

Farmers' logic and the implementation of EU agricultural environmental policy

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Can new EU directives be implemented?

What is the role of farmers' decision making?

Focus on promising elements of CAP 2007-2013:

- Payment for public services
- High value farming systems
- Provision of environmental goods in rural development

→ What to expect reflecting on 25 years of experiences with Dutch agro-environment schemes

This presentation

1. The Dutch context of agri-environment policy
2. Dutch farmers': pro and con agri-environment schemes
3. The implementation of new EU environmental directives

The Dutch context of agro-environment policy

The Netherlands as extreme case

- Density of population
- Level and speed of urbanization
- Landscape construction
- Agricultural modernization
- Pollution of water, soil and air
- Loss of nature and traditional landscape





But also

Growing societal concern

Modern agriculture losing 'license to produce'

Need to change accepted at 'Green Front'



Policy development: agri-environment schemes

1980's voluntary agro-environment measures

2000 Payment from measure-based to output-based

1990's first experiments with environmental cooperatives

2000 environmental cooperatives institutionalized;
public services in discussion

BUT

effectiveness of agro-environment schemes disputed too

Farmers about agri-environment schemes

Pro

Extra income

Concern for nature

Responsibility for region

Wish for social acceptance

Results witnessed

Political pressure

Con

Loss of income

Loss of production quality

'Untidy' land

Loss of independence

Lack of results

Distrust towards government

Attitude towards farming & environment

Economic motives

- ability to continue farming, need for extra income

Managerial and ethical motives

- ability to be a 'good farmer'

practically: 'tidy' land, productivity, quality

morally: professional ethics

Attitude towards government & policymakers

Distrust and insecurity

- Complexity of regulation
 - Ever changing nature of regulation
 - Intransparency of decision making
- Reluctance to enter schemes
- Stimulus to build cooperatives



Environmental cooperatives

- Collective negotiation with government
- Defense of members' interests
- Training and advice for farmers
- Assistance with paper work
- Feeling of shared responsibility
- Stimulates concern and engagement
- Satisfaction of cooperation & solidarity
- Self-organization & regional covenants

What about subsidies?

Public services → private contracts (RLG)

More security of payments

More stability of outcome: tailor-made to region

Output oriented

- More room for creativity & craftsmanship
- Entrepreneurial identity & professional ethics
- More holistic approach to farming

But output measurement complicated!

Conclusion for Dutch farmers

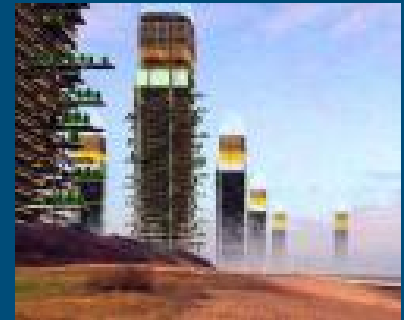
Farmers' decision making important, in context of

- market development, and
- national and EU agricultural politics

Interest pushed by

- Need for extra income
- Increasing sense of urgency
- Acceptance of social pressure

BUT political distrust and feeling of insecurity



Promises of new EU directives

Axis 2

1. payment for public services

- Clear statement for sustainable agriculture
- More appealing to farmers
- More acceptable for the public
- Chance if regional approach

2. High nature value farming

Supports legitimacy of alternative farming

Holistic approach

3. provision of environmental goods in rural development framework

- Example of Northern Frisian Woodlands

Axis 1

Cross compliance and GFP as warrant for sustainability but influences attraction of public services

Tight GFP leave less room for voluntary engagement

What about the implementation?

In new CAP more room for national implementation

■ → advantages & disadvantages

Example LEADER/axis 4 in the Netherlands

institutional conservatism & clientelist links (Lowe 2005)

More room for manoeuvre at regional/local level when
more room at national level????

Conclusion

- Precise effect of new directives yet unclear
 - Profound impact on farm practices probable
 - Farmers' decisionmaking important
 - But character of policy & implementation too →
 - Farmers' concern for nature, fear for punishment and need for rewards.
-
- Duality of policy directives

Delicate balance

- Trust of farmers is essential for encouraging sustainable behaviour but easily destroyed by tightening regulations and control.
- Not tightening regulations requests trust of policymakers and society.

And is there a role for science?

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