



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 24

AUTHOR(S):

Lee-Ann Sutherland
The James Hutton Institute

Social networks and innovation in agriculture

‘Social networks’ are the relationships between people. Understanding social networks is important for understanding how farmers gain access to information and pass it on to other farmers (i.e. peer to peer learning). Networks are also important for understanding how farmers are influenced – farmers are more likely to follow the advice, or adopt an innovation, if it comes from a farmer they know and respect. It is sometimes expected that all farmers would share with other farmers if they had the opportunity – this is not the case. Farmers may not want to risk losing their competitive advantage, or to share with someone who they do not see as reliable and able to reciprocate. Social research has demonstrated that farmers tend to form networks with farmers who are similar to them (e.g. produce the same commodities, have the same standards of practice), and located in the same area. This is termed ‘bonding social capital’. Innovations can develop through these relationships, but they are often very specific to the location and are limited to the local network. In contrast, ‘bridging social capital’ is the connection made to people who are different, and typically located far away. New ideas are more likely to be introduced through these types of networks, and innovations spread. When encouraging networking, it is therefore very important to enable farmers to network people from distant locations who have had different experiences.

For more information see: <https://www.agrilink2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AgriLink-conceptual-framework.-Theory-primers.23.pdf>

CONTACTS:

Lee-ann.sutherland@hutton.ac.uk
www.hutton.ac.uk

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Not Applicable

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This Practice Abstract is derived from one of 27 Theory Primers that support the conceptual framework which underpins the AgriLink project. Each Theory Primer introduces a specific theoretical topic in the conceptual framework and is intended primarily for academic readers. The Practice Abstracts derived from each Theory Primer aim to make these topics more accessible and understandable to a wider non-academic audience.

The AgriLink Conceptual Framework and all Theory Primers can be found here: <https://www.agrilink2020.eu/our-work/conceptual-framework/>



ABOUT AGRILINK

AgriLink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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www.agrilink2020.eu
twitter.com/agrilink2020
pierre.labarthe@inra.fr

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All the Practice Abstracts prepared by the AgriLink project in the EIP-AGRI common format can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/agrilink-agricultural-knowledge-linking-farmers>