

Evaluation of animal health surveillance: is it all about technical effectiveness?

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Purpose: Surveillance systems (SS) need to be tailored to epidemiological systems which are driven by epidemiological, ecological, economic, social and environmental factors. This requires the design of comprehensive, practical, and affordable evaluation frameworks. Priority setting, affordability, sustainability, social acceptance, communication and efficiency are all issues that policy makers have to consider when designing and implementing disease management policy.

Methods: One of the objectives of the RISKSUR project was to develop a practical framework to guide decision makers in performing integrated evaluations of their SS. The EVA decision tool was developed based on expert meetings and discussions and builds on existing evaluation framework, methods and tools and provides an integrated support guide for economic and epidemiological evaluation of SS.

Results: The user provides inputs related to the aim and context of the evaluation. The tool generates an optimum selection of evaluation attributes and measurement methods to assess the efficiency, effectiveness (e.g. sensitivity), and also functional aspects influencing the overall performance of a SS (e.g. acceptability, flexibility) and economic criteria. Further, new methods based on participatory approaches have been developed to assess functional attributes. The applications of EVA to SS in EU countries and challenging environments have highlighted the critical importance of functional attributes assessment to generate meaningful recommendations for all stakeholders.

Conclusion: The EVA decision tool provides a practical evaluation framework which guides the evaluators on the implementation of the evaluation and provides essential elements for the interpretation of the results. This integrated approach ensure uptake of the outcomes by positioning them back into the complex process of decision making.

Relevance: Relevant evaluation programs are critical to provide evidence based information to ensure quality of the data and stakeholder trust in animal health status of one country.