



Country Report for Serbia

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Topics of demonstration

Water management, Soil fertility management, Crop protection Integrated pest management, new products, Technologies, Quality enhancement and promotion, Machinery, Biodiversity and nature management, Low input farming, New varieties/planting material, Processing to food/feed, Pasture management, Animal Health management and welfare, Animal nutrition/Feeding, Housing and rearing systems, New crops, Business development, Climate change mitigation and adaptation are dominant topics.

All demonstrations focus equally on technologies (single or several combined) while the whole farm approach is rarely driver of the demonstration (except for beekeeping).

Providers and purpose of demonstration

As a rule of a thumb, the main initiators of demonstration activities in Serbia, especially in the most widespread sector (i.e. arable crops, fruit, vegetables, dairy/meat cattle) are the state (through advisory service) and input providers. The exception are specialized sectors such as organic production and beekeeping where producers are main initiators and the organizers of knowledge transfer.

When initiator is the state the purpose of demonstration is to enable productivity growth in the sector, on the basis of technical and technological improvements and innovative products and solutions that is expected to lead to 1) increase the competitiveness and sustainability of agriculture farms and other participants in the rural economy; 2) increase the level of sustainability and efficiency; 3) enable networking and strengthening cooperation with other actors interested in the development of agriculture and rural development.

On the other hand demonstrations organized by input providers usually aim to promote their products and increase market share.

History

Kingdom of Serbia established the first demonstration field at Institute of industrial plants in 1884. Following the occurrence of grape phylloxera, the first institution with aim to practically demonstrate best practice of growing grapes to individual producer was formed in 1886. This was accompanied 1900 by two agricultural stations in the south of Serbia where both were focused on improvements of agriculture production in all sectors. In the period between two World Wars, Kingdom of Yugoslavia funded two agriculture stations that soon after grew into research institutes with their own demonstration fields. The most agricultural stations that nowadays work in advisory system of Serbia are funded in 1950s following the initiatives from regional farmer associations. Many of those during their life time were closely linked to big state owned agricultural companies serving as organizer of knowledge transfer to cooperants.



Types of Demonstrations

“Field days” or “Field walks” (lower image) are the commonest mean for getting the producer in direct contact with what is promoted in demonstration activity. These events are organized either in experimental fields of the research institute/advisory service/company or at production field of chosen representative farmers that use the product/technology of interest. In both cases the demonstrations are research institute/advisory service/company driven and aim to promote either new technologies, best practice or companies’ portfolio and its advantages.

Farmers that are current and/or potential prospective clients of the company are invited to the event. During the field day different products (e.g. hybrids, fertilizers) are presented and farmers can see the output of production including the yield measurements. Also, these events give opportunities for farmers to interact and discuss what they see in the field.

Access Issues

The inventory focused on Pannonian part of Serbia which is predominately agricultural region. However, recorded situation could be considered as representative for remaining regions in Serbia. Majority of attendees are males (>75%). Regarding the age there is a balance between experienced farmers (40-55 years) and their successors (25-40 years).

Other Issues

Agricultural stations organize field experiments on land owned by the state, which is granted on annual basis for organization demonstrations. If the demonstrations are organized in collaboration with individual producers, often the host changes from year to year.

Input providers commonly position their demonstrations fields near major roads and clear information on the treatment is displayed throughout season (upper image). This allows farmers passing by, to stop and get introduced to the outcome of the treatment. Since the owners of the fields are often well known by local farmers this approach can also initiate farmer-to-farmer interaction.

Apart from “field days”, face-to-face contact between farmers is enabled also during Agriculture Fair that is organized on annual basis and gives chance for display of representative products and thus discussion on best practice leading to given output.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- State is the major initiator and organizer of demonstrations
- Input providers organize demonstrations to increase market share for their products
- Farmer driven demonstrations are more common in “exotic” sectors like organic and beekeeping
- Farmer-to-farmer learning is achieved during field days
- Demonstrations are usually facilitated by agricultural advisors



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