

ADOPTION OF PRECISION FARMING BY FLEMISH FARMERS

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The focus group of the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI, 2015) indicated that the adoption of precision agricultural technologies (PAT) in Europe is lacking behind. More recently, ABN AMRO concluded that “everybody is doing smart farming except the farmers”. Although experts seem to agree on the limited uptake, clear recent figures are lacking, at least in Flanders.

Therefore, the study objective was to map the use of PAT in Flemish agricultural businesses. In the framework of the Flemish year of agricultural data, questions on the use of PAT's were sent out to participants of the Farm Accountancy Data Network, i.e. a representative for all Flemish agricultural and horticultural companies. 527/655 (80%) useful replies were collected.

57% of the responding farms apply PAT's themselves or through contractor, or will most likely do so within a period of five years. In arable farming, dairy, pig and poultry sectors, this percentage is even higher than 66%. This mainly concerns GPS in crop farming and yield registration in livestock farming. A management information system is often lacking. Half of non-users thinks their farm is too small to invest in PAT. Drivers to adopt PAT's are clear costs/benefits, a substantial price reduction and positive experiences from fellow farmers. More accurate daily management and improved insights into technical results are mentioned as the most important benefits.

Concluding, today the use of PAT's is often limited to rather simple technologies like GPS. Yet, a fast majority of farmers shows great interest. The next step, using the generated data for data-driven management decisions is yet to be taken.