BioSecure
Enhanced and cost-effective biosecurity in livestock production

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PRACTICE ABSTRACT # 50

# Stakeholder-focused research: policy implications for research funding frameworks

**Stakeholder-focused research executed within European funding frameworks can present methodological and structural challenges that carry direct implications for funders, research consortia, and policy makers.**

Research methods such as interviews, focus groups, workshops, and field observation are essential tools for understanding how biosecurity is experienced, negotiated, and enacted in real farming contexts. However, the dynamic and non-linear nature of these methods can be at odds with the more structured quantitative focused research which can impact on delivery of outcomes within funding frameworks. The following points outline the tensions:

- Qualitative and iterative research approaches make fixing timelines inherently difficult, which may be in contrast to other projects employing more traditional quantitative methods within large consortia.
- Recruiting stakeholders for meaningful, sustained engagement is substantially more demanding than standard recruitment and requires longer planning times, especially when networks of contacts are not already in place and efforts are being made to engage hard-to-reach participants.
- Stakeholder-focused interventional studies must be designed to accommodate the full arc of planning, data collection, and analysis, going beyond just time for fieldwork.
- Outputs should be reported in formats that are accessible and actionable for the audiences most likely to benefit from them. This may require using new approaches not usually employed in quantitative research.
- Variation across livestock sectors and countries is expected, not exceptional. Contextual differences rooted in societal, cultural, and community factors should inform how project outcomes are defined and measured.
- Success in this type of research should be assessed through diverse and appropriate indicators, including relational, communicative, and trust-based changes, rather than defaulting to behavioural metrics borrowed from biological science frameworks.
- Expectations of change must be calibrated to what is realistically achievable within project timelines, among participants, research teams, and funding bodies alike.



Picture: Researchers reflecting on the facilitators and barriers encountered during their participatory interventions across different farming contexts

Qualitative research must be treated as a methodologically distinct and equally valid mode of evidence production alongside standard quantitative approaches.

The various challenges encountered are predictable features of engaging with stakeholders that funding frameworks should plan for structurally, rather than treat as exceptional risks.

The analytical timeline of stakeholder-focused research should prompt funders to consider post-award support mechanisms.

Milestone and deliverable structures in competitive research frameworks should be adapted to accommodate the iterative and emergent logic of stakeholder-focused approaches.

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Funded by the European Union

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