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Illegal Rural Enterprise – Developing a framework to help identify and investigate shadow infrastructures and illicit criminal networks.

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Illegal Rural Enterprise – Developing a framework to help identify and investigate shadow infrastructures and illicit criminal networks

Purpose: This study builds on the extant research of the authors on Illegal Rural Enterprise [IRE]. However, instead of taking a single or micro case approach within specific sections of the farming and food industries we examine the concept holistically from a macro case perspective. Many IRE crimes simply could not be committed without insider knowledge and complicity, making it essential to appreciate this when researching or investigating such crimes.

Design/methodology/approach: Using data from published studies, we introduce the theoretical concept of 'Shadow infrastructure' to analyse and explain the prevalence and endurance of such criminal enterprises. Using a multiple case approach, we examine data across the cases to provide an analysis of several industry wide crimes - the illicit halal meat trade; the theft of sheep; the theft of tractors and plant; and the supply of illicit veterinary medicines.

Findings: We examine IRE crimes across various sectors to identify commonalities in practice and in relation to business models drawing from a multidisciplinary literature spanning business and criminology. Such enterprises can be inter-linked. We also provide suggestions on investigating such structures.

Academic and practical implications: We identify academic and practical implications in relation to the investigation of IRE crime and from an academic perspective in relation to researching the phenomenon.

Social and policy implications: Include setting up a multi-agency intelligence hub to provide expert knowledge to the numerous agencies involved in investigating such crime.

What is the value of paper: Combining data from numerous individual studies from a macro perspective to provide practical solutions to a multi-faceted problem.

Key Words: Criminal Entrepreneurship, Illegal Rural Enterprise, Illicit Trade, Rural Policing, Shadow Infrastructures.

Introduction

This study focuses on the literature of UK based rural policing¹. In the literature, it is acknowledged that although rural policing is of equal importance to urban policing it has been neglected in criminal justice research (Rudell, 2016; Meško and Bowden, 2023). Indeed, a review of the published articles in this journal highlights that few

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3 relate specifically to rural policing, rural crime or its investigation. Nevertheless, with
4 the development of rural criminology as a distinct sub-topic and the introduction of
5 journals such as the International Journal of Rural Criminology, and the Routledge
6 Handbook of Rural Criminology (Donnermeyer, 2016) studies of rural crime and
7 policing are beginning to make an impact. Early studies **focused on** literature reviews
8 and individual case studies (Smith, 2010) which although invaluable in presenting
9 individual insights do not have the impact of comparative cross-case studies. This can
10 be ascribed to a dearth of substantive published data and to the difficulty of
11 researching the topic in closed communities. Policing and researching rural crime are
12 difficult endeavours in that both the farming and criminal communities **are reticent** in
13 talking to the authorities or to academics, practicing a form of Omertà **making**
14 **recruiting respondents difficult** (Smith, 2010).
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28 Nevertheless, there has been an increase in empirical, qualitative studies using case
29 study and documentary research methodologies (see McElwee, Smith and Somerville,
30 2011; Smith and McElwee, 2013; Somerville, Smith and McElwee, 2015; Fenwick, 2015;
31 Manning, Smith and Soon, 2016; Terpstra, 2017; McElwee, Smith and Lever, 2017;
32 Smith, 2017; Smith, McElwee and Somerville, 2017; Goodall, 2019; Smith and
33 McElwee, 2019; Goodall, 2021; Goodall, 2022). There is still a pressing need for further
34 qualitative, empirical articles on rural policing and crime to move beyond the analysis
35 of single cases and a constant reviewing and regurgitation of the literature. Moreover,
36 there is a need to synthesise the literatures of rural crime and policing which do not
37 always naturally align. Policing scholars examine rural policing strategies, tactics, and
38 organisational perspectives relating to rural policing and the use of modern
39 technology; whilst scholars of rural crime concentrate on emerging crime types. Much
40 research focuses on policing initiatives and not on the communities, or the rural
41 settings themselves and much of the literature is dated. Moreover, scholars of rural
42 crime invariably ignore the literature on *illicit markets* and *shadow infrastructures*
43 (Gallagher and Foster, 2021).
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3 The research direction in rural crime focuses on predatory victimisation inflicted on
4 the rural community by *urban marauders* (Smith, 2010). Although this polarised view
5 has been challenged the notion of insider-crime is not taken seriously enough by
6 scholars, the investigating authorities, nor the industry itself (McElwee, Smith and
7 Somerville, 2011; Lynn et al, 2023). We argue that Illegal Rural Enterprise [IRE] crimes
8 are part of an ongoing system of criminal enterprise facilitated by 'criminal capital'
9 (Platt, 2015) and operationalised through 'illicit shadow networks' (Gallagher and
10 Foster, 2021) involving both insiders and Organized Criminal Groups [OCGS]. Thus,
11 although they are investigated as single cases, or scandals, they are criminal
12 conspiracies operating within parallel supply chains, networks and mechanisms
13 forming a 'Hidden Enterprise Culture' (Williams, 2008).
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27 This necessitates consideration of socially constructed stereotypical representations of
28 the rogue farmer versus the urban criminal. Based on this we developed our RQ – *Who*
29 *is the serious and organised criminal?* To address this empirically, we draw on an
30 extensive body of empirical research conducted over a fifteen-year period using the
31 primary methodology of 'Documentary Research' (Scott, 2014). We examine 6 historic
32 cases of IRE crime (McElwee, et al, 2011). Instead of taking a single or micro case
33 approach within specific sections of the farming and food industries as in our earlier
34 publications, we examine the concept holistically from a macro case perspective across
35 our publication stream. We begin by presenting the literature on IRE and our corpus
36 of work in this niche field of Rural Entrepreneurship to highlight the existence and
37 importance of IRE from a practical and theoretical perspective with the purpose of
38 moving the research agenda forward. To do so, we introduce a new conceptual
39 framework relating to the theories of 'Illicit Trade' (Scalia, 2017) and 'Shadow
40 Infrastructure' (Gallagher and Foster, 2021) which is helpful in understanding IRE in
41 particular, and much rural crime in general. Our aim is to stimulate a better
42 understanding IRE and 'Criminal Entrepreneurship' amongst practitioners and
43 academics and to highlight a contemporary policing issue by contributing to the
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3 development of research in this field by examining an under researched aspect of rural
4 policing that span the farming and food processing industries and transcend the rural
5 and the urban whilst falling between the cracks in relation to existing policing
6 structures, resources and investigative strategies.
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15 **Synthesizing and reviewing the Literature.**

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17 The traditional, accepted paradigm of rural crime presented in the media portrays
18 farmers and rural enterprises as the victims of crime by virtue of 'Urban marauder' and
19 'Alien conspiracy' thesis (Paulsen, 2007; Smith, 2010). To challenge the fallacious
20 assumption, of urban marauders being behind all rural crime, we coined the term
21 'Illegal Rural Enterprise' [IRE] to differentiate between crimes committed by industry-
22 insiders and urban criminals (Smith, 2004; Smith, 2010; McElwee, Smith and
23 Somerville, 2011; Smith and McElwee, 2014; Somerville, Smith and McElwee, 2015;
24 Smith and McElwee, 2016). However, it is not a 'them-versus-us' paradigm but a
25 complex symbiotic and parasitical arrangement. This review includes unavoidable
26 self-referencing because we have authored the majority of publications in the IRE
27 research stream.² Conceptually, IRE has been well received in rural criminology
28 (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2013; Donnermeyer, 2016) for applying business
29 school concepts. This study is a commentary on the evolution of our work stream.
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44 We begin by developing an understanding of the 'Rogue Farmer' paradigm within the
45 context of IRE; Illicit Trade, Illicit Economies and Shadow Infrastructures. It is
46 necessary to explain the relationship of IRE to the literature and context of rural
47 criminology because of the disparate nature of the literature spread across various
48 disciplines and publication outputs. Rogue farmers, criminal farmers and industry-
49 insiders operate in a particular crimino-entrepreneurial eco-system stereotypically
50 represented as 'rogues' or 'chancers'. They escape scrutiny because they do not fit the
51 accepted profile of the criminal and although they may be known to the police and
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3 other agencies, they are not considered serious criminals. Rural criminology is a
4 rapidly expanding sub-category of criminological theory because crime manifests
5 itself differently in rural and urban areas (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2013). Rural
6 criminology challenges contemporary thinking in critical criminology (DeKeseredy,
7 2016) - **for example**, Meško (2020) challenges the popular belief that rural communities
8 are less criminogenic than urban area.
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18 **Illegal Rural Enterprise:** The concepts of the “Rogue Farmer” and “Criminal Farmer”
19 (Saltiel et al, 1992; Wiber, 1995; Smith, 2004; Heffernan, Nielsen, Thomson and Gunn,
20 2008; Smith, 2010; Smith, 2011, Smith and McElwee, 2016) are gaining traction in the
21 literatures of criminology and rural sociology. Indeed, Wilkinson, Craig and Gaus
22 (2010) refer to the “*Exploitative Farmer*” and Cross (2013) to the stereotype of the “*Bad*
23 *Farmer*”. When one examines the disparate crimes and statutory offences committed
24 by rogue farmers they appear unconnected but closer scrutiny reveals that the
25 motivations behind them are often economic examples of illegal pluriactive
26 criminality. Most are deniable, low-risk criminal activities **or** ‘alternative income
27 generation’ strategies. These generally involve obtaining an **undeclared** illicit rental
28 income on a ‘no-questions-asked’ basis. These include renting outhouses to organized
29 crime figures knowing they will be used for criminal purposes or ‘off-the-books’
30 enterprises. **They can be** statutory offences or illicit entrepreneurial ventures which
31 may not be illegal but are immoral. Low risk activities are characterised by their nature
32 as ‘parsimonious’ practices and thus protect livelihoods. Other examples include
33 predatory high-risk crime accepted as criminal **and** entered into **complicity**. As a form
34 of ‘Criminal Entrepreneurship’ (Hobbs, 1996; Smith, 2004) it provides a competitive
35 advantage. **It benefits the criminal by** providing an otherwise illegal service to
36 complicit customers for a considerable profit. It is important because it receives little
37 official consideration in contrast to **outsider** crime.
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3 IRE crimes are complex and involve repeat commercial transactions, insider
4 knowledge and complicity motivated by financial profit (Smith, 2021). Yet, there is no
5 such crime as IRE which is a theoretical, academic concept with no official recognition.
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9 **Nevertheless**, illegal and Illicit crimes, particularly large-scale one's are inevitably
10 connected to **OC** and form 'Illicit economies' which traditionally have received little
11 attention from governments and international organizations (Felbab-Brown 2017).
12 This is particularly true of **OC** in rural communities and to IRE. The problem with
13 **such** crime in rural communities, and with the illicit economies they generate, is that
14 although **they are** serious and organized are not deemed serious enough to allocate
15 scarce investigative resources. **Consequentially**, they are considered low priority.
16 Such crimes replicate business **per se** where order and stability are required which
17 dictates that they must mirror established business practices complete with premises,
18 transport routes and supply chains. This requires the implementation of business
19 practices and different skills and attributes than traditional **OC**. They require a high
20 level of financing and access to capital (Smith and McElwee, 2016) **and the** risks are
21 usually lower than in engaging in other forms of **OC**. **Their implementation** requires
22 the possession of entrepreneurial social capital as opposed to criminal social capital
23 (Firkin, 2003). IRE exists at the boundaries of enterprise and organized criminal
24 behaviour as a distinctive modus operandi which differs from more established
25 orthodox forms of criminality. IRE is connected to 'Business Crime' and 'White Collar
26 Criminality' (Sutherland, 1945) **committed** by networks of criminally inclined
27 businessmen. Indeed, IRE requires the possession of business acumen or nouse and
28 may be committed by otherwise apparently law abiding individuals.

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53 **Illicit trade, illicit economies and shadow infrastructures:** We argue that '**Illicit**
54 **Trade**' (Scalia, 2017) which involves legal and illegal aspects plays a significant part
55 in IRE crimes committed via complex '*Shadow Infrastructure*' (Gallagher and Foster,
56 2021) which spans both legitimate and criminal networks, operating in '*Shadow*
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3 *Economies*; (Schneider and Enste, 2013). Nevertheless, illicit economies pose socio-
4 economic threats to the stability of nation States, are highly complex and unseen in
5 nature (Felbab-Brown 2017:3) and because they generate both positive and negative
6 consequences they can influence local and national GDPs. As illicit operators they
7 operate with impunity to lie, cheat and steal at will (Green, 2006). Perpetrators of IRE
8 seldom exhibit signs of 'gangsterism' and violence associated with traditional OC
9 reinforcing their low priority. Moreover, illicit economies are managed by a criminal
10 business elite (Scalia, 2017) but with IRE we know very little about those behind such
11 crimes committed by industry-insiders. In addition, some IRE activities operate within
12 the context of the informal economy (Williams, 2008) which exists and operates in
13 tandem to the formal one (Paoli, 2003). It is a constantly changing marketplace,
14 because of the adaptability of OCGs and market conditions.

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16 In defining illicit trade, we use the definition posited by the World Custom
17 Organisation.³ This is important because illicit trade is a broad collection of
18 phenomena requiring a broad palate of coordinated policy responses, but unlike other
19 serious crime which produces highly visible incidents, the majority of such crimes and
20 illicit trade remain below the surface (Scalia, 2017). This impedes the necessity for the
21 mobilization of the political will to address the threat and that a common facet of illicit
22 economies is that any illicit trade generates a traceable 'illicit financial flow'
23 (Lallerstedt, 2018). Moreover, all forms of illicit trade constitute criminal activity and
24 a major problem in determining the scale of the problem is exacerbated by the fact that
25 law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies and the private enterprises and
26 individuals effected are understandably reluctant the share their individual insights
27 openly (Lallerstedt, 2018). According to Lallerstedt, any enterprise requires money to
28 operate, even when the business is organized crime.

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30 One of the issues with police investigations into IRE crimes is that they position the
31 criminal within an underground economy whereas in reality there is very little
32 separation between the criminal and business communities. Indeed, Ruggiero (1996:1)

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3 argues that OC and the legitimate economy are two complimentary sides of the same
4 economic interaction and contemporary capitalism relies on the interaction between
5 legality and illegality. Gottschalk (2021) argues that white-collar criminals often
6 commit crime because it is both convenient and profitable to do so citing 'convenience
7 theory' as a motivating factor. It is often impossible to make an accurate measurement
8 of the scale of the problem in individual industries forcing analysts to rely on rough
9 estimates, proxy measures and best guestimates in relation to the financial aspects of
10 the problems. Thus the fundamental driver behind any illicit trade is the revenue
11 generated from the product of services. In traditional OC, the profits generated from
12 one criminal activity are used to fund the perpetration of other OCs but with IRE
13 crimes it is not known if this is the case.
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26 Sciarrone (2011) refers to a "grey zone" between the legal and illicit economic spheres
27 who share the same networks and form relationships with industry professionals and
28 entrepreneurs. This is exciting, albeit we know very little about the mechanisms (Netto,
29 2019) behind the criminal elite or about the interface between the legal and illicit
30 economies or so-called *dirty economies* (Ruggiero, 1996). In such economies, shadow
31 infrastructures are an invisible but necessary mechanism (Gallagher and Foster, 2021).
32 We expand the concept to include parallel networks and supply chains and the
33 connections and nodes between said legitimate business models, networks and
34 supply chains. Shadow infrastructures are ultimately channels through which
35 business whether legal or illicit is conducted and these infrastructures link legitimate
36 business and OC. Infrastructures are "the physical networks through which goods, ideas,
37 waste, power, people, and finance are trafficked" (Larkin, 2013, p.123). Moreover, Gallagher
38 and Foster refer to so-called 'bad-actors' who span the legitimate and illegal domains
39 (our insiders). Notably, the links between the formal and informal economies and the
40 legitimate and shadow infrastructures relate both to industry networks, linked supply
41 chains and linking nodes extending deep into the communities. The farming and the
42 food industry are interlinked and cannot be separated from the supply chain nodes.
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3 Farmers and other industry actors [as 'bad-actors'] meet together at their local mart,
4 agricultural and food shows, farmers marts/markets and at farm sales etc not regularly
5 frequented by outsiders nor the police.
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12 **Methodology**

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14 The main methodology employed is Documentary Research (Scott, 2014). Using data
15 from existing published studies we provide a contextualised discussion of what
16 constitutes IRE before interrogating theory from criminology which helps explain the
17 power and persistence of IRE and the relevance of the theoretical concept of 'Shadow
18 infrastructure' (Gallagher and Foster, 2021) to help analyse and explain the prevalence
19 and endurance of such criminal enterprises. Using a multiple case study approach
20 (Yin, 2013), we examine the data, arguments and findings across the cases to provide
21 an analysis of several industry wide crimes, including:
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31 **Example 1:** Illegal Halal meat scandal (Smith, 2004; Smith and McElwee, 2021).

32 **Case 2:** The "Euro-vet scandal" (Smith and Whiting, 2013).

33 **Case 3:** The "Black Fish scandal" (Smith, 2015).

34 **Case 4:** The Theft of Tractors and Plant (Smith and McElwee, 2016).

35 **Case 5:** The theft of 'Sheep and Livestock' (Smith, 2017).

36 **Case 6:** The farming and waste disposal nexus in the UK (Smith, 2021).

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39 *As in the earlier studies we analysed the data using a predetermined research criteria*
40 *looking for patterns, similarities and differences across themes. In all of the scenarios*
41 *insider knowledge and involvement; the involvement of pre-existing business*
42 *practices, supply chains and legitimate accomplices; and the flouting of low tariff*
43 *regulations that avoided serious criminal charges; and haphazard law enforcement*
44 *structures were present.* Our analysis was driven by the application of key concepts
45 around illegal enterprise in relation to how they were applied to rural criminality and
46 policing. This ensured that issues of validity and generalisation were addressed with
47 consistency across the six cases all of which reported on complex criminal scenarios
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and for the triangulation, analytic generalisation and evaluation of the data using the theories of IRE, Illicit Trade etc to inform and guide the conceptual and theoretical integrity of the case stories generated ensuring that the findings across the cases were generalizable and grounded in similar contexts.⁴ To achieve this we engaged in the process of 'Constant Comparative Analysis' (CPA) (Glaser, 1965; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Tesch, 1990; Anderson, 1995; Anderson and Jack, 2015) across the cases. CPA is a common-sense approach for examining qualitative data enabling one to better understand it by comparing it across whole cases or identified codes and themes to spot patterns, highlight conceptual differences and similarities by creating and refining categories and analytic themes (Glaser, 1965; Tesch, 1990). It involves ongoing sampling and can be done by memory (Glaser and Straus, 1967). In the original studies we read and reread the documentary data and conducted CPA coding systematically and thoroughly within the scenarios using post-it notes and in this study we conducted the analysis across the scenarios writing memos and constantly re-examining the emergent codes by comparing thematic data applicable to each category before integrating the categories to delimit and draft plausible theory to become closer and more familiar with the data. This analytic process was aided by all the cases being constructed using the same criteria from documentary research methodology. The original case studies involved analysing the activities of over 60 criminal entrepreneurs.

Case presentation, analysis and discussion

In the cases presented in table 1, using constant comparative analysis across the cases a common narrative thread relating to Illegal Trade and Shadow Infrastructures emerged:

Case.	Narrative thread.	Comparative analysis.
Halal meat scandal.	This case relates to the criminal activities of the notorious Julian Jones and numerous co-conspirators over a 15 year period when he appeared to mastermind the illegal Halal	Individually and collectively the CPA conducted highlighted emerging themes including insider knowledge and involvement; the involvement of pre-existing business practices, supply chains and

	<p>'Smokies' trade in the UK. Tracking his career longitudinally we established he was active over the length and breadth of the country and was arrested in various locations with incriminating evidence implicating him in the illegal trade. He accrued a considerable amount of convictions but each case was treated as a one-off statutory infringement and not a continuing criminal conspiracy. However, from a longitudinal analysis it became evident that he was not the mastermind but a manager in the criminal venture – shadow infrastructure. Jones fled the UK circa 2016 but the trade continues unabated albeit the authorities do not appear to have intelligence on his replacement.</p>	<p>legitimate accomplices; and the flouting of low tariff regulations that avoided serious criminal charges; and haphazard law enforcement structures which were all present in the scenarios encountered in the studies. We had initially labelled and theorised these behaviours and practices as IRE and the bad-actors as Rogue or Criminal Farmers. However after conducting the CPA across the scenarios we realised that collectively they all evidenced the presence of a considerable shadow network involving a variety of bad-actors including financiers, middle-men, hauliers, butchers and abattoir owners, organized criminals down to foot-soldiers. Applying the theoretical labels of Shadow Infrastructures and Illicit Trades helped make more sense of these organised criminal networks. As illicit/illegal trades they service a dark supply chain on a weekly basis. In relation to the halal scenario the volume of carcasses involved and the insider knowledge necessary indicates that it is an organised criminal venture conducted by industry insiders thus evidencing collusion amongst the farming community and meat trade. Likewise, in the Eurovet, Black Fish and tractor theft scenarios it was evident that they were criminal ventures serviced by shadow infrastructure, illicit trade and shadow economies and characterised by palpable collusion in the farming and equine industries. In the Euro Vet scenario although several customers were charged others were treated as witnesses and numerous leads were not pursued. The Black Fish scenario was a sophisticated criminal venture run in tandem with legitimate trade. Shadow infrastructure included hidden storage tanks and elevators so that even factory workers were unaware of. The fish were sold through the legitimate channels but the profit not declared to the taxman. In relation to tractor theft the shadow infrastructure involves commercial supply chains including freight containers to ship the stolen goods abroad. These are obviously continuing criminal enterprises and in the tractor theft scenario the OCGs involved employ thieves with a knowledge of farming and plant. An analysis of the sheep theft scenario confirmed criminal collusion between rogue farmers, farm workers and urban marauders. The sheep theft scenario is patently an ongoing criminal venture as is the farming waste disposal nexus where there is evidence of collusion between farmers and criminals. All the scenarios involved analysing the cases longitudinally through time. The narrative thread relating the shadow infrastructure discussed above evidences that the IRE activities discussed</p>
Euro-vet scandal.	<p>This case was examined post-conviction using documentary research methodology and from our readings and analysis it was evident that this was a continuing fraud involving the supply of veterinary medicine to farmers and the equine industry. It involved an online ordering system and depots in the UK and Europe. The fraud involved supplying medicines and other veterinary products from outside the UK which did not meet the strict UK guidelines.</p>	
Black Fish scandal.	<p>This case was also examined post-conviction. The fraud was perpetuated by a cartel of fish processors and fisherman keeping the so-called 'blackfish' caught over their allowed quotas and laundering them through their legitimate businesses/factories. It was uncovered by a forensic accountant who spotted financial irregularities who blew the whistle.</p>	
Tractor and Plant theft.	<p>This case was examined post-conviction examining the activities of ten OCGs involved in the illegal trade. We established evidence of collusion amongst some farmers and organized criminals who steal tractors and plant to order for sale in the developing world.</p>	
Sheep theft.	<p>This case was examined post-conviction examining- twenty convicted cases. The crimes involve insider knowledge and farming skills such as access to sheep dogs/quad bikes and trailers is necessary as is having a shadow infrastructure to launder the sheep before they are sold into the abattoir systems.</p>	
The UK farming-waste	<p>This case was examined post-conviction using documentary research and reported on five cases where farmers were directly involved in</p>	

<p>disposal nexus.</p>	<p>disposing of waste by wrapping it up in plastic covered bales and storing them on the farm or acting as unofficial dumping sites. The farmers had the spare storage capacity and the technology and equipment to facilitate the crimes. It is a continuing criminal venture.</p>	<p>constitute a 'Illicit Trades' (Scalia, 2017), 'Illicit Economies' and are operationalised via standing 'Shadow Infrastructures' (Gallagher and Foster, 2021) closely related to legitimate business interests and indeed are difficult to disentangle in reality thus ascertaining where the line between legal and illegal practices begins and ends is both complex, difficult and challenging.</p>
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The overarching narrative of table 1 enabled a meaningful comparison between the previously published studies allowing for longitudinal and comparative findings across the studies. What the narrative tells us is that it is easier for governments and societies to ignore the problem than deal with it head on despite the hidden and insidious nature of the crimes (Felbab-Brown 2017:3) and because there are seldom overt signs of crime they operate **undetected**. The continuous nature of the shadow criminal activities allow the illicit operators to operate with impunity making them low priority crimes seldom officially recorded. The absence of an identifiable criminal elite (Scalia, 2015) **makes them easy to ignore**. All of these factors coalesce to ensure there is no one to blame or scapegoat. We simply do not know enough about the financial elite behind such crimes or their links to industry-insiders and Criminal Mafias **highlighting** a need to profile their modus operandi and modus vivendi and develop better typologies (Smith, 2009). We need to better understand links between the 'Informal Economy' (Williams, 2008) and its interface with the formal (Poali, 2003) to help us better understand the constantly changing business environment, market conditions, marketplaces and the changing face of OCGs who innovate and adapt quickly to the changing circumstances.

The cases discussed fit the criteria for Illicit Trade as defined by the World Custom Organisation in that they all involve the transfer of money, goods or value gained from illegal and otherwise unethical activity. They encompass a variety of illegal trading activities including fraud, theft and environmental crime and all have identifiable illicit financial flows **operating** in a similar manner to Netto's

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3 'Mechanisms' in that they are standing commercial structures designed to facilitate
4 repeat business. Whether they are industry specific mafias or cartels is irrelevant
5 because the existence of the structures ensures business continuity even if individual
6 players are arrested and imprisoned.
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11 From our analysis it is apparent that what unites these cases is that they typically
12 involve a deliberate decision to engage in illegal activities for profit to build on and
13 maximise the profits of their legal businesses. Indeed, our main finding and message
14 is that collectively the dual concepts of 'Shadow Infrastructures' and 'Illicit Trade' help
15 explain the complexity of much IRE crime and food-fraud committed by criminal
16 entrepreneurs mirroring legal entrepreneurial business practices and not 'one-off'
17 criminal activities. The crimes involve the utilisation of skills appropriate to their
18 business and industry activities and can be committed in a short period of time and
19 profits laundered alongside legitimate assets. The crimes are committed on a regular
20 basis. They operate from farms and/or private businesses to which the public and
21 authorities have limited access and use avoidance and deterrence techniques to enable
22 them to operate in secret and unfettered. Individually and collectively this ensures
23 that the perpetrators avoid official scrutiny and detection. The acts committed are part
24 of a wider criminal conspiracy and supply chain operating across counties and
25 regions. The police and authorities operate under restrictive boundaries ensuring each
26 part of the conspiracy is dealt with separately if interdicted in different areas. At
27 present, there is no joined-up investigative mechanism for identifying and linking
28 low-level crimes evidencing a pressing need for more proactive multi-agency
29 approaches and joint investigations although they are costly and time-consuming
30 taking several years from detection to prosecution. Sentences are minimal rendering
31 the cases less serious, negating the need to address this via the legal system. Thus,
32 despite the existence of the Fraud Units in the respective Food Standards Agencies in
33 England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is not a unified Intelligence Hub
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3 or Investigative Agency responsible for overseeing food-fraud and farm crime making
4 IRE crimes lucrative with limited risks and penalties associated with serious crimes.
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8 These illicit trades whether they be in sheep, tractors or veterinary products require a
9 broad and varied palate of coordinated policy responses which at present are not in
10 place rendering the majority of such crimes and illicit trade invisible (Scalia, 2015).
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12 There does not appear to be the political will to mobilize the resources to tackle the
13 threat or the traceable illicit financial flows that characterise illicit economies
14 (Lallerstedt, 2018). This creates deniable 'grey zones' (Sciarrone, 2011) and until we
15 can better understand the real scale of the problem illicit trade and associated criminal
16 activities will continue to spread. One of the first steps required is for the authorities
17 to acknowledge the existence of IRE, insider-crime and that illicit trades are not
18 committed by mythical mafia figures but by industry insiders in collusion with
19 organized criminals. In reality there is very little separation between the criminal and
20 business communities as argued by Ruggiero (1996) and Gottschalk (2021). Both
21 engage in symbiotic economic interactions which are complimentary to each other
22 when aligned to contemporary capitalism. It is too convenient for those involved in
23 the illicit trade to commit profitable low-risk crime. These shadow infrastructures and
24 parallel networks are invisible but necessary mechanisms (Larkin, 2013) and it
25 behooves us to better understand the supply chain networks and nodes involved and
26 how the illicit trades operate. This will require a considerable investment in time and
27 money but intelligence systems take time to develop and proper liaison and trust are
28 the life blood of intelligence gathering. The added value of the comparison /
29 summarisation across cases lies in linking the existing themes to those of Illicit Trade
30 and Shadow Infrastructures which have great potential in creating an investigative
31 framework for such crimes.
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57 **Drawing tentative conclusions**
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3 This study provides an overview of the issues surrounding IRE through a multiple
4 case study approach and a synthesis of the literatures of rural policing, IRE and Rural
5 Criminology linked to the business and business crime literatures. This study in
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This study provides an overview of the issues surrounding IRE through a multiple case study approach and a synthesis of the literatures of rural policing, IRE and Rural Criminology linked to the business and business crime literatures. This study in conjunction these literatures makes a contribution by moving the debate beyond the individual crime and criminals to take cognisance of the role of illicit trade and shadow infrastructures in generating enterprise crime associated with long term criminal networks and markets which operate with impunity despite being OCBs. There are academic, practical and policy implications to be learned from this study. However, the greatest strength of the study lies in its comparative nature and the potentially wide reaching implications for both researchers and for practice because it is necessary to commission further research to implement the suggestions made below to focus on the changes needed to the way illegal rural enterprise is considered by the police and the wider legal system. Nevertheless, policy and law makers, intelligence and law enforcement agencies require to take urgent action to address the situation and policy makers and legislators need to draft new legislation in relation to negating the financial gains accrued by committing IRE crimes. Those involved only commit the statutory offences for financial gain and the offences are merely blunt instruments. Cognisance needs to be taken of the organized criminality involved in their commission from the investigation of the crime to the prosecution. There is a need to follow the money trail (Platt, 2015) because as argued by Lallerstedt, all enterprises require money to operate, even when the business is OC. There is also an urgent need for academics to conduct more empirical research with the private enterprises and criminal elites involved who are understandably reluctant the share their individual insights openly (Lallerstedt, 2018). Policy implications include setting up a multi-agency intelligence hub to provide expert knowledge to the numerous agencies involved in investigating such crime. However the key conclusions from the above case studies support the need to revisit and recognise the issues of IRE from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

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3 To return to the original thesis that rural crime is committed solely by predatory urban
4 marauders (Paulsen, 2007; Smith, 2010) the above cases suggest that the true picture
5 is more complex than that and that although much crime is committed by urban based
6 OCGs many crimes require insider knowledge and that organized rural criminality
7 requires collusion **between** the urban criminal, rogue farmer or entrepreneur. Thus to
8 answer the RQ - who is the serious and organized criminal behind rural crime it is
9 evident that both faces of **OC** are present and that illicit trades, illegal economies and
10 shadow infrastructures are ever present features of such criminality.

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12 Our main take-away points are that IRE crimes involve a high level of collusion
13 between the conspiring criminals and their customers **differentiating** them from
14 traditional, predatory **OC**. Yet there is a definite gap between the perceived
15 seriousness of the crimes and the sentences and punishments handed out to those
16 caught by the authorities. When such cases are identified and prosecuted, it is often
17 low-level employees involved in the day-to-day running of the criminal ventures who
18 are caught and penalised, not organized criminals and rogue farmers. The kingpins
19 and financiers of such ventures are seldom identified and interdicted, leaving them
20 free to **lead** their criminal business unhindered **in perpetuity**. **They are** insulated from
21 detection because they know that the resultant investigations will end when the
22 appropriate crimes and offences have been investigated in sufficient depth to prove
23 the case. They continue to operate by moving operations to new locations or premises
24 safe in the knowledge that it may take **considerable time** before the authorities gather
25 sufficient intelligence to disrupt them again **and that** their complicit **accomplices** are
26 unlikely to inform on them.

27
28 There is a pressing need for the authorities to identify such 'bad actors', develop
29 profiles of their offending and **craft** new investigative strategies and tactics to tackle
30 the issues in real time. We desperately need to identify the 'Shadow infrastructures'
31 and 'Dirty economies' behind them and map their ontological development across
32 time. It is evident from **our** analysis that there is industry wide collusion **with** few
33 instances being punished. **Invariably** they are treated as witnesses and few are

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3 identified, targeted and prosecuted. There are pragmatic reasons behind this with
4 limited resources, skills or time to properly investigate the illegal customer supply
5 chains and shadow infrastructures. There needs to be a mechanism for recording such
6 customer related complicity and for dealing with it **via** a Fixed Penalty Fine or HMRC
7 **sanction**. This would be a major step towards discouraging such complicity. In
8 addition, there is a need for legislation to reinforce the seriousness of criminal
9 conspiracies; and for multi-agency training in investigative practices. We are unaware
10 of **any** UK training courses on investigating rural crime or specifically on rural
11 policing. **To augment this** there is a need for a properly resourced national intelligence
12 and investigation agency to tackle such crimes. Such illicit practices and their 'shadow
13 infrastructures' have been ongoing for generations and unless there is a concentrated
14 response then they will likely continue for generations to come **thus we need to better**
15 **understand** how criminals utilise these.

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8 **End Notes**

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11 ¹ There is an expanding literature on rural policing and **food fraud** in an Australian and US context
12 (Shears, 2010; Harkness, 2017; Donnermeyer, 2018; Barclay, 2023; Lynn et al, 2023) out with the scope
13 of this study.

14 ² One problem we face is that although our research stream is becoming well cited in entrepreneurship
15 and rural criminology there are so few authors doing similar research hence the difficulty in citing the
16 work of others. As pioneers it is difficult to cite work which is not there.
17

18 ³ *“Illicit trade involves money, goods or value gained from illegal and otherwise unethical activity. It encompasses*
19 *a variety of illegal trading activities including human trafficking, environmental crime, illegal trade in natural*
20 *resources, intellectual property infringements, trade in certain substances that cause health or safety risks,*
21 *smuggling of excisable goods, trade in illegal drugs and a variety of illicit financial flows”.*
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24 ⁴ Our use of published cases is illustrative. This strategy was deliberate because we designed the
25 overarching research stream with comparability in mind, choosing documentary research across
26 studies to facilitate this.
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