K. Helming
M. Pérez-Soba
P. Tabbush
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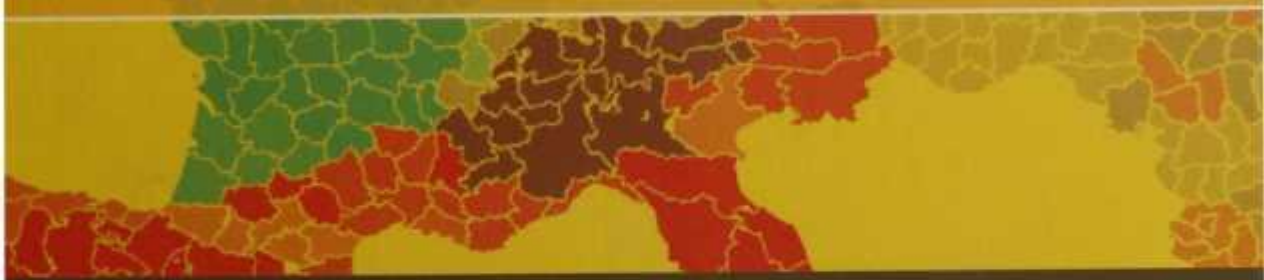

Sustainability Impact Assessment of Land Use Changes

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With 72 Figures, 55 in colour

Springer

Dr. Katharina Helming
Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)
Eberswalder Str. 84, D-15374 Müncheberg,
Germany

E-Mail:
khelming@zalf.de

Dr. Marta Pérez-Soba
ALTERRA
Wageningen UR, Droevendaalsesteeg 3, 6708 PB Wageningen,
The Netherlands

E-Mail:
marta.perezsoba@wur.nl

Mr. Paul Tabbush
Forest Research, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham Surrey, UK, GU10 4LH
United Kingdom

E-Mail:
paul.tabbush@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

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Foreword

There are many reasons why strategic intelligence is required to support policy decisions. These primarily stem from the nature of today's knowledge society with two contrasting trends. On the one hand, there is a trend of increasing human intelligence in the economic, social and political systems. On the other hand, there is a trend towards dissolving certainties about the problems and solutions of today's society. Clearly, more information does not necessary imply more certainties on how to act. What is more, the same facts are often interpreted in markedly different ways: the same policy relevant information can – and often does – results in conflicting framing of a problem by different stakeholders. This is mainly due to competing assumptions, rather then because of inconsistent facts. Therefore, it is not surprising that policy-makers are calling for strategic intelligence to support their understanding of today's challenges, including the relevant aspects of science and technology, their impact and their possible future developments.

Over the last 15 years, Europe has rapidly adopted the practice of developing and using Impact Assessment (IA) tools to support decision-making. Formal procedures and guidance for IA are well established within the European Commission and in most EU Member States. The adoption of IA procedures alone, however, does not guarantee that every policy domain is actually using the full potential of these assessment tools in the preparation of policies and legislation. To substantiate the complex process of IA, the European Commission has launched a series of comprehensive research projects to develop science based sustainability impact assessment tools. The integrated project SENSOR is one of them and I am looking forward to reading and using this publication on the IA concepts and tools developed within the SENSOR project.

Peter De Smedt
Scientific Officer of the SENSOR project.

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