



**PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 49**



**Introduction of cover crops in Colli Piacentini viticulture area (Italy) – peer-to-peer pathway**

The introduction of cover cropping in Colli Piacentini viticulture practices, studied in the AgriLink project, started since the 1990s. Traditional tillage in the whole vineyard has been gradually replaced in several lots by the usage of different cover crops, often in combination with tillage, mulching or herbicide use. This practice reduces soil compaction and erosion, facilitates soil water management, increases soil organic matter, allows machinery access even in rain periods, reduces disease pressure, increases biodiversity, and reduces pest pressure. The technology is not linked to input sales, either in terms of equipment or products, and its introduction was not driven by any sort of suppliers or business actors. Today, more than 75% of farmers in the region are using permanent spontaneously grown crops in their vineyards, sometimes alternating it with tillage, other 5-10% start to introduce temporary cover crops used as a green manure.

The large majority of farmers adopted the innovation by following the example of peers, both from the neighbourhood and from other viticulture areas in Italy. The introduction and spread of the practice was supported by private agronomic consultants, while public advisory services seemed to have no role in this process. The lack of public advisory and training services resulted in relevant complaints voiced by the farmers. This experience highlights the need for assistance in the development of i) instruments facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and ii) public advisory services, in order to access up-to-date and reliable information on innovation in viticulture.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the uptake of the innovation an important role of informal network was observed. This network is composed not only of peer farmers, but also of the researchers from the university, operating in the area in various R&D projects.

Soil related projects in the region:

[Soil4Wine LIFE+](#)

[VINCAPTER](#)

[PROVITERRE](#)



## 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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