

Limits to agri-environmental schemes uptake to mitigate human–wildlife conflict: lessons learned from Flamingos in the Camargue, southern France



"Agri-environment schemes (AES) favouring the maintenance of hedges were implemented in the Camargue (southern France) as it has previously been proven to reduce the risk of damage caused by Greater Flamingo incursions into rice fields. Given the persistent incursions, we estimated the economic cost of damage from 2007 to 2009, the uptake rate of hedge-related AES and explored the limits of these schemes as a mitigation effort. Semi-structured and key informant interviews, site mapping and field visits were made to verify claims and estimate damage. Number of plants/m² and fertile stems/plant were estimated on 1,498 and 312 grids, respectively, spread over 26 rice fields. Damaged areas of rice fields forayed by flamingos presented from 1.35 to 3.06 t/ha lower yield than undamaged areas. We estimated 228€/ha average loss in forayed fields for a total of 400,000€ in yield loss in 2008. Administrative constraints limited AES and free seedlings distribution, preventing the problem from being addressed at an appropriate scale. The trivial financial support for hedge management relative to more lucrative AES with lower constraints resulted in low uptake rate. We propose that modifications of AES take into account landscape factors over administrative boundaries and that the financial support for AES be scaled up relative to other subsidies in order to address the efforts necessary to achieve landscape changes to reduce human–wildlife conflict."

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