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What aspects influence the farmer's motivation to participate in a living lab in the Dutch-Belgian living lab context?

Europe wants farmers to innovate faster to make agriculture more sustainable. Within the AgriLink project, we examine whether the “Living lab” method is relevant to innovate faster. Described in plain language, in a living lab the researcher, the farmer and a number of other stakeholders actively work out together a solution to a real problem of the farmer through various exercises. But what aspects influence the farmer's decision to participate in a living lab, for example, the Dutch-Belgian living lab on catch crops to reduce nitrate leaching?

1. The farmer must be convinced that there is a problem and have an interest in solving it. Legislation on nitrate leaching is not a motivator to take a proactive approach.
2. The farmer must be confident that a feasible solution exists. Is the solution that the farmers see, also accepted by government and society? Is a win-win situation possible or is it better to leave the problem untouched (wait and see)?
3. Terms such as [living lab](#) and co-creation are words that are hip today in the context of research. They sound vague and insignificant in daily consultation with farmers. One farmer put it this way: "Co-creation works like a red cloth on a bull for me." So, careful with this jargon!
4. Working with nature is working with insecurity and requires quick switching. The focus is on short-term solutions, it turns out to be more difficult to free up time and devise long-term solutions.
5. Experience shows that farmers, as most people, become more vocal in one-on-one conversations and more willing to express their thoughts and ideas than in a group. Peer pressure can lead to silences or to joining the loudest person. The best ideas are often vented after the meeting!

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#TechnicalInnovation

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### A field meeting

On 20 November, a field meeting took place at the Vredepeel test center with the theme "Catch crop 2019, how did you tackle it?". The day was organized within the framework of the Grondig Boeren met Maïs project by WUR | Open Crops and one of the other project: Agrifirm. Innovatiesteunpunt and the Belgian stakeholders were there.

In the Netherlands, maize growers are obliged to sow a catch crop to retain nitrate and prevent leaching. The catch crop must also be sown before 1 October. This means that if the catch crop is sown afterwards, the maize must be off the land before October 1.

Within the context of Dutch legislation on making maize cultivation more sustainable, a maize grower has three questions to ask himself today:

- How do I ensure a good yield from my corn? The target is 20 tons of maize per hectare
- How do I ensure that it is clean and that there are not too many weeds?



## 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.

### DISCLAIMER:

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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>