# Hypothesis

Farmer-to-farmer, government and private; how to balance the three for effective, equitable extension

To determine where farmer-to-farmer extension is suitable, and how direct private and public extension must complement this, if at all, to ensure equitable extension.

This research sets out to answer three main questions.   
Firstly, to determine what characteristics are linked with farmers seeking (or not seeking) information from other farmers[[1]](#footnote-1).   
Secondly, to determine the traits likely to make a farmer sought out as a source of information on dairy farming[[2]](#footnote-2).   
Thirdly, to determine how best to distribute private[[3]](#footnote-3) and public[[4]](#footnote-4) sources of extension – whether to differentiate spatially (by area/network) or by characteristic.

The following is hypothesized,

*Seekers* are likely to be less market-oriented and part of networks with more social cohesion – the opposite applies to non-seekers.

*Soughters* are likely to be innovative, market-oriented farmers with exposure to a variety of sources of information.

*Soughters* and *non-seekers* are more likely to seek out private sources of extension. They are less likely to be reliant on a single source of information.  
Seekers are more likely to seek out public extension, but more dependent on particular source of information.  
This however is likely to be condition by previous exposure. Controlling for this, variation is likely to be larger by farmer type than by area.

# Rationale

The dataset’s richness regarding dairy farmers’ social connections and farmer’s preferred sources of information means it is well-poised to answer the questions above, which are particularly relevant to two major questions in development research and practice. Firstly, whether farmer-to-farmer extension (F2F) is appropriate for the delivery of extension, and if so, how to pick “lead farmers”[[5]](#footnote-5). Secondly, what the respective roles of private and public extension should be in agricultural extension – how should they be divided, and who should they target, to maximise the impact of extension.

Discussion of these two questions particularly pertinent at the moment, given the short- and long-term stresses to food security due to Russian aggression in Ukraine and climate change further increase the need for effective agricultural extension. Simultaneously, inflation and rising interest rates are likely to push private and public entities to reduce spending – such research could inform where and how low-cost extension methods (such as F2F) could be deployed effectively, and in which circumstances the scope and scale of extension could be reduced with minimal impact.

Furthermore, the dataset available is particular in its richness regarding social connections, network characteristics, and farmer’s utilised and preferred sources of information on dairy farming. The quantitative evaluation which may be conducted using this data may prove valuable in corroborating or challenging the qualitative research on the questions above.

# Research Questions

1. What individual and network[[6]](#footnote-6) characteristics make dairy farmers more likely to seek information from other farmers?
   1. Are network or individual characteristics, if any, more robust determinants of whether farmers will be seekers?
2. What are the traits of soughters?
   1. Do these vary according to the characteristics of the social network?
   2. Do these vary according to the characteristics of the seekers? (will a certain type of seeker seek out a certain type of soughter, and a different seeker a different soughter)
3. Do *seekers*, *non-seekers*, and *soughters* have different preferences as to where to acquire information or training on farming – ie whether it is private- or public-sourced?
   1. How does reliance on these sources of information vary between and within groups?
   2. Does the preference of information source vary more by grouping (whether seeker, non-seeker, or soughter) than network/area?

1. For ease, let us refer to these as “seekers” and “non-seekers” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For ease, these will be referred to as “soughters” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Refer to non-government sources of extension including private companies, NGOs. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Government-run [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Farmers who are trained and then task to disseminate their knowledge and experiences with others farmers [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Characteristics particular to a network of individuals, rather than of sole individuals, and thus are explanatory over groups [↑](#footnote-ref-6)