

Data use by small scale horticultural producers in Wales, U.K.: directions for the provision of digital information in rural management

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Abstract: Food security for small-scale farmers requires resilient farming practice. Farms are affected by economic, market, regulatory and social factors and the farmer needs to be provided with relevant, reliable and up-to date information on these factors. A case study is given of horticulture in Wales where land holdings tend to be small, being of less than 2ha. It showed the growers have an age profile predominating in the older ranges, such that inter-generational skills are likely to be lost. Trade is mainly through on-farm sales, local tourism outlets or local retailers. The majority of growers have access to digital technologies. The most useful to the small-scale farmer are communication devices and knowledge technologies supplying information including that on market prices, weather, soil conditions and best practice. This information increases its benefits if it provides scenarios and predictive models. To use the information, the farmers need an adequate agricultural education. The knowledge systems need to be developed and maintained and this often requires support from Government and Producer Organizations. Use of the knowledge technologies and the two-way supply of information between the farmers and the Producer Organizations and Government will help improve crop

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productivity, sustainability, rural economics and household well-being.

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