Farmers & Soil Conservation
The Who, the How and the What

Growing Agri-food KTT in Ontario
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Background

• Farm family
• MA Sociology, U of Guelph
• Farm organizations
• Soil conservation

• Driving Question: What programs will convince farmers to improve soil health and reduce erosion?
What do we know about farmers?

Alternative

Conservation

Lifestyle

Economic

Conventional


Graphic courtesy of smartinsights.com
Attitudes ≠ Behaviour

• Meta-analyses of farmer characteristics, attitudes and conservation behaviour reveal no emergent trends...
• ...except for social capital
• Are we asking the wrong questions?


DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION MODEL

- Innovators: 2.5%
- Early Adopters: 13.5%
- Early Majority: 34%
- Late Majority: 34%
- Laggards: 16%

ESSENTIAL MARKETING MODELS HTTP://BIT.LY/SMARTMODELS
Depends on the ‘innovation’

e.g. where does my dad fit on the curve?
Adoption of cover crops

• Does it make sense to research or do outreach to farmers as individuals, separate from their families, businesses, culture or network of advisors?
• How can we make use of this system for KTT?
Farmers as ‘extension’

- Rogers argues that the best messengers aren’t experts but near-peers
- But Stockwell argues that ‘innovator language’ raises red flags to others

Examining our questions

• Why are farmers not responding to my fact sheets? Am I not convincing enough?

• Are there social or practical barriers to soil conservation?

• Redefining the Question: What conditions would allow farm management to change?