Farmer knowledge to inform NFM

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Outline

• What we said we would do
• What we found out
• What we do next
• Lessons in engagement
What we said we would do

- Over the last 2 years we have:
  - Sought the views of farmers across the West Thames (36 responses)
  - Had stands at Groundswell 2019 and ORFC 2020
  - Collected soil samples from 46 farms in West Thames

  … Some farmers also attended the workshops.
What we found out

- The importance of soils
- A range of farming practices
- Diverse range of views and willingness to engage
- Farmers are diverse and reflect wider range of thinking
Soil types distribution on the whole West Thames river basin according to *Soilscape* project

Details of soil types distribution within the three catchments which have NFM projects

- **Upper Thames**
- **Pang**
- **Loddon**
Soil types distribution according to farmers

Answers to question 2: “What soil types do you have?”

Soil types distribution on the whole West Thames river basin according to *Soilscapes* project
Views on soil management

• Is it worth investing in good soil structure?: Yes 92%
• SOM helps me access fields more quickly: Yes 58%
• Do you try to improve your SOM?: Yes 94%
• Each year to do something to help SOM: Yes 89%
• Is soil testing useful: Yes 83%
• Cover crops part of my rotation: Yes 28%, Undecided 44%
Soil testing

Soil tests implemented by farmers

- Nitrogen: 6% once, 44% more than once
- Phosphorous: 6% once, 75% more than once
- Potassium: 8% once, 75% more than once
- Soil carbon: 11% once, 33% more than once
- Trace elements: 11% once, 50% more than once
- Other: 11% once, 22% more than once

Legend:
- Green: Once in the last 5 years
- Orange: More than once in the last 5 years
Arable rotations
Compared to 20 years ago …
Some unproductive areas

In the last ten years, are there any areas of your farm which have become unproductive or unusable?

- Not any areas which have become unproductive: 59%
- Some areas have become unproductive: 41%

- Weed (Black grass): 22%
- Drought: 6%
- Flooding: 17%
- Water logging: 22%
- Overgrowing of field edge vegetation: 6%
- Increase of machinery width: 6%
- Flytipping: 6%
- Environmental stewardship schemes: 17%
Willingness to change

- 64% considering significant changes
- 61% consider advice very/fairly important
Farmers not so out of step
What we do next

• Interviews with farmers in West Thames (Mar & Apr 2020)
• Further views from farmers in West Thames (Mar 2020)
• Draft report on agri-policy to inform thinking (April 2020)
• Input into scenarios development (Spring onwards 2020)
• Continue the dialogue:
  
  discussion on soils and ground truthing the scenarios.
Lessons in stakeholder engagement

• Food & drink matter
• Venue for least comfortable
• Invitations via gatekeepers
• Ask them questions
• Attendees are your partners

Keep dominant voices busy
• Individual activities so all input
• Have maps & photos to view
• Listen & let them off-load
• Regular communication before & after

Relax and enjoy 😊
When referring to LANDWISE work

• For this Webinar please cite as flows:

• Other publications:
  Elwin A et al (2020 planned) Co-creating landscape scenarios for natural flood management through participatory workshops, Land Use Policy
  Broadmeadow S et al (2020 planned) Opportunity mapping for natural flood management interventions based on soil typology and farmer knowledge, ?? Which journal?
Thank you.
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