

Four strategies to deal with impurities in intercropping

Problem

Harvested crops grown in intercropping contain impurities from the crop(s) they were grown with, rendering them incompatible with food processors' quality standards.

Solution

Design a cognitive map depicting impurity-related barriers and their interrelations.

Applicability box

Theme

Post-harvest management, Cropping systems, Processing.

Keywords

Postharvest equipment, Intercropping, Food processing

Context

Europe

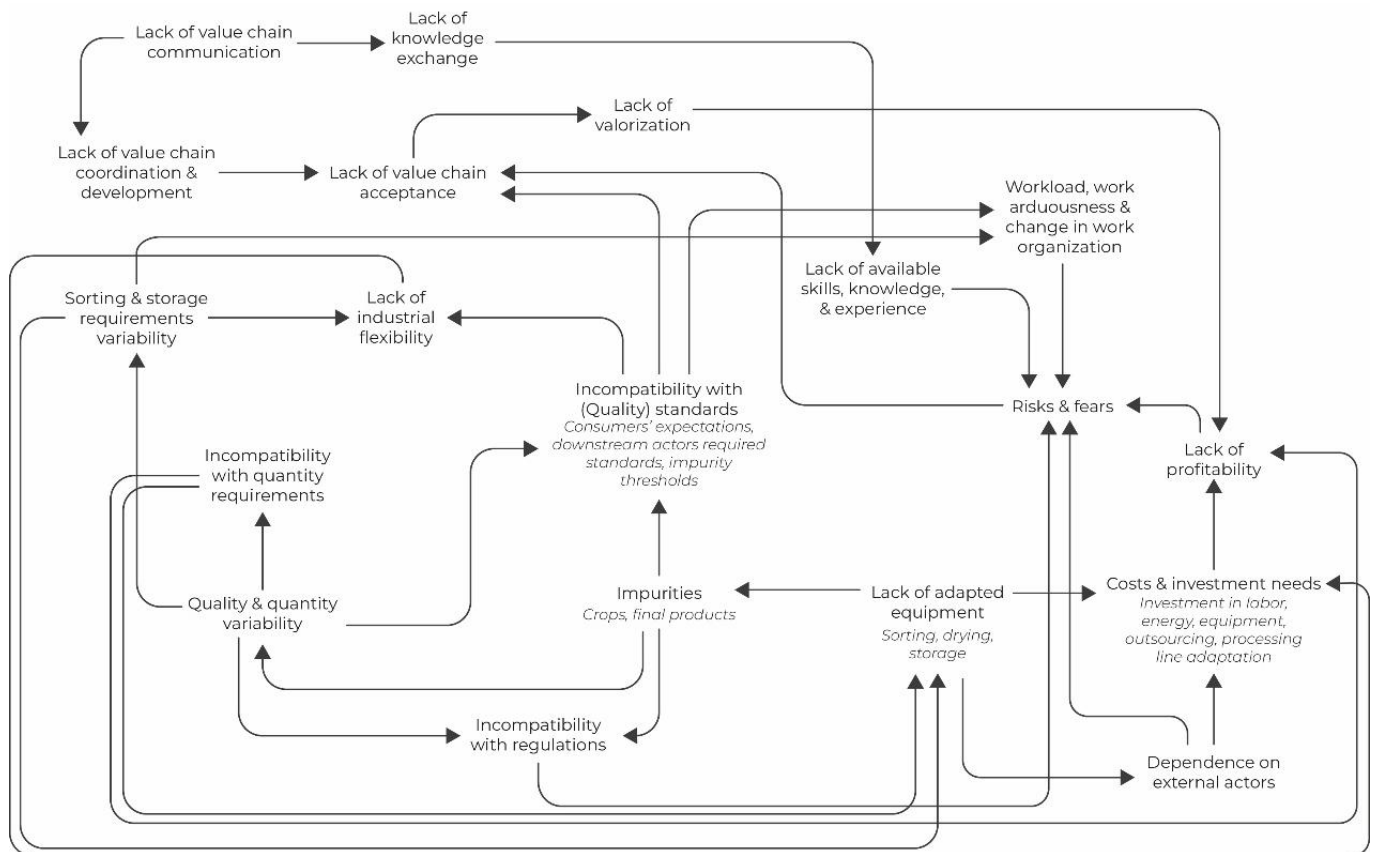


Figure 1 – System map of impurity-related barriers.

Benefits

Simultaneously viewing the multiple dimensions of the impurity issue facilitates the identification of possible leverage points for effective interventions.

Practical recommendations

Strategies to deal with impurities:

- **Minimisation:** improve sorting equipment efficiency to reach maximum impurity threshold accepted by processors,
- **Acceptance:** increase the maximum impurity threshold accepted by processors as long as impurities have no impact on processing processes and products' quality,
- **Adaptation:** adapt processing processes to impurity presence without changing the final product,
- **Valorisation:** develop new products based on the integration of impurities.

Each strategy targets different leverage points (e.g., sorting equipment, knowledge development) and rely on the involvement of specific actor types.

Strategies must be discussed with field actors for relevance and feasibility assessment and for translation into concrete interventions.

Maps of barriers can be designed for other intercropping-related issues and discussed with field actors to identify leverage points and related resolution strategies.

Further information

Further readings

- [Stone, T. F., Alford, J., Bečvářová, P. H., Eisa, M. A. M., El-Naggar, A. H., Carpio Espinosa, M. J., Fraç, M., Álvaro-Fuentes, J., García-Gil, J. C., Krabbe, K., Martins, J. T., Pathan, S. I., Plaza, C., Rasmussen, J., Righini, C., & Thorsøe, M. H. \(2025\). Food system strategies to increase grain legume-cereal intercropping in Europe. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 49\(4\), 518-542.](#)
- Bedoussac, L., Salembier, C., Jeuffroy, M.-H., albouy, lisa, & Elina, D. (2022). *FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE OF SPECIES MIXTURES: Redesigning European cropping systems based on species MIXtures*. <https://doi.org/10.17180/B5F1-W556>.

Weblinks

- Check the [Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#) for more practical recommendations.

About this practice abstract

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IntercropVALUES aims to exploit the benefits of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, environmentally friendly cropping systems acceptable to farmers and actors in the agri-food chain. As a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, it brings together scientists and local actors representing the food value chain. It includes 27 participants from 15 countries (3 continents) from a wide diversity of organizations and stakeholders. The project will run for four years and started in November 2022.

Project website: <https://intercropvalues.eu/>