

COOPERATIVE FARMING

Agroecological gains in France

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Credit: ERIC CABANIS/AFP/Getty Images

Inter-farm cooperation has been a locus of research for farmers and shareholders in the Global South, but has not been much studied in the Global North where such cooperation remains a steadfast tool for farmers in developed nations to maintain profitability. This cooperation may even have agroecological benefits through sharing the costs of more intensive methods.

Véronique Lucas at the University of Montpellier, France, and colleagues studied five machinery co-ops involving 30 farms across France. Most of the co-ops were involved in sharing no-till farming equipment, seeds and/or barns and machines for making hay. Most of the farmers have been involved in such co-ops — where

equipment and investments are shared through a deliberative process — for much of their careers, and have been adopting agro-ecological processes focused on conservation, moisture management and legume development to reduce fertilizer use. Sharing knowledge and equipment seems to be deepening such processes, reducing the duplication of resources for farmers in an era of price volatility and maintaining some semblance of stability while improving ecological functions on their land.

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