



FROM INDICATORS TO RISK GOVERNANCE: TEN YEARS OF LEA MONITORING TO IMPROVE OFFICIAL CONTROLS AND FOOD SAFETY IN SARDINIA (2016-2024)

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Objective. To evaluate the evolution of the regional monitoring system for Essential Levels of Assistance (LEA) indicators in Sardinia during the period 2014-2024 and to analyse its contribution to strengthening official controls in veterinary public health and food safety.

Materials and Methods. Since 2016, the Sardinia Region has progressively implemented a structured monitoring system that uses LEA indicators not only for compliance verification but also to support planning and continuous improvement of official controls in veterinary public health and food safety. The organisational model was developed with the scientific and technical support of the Experimental Zooprophy-lactic Institute (IZS), through documented procedures defining information flows, roles, responsibilities, and monitoring activities.

The study analysed LEA performance during the period 2016-2024, using the two-year period 2014-2015 as a reference baseline. Monitoring activities included quarterly assessments of progress, verification of data quality and completeness, comparison between planned and implemented activities, analysis of ministerial information flows and regional information systems, periodic audits, and feedback of results to Local Health Authorities (ASLs). The contribution of the monitoring system was assessed by analysing the annual LEA scores assigned by the Ministry of Health through the national LEA evaluation system (0-100), where 60 represents the minimum acceptable threshold.

Results. The monitoring system evolved from an annual reporting process into a continuous cycle of planning, monitoring, verification, and corrective actions. Intermediate monitoring

enabled the identification of recurring critical issues, including failure to perform sampling activities, discrepancies between planned and recorded activities, incomplete inspection reports, inconsistencies between matrices and analytes, delays in sample management and data recording, as well as differences in the application of official procedures among ASLs. Periodic feedback of results promoted greater consistency in the implementation of official controls and improved activity planning and accountability of territorial services.

Before the implementation of the structured monitoring system, the LEA indicator for Food Safety and Veterinary Public Health Prevention (a single composite indicator until 2020) achieved a score of 51/100 in 2014 and 57/100 in 2015. From 2016 onwards, the same indicator consistently received scores above 90/100 in the annual assessments carried out by the Ministry of Health, demonstrating a significant and sustained improvement in regional performance.

Conclusions. The progressive implementation of structured monitoring procedures was associated with sustained improvements in LEA performance and contributed to strengthening the governance of official controls in veterinary public health and food safety. Intermediate monitoring and periodic feedback transformed LEA indicators from an annual reporting requirement into an operational management tool supporting planning, early identification of deviations, and timely implementation of corrective actions. This model, based on the integration of regional planning, audits, and ministerial reporting, represents a potentially transferable experience and provides an example of how structured monitoring approaches can support the strengthening of official control systems for the protection of public health.