

Round table : How to recruit farmers as participants to economic experiments?

Round table chaired by Uwe Latacz-Lohman

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The objective of the round table is to have an open discussion about the different ways to recruit farmers and to incentivize them. Most participants of the round table had had to organize experiments or surveys with farmers and have shared their experience

We provide here a synthesis of the main points (in bullet points) which were discussed, without necessarily quoting the persons who mentioned these points. Three short ppt presentations are also available (by Uwe Latacz-Lohman; Fabian Thomas, and Florence Gramond)

1) **How to reach farmers**

The first difficulty is to obtain a reliable dataset of farmers' contacts (and possibly farmers' main characteristics to check the representativity of the sample). The issue is that database can rarely be merged (for privacy reasons or by lack of a common identification number).

Most data base obtained thanks to professional corporations , “chambers” of agriculture (example of Lower Saxony) or cooperatives (example of Inra). In all cases, it requires to have good and long-lasting cooperation with official institutions (Ministry, administrations, professional associations, farmers' unions)

Reaching farmers by telephone, emails or directly in face to face interviews: email addresses are hard to obtain and are most often in the hands of farmers' organizations and unions. Not easily shared. Moreover, the sampling is usually made by those detaining the database: there is a risk of unintended selection bias (selecting farmers they know best to be part of the experiment for example). A second issue is that questionnaire contents have to be approved first and many reasons can slow down the process (i.e. sensitivity to some issues, local elections, etc.)

By post: high cost of preparing and sending letters – Risk of very low return rate - Letter with an invitation to participate to on-line experiments, with individual code

By email: potential selection bias linked to age and internet access in rural area

Face to face: Inra reports the organization of a risk preference elicitation experiment with 200 farmers. They worked with recruited enumerators – 8 months of equivalent full time doing face to face interview – survey lasted 1 hour

Bringing farmers in the lab: need to convince farmers to be paid for participating in an experiment – risky when there is a minimum number of farmers in the group because they may decide not to turn-up at the last moment. One solution is to get access to farmers during a training session.

2) Techniques to get a high response rate

One suggestion is to write articles in the farming press (such as topagri in Germany) on topical issues (for example the cost of greening) – at the end of the article insert the link to a questionnaire to give their opinions – eliciting preferences. Alternatively, give conference to farmers on topical issues: and bring questionnaires which can be distributed at the end of the conference to the audience. It improves the understanding and willingness of farmers to participate BUT selection bias (only those familiar with computers and smartphone respond; only those interested by the topic are reached) and potential manipulation (multiple responses by the same person)

Use a professional survey company: BVA (2nd survey institute for research in France after Ipsos) has a long lasting experience with farmers' surveys. They have several panels of farmers (8000 farmers, paroles d'agri « farmers words ») who accept to respond to several questionnaires per year (on pesticide use, on decisions concerning cropping patterns etc.). They use a mix of telephone and online questionnaires. All relevant information on farmers is in the database and available for all surveys. Respondents receive main results. From this access panel, BVA can build a representative sample of French farmers, quotas based on region and farm type (OTEX)

BVA uses a large range of nudges to increase response rate by farmers. BVA has tested different objects of email to analyze which ones have higher answer rate (« because farming can't go on without you »). And once email are opened, they induce farmers to click on the link of the survey (using for example colored boxes).

Always provide a feedback to the farmers for example in the form of follow-up of the survey (sent to interviewed farmers personally or through an article in the local media)

3) How to incentivize them

Possibility to arrange payouts with vouchers

For the Inra survey (on farm face to face experiments): Show-up fee 20€ + max 60€ incentive payment (1 hour)

For the Engees lab experiment: 60 € for two hours