

Communication and Education to Promote Soil Sustainability in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana



Maureen Victoria, Holli R. Leggette,
Jamie L. Foster, Haly Neely, Clark
Neely, Katie Lewis, Perejitei Bekewe

Introduction and Theory

- The uncertainties of complex agricultural issues for row crop agriculture prompt a need to connect scientific findings to on-farm practices (Ingram et al., 2016).
- Region-specific analyses provide an opportunity for a transdisciplinary approach to communicate with and educate farmers (Young, 2020) about the benefits of soil health management practices (SHMPs).
- The purpose of this study was to investigate preferred information sources and communication channels of wheat producers in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana according to each of Rogers (2003) five adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards).

Method

- Qualitative interviews with ($n = 32$) wheat producers in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.
- County/Parish Extension Agents and Certified Crop Consultants helped us to identify our sample through purposive sampling (Patton, 2002).
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed for statement unitization.
- Secondary peer review of statements within Rogers' (2003) adopter categories to confirm data alignment within each category.
- Investigator triangulation helped to achieve trustworthiness.

Findings

- **Innovators: Network closely with science professionals**
 - Receive the latest scientific soil and crop information at conferences.
- **Early Adopters: Opinion leaders**
 - See the benefits of “asking questions” and being able to “touch and see” results at field days and demonstrations.
- **Early Majority: Rarely opinion leaders**
 - Prefer field days due to producers' ability to interact with “neighbors” and individuals [they] “trust for their opinion.”
- **Late Majority: Want reduced uncertainty and risk**
 - Prefer on-farm visits because producers “can learn from and discuss concerns with someone who really listens.”
- **Laggards: Isolate from local and social groups**
 - Find e-mail, mail, and web articles useful because [they] can read while operating equipment and spend more time in the field.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The degree to which an individual engages in communication amongst members in their interest group the more powerful the communication (Rogers, 2003).
- Timely and beneficial information from the appropriate sources and mediums could help producers to comprehend the urgency for soil health management practices and techniques.
- As for later adopters, strategic outreach and engagement focused on producers' beliefs and behaviors regarding soil sustainability is critical (Upadhaya et al., 2021).

References

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