



Southeastern Arizona Ranchers' Everyday Life Experiences and the Influence in Adoption of Innovative Drought Practices

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Southeastern Arizona ranchers' biggest climate related concern is drought, which impacts their everyday practices. This study explored how everyday work routines impact the rancher's willingness to adopt innovative drought practices. Two theoretical frameworks were used: everyday sociology (Alder et al., 1987; Mars, 2020) and Schein's (2010) hierarchy of organizational culture. Everyday sociology was used to explore "what, how and why" of daily ranch routine and activities of four ranches in and around Willcox, AZ were included (n=10). Schein's hierarchy was used to explore the ranching culture's field-wide norms and values. The ranchers were interviewed and directly observed performing a range of routine practices over 97 hours of field work.

The key findings of the study were:

Short-term persistence and generational sustainability. The ranchers make decisions aimed at preserving multi-generational persistence and community connectedness.

Problem-driven ingenuity and resourcefulness. The ranchers are intent on 'making things better.' The ranchers are problem-driven, waiting for daily problems to arise. Financial scarcity directly impacts their willingness to adopt innovative drought practices based largely on volatile meat markets. When time and funds allow, the ranchers work on problem prevention. Resource stockpiling empowered the ranchers to be ingenious despite having limited time and funds.

Environmental synergy. The ranchers constantly work to create more effective water systems to support both wildlife and cattle. The ranchers understand vegetation ecology and constantly follow vegetation growth patterns on their pastures, which determines grazing schedules. Ranchers commonly use supplement feed or cull herds in extreme drought years.

Everyday interactions and community involvement. The ranchers utilize social media for public education and peer and community networking. Such practices involve the sharing of information on innovations and shared problem solving. There was also high interaction with agricultural and environmental organizations as the rancher advocated for themselves, their community, and industry.

The following recommendations for practice and research are:

- Further research conducted with other ranchers at the regional and national level to understand rancher decision making and climate innovation adoption to include drought and other climate indicators.
- Further research that compares multi-generational ranches to first-generation ranches decision-making.
- Include ranchers in research implementation and design.
- Ranchers are encouraged to proactively form and coordinate diverse community network of support for climate innovation adoption.
- Ranchers should work to shift from a problem-driven mindset to a solution-driven mindset that includes a mix of economic and environmental based goals.