IPM adoption in my hub

Facilitation approach and progress made in IPM adoption

ΕΤΟΣ ΙΔΡΥΣΗΣ 1920 - ESTABLISHED IN 1920
ΓΕΩΠΟΝΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ
AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

My group

Kalliopi Kounani
Kiato, Peloponese, Greece

PRESENTATION OF THE HUB COACH ORGANISATION

The Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) is the third oldest university in Greece. Since 1920, it has made contributions to Greek agricultural and economic development, by conducting basic and applied research in Agricultural Science and Technology.

In IPMWORKS, AUA is responsible of creating and continually supporting the Greek Viticulture Hub location in Kiato, Peloponese, Greece

THE HUB

The HUB consists of 10 conventional farmers situated in the general region of Kiato, Peloponese, Greece.

Specializing in viticulture for table grape production, the farmers cultivate mostly Thomson Seedless varieties.

OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE FARMERS

The farmers are participating in the hub are motivated towards a greener agriculture with reduced costs for farming operations which will be environmentally economically and socially sustainable. Based on the fact that no farmers were integrating IPM practices in their farms before the project, they were very interested on gaining knowledge on this topic.

DRIVERS

Farmers want to prioritize sustainable farming methods and to be more aware of the environmental impacts and risks, including resistance development, associated with extensive use of pest control treatments. They are committed to exploring alternative, eco-friendly solutions to maintain the sustainability and effectiveness of their farming practices over time.

BARRIERS

Farmers are hesitant to try new, less proven methods due to the risk of potential losses. This cautious stance is a result of their need for dependable solutions to manage the difficult climate conditions. Additionally, the lack of support from the Greek government adds to their challenges, making it even more crucial for them to rely on established strategies to protect their agricultural activities.

IPM challenges and results

IPM Challenges

In the Greek viticulture hub, IPM faces significant challenges due to farmers' heavy reliance on chemical protection products, with 13-18 applications per growing season. Another major obstacle is the absence of Greek legislation to support the adoption of IPM strategies, hindering progress toward more sustainable practices.

In regards of threats: Botrytis, often known as gray mold in viticulture, is the key challenge.

The hub's results

The farmers were introduced to advanced mist blowers, a technology that significantly reduces reliance on chemical plant protection products. This innovation aligns with our IPM strategies, enhancing the efficiency of treatments and minimizing environmental impact.

We still need to address the issues of fully integrating IPM practices across all participating farms and ensuring consistent adoption. There's also a need to measure the long-term impact of these practices on crop health and yield. Furthermore, securing ongoing support and resources for the hub to maintain and advance our IPM strategies is crucial.

The hub farmers plan to move forward by systematically applying the knowledge gained from our journey in IPMWORKS, continuing education on IPM advancements, and by collectively investing in more efficient technologies, of course with the guidance of their agricultural consultants.

Key conclusions

The key results from our activities demonstrate that when hub farmers collaborate, share knowledge, and employ IPM practices, we can reduce chemical use and enhance sustainability.

'Soft skills' such as communication, problem-solving, and team cooperation have been vital to the hub's success in managing issues. These skills have enabled us to efficiently share insights, support each other through challenges, and build a strong community foundation that's essential for long-term sustainability and resilience in the agricultural practices.

Facilitation approaches

Engagement of Farmers

What is the issue the hub work on more precisely?

Coordinating the hub's group activities requires navigating the farmers' tight schedules, especially during peak seasons like harvest when workdays are extended. Weather fluctuations and pest pressures demand immediate action, further limiting their availability

How did you proceed? What did you do?

To address the scheduling challenges, I facilitated a shift towards digital communication platforms that allowed for more flexible interaction. By implementing a combination of group chats and online meetings, we could discuss and plan around each farmer's availability. I also established a regular but adaptable schedule for in-person meetings to coincide with less intensive farming periods.

What conclusions can you draw?

Effective planning within agricultural operations must account for the unpredictable nature of the work, especially due to weather-related urgencies. Flexibility in scheduling has proven to be critical, allowing for timely and necessary adjustments to activities.

My tips for making it work

- Embrace digital tools to allow for keeping everyone updated and informed.
- Keep a flexible approach to planning
- Regularly check in with all members to reassess and, if necessary, readjust plans to fit everyone's availability and current agricultural demands.

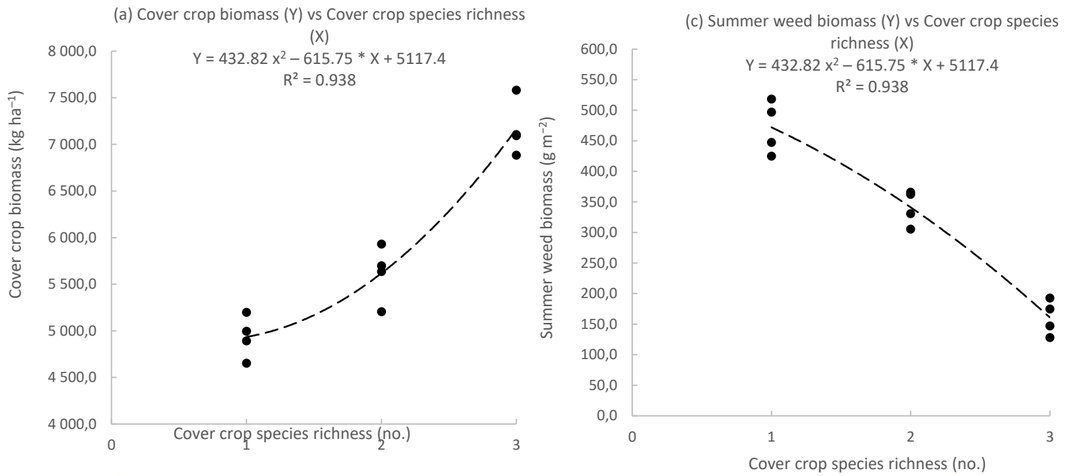
Individual facilitation

- Conducting personalized farm visits for tailored advice and practical observations.
- Utilizing emails and phone calls for immediate assistance and queries.
- Carrying out on-farm trials to evaluate beneficial system changes.
- Scheduling one-on-one meetings for focused, individualized guidance if needed

Collective facilitation

- Sharing in field comparison trial results and discussing motivations for change at annual hub meetings.
- Learning from field walks, demonstrations of new technology, and visits to other farms.
- Encouraging collaborative learning and knowledge exchange via demo-events

IPM adoption & pesticide use



Cover Crops

As part of the project, we conducted anin field comparison experiment on cover crops. 7 different combinations of cover crops were implemented in one of the fields of the Greek Viticulture Hub. In the left figure, the summer weed biomass (Y-axis) is measured in grams per square meter, and it shows a decreasing trend as the cover crop species richness (X-axis) increases.

The right figure indicates the biomass of cover crops in winter (Y-axis) measured in kilograms per hectare. This graph shows an increasing trend in cover crop biomass as the species richness increases.

These graphs could be used to argue that **increasing the diversity of cover crop species can potentially reduce weed biomass in the summer and increase the desired crop biomass in the winter, indicating benefits of biodiversity in crop management.**

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As one of the farmers in our hub, I can say we're all pretty proud of how we've taken on IPM. We've cut down on pesticide use, which feels right for our land and our conscience.

Getting involved with the IPMWORKS network has opened our eyes to even more ways to farm responsibly and effectively without relying too much on chemicals. It's good to be part of a group that's making real change in farming.

Spiridon Karahalios

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As a hub coach, I’ve seen the progress our farmers have made in adopting IPM. There's been a clear decrease in pesticide use, which is a big win for both our crops and the environment. The interest in the IPMWORKS network has grown too, offering us great ideas and connections that help us keep improving our practices. It's clear that working together and sharing our experiences is making a real difference in moving towards safer, more sustainable farming.

Kalliopi Kounani

A European network of demonstration farms promoting low pesticide use and economically efficient management strategies

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