



Adoption and farmer perception of best management practices in Southern Spain

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Soil resources in many parts of Europe are being degraded due to non-sustainable land and soil management practices. During the past decennia, best management practices (BMPs) have been developed in order to maintain or restore soil health. However, the adoption rate in practice is rather low. Amongst other reasons, these practices might lack on-farm compatibility, or farmers may lack confidence in the proposed measures.

In order to assess the adoption of management practices (MPs) and obtain information on farmer perception a study was performed in the Southern region of Spain (Andalusia), within three predefined farm type zones (FTZs) corresponding to arable, permanent crop and mixed farms. In order to identify main drivers and barriers for the adoption of different tillage practices, a sequential mixed method was applied, by combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques at different stages in time. First, a qualitative data-collection through semi-structured interviews were conducted in each FTZ to identify behavioral outcomes, normative referents and control factors for each unique MP in that specific FTZ context. Secondly, the quantitative stage of the mixed method approach encompassed a large scale survey based on the final list of control factors, outcomes and referents of each BMP which resulted from the first stage. As a final qualitative step, focus groups were conducted in each FTZ to elaborate on possible solutions towards the barriers on one or more MPs

For this particular region of Spain, we observed that the adoption rates of a certain MP differed among subregions within each FTZ. In general barriers and drivers were found to vary in their nature and across the different subregions, although some of them were common across all subregions. It is noteworthy that the Common Agricultural Policy is the main influential agent for farmers' decisions and their perception of drivers (financial support) and limitations (rigidity of the measures) with respect to the implementation of certain MPs. Furthermore, in all the FTZs, farmers strongly demanded an extension service which responds to their needs and plays the role of an exchange channel between researchers and farmers.