

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION POLICY

POLITICA AGRICOLĂ COMUNITARĂ PENTRU O MAI BUNĂ POLITICĂ DE PROTECȚIE A MEDIULUI ÎNCONJURATOR

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Abstract. *Environmental protection programs as a part of Common Agricultural Policy could include measures regarding premiums guarantees for farmers who came into this program as volunteers and on contract basis. The instruments that are normally applied to agriculture are legislative regulations regarding agricultural farmlands exploitation modality. Farmers participation to local programs are paid in order to compensate any losses of income. Agrienvironmental measures could be designed at regional or local level as it could be adapted to any particular agricultural system form and for different environmental conditions, which are widely diversified within EU. This fact make agrienvironmental measures an precisely instrument for reaching the proposed aims.*

Rezumat. *Programele de protectie a mediului inconjurator din cadrul Politici Agricole Comunitare pot include masuri ce prevad garantarea unor premii pentru fermierii ce sunt inclusi in acest program prin voluntariat si pe baza unor contracte. Instrumentele ce sunt in mod normal aplicate agriculturii sunt reglementari legislative referitoare la modalitatea de exploatare a terenurilor agricole. Participarea fermierilor la programele zonale sunt platite in vederea compensarii pierderilor din venitul acestora. Masurile agro-protectioniste pot fi proiectate la nivel national, regional sau local in asa fel incat sa poata fi adaptate formele particulare de sistem agricol si la diferite conditii de mediu inconjurator, care de altfel variaza in limite largi in cadrul UE. Acest fapt face ca masurile agro-protectioniste sa reprezinte un instrument precis pentru atingerea scopurilor propuse.*

INTRODUCTION

Agri-environment measures are designed to encourage farmers to protect and enhance the environment. It provides payments to farmers in return for a service – that of carrying out agri-environmental commitments that involve more than the application of usual good farming practice. Farmers sign a contract with the administration and they are paid for the additional cost of implementing such commitments and for any losses of income. Agrienvironment payments are co-financed by the EU and the Member States with a contribution from the Community budget. Agri-environment measures may be designed at national, regional or local level so that they can be adapted to the particular farming systems and environmental conditions.

Agri-environmental measures have two main objectives:

- reducing environmental risks associated with modern farming;
- preserving nature and cultivated landscapes.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Agri-environment measures are established by Member States or Regions and submitted to the Commission for approval as part of their Rural Development Plans.

Member States and Regions set up agri-environment programs and these are often subdivided into different schemes. Each program or scheme is made up of a series of measures. Programs/schemes come in many different forms.

Measures related to productive land management (European Commission, 2005):

- Input reduction: This category of measures includes reductions in fertilizers and plant protection products;
- Organic farming;
- Extensification of livestock;
- Conversion of arable land to grassland and rotation measures;
- Undersowing and cover crops, strips (e.g. farmed buffer strips) and preventing erosion and fire;
- Actions in areas of special biodiversity/nature interest;
- Genetic diversity;
- Maintenance of existing sustainable and extensive systems;
- Farmed landscape;
- Water use reduction measures.

Measures related to non-productive land management:

- Set aside, measures include both large areas of set-aside and small ones such as uncultivated field strips (European Commission, 2005);
- Upkeep of abandoned farm land and woodland;
- Maintenance of the countryside and landscape features;
- Public access.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the last years of pre-aderation process, Romania and other candidate countries implemented a serial of agrienvironmental measures. It would be important to point out those measures and their effect on Romanian agricultural structures.

One of the major instrument is the Nitrate Directive. The Objective of Nitrate Directive (91/676/EEC) aims to reduce agricultural induced pollution of waters with nitrates. The main emphasis is placed on the management of manure and other fertilizers. Members States are required to identify the polluted waters and the waters that could be polluted by inappropriate activities.

In Romania due to Government Decision no. 964/2000 that is implementing the policy of water protection against pollution caused by nitrates that are generated by agricultural activities and in the same time is implementing the Nitrate Directive in Romania. A negative aspect is that there is not a good agricultural practice and the Ministry of Waters and Environmental Protection and the Research Institute for Social – Science and Agro chemistry is preparing one (Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries, 2004).

For agricultural soils/soil testing monitoring there are necessary facilities and structures in all member states but there are significant differences between practical applications. In Romania the Institute of Agrochemical and Soil Studies are collecting data through their pedological and agro chemical research centres, monitors soil quality about detailed analysis of the degradation areas.

A large part of the EU space is designated as protected areas. Over 12800 different sites are identified, organized through IUCN management category or Natura 2000 sites. Within those Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania have a low share of 8,8 to 4,6 % on national area as protected areas. In Romania between 1998 and 2003, the amount of land classified as protected rose between 1,23 mill. Ha to 1,29 mill. Ha (Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries, 2004).

The area that is designated to organic farming is increasing rapidly after 1990. This action is promoted through many programs that are designated to encourage organic farming. In Romania legislation sustains the certification methodology and the organisms that are certifying the organic agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2003). This structure is incipiently developed, but the main problem is the lack of demand for organic products, the demand of consumers for traditional products, lack of experience regarding the inspection and certification procedures.

SAPARD program stipulate measures for environmental protection but with limited financial resources. These measures were pointed out to specific pilot areas with a clear objective to develop practical experience of agrienvironmental implementation at both administrative and farm level.

In Romania according to the national plan for agriculture and rural development, agri-environmental measures are strongly required and is going to be launched (European Commission, 2005).

The main areas need consideration in future rural development policy were encapsulated in the conclusions of the Second European Conference on Rural Development, held in Salzburg in November 2003. The 1st pillar concentrates on providing a basic income support to farmers, who are free to produce in response to market demand, while the 2nd pillar supports agriculture as a provider of public goods in its environmental and rural functions, and rural areas in their development.

Payments under Axis 2 aim to ensure the delivery of environmental services by agri-environment measures in rural areas, and preserve land management (including in areas with physical and natural handicaps). These activities contribute to sustainable rural development by encouraging the main actors (farmers, foresters) to keep up land management so as to preserve and enhance the natural space and landscape. This means protecting and improving environmental resources, and ensuring the sustainable use of forestry resources. Such measures also help prevent the abandonment of agricultural land use through payments to compensate natural handicaps or handicaps resulting from environmental restrictions.

Co financed activities should clearly target EU priorities such as combating climate change, enhancing biodiversity and water quality, or reducing the risk or impact of natural disasters. A general condition for the measures under Axis 2 (at beneficiary level) will be respect of the relevant EU and national mandatory requirements (cross-compliance). If these requirements are not complied with, payments in some measures of Axis 2 can be reduced or cancelled.

CONCLUSIONS

During the initial years of transitions, agrienvironmental issue receive less attention as the production intensification does. But the situation already changed and is going to change considerably.

Agriculture plays a determining role in all EU countries, the initiatives aimed to protect the environment. Key legislation includes: measures undertaken to protect surface water and groundwater; directives obliging Member States to protect the habitats of their wild bird populations and habitats. The Commission presented several important environmental initiatives in including the strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides', a thematic strategy for soil protection', and the strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources', all those respecting the objectives of the EU's rural development strategy.

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