



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 73

Informal farm machinery repair networks in the mountain villages of southern Transylvania

The difficulty of using low powered, mechanical hay-making equipment (e.g. walk-behind motor scythes) on the steeply sloping mountain grasslands of southern Transylvania has led to small-scale subsistence farmers in the region developing their own 'farm hacks' to adapt their (often ageing) motorised hay-making equipment to the local landscape. The disappearance of many Romanian farm machinery manufacturers after the fall of the communist regime has also led to the development of informal networks of small farmers who collaborate to repair and adapt 'new' machinery spare parts from the international equipment manufacturers now established on the Romanian market to their older equipment. Small farmers come together mainly through extended networks of neighbouring farmers, family and friends. These social networks use technical information and sketches found on the internet (including YouTube videos) to develop budget technical solutions for their specific needs / context. Farm advisory systems could further support such forms of grassroots knowledge exchange and co-creation by creating specific networking events to bring together farmers with different technical skills; by facilitating peer-to-peer support for farmers facing specific challenges, and/or; by encouraging community experts to hold courses, workshops and create YouTube videos in their own language on various technical issues, including machinery repairs. Inspiring examples from other countries include the international Farm Hack network for sharing know-how amongst DIY agricultural tech innovators (<http://www.farmhack.org/tools>) and the French small-scale farmers collective known as L'Atelier Paysans (www.latelierpaysan.org).

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Farm hacks come in the form of spiky wheels for tractors or low-tillage machinery, reducing the size of machine blades for the steepness of the slopes, but also more radical inventions that did not receive safety approved from local authorities.



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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