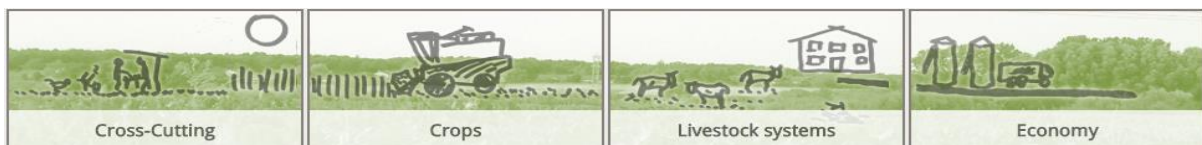




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Developing a framework for critical assessment of stakeholder engagement activities.

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Multi-actor approaches to research are essential to meeting the complex challenges facing the agricultural sector in Europe. From a practical perspective, working with stakeholders can enhance the relevance of research findings, and increase the chances of achieving changes in practice. Recent work within the Modelling European Agriculture with Climate Change for Food Security (MACSUR) project analysed seven case studies of stakeholder engagement involving partners from the consortium. This initial study revealed a number of categories underlying the individual cases. These categories highlighted the interactions between the actors involved (including scientists) and how these were shaped by, and shaped, external and internal structures and processes. Here, the categories which emerged from the initial study have been developed into a simple approach for the critical assessment of engagement activities. A qualitative framework is being developed, composed of five elements derived from the initial study: external shaping, shaping by priority, shaping by role, shaping by actions and pathway to impact. Development of qualitative indicators to support the assessment of each element relative to theoretical best practice is ongoing. Applications of the nascent framework, including assessments of MACSUR regional case studies, are presented to illustrate its potential. Use of the framework in engagement design and review is intended to minimise unintended consequences arising from unrecognised issues relating, for example, to the effects of power inequalities between the social worlds of different stakeholder groups. It provides a structure for systematic reflection on such elements, either when designing a stakeholder engagement activity, as a reflexive exercise during implementation, or in order to assess a completed activity. Complementing current practical frameworks for good practice in stakeholder engagement, this tool is being designed to address critical aspects of engagement in the context of quantitative research, including the development and use of models as part of integrated assessments.