

RISKSUR Symposium: Roundtable discussions

Question 7

Facilitator: All

Rapporteur: All

Question: We believe one of the obstacles preventing the adoption of new surveillance approaches is the slow translation of research findings into policy. Do you agree? If so what do you think are the main reasons for this? How do think this translation of scientific findings into policy and implementation of surveillance be improved?

Feedback

There was agreement from all tables that slow transition of research findings into policy is an obstacle to the adoption of new surveillance approaches.

Reasons for slow translation of research findings to policy

- Reasons are at several levels – economic, political and communication.
- Research is not translated to a level that decision makers can understand.
- Lack of trust – people want to wait until research has been consolidated/validated before implementing it themselves.
- The way the services work in some countries could be a factor – stagnated process (excess hierarchy and bureaucracy).
- Lack of acceptance of the research directions given by the European Commission.
- Diversity among countries – how can we find rules that apply to all? The findings of research in one country may not apply to others, and the legislation needs to be for all. Countries must also have liberty to design their own policy to attend their situation.
- The behaviour of humans; it is difficult to change people's habits.
- Policy and research speak different languages.
- Research cannot address immediate needs. There is a time step.
- Industry not necessarily keen to update surveillance methodologies.
 - Industry happy with current surveillance approach
 - Theoretical research on syndromic surveillance may not be useful to farmers/industry.
- Complexity of methods and need for technical expertise to understand and implement, an example of a complex method of herd classification which was never implemented was cited.
- New methods may not always be relevant to real world problems.
- Legislation restricts flexibility.
- Historically policy makers may have been conservative and not willing to accept new approaches but the situation has changed in some countries where policy makers now trust their scientific advisors to tell them what surveillance is most appropriate. It may not be a problem of policy makers not accepting scientific advice but there may still be issues that delay the implementation of new methods.

Methods for improving implementation of scientific findings into policy

- Communication and dissemination - research translated from peer-reviewed papers to:
 - Policy makers.
 - Farmers/vets.
 - General public.
- People within the government (policy making departments) or scientists need sufficient expertise to translate research into policy; however, it is a rare skill to translate a policy question into research and back again.
- Link authorities with the research centers.
- Bring people physically together to discuss
 - Increase participation of CVOs in meetings such as SVEPM.
 - Arrange specific meetings as it can be difficult to encourage policy makers to attend scientific meetings.
- Exchange of personnel between positions in science and policy.
- Young researchers in particular need more contact with policy makers, to develop relationships and have time to understand them.
- Researchers need to disseminate and sell their own outputs to policy/industry.
- Researchers should want to increase their impact and be able to measure the impact of their work.
- Research including economic outputs (production/trade impact) will have improved effects on policy uptake.
- Policy impact should be included in projects from the very beginning.
- Choose one strategy and put money into developing it.
- Lack of resources is driving change as decision makers need to consider the most efficient methods of surveillance.
- The flexibility that will be built in to the new animal health legislation should make it easier to adopt new methods.
- A method to evaluate new approaches and ensure that they meet the surveillance objectives will be required.