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Factors Determining the Adoption of Sustainable Land Use Innovations in Agriculture

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Abstract

Sustainable land use (SLU) innovations are innovative practices that contribute to SLU, i.e. practices driven by a mindset and values of justice, supporting the well-being of all life on Earth today and in the future. Building on the concepts of perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), this study explores what factors influence land use manager's decision to adopt a SLU innovation, particularly focusing on agricultural land. Understanding these factors is essential not only for robust empirical analysis but also for informing the design of effective, context-sensitive policy interventions. A wide range of factors has been identified in prior research. Importantly, these factors do not operate uniformly: depending on institutional, economic, and socio-cultural contexts, the same factor may function as a driver, an enabler, or a barrier to adoption. Through a structured literature review, 108 distinct factors were identified and grouped into nine thematic categories. The analysis identified 69 unique barriers to adoption with economic and psychological barriers most frequently reported. The findings show that the barriers are interconnected, spanning individual, organisational, and systemic dimensions. No single barrier type dominates across contexts. Also, 19 drivers and 20 enablers were identified showing two fundamentally different mechanisms influencing adoption. SLU adoption is primarily driven by intrinsic psychological motivators (e.g. attitudes, perceived norms, trust) – adoption decisions originate from internal evaluations of value, benefits and expectations rather than from external constraints. Meanwhile, enablers increase capacity and opportunity by creating conditions necessary for land users to act on their motivations. Knowledge-related enablers are most mentioned followed by economic and governance enablers. Recognising the conceptual distinction between drivers, enablers, and barriers is essential for understanding why adoption occurs, how it becomes feasible, and where policy interventions should be targeted. These findings emphasize the need for tailored policy instruments rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Keywords: Sustainable land use, Agriculture, Barriers, Drivers, Enablers

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