

Farmers levels of knowledge and awareness of environmental issues have an unquestionable impact on the natural world. However, in our study, farmers' comments often betrayed generalised and somewhat vague notions of nutrient cycling and their responses demonstrated that their knowledge was not so developed and sophisticated when it came to furnishing the details. They primarily gained from knowledge attained at agricultural schools or universities, and complemented this with information from the Internet or various training activities. However, farmers interviewed during this project were usually unable to volunteer accurate formulas or give behaviour in soils. Older farmers (under 50-years old, 32%) predominantly drew on their long experience of farming and tacit knowledge gathered through informal channels. In addition to the measurable benefits (income, revenue, yields), more experienced farmers perceived the environment and natural resources as important and inseparable elements of their everyday activities. Therefore, it should be stressed that it is not economic pressure that is the most important factor behind farmers changing perceptions and practices towards more environmental-orientated activities. On the other hand, younger farmers were mainly oriented towards short term profits, but were willing to introduce changes and implement innovations if they expected positive outcomes. They tended to have less experience of farming techniques but had received a more formal agricultural education than the older farmers examined in the survey group. These regulations tightened measures and rules to ensure that agricultural production were compliant with the needs of nature. On the basis of this research, it should be borne in mind that farmers generally understood the importance of sustainable agriculture in terms of keeping down the use of chemical fertilisers. The main drivers for this approach tended to be high prices and a need to fulfil EU regulations in order to benefit economically. All farmers in the EU are obliged to fulfil the cross-compliance requirements if they wish to receive full direct payments. In many cases (57%), the farmers interviewed took an intuitive approach to the problem of sustainable nutrient management. However, their own observations and experiences were usually 'in simpatico' with the concept of sustainable agriculture.