Influence of Subjective Norms and Communication Preferences on Grain Farmers’ Attitudes toward Organic and Non-Organic Farming Research Paper

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Abstract

Interpersonal communication and mass media can influence an individual’s attitude or behavior. International and American studies have shown that interpersonal contacts have influenced farmers’ decisions to adopt or not adopt organic farming. Other studies have revealed the communication preferences of organic and non-organic farmers. This study was unique since it combined components of the theory of planned behavior and diffusion of innovations to describe the role subjective norms and communication channels have on forming attitudes toward organic and non-organic farming by non-organic Midwestern grain farmers. Data was collected through a questionnaire sent to 320 members of the Ohio Corn Growers Association or the Ohio Wheat Growers Association. Respondents did not feel pressure from subjective norms to adopt organic farming, but they cared about the opinions of their subjective norms, especially family and consumers. Ohio grain farmers in this study also indicated the importance of communication channels for influencing their decisions to adopt or not adopt farming practices. Interpersonal communication channels (demonstrations, other farmers, meetings, workshops, suppliers, Extension agents) were the most important. The researchers suggested that agricultural communicators and commodity organizations consider the purpose of their messages and select the most appropriate source for delivery. Recommendations were made for further research and teaching by agricultural communication faculty.

Keywords: theory of planned behavior, subjective norms, communication channels, organic farming, grain farmers, survey research, diffusion of innovations