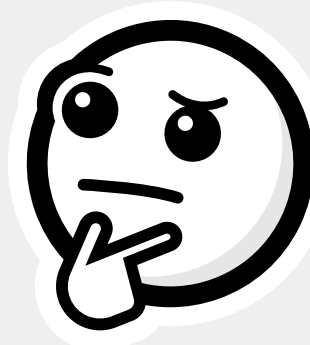
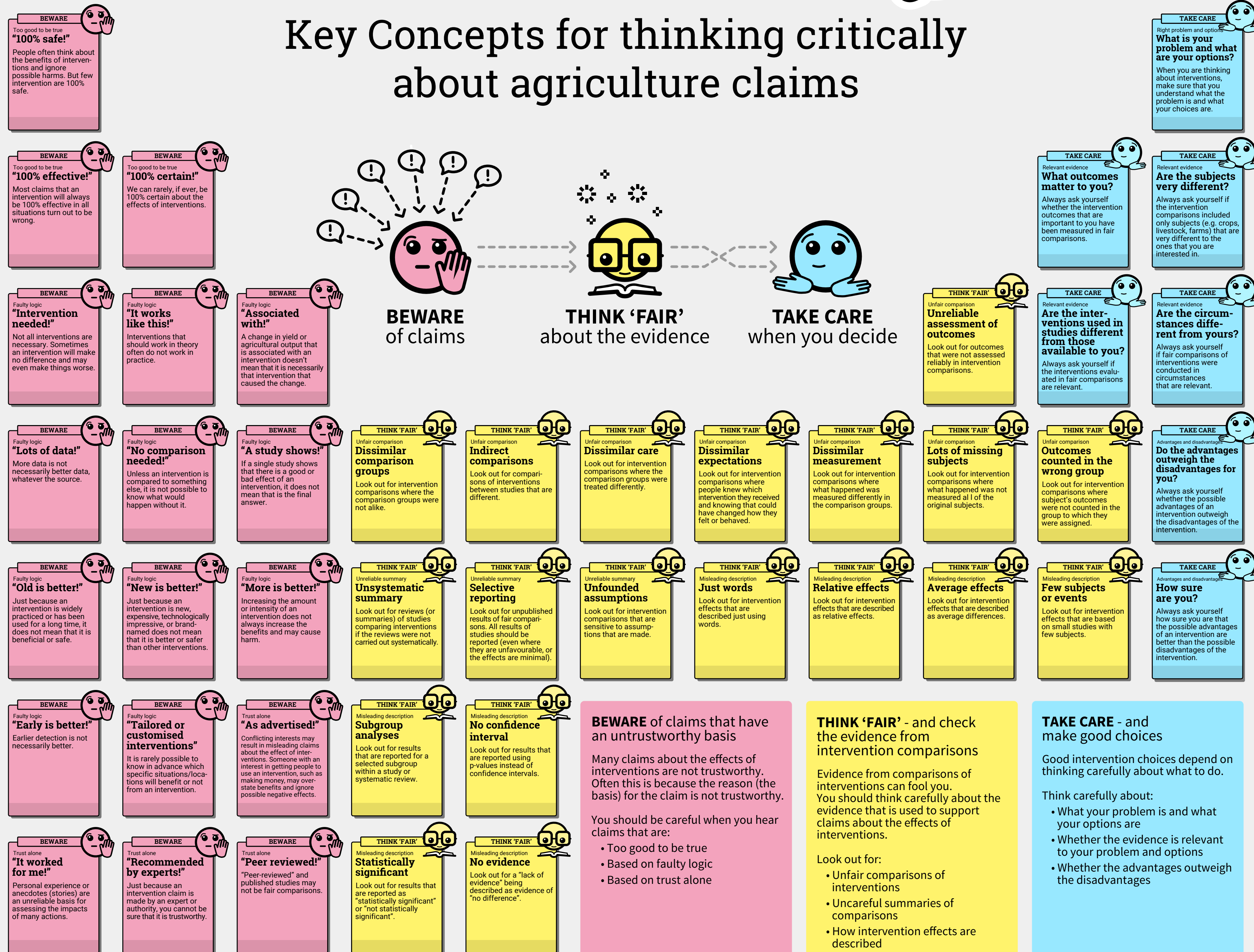


That's a claim!



Key Concepts for thinking critically about agriculture claims



Introduction

How do you decide what is best to improve the efficiency and sustainability of agriculture? There are lots of claims about what farmers should and should not do on their farms. How can you know which of these claims are trustworthy? And how should you decide when to act on claims?

An **"intervention"** can be anything a farmer does for the farm — for example, applying a pesticide, changing the type of tillage used, using antibiotics on livestock, or not using antibiotics. It can also be something that is done for the benefit of farmers generally — for example, providing farm advice or making funding available. An **effect** is something an intervention makes happen—like improving yields or outputs.

A **claim** is something someone says that could be right, but could be wrong. People make lots of claims about intervention effects. How can we tell which claims are right or wrong? To do this, you need to look at what supports their claim - its **basis**. For example, personal experience is not a good basis for a claim about what is good for your farm. This is because we don't know what would have happened if that person had done something else.

To know if an intervention (like changing a tillage regime) causes an effect (like improved yields), the intervention has to be **compared** to something else (like no tillage). Researchers compare an intervention provided to one group with something else given to another group. Those comparisons provide **evidence** — facts to support a conclusion about whether a claim is right or wrong. For those comparisons to be **fair**, the only important difference between the groups should be the interventions.

A **good choice** is one that uses the best information available at the time. For agriculture choices, this includes using the best available evidence of intervention effects. Good choices don't guarantee good outcomes, but they make good outcomes more likely.

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TAKE CARE - and make good choices

Good intervention choices depend on thinking carefully about what to do.

Think carefully about:

- What your problem is and what your options are
- Whether the evidence is relevant to your problem and options
- Whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages

THINK 'FAIR' - and check the evidence from intervention comparisons

Evidence from comparisons of interventions can fool you. You should think carefully about the evidence that is used to support claims about the effects of interventions.

Look out for:

- Unfair comparisons of interventions
- Uncareful summaries of comparisons
- How intervention effects are described

BEWARE of claims that have an untrustworthy basis

Many claims about the effects of interventions are not trustworthy. Often this is because the reason (the basis) for the claim is not trustworthy.

You should be careful when you hear claims that are:

- Too good to be true
- Based on faulty logic
- Based on trust alone