

Structuring data gathering on organic farms: the transdisciplinary development and use of a farm scan within a broader methodological framework

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Introduction

Group meetings of organic suckler cow farmers, advisors, researchers in Flanders

Comparable data collection, monitoring and evaluation

Access to knowledge
Facilitation of learning
Knowledge co creation

Improved decision making by farmers
Improved farm efficiency
Innovation on farms



BUT

Comparable data and knowledge gathering is lacking and farmers are not able to organize efficient data collection to share within the network.

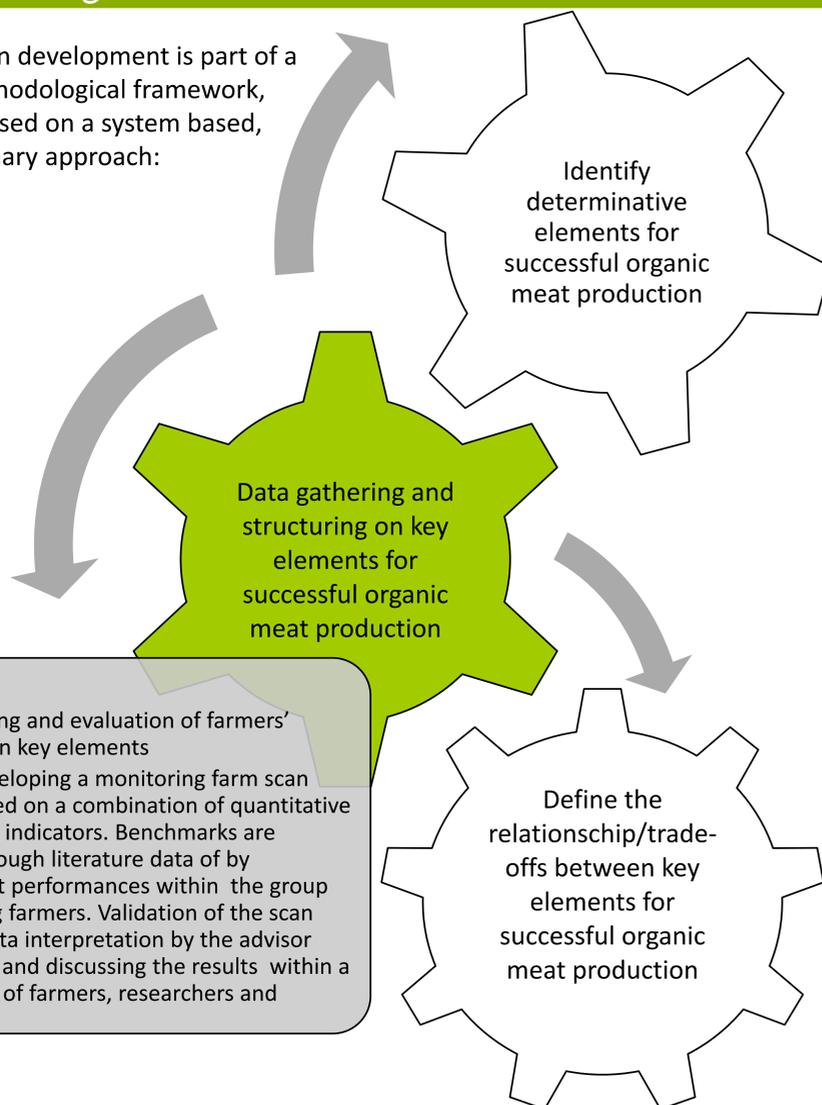


AIM

Therefore, this study aims at organizing gathering and structuring farm specific data in an efficient way to systemically examine interventions and to share knowledge within the network by development of a farm scan.

Methodological framework and data collection

The farm scan development is part of a broader methodological framework, which is focused on a system based, transdisciplinary approach:



• FARM SCAN:

- **Goal:** monitoring and evaluation of farmers' performance on key elements
- **Approach:** developing a monitoring farm scan (excel file) based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Benchmarks are introduced through literature data of by identifying best performances within the group of participating farmers. Validation of the scan occurred by data interpretation by the advisor and by sharing and discussing the results within a group meeting of farmers, researchers and advisors.

Results

Strengths:

- Iterative process of development assures flexibility on the content of the tool
- Based on qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Participatory approach stimulates and creates ownership by end users (farmers and advisors).

Weaknesses:

- Data gathering was done by the researchers. It is a future challenge to stimulate farmers to do the monitoring themselves and on a regular basis.
- Interactions and trade-offs between indicators are not included in the scan

Participatory farm scan development

Opportunities:

- Structured monitoring and evaluation
- Individual use as well as in farmers' networks for discussing results
- Improve the outcome of the network meetings by feeding the discussion by data comparison of participating farmers.

Threats:

- Prerequisite for successful use and development is to have a network where there is an atmosphere of openness and confidence among all stakeholders. It's a challenge to maintain this when other farmers/researchers join the network.

Conclusions

Development of the farm scan did not occur as a linear process, but through an iterative approach. A process of data gathering and use of this data within an existing network of farmers, advisors and researchers was initiated. This farm scan might evolve towards a database for organic beef farmers in Flanders and attract more farmers to the network.



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