

The EU societal awareness of landscape indicator: A review of its meaning, utility and performance across different scales.

P.J. Jones, E. Andersen, C. Capitani, S. Carvalho Ribeiro, G.H. Griffiths, I. Loupa-Ramos, L. Madeira, S.R. Mortimer, M.L. Paracchini, T. Pinto Correia, A.M. Schmidt, R. Simoncini, D.M. Wascher

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Abstracts: There is increasing recognition that agricultural landscapes meet multiple societal needs and demands beyond provision of economic and environmental goods and services. Accordingly, there have been significant calls for the inclusion of societal, amenity and cultural values in agri-environmental landscape indicators to assist policy makers in monitoring the wider impacts of land-based policies. However, capturing the amenity and cultural values that rural agrarian areas provide, by use of such indicators, presents significant challenges. The EU social awareness of landscape indicator represents a new class of generalized social indicator using a top-down methodology to capture the social dimensions of landscape without reference to the specific structural and cultural characteristics of individual landscapes. This paper reviews this indicator in the context of existing agri-environmental indicators and their differing design concepts. Using a stakeholder consultation approach in five case study regions, the potential and limitations of the indicator are evaluated, with a particular focus on its perceived meaning, utility and performance in the context of different user groups and at different geographical scales. This analysis supplements previous EU-wide assessments, through regional scale assessment of the limitations and potentialities of the indicator and the need for further data collection. The evaluation finds that the perceived meaning of the indicator does not vary with scale, but in common with all mapped indicators, the usefulness of the indicator, to different user groups, does change with scale of presentation. This indicator is viewed as most useful when presented at the scale of governance at which end users operate. The relevance of the different sub-components of the indicator are also found to vary across regions