

EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

The study examines the evolution of research on the implementation of sustainable agricultural policies in the European Union, focusing on the central role of the Common Agricultural Policy, which addresses key issues such as agricultural sustainability, agri-environmental policies, eco-conditionality, rural development, and financial support mechanisms, highlighting both the progress made and the structural limitations. The analysis focuses on three main dimensions. In terms of impact, the studies reveal persistent difficulties for the CAP in halting biodiversity loss, preventing soil degradation, and adapting to climate change. Thus, greening measures have had limited effects, and uniform direct payments have contributed to a decline in cultural diversity and an increase in the value of agricultural land. However, agri-environmental instruments and organic farming schemes have demonstrated clear benefits for environmental protection. In terms of design, the literature highlights the relevance of instruments such as eco-conditionality, farm typologies, and LEADER programs, which allow policies to be adapted to the structural diversity of farms. Thus, targeting payments towards verifiable environmental outcomes, strengthening producer organisations and integrating technological and behavioural data are considered mechanisms for increasing the relevance and resilience of European agricultural policies. In terms of efficiency, econometric and experimental evaluations indicate divergent effects: investment subsidies and agri-environmental schemes support eco-efficiency and, to some extent, total factor productivity, while decoupled or coupled direct payments generate modest or negative results. The overall conclusion highlights the need for a transition from area-based payments to schemes geared towards results and public goods, by integrating agroecological principles and strengthened evaluation frameworks.

Keywords: Common Agricultural Policy, agricultural sustainability, eco-conditionality, rural development, agricultural subsidies
