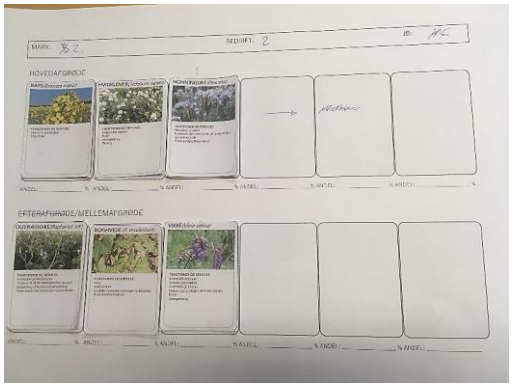

Photo 3 and 4: A board game for farmers designed to create species mixtures in a rotational perspective – stimulating on farm species mixture testing the following season. Photo: Ane K. Aare, RUC, DK

Photo 5 and 6: Peer-to-peer farmer interactions visiting single fields to observe and discuss species mixtures established according to expectations of the host farmer. Photo: Ane K. Aare, RUC, DK

Further information

- Wiki: Agro Diversity Toolbox WIKI http://vm193-134.its.uni-kassel.de/En.DiversiWiki/index.php/ReMIX_multi-actors_platforms
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge Platform for more practical recommendations.

About this abstract

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ReMIX is a H2020 multi-actor project that will allow designing cropping systems based on agro-ecology for the benefit of farmers and the whole EU agricultural community. ReMIX will exploit the benefits of species mixtures to design more diversified and resilient agro-ecological arable cropping systems. Based on a multi-actor approach, ReMIX will produce new knowledge that is both scientifically credible and socially valuable in conventional and organic agriculture. The project will tackle practical questions and co-design ready-to-use practical solutions. The project will span from the specification of end-user needs and the co-design of in-field and on-farm experiments to demonstrations with evaluation of new varieties and practices. ReMIX will contribute to the adoption of productive and resilient agricultural systems. The project is running from May 2017 to April 2021
Website: www.remix-intercrops.eu

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