



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 55

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Implementation of milking robots - changing role for advisors

The aim of the AgriLink project was to explore which actors provide farmers with advice at different stages of the technology implementation process. A case study focusing on the uptake of milking robots was carried out in the county of Trøndelag in Norway where the density of milking robots is high. The first farmers to install milking robots in the early 2000s did not receive any support from the traditional advisory services that, at the time, were very sceptical of the technology. The suppliers provided some advice in the implementation phase but pioneers had to handle many situations on their own. Dairy farmers today are well aware of milking robots. In the assessment phase, farmers perceive advisors from the milk cooperative and the input suppliers to provide the most valuable advice. However, many other actors also contribute advice in this phase, for example, other agricultural cooperatives and financial institutions. In the implementation phase, the main advisors are milking robot provider personnel and specialist advisors from the dairy cooperative.

The study indicated that traditional advisors have become important for the later adopters. The fact that they have managed to take a central role in the assessment and implementation phase seems to result from a desire to receive more “neutral” advice than that provided by technology providers. Traditional advisory services also provide a more holistic picture of the situation and this is important for a decision as significant as the purchase of a milking robot. The study showed that the traditional advisors were not the driving force behind the initial uptake of this technological innovation, but they have played an important role in diffusion in the later phases of the development.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The region of Trøndelag is in the middle of Norway with a variation of conditions for farming from the coast to the mountains. Dairy farming is the most important production with about 1500 dairy farms in 2019. The number of farms with milking robots is estimated to approximately 500. However, this is increasing, with about 40-50 sold robots each year at regional level.

The innovation cluster 'Autonomous vehicles, robots, drones, intelligent sensors and precision farming' (TECH cluster) in AgriLink is devoted to investigating the importance of new technologies in the agricultural systems to improve efficiency and facilitate the agricultural labour. Examples of cases studied are: the use of drones to collect data, which can be used to increase the environment performance of farms, enabling a more efficient use of agricultural inputs (water, nitrogen, pesticides); the use of intelligent water sensors on the soil (to monitor parameters such as humidity, temperature and salinity at different soil depths) to improve the efficient use of water; or the use of robots in dairy farming allows farmer to increase the flexibility in everyday life and to improve the productivity in the milking.



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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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>