Learning processes initiated by agricultural demonstration activities in Switzerland

Rebekka Frick, Kathrin Huber, Heidrun Moschitz, Thomas Alföldi

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Results from Swiss Case Studies

• **Bio-Viehtag (Organic Cattle Day)**
  - Since 2018
  - Organized by Bio Suisse & FiBL
  - Objectives: Knowledge exchange on organic cattle husbandry
  - Size: 600 visitors, 15 sessions

• **Arenenberger Ackerbautreff (Arenenberg Arable Day)**
  - Since 2015
  - Organized by Agricultural Centre Arenenberg
  - Objectives: Demonstrate trials of arable farming
  - Size: 100 visitors, 4 sessions
Research Question

What are success factors for initiating learning processes at agricultural demonstration events?

• Learning processes
  • Focus on Output
  • i.e. acquired knowledge and skills, memories, reflection

• Success factors
  • Focus on role of demonstration events
  • Focus on organization of demonstration events
Methods

• **Data collection**
  • Quantitative and qualitative methods:
  • Survey with participants (BV and AA: ca. 10% of participants)
  • Participant observation (BV: 4 obs., AA: 3 obs.)
  • In-depth interviews with participants (BV: 8 int., AA: 9 int.)
• **Analysis:** inductive identification of success factors
• **Validation:** Workshop with advisory group
Success Factor 1

Clear objectives and programme as well as target group-specific advertisement

«The advertisement has to include the information the farmer needs to decide whether the event is useful to him.»

Advisor, Participant
Success Factor 2

Optimal access for participants at different levels

- Location and time, visibility and acoustics
- Introduction, structure (flexible vs. fixed groups)
- Mediation techniques

«During the presentation the participants were rather passive. The attention rose when the focus shifted to the [demonstrated] animals.» Participant observer, Organic Cattle Day
Success Factor 3

Relevant contents and applicability on the individual farms

«[The speakers] should be honest so that one can see whether something really works and […] also should show things that did not work or where there have been some problems.» Farmer, Participant of the Arenenberg Arable Day
Success Factor 4

Interaction between the participants

«The Organic Cattle Day is a good format to get security needed to try something new. Because the people who are already doing it go there. […] In most of the times, [the session] is followed by a discussion among the participants. And that’s when you discover who already does it.» Farmer, participant Organic Cattle Day
Success Factor 5

Long-term anchoring

«What is interesting is when you can go there [to the trial] again and can see how it develops. I went back many times to observe how the sugar beet and maize is developing.»
Farmer, Participant of the Arenenberg Arable Day
Conclusions

• Huge potential of demonstration events
• In practice: not easy to fulfill all these factors
• Learning as a first step for change of knowledge and attitude
• Questions of implementation: what else is needed? Role of demo-events in an overarching system