Workshop Report

Controlling run-off in potatoes benefits for the grower and the environment

20 April 2017 - Marsham Arms - 12:30pm-3:30pm

Summary

- The free event attracted 24 attendees from Norfolk and Suffolk including 10 farmers (farming over 11,000 hectares) along with farm advisers, academics, engineers and a supply chain representative
- Short presentations from applied academics reviewed the methods to prevent run-off in potatoes with scientific evidence from Cranfield University and ADAS trials around tractor wheeling disruption
- A demonstration of the BE Wonder Wheel, sponsored by Tesco, occurred in a nearby field with water infiltration experiments and soil compaction tests in wheeling's with and without disruption
- Farmers and advisers had the opportunity to exchange knowledge on wheeling, inter-row and tramline management and the practical benefits and cost savings they can deliver
- Wheeling disruption was agreed as an effective technique to reduce run-off but the best method was debated with use of tines alone suggested as potentially more cost-effective
- Cost-savings from retaining soil, nutrients, water and plant protection products and avoiding field wet patches were highlighted along with meeting cross-compliance requirements for environmental protection
- Further information on the impact on yield was requested and this will hopefully be evaluated at the AHDB SPot Farm East at Elveden Estate by Cambridge University Farm and Cranfield University later in 2017
- Attendees from water companies and rivers trusts met with academics and the Elveden Estate Manager after the event to discuss the monitoring proposal and pool resources to fund the collaborative research
- 'Interesting', 'Topical', and 'Worthwhile' were the most commonly used words to describe participants experience with half of the attendees completing evaluation forms
- All respondents agreed that they had learned something new and nearly all agreed that they would do something new as a result of taking part with one respondent not sure
- Four farmers had trialled the BE Wonder Wheel as part of the project, one had trialled it independently prior to the workshop, and another two volunteered for free trials as a consequence of the workshop
- One farmer requested a farm visit and all respondents stated that they would like to attend future events

Background

Water Sensitive Farming is a collaborative project 2016-2018 to benefit both farmers and the environment by improving agricultural soil and water management throughout much of the East Anglia. The aim is to keep soil, nutrients and water in the field and away from the surrounding river system, enhancing farm productivity and watercourse quality.

WaterLIFE an EC-funded project and the WWF-UK and Coca-Cola Freshwater Partnership have funded Norfolk Rivers Trust to work with farmers 2016 – 2018 with objectives to improve land use in over 3000 acres; install 15 silt traps; and engage greater than 1000 farmers in both the Cam & Ely Ouse and Broadland rivers catchment.

Tesco have funded the Broads Authority to work with farmers and agronomists in 2017, with priority given to those in the Tesco supply chain, throughout the Broadland rivers catchment. The primary objectives are to: encourage the use of new and innovative technology to help their business and the environment; raise awareness of the protection of waterbodies; and link growers with funding sources.

A secondary objective is to stimulate interest from the supply chain to attract further funding to encourage the agricultural community and research organisations to further investigate the costs and benefits of new technology a local level - including the impact on crop yields, quality and water efficiency.

All work in the Broadland Rivers Catchment is co-ordinated by the Broadland Catchment Partnership (BCP) that is co-hosted by the Broads Authority and Norfolk Rivers Trust. The BCP aims to improve the water environment and provide wider benefits for people and nature.

Objectives of the workshop

1. Introduce the catchment partnership and collaborative approach to protecting waterbodies.
2. Raise awareness of Water Sensitive Farming and free advice, funding and kit trials available.
3. Exchange knowledge on novel cost-effective techniques and encourage wider dissemination.

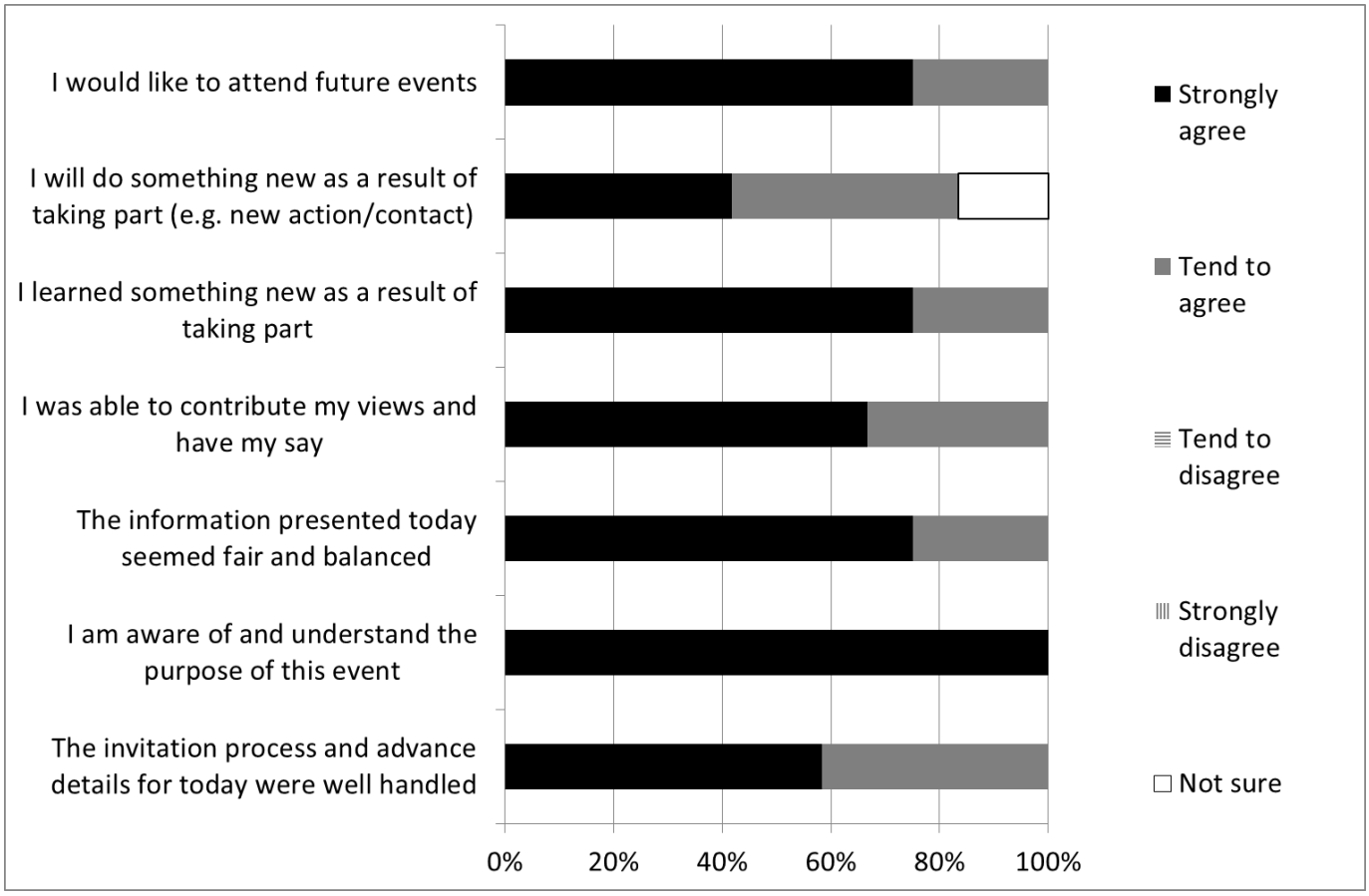
Desired outcomes of the workshop

1. Improved networks with farmers, agronomists and other advisers through presentation of impartial, balanced and costed (where possible) information.
2. Increased trials of innovative technology to increase water infiltration and reduce both run-off and leaching from agricultural soils.
3. Increase uptake of farm advice and funding for improvements to water environment.

Agenda

Time	What	Who
12:30 - 13:00	Lunch	All
13:00 - 13:15	Welcome and introduction	Neil Punchard
13:15 - 13:30	Techniques for reducing water usage and run-off in potatoes	Mark Stalham
13:30 - 13:45	Recent run-off and soil loss trials using the Wheel track roller	Lynda Deeks
13:45 - 14:00	SPot Farm East trials and proposed monitoring	Andrew Francis

Evaluation



N = 12

Demonstration of soil infiltration tests in wheelings

Workshop participants

N	First name	Surname	Category
1	Andy	Alexander	Adviser
2	Sophie	Bambridge	Farmer
3	Tony	Bambridge	Farmer
4	Ed	Bramham-Jones	Adviser
5	Harry	Betts	Farmer
6	Barry	Bendall	Adviser
7	Trevor	Bye	Engineer
8	Lynda	Deeks	Academic
9	Dan	Driver	Academic
10	Andrew	Francis	Farmer
11	James	Harrison	Farmer
12	Richard	Lapage	Engineer
13	John	Lockhart	Farmer
14	Paul	Mace	Adviser
15	Tim	Papworth	Farmer
16	Jeff	Poortvliet	Farmer
17	Edward	Pye	Farmer
18	Jonathan	Pye	Farmer
19	Neil	Punchard	Adviser
20	Richard	Reynolds	Adviser
21	Ian	Skinner	Adviser
22	Alison	Smyth	Adviser
23	Mark	Stalham	Academic
24	Laurence	Webb	Supply