



Country Report for Norway

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Topics of demonstration

Animal husbandry – mostly dairy cattle: animal health and welfare, nutrition/feeding, pasture management, housing and rearing systems.

Crops/trees – mostly fodder crops and pasture: climate change mitigation and adaptation, crop protection, soil fertility management, new varieties/planting material, urban agriculture, machinery.

Providers and purpose of demonstration

Public/Private advisory extension or advisory service (e.g. Norwegian Advisory Services – NLR), individual farmers, NGO/charity and/or other agricultural development organizations.

Mostly to engage farmers disseminate and gather information and knowledge creation, but also for educational purposes/training opportunities, networking and to strengthen the farming community.

History

Demonstration farming began in Norway as a farmer-backed initiative in 1937. Interest increased during the 1950's, and in the 1970's demonstration rings were established in both Eastern and Western parts, in Trøndelag as well as in the three northernmost counties. Initially, the focus was mainly on improving plant propagation with experimental trials and soil analysis used to bring new knowledge quickly and efficiently to practical agriculture. As the number of members increased, the practice spread to smaller districts and agricultural demonstration began to incorporate an increasing number of research disciplines. Advisory work has always been part of the demonstration process, helping farmers to adapt to the conditions in each county. Environmental considerations and product quality have been important issues in recent years, as well as environmental planning, business development and agricultural technology assessment. Today Norsk Landbruksrådgiving (NLR) provides an umbrella and service organization for 11 regional advisory units with a total of 29,000 members and 330 employees across the country. NLR receives financial support from the government and cooperates extensively with various players in the agricultural sector.



Photo: Norwegian Advisory Service (NLR), 2015

Types of Demonstration

Field walks – Field walks are often organized by the NLR in cooperation with host farmers, other agricultural organizations, professionals and county officials. Themes are often linked to climate change mitigation and adaptation, crop protection, soil fertility management, new plant varieties/materials and machinery. Organic production is also a common theme that farmers are interested in learning more about.

On-farm demonstration – On-farm demonstration is often organized by the individual farmer or by agricultural schools and the 4H educational organisation. Demonstrations are often through open farms or open days and enable farmers to demonstrate the way that they operate and practices they are skilled at. The farms/schools often also make themselves available for guided tours/knowledge dissemination on the request of other farmers, advisors or others with an interest in agriculture.

Access Issues

Agriculture in Norway is strongly influenced by climatic conditions and geographical location. The largest proportion of agricultural land is found in Eastern Norway in the counties of Østfold, Vestfold and Akershus – which explains why the majority of demonstration activities are concentrated in this region. Cereal cultivation is common in the flatlands of Trøndelag, Jæren and Eastern Norway, which are considered the best agricultural areas. Demonstration activities are conducted in all regions from NLR regional centers spread throughout the country. Agricultural schools are also in all parts of the country. Overall, visitors to demonstration activities are as likely to be women as men, but a higher proportion of demonstrations are led by men. The largest proportion of visitors are under the age of 25 with few visitors over 55. Where demonstration activities are led by farmers, virtually every visitor is between 25 and 40 years old, while for demonstrations led by organizations, the largest group (about half) are under 25 years old. This may be attributable to the pressure younger farmers have to develop their farms – which are often relatively marginal in economic terms.

Other Issues

As many of the relevant organisations and individuals did not have time to complete the study, our respondents do not comprise a representative sample.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Field walks and on-farm demonstrations
- Animal health, welfare, nutrition
- Fodder crops and pasture – climate change, crop protection, soil fertility management
- Disseminate and gather information, knowledge creation
- Advisory services, farmers and agricultural development organizations
- Highly variable geographical and climatic conditions
- 50-50 participation of men and women
- Many young farmers organize and participate in demonstration activities



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