



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 57

Advisory support for non-inverse tillage as soil improvement

The Agrilink project investigated the adoption of non-inverse tillage as a measure for soil improvement in the Netherlands. In non-inverse tillage the soil is not tilled therefore the soil-life is able to develop itself without being interrupted or destroyed. This would create a better soil structure which would result in a more robust soil.

In the Netherlands there are only a few farmers applying non-inverse tillage just to improve their soil structure and soil-life. The adopting farmers heard about the practice in a presentation or news-article by one specific advisor, who introduced the practice from Belgium. Additionally observing the experiences from other farmers helped raise the interest in non-inverse-tillage and the decision to adopt the practice. Study groups facilitated this exchange by allowing farmers to see how other farmers apply non-inverse tillage.

Most farmers assessed the innovation quite soon after they became aware of it. For the assessment of non-inverse tillage most farmers first tried it on a small part of the farm. In the assessment the farmers observe the improving soil quality, the weed pressure, the effect on yield and they find ways to destroy the green manure without ploughings. Sometimes the advisor helped with the assessment, but mostly the farmer trusts the own experience. The implementation phase takes a few years because the soil needs to adapt to the new system. In these years the farmers also learn how to cultivate the soil in the best way to still grow good quality crops.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For most farmers, the advisor is important in this learning process. For the future almost all adopters mentioned that they would keep fine-tuning the system. Dealing with green manure is the biggest challenge for farmers in non-inverse tillage.

It is remarkable that this innovation started with only one advisor. Together with some pioneers he has played a key role in the adoption of this innovation. Later two other advisors started advising on the practice in other parts of the country. Almost all farmers in the Netherlands that apply non-inverse tillage were supported by one of these three advisors. Many of the non-adopting farmers argue that they see many potential negative influences and haven't seen a positive example yet. The experiences of fellow farmers can support or hinder the adoption depending how they evaluate the practice. To inspire and support more farmers to apply the innovation it would be good to support the development of non-inverse tillage expertise among more advisors and share the positive experiences among farmers.

[The role of advisory services in farmers' decision making for innovation uptake. Insights from case studies in The Netherlands](#)



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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