Farmer Attitudes to the Environment, Farming and Agri-environment Schemes
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Overview

- Categorise farmers into attitude groups
- Extensive information from survey:
  - Farm and farmer characteristics and behaviours
  - Attitudes to farming, environment and AESs
  - Participation in different agri-environment schemes
  - Choices made within schemes
  - Estimated costs of AES measures
- Analysis matching attitudes with participation and choices in agri-environment schemes (AESs)
Farmer Attitudes

- Attitudes affect decisions made by farmers
- Understanding decisions is important in creating successful policy
- Decisions relating to agri-environment schemes (AESs) impact environment so important they are understood
Survey

- 1000 Irish farmers
- Representative by farm system and size
- Agreement to statements about:
  - Farming
  - Environment
  - Agri-environment schemes
Attitude groups

- Factor analysis
  - Finds underlying factors or attitude groups in responses to survey

- Seven attitude categories
  - Two relating to AES benefits and drawbacks
    » Strongest relationship with participation in AES
  - Five relating to farming and the environment
Benefits Conscious

- More inclined to recognise the upsides of participating in AESs such as:
  - Better looking farmyard and countryside
  - Better slurry management
  - More wildlife areas
  - Environmental knowledge gained from courses
  - Income source
Drawbacks Conscious

- More inclined to recognise the downsides of participating in AESs such as:
  - Limitations on stock and nutrient management
  - High advisor cost
  - Hassle with forms
  - Insufficient payment to cover costs
  - Lack of continuity
  - Loss of productive land to measures
  - Greater risk of inspection or penalty
Innovative Orientation

- Importance of new technology
- “I am good at finding information”
- Keep the farm running to pass on to children

Financial Orientation

- Maximise income & produce more food regardless of environmental consequences
- ‘Makes more sense to join scheme if neighbours are too’
Conservative Orientation

- Risk averse
- Cautious about new ideas and practices
- Important to be respected by other farmers

Agricultural Optimists

- Land is underutilised
- Economic future in farming is bright
Positive Caretakers

- Enjoy farming more than other potential jobs
- Farmers are good caretakers
- Farmers have not caused damage to the environment in the past
Results so far

- Strong relationship between benefits and drawbacks and participation
- Attitudes influence participation in AESs and intent to keep up maintenance
- Neighbours strongly influence decisions
Conclusion

- Evidence based categorisation of farmers into attitude groups
- Different motivations for different groups
  - Knowledge transfer could be tailored
  - Identifies new potential for policy design and implementation
- Potential use in relation to water quality, GHGs and biodiversity
Questions