The Social Science of BMP Adoption

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A man always has two reasons for doing anything: a good reason, and the real reason.

-J.P. Morgan
Farmers adopt BMPs when their motivations are stronger than barriers

**Barriers**
- Awareness
- Social norms
- Perceived cost
- Perceived risk
- Uncertainty of practice

**Motivations**
- Threats
- Cost savings
- Self-identity
- Peer pressure
I’m not paid to conserve soil, I’m paid to grow corn.
Decreasing barriers

- Clearer and consistent messaging
- Cost-share programs, financial incentives
- Crop insurance programs
- Farmland rental agreements
- Research & development
Increasing motivation

- Threat of regulation / erosion
- Saving money on inputs
- Self-identity
- Positive pressure from peers
We rarely know what actually motivates us

- California: comparing 4 reasons for energy conservation:
  - It is better for the environment
  - It will benefit future generations
  - It saves me money
  - Most of the people in my neighbourhood are doing it
Improving our messages

• Do financial incentives negate social normative messages/ intrinsic motivation?
Improving our messages on cover crops?

- Reframe cover crops as the answer to specific risks:
  - Soil erosion
  - Compaction
  - Drainage issues
  - Residue management
- Reduce premiums on crop insurance for farmers using cover crops
- **Cover crops reduce risk**
Evaluation and improvement

success

plan

do

measure
What’s happening around the world?
Incentivize the early adopters to reach out to their peers.
Pilot program

• **Train** early adopters
  • Communication
  • Leadership
  • Demonstration

• **Support** them to mentor, speak, start informal clubs

• **Publicize** them in farm media

• **Evaluate** and learn
We would love to hear from you!

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