

Social constraints and impacts

Unlike technical and legal constraints, which are often insurmountable, the rigidity and applicability of social constraints may be open to discussion and, under certain circumstances, action may be taken to avoid or negate the constraint. Social constraints include farmers/producers resistance to *implement* the particular countermeasure, e.g.:

- *Resistance to method with respect to animal welfare issues.*
- *Resistance to residual levels of contamination by food industry/consumers: this is likely to be related to the availability of alternatives.*
- *Resistance to use of secondary product (e.g. composting, fertilizer), particularly if applied to previously uncontaminated areas.*

Correct application of the countermeasure cannot be assumed, and consideration needs to be given to precisely how the method needs to be applied to be effective and to whether this needs policing. In the templates, both those social factors which affect the *implementation* (“social constraints”) and *effectiveness* (“factors influencing the effectiveness of procedure”) of a countermeasure are identified. Social factors influencing the effectiveness might be:

- *Acceptability of the implementation of the countermeasure to farmers/the public/owners/employees.*
- *Acceptability of disposal/treatment procedures.*
- *Potential for a black market in contaminated foodstuffs.*
- *Degree to which the countermeasure diverges from common practice.*

Compliance is a key issue for the effectiveness of all countermeasures. This has two main elements:

- 1) the compliance of workers applying the countermeasure to use the correct method of application, and
- 2) the compliance of members of the public in relation to behavioural change and in relation to acceptability of the countermeasure (removal of flora, for example, could elicit active resistance as has been seen in relation to, for example, road-building in the UK). Public acceptability issues require two-way communication and resolution.

A further issue in relation to compliance is ownership: property owners may or may not be willing to apply countermeasures or have countermeasures applied to their property. One element of this willingness will be the question of who is paying for the countermeasure application, but there may be other reasons (such as e.g. destruction of gardens; restriction of access) which make owners more or less willing to comply with a countermeasure.

There can be a risk of stigma associated with some countermeasures, particularly when there is a need to select areas of countermeasure application within a larger region. Generally, one would expect countermeasures to result in a lower level of stigma in communities than if nothing had been done. However, countermeasures that result in a visible change in practice or landscape, to a small subset of society (for example a few farms), may carry a greater risk of stigma for those groups or individuals.

There may be a social impact when implementing countermeasures. This might refer to public confidence/trust in authorities, growth of black markets, and disruption of farming practices etc. These features may lead to a positive and negative rebound on the effectiveness of the measures and decision-makers should consider the relevance of such social factors carefully when deciding whether or not they apply to the situation in question.

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