

Decision Support Tools: A customer perspective

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Why has Defra supported DST?



Defra's agricultural research is policy driven: reducing pollution to air, soil and water, optimising use of inputs, reducing waste.

DST can help farmers and policy makers.

DST for policy making

- Scenario planning
to meet targets
to identify areas likely to fail
- Identifying suitable approaches at different scales
- Identifying cost effectiveness
- Building up more complex pictures of the interaction
between different pollutants (pollution swapping)
- Providing tools for advisors

That's the theory!

What does the practice look like?

A problem!



- Tools often over promise and under-deliver!
- They were not developed for the purpose for which they are now being sold to Defra and as a consequence, they could fail to deliver.

What do I need from DST and the people who develop them?

Honesty

Don't try and pretend a tool will do something it won't!

Is it best used at a local or national scale? It is underpinned by representative data? Are questions of uncertainty addressed?

Be open about the limitations!

Utility



- **Models need to have broad applicability.**
- **They need to be thoroughly tested – particularly if national policy is going to be based on what a model predicts.**

Ease of Use



For “normal” people, not IT experts! Very important!

But will people try harder to learn if the benefits are worth it? Or will they not bother?

You could factor in training as part of the package.

Collaborative

- **Be prepared to work together to develop common frameworks**
- **You don't have to agree with each other!**

Focused

- **Understand the needs of the end-user and focus on them.**
- **“Sell” your model to the audience**
 - **will it save a farmer money?**
 - **will it help a policy maker reduce pollution?**

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