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Author(s): Boelie Elzen, Bram Bos

This paper discusses an approach to develop new 'integrally sustainable' animal production systems and stimulate their uptake in practice. It consists of a design approach called RIO, and a set of 'anchoring' activities to stimulate their uptake in niches and in the regime. In the period 2001–2015 we have applied the approach in various animal production sectors, and adapted and improved it while doing. The general aim of the paper is to assess the applicability of the RIO/anchoring approach to induce sustainability transitions. We conclude that RIO is especially suited for areas characterized by a 'heterogeneous' set of sustainability challenges (in our case, environmental burden, animal welfare, public acceptance, profitability). A RIO approach can then render 'integrally sustainable' alternatives that generate wide interest in the regime. Anchoring activities can successfully stimulate a variety of initial changes. This does not suffice, however, and a conducive institutional environment is key to facilitate the initial uptake of the novel systems. With relatively simple and cheap financial instruments, governments can help to create such a conducive environment.

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