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**SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE CONDITIONS
REQUIRED FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE
SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES
WITHIN THE REFORM OF THE COMMON
AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

SUMMARY FINAL REPORT -

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I. OBJECTIVES

This research project has examined the conditions of success of the supporting environmental measures (that is, regulation 2078/92 EEC) within the broader framework of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1992. The general objectives of this project were the following :

Analysis and evaluation of the integration of environmental aims into agricultural policy, using the supporting environmental measures as an example.

Determination of the attitudes of the agricultural population toward the aims of environmental protection.

Investigation of the socio-economic framing conditions which affect the implementation of the agri-environmental measures.

The empirical research under these objectives was in three EU member countries, France, Germany and Portugal. For each of these countries a national report has been elaborated, followed by a comparative report

II. METHODOLOGY

A comparative approach has been applied at various levels. It should give an insight in the different national and regional situations and implementation practices of the agri-environmental measures in the broader framework of interaction of European, national and regional levels of agri-environmental policy including the orientation of social and political actors at these various levels.

A plurimethodological approach supplemented the comparative one and allowed for a better understanding of the processes and difficulties for the success of agri-environmental policy by using several information sources - that of farmers, that of experts of agri-environmental policy, that of statistical information and that of written documents (reports from governmental or scientific institutions).

The enquiry focused on four levels of analysis:

- 1) The situation in agri-environmental policy at the beginning of the reform process within the three countries. This situation has been described in terms of the socio-cultural, political and socio-economic aspects of agricultural development.
- 2) Perception of the agri-environmental measures and agricultural policy by farmers in three German, two French and two Portuguese regions.
- 3) The perception of environmental issues through the farmers and their social integration.
- 4) The synthesis of the analyses done at levels 1-3 in a comparison of the three countries and regions included.

The methods employed are the following ones:

Within each of the three countries regional case studies for the transfer and implementation of regulation 2078/92/EEC have been carried out. For France and Portugal there were two case studies, but for Germany three - because of the specific situation in this country that has resulted from the recent changes through re-unification. The specific situation in the former East Germany should be understood more adequately which justified an additional case study.

The research methodology was based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis consisting of standardised interviews with farmers, in-depth interviews with experts of agricultural and environmental policy, secondary analysis and document analysis. Among the qualitative methods the field interviews with experts and document analysis were of relevance for the research(including governmental, administrative and scientific documents and publications).

According to the sociological orientation of the project, the core methodology has been that of oral interviews, based on a standardised questionnaire for farmers in selected areas within the three countries. Altogether 666 farmers have been interviewed during this project (192 in France, 274 in Germany, 200 in Portugal). The data analysis has been worked out by the statistical programme SPSS.

III. MAIN RESULTS

In the first phase of implementation of the agri-environmental measures of the CAP-reform (1993-1995), heterogeneous perceptions and approaches can be observed. These related to specific political, social and economic traditions and institutions for agriculture and rural development in the three countries (at national and regional levels). The institutional and structural conditions of success of the agri-environmental measures are of two kinds: (a) at the political-institutional level, the differing structures of the states and the differing roles of regions within the states (with Germany as the specific case of a federal system among the three) creates complicated implementation problems; (b) at the societal level the socio-cultural context and the role of agriculture within each of the three countries requires social accommodation of the measures not only administrative implementation. Beyond such institutionalised differences, acceptance of the agri-environmental measures through the agricultural population has to be studied. Acceptance cannot be reduced to a question of sufficient positive incentives and adequate motivation: farmers can only partially be motivated externally and extrinsically. In the long run their individual and conscious decision how to produce is of greater importance. The farmers decisions are not isolated but happen in complex structured social contexts.

(1) Main results from the national studies

a) For France: The French study regions, although different in the socio-economic profiles, do not contrast sharply with regard to agricultural development. Within the regions the focus of activity and negotiation is not the region as a whole but local *départements*. In both regions the practical application of the agri-environmental measures has only a weak impact on agricultural development and its dynamics. However, the social resonance of the measures is surprising. Although the legitimisation of the agri-environmental problems has not been completely recognised, the discussion evolves rapidly, particularly in ideological terms. The changes in orientation and behaviour of the actors involved in the implementation of the measures are part of regionalisation of the measures (which are part of a decentralisation of public policies). Furthermore the necessary knowledge of the areas of implementation has resulted in local adaptation and in take-over of the measures through the actors managing rural areas. The differences of the actors and the necessity of their cooperation have stimulated innovative decision-making processes. Negotiation and compromising of environmental goals change the traditional frames of reference in the management of rural territories with the consequences of social experimentation and innovation, combining innovation with continuity.

The present political approach of managing environmental issues through negotiations leaves many problems in the implementation of agri-environmental measures open for casual solutions, thus their adoption and goal-directness seems doubtful. The management contracts with the individual farmers lead to a dispersion of the parcels included in the measures. The contract does not guarantee the continuity of the initiated process in a longer time perspective. The agri-environmental measures have consequences for changes in the regulation of agriculture and cause the question of the relations between individual engagement and collective rules in rural territorial management. Similarly the measures evoke the problem of ecological expertise as crucial in the process of implementation - both issues are not yet settled.

b) For Germany: The regional implementation of the agri-environmental measures has resulted in quite different programmes of the German Länder. The quality of regions as states has strengthened the role of regional ministries of agriculture and formal political actors in the implementation process. This process includes less negotiational components than in France. The formal approval of heterogeneous approaches in the regional programmes through the European Commission has raised some controversies between the German Länder which follow divergent policies. The South German Länder, being the ones with the most ambitious and best financed programmes, have included components of which the ecological effects are doubtful.

The agri-environmental measures are accepted in the agricultural population as well as among most political groups. They indicate a kind of social consensus on the agricultural question in German society, however this consensus does not say much about the real changes the measures have brought: the measures can be harmonised with heterogeneous interests but they are not very effective in inducing ecological change in agriculture. Simultaneously with the broad acceptance of the measures, also among farmers participating in them, doubts of the effectiveness and strong criticism of CAP could be found. The farmers experience the complexity of the situation in which they are identified as polluters through science (not free-will polluters, but as an unintentional consequence when they followed the modernisation path of CAP). The controversies about such negative impacts are now over (are the farmers polluters and therefore responsible or not?) and more pragmatic questions of how to reach environmentally friendly agriculture prevail.

In the debate on the eligibility of participants the controversial issue of freerider effects of participation have arisen. This question comes up in situations like in Germany, when the measures come into an agriculture already differentiated in relation to the environment (extensive, intensive, integrated, biological farming).

c) For Portugal: The regional differences in Portugal (where no regions as administrative institutions have existed up to now) follow a new differentiation line, that between the interior and the coast, no longer only north/south. The agri-environmental measures contribute to a minimisation of the regional differences between the study regions *Tras-os-Montes* and *Alentejo* by specifically targeting traditional forms of agricultural production. Farmers in these areas who practised traditional forms of agriculture were eligible and therefore most likely to be the main candidates to the agri-environmental measures. Having identified the traditional family farmer as the main agent, including the main problem of the maintenance of the farm, the motivations and attitudes of these farmers regarding the measures and environmental issues in general can be summarised as follows: becoming a candidate for the measures is clearly motivated by concerns related to the future of the farm. Eligibility conditions are generally easily met by farmers in the areas targeted and require no change of existing forms of production. Farmers primarily stress economic concerns related to the market and market conditions as relevant questions about the future. Preservation concerns are present insofar as they relate to farmland use. Embryonic environmental attitudes, linked to the question of preservation, may evolve.

The results raise serious questions on the future of the farms. How will the small and very small farmers resist the present trend of rural exodus and abandonment? The agri-environmental measures do not alter the economic conditions of traditional family farming in the interior regions. How will the farmers adapt to rural change, (e.g.: given the lack of successors and ageing agricultural population).

The agri-environmental measures involve a duration of five years, however it is not clear for the farmers what the

objective will be at the end of the five-year period. If the farmers fail to express environmental concerns and further fail to manifest environmentally sound practices and attitudes then the measures have failed to adequately introduce the environmental problematique into Portuguese countryside.

(2) Main results from the comparison of the three countries include:

a) The analysis of social and institutional contexts underlined the specific development of agriculture in Portugal (in contrast to the northern countries), where the social adaptation of the measures to traditional extensive agriculture is important. In France the catalytic function of the measures in changing the legitimation of agriculture is of major significance. This is expressed in the dynamics of negotiation and the strengthening of the role of *départements* in implementation. In Germany a much more formal, state-run, decentralised top-down approach of implementation is found where the regional states (that is, their ministries of agriculture) formulate the programmes, and compete for budgets. In Portugal the institutional implementation can be identified as a formal top-down approach with a passive wait-and see response of farmers. Here the funds for the measures have become targeted for support of traditional agriculture with an indirect effect of slowing down the rural exodus.

b) The comparison of the types of measures and their acceptance through the farmers shows one abstract similarity: the measures which find most acceptance are the ones requiring least change of prior agricultural practices - mainly continuation of traditional extensive agriculture or extensification of grassland. The measures of "higher" ecological quality like organic farming are rarely practised. The choice of farmers is not always a conscious individual choice - often the financial incentives dominate, that is, farmers participate in just another programme among many others which are offered to them already and it is the agricultural administration, the extension service or the local actors in the negotiation process who play the active role.

The motives for participation show a relative dominance of short-term economic concerns. The measures as they are practised hitherto do not consequently evoke a long-term motivation and decision of farmers to carry out environmentally friendly production. The motivation structure seems to be limited to the 5-year contract period. Motivation is not necessarily based on conscious individual decisions but often more a consequence of the information and campaigning of institutions.

c) Comparison of generalised orientation patterns of the farmers

Methodologically the comparison of attitudes and orientations across the countries and regions raises the problem of de-contextualising the interpretation, thus becoming a methodologically doubtful cognitive operation. Therefore and for the limited data set only few of such comparison have been carried out.

In the orientation of farmers partial similarities could be found within the French and German farming communities, when the interpretation follows two main lines of reasoning- orientation towards continued productivism of agriculture and resignation or doubts on the future of agriculture. Among the French and German farmers the agri-environmental measures are sometimes seen as causing stagnation in their agricultural production, limiting their right to produce and curb the yields. The Portuguese farmers do not follow such an orientation (which reflects a situation given in the Northern countries with intensified agriculture and agricultural surpluses). From their mainly extensive and traditional production forms they do not see agriculture as a polluter but see themselves as conserving the agricultural landscape.

Two orientation lines, that of production and conservation as two dominant axis (and within these several forms of environmental orientation) can be differentiated. Four generalised types of orientation were identified in the answers of the farmers: "ecological tradition"; "ecological modernity", "productive modernity" and "productive tradition" (where environmental concern had little significance), this was the main orientation pattern among the farmers interviewed: nearly one third, the other three having between 20%-26%).

IV. SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AND POLICY RELEVANCE

The analysis has shown positive and negative aspects of the European agri-environmental policy, its discourse-promoting effects and the suspicion it evokes among the farmers. Two sets of conclusions can be derived from the limited data set: (1) conditions of success formulated at scientific level which should bring new knowledge in the discourse about agri-environmental policy (2) tentative policy implications of these results and the conditions of success formulated.

(1) Implications of the scientific results

- Differences in the socio-economic framing conditions in which the farmers are facing the agri-environmental measures do not allow a common definition of the situation, thus formulating general conditions of success for single measures. The north-south cleavage, with the situation of Portuguese agriculture being different (Portugal is not in the situation of being a modernised intensified market oriented economy and having highly efficient agriculture producing a surplus) causes different scenarios of future development. In the northern countries the agri-environmental measures fit well into the goal to reduce the agricultural surplus (and sometimes this seems to

become the main goal). The measures must also be accommodated to other structures and situations as, for example, in Portugal. Therefore the conceptualisation of the measures should be clear. Also the goal structure of the measures needs some clarification and differentiation and must allow adaptation to country-specific development patterns. However, the measures must allow accommodation to such divergent structures and situations as exist in Portugal without simply being conceptualised in a broad and abstract fashion to allow for nearly any concretisation within national and regional transfer (this is a dilemma which Regulation 2078/02/EEC is confronted with in its first phase, and it has to be addressed now by the new implementation regulation). Therefore, the goal structure of the measures needs some clarification and differentiation and must allow framing for country-specific development patterns.

- The agri-environmental measures are "translated" in heterogeneous regional programmes. The problem of improving the success of the measures is not that of providing for equal incentives everywhere but that of recognising very different contexts and process components which allow to contribute to a similar result: that of improving the environment or conserving a still existing good environment. The measures can address these goals more directly through reduction of inputs or indirectly by trying to keep the land in use and preventing or slow down rural exodus. The first approach seems to be typical for the northern countries, the latter one for Portugal. Both approaches will be necessary when the policy is going to become effective throughout the EU.
- The agricultural community within the three countries is in different stages of a discourse concerning the internalisation of negative environmental effects into agriculture or the prevention of such effects through environmentally friendly farming. Taking a time scale, the beginning of environmental discourse on agriculture is marked (by no practical implementation) and the stage of practising environmentally friendly farming is at the end the national discourses are in between. Again the Portuguese case is specific. The Portuguese agricultural population must first become more modern in their agriculture. However, obviously they are not aware of the problem that this modernity cannot resemble the one Northern Europe farmers have experimented with. Their modernity risks being ecological or not to be at all.
- The regional question for agri-environmental policy reveals a complex dynamic which cannot be discussed in the political-administrative terms of a region which are used for EU policy or national policies. The concept of a region must include ecologically homogeneous areas (not necessarily zones of application for certain measures or "sensitive areas"), and the problem will be that of integrating heterogeneous regional dimensions in coherent approaches.
- The scientific evaluation of the agri-environmental measures causes methodological and practical problems as a consequence of the differences that have become visible within this research: evaluation should refer to the social, economic, political and ecological differentiations. It causes scientific problems and methodological difficulties of adequate frames of reference (individual farm level, ecologically homologous areas, regional level), and it will depend essentially on the choice of the guiding model, that is: which kind of agriculture (defined in terms of its social organisation, economic and ecologic perspective) should the measures support or aim at, which agricultural objectives (maintaining existing farms?) and ecological objectives (managing pollution? conserving traditional extensive agriculture?) should they have?
- The continuation of sociological research which began with this study is required - with certain changes in approaches and methodology: larger studies, with more representative regions and samples, longer time of study and observation (process-accompanying research). There are not only scientific reasons (to have more knowledge) but also practical pedagogical reasons to continue such research: it allows for cognition of the evolution of environmental awareness and the course of experience and learning process among the agricultural population. This again is a major source of knowledge for the further successful implementation.

(2) Policy oriented implications of the research

The public and political discourse on the agri-environmental measures has been dominated by the problems of agriculture in the northern EU member countries and their specific problems of soil and water pollution. This should be taken into account when the measures are discussed for southern European states like Portugal.

- The minimum expectations to the EU policy makers is a more clear and explicit goal structure of the measures. Also the new implementation regulation does not go far enough in this respect.
- The regional level of implementation is adequate in general and in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, but also from an ecological point of view. The problems arise in practice: political approaches of regionalisation vary extremely in the Member States and there is no operational concept of regionalization which would allow to integrate economic, ecological, social and political aspects.
- The approach to integrate agricultural and environmental policies through voluntary management agreements with compensation payments to the individual farmer is generally agreed upon. It is subjected to highly different social and political consideration in the three countries, therefore integration should not be seen as a unique approach which can be practised as a "blueprint". Furthermore it should be noticed that the implementation is sometimes managed like a traditional regulatory programme which is implemented top-down by governmental institutions and controlled in traditional bureaucratic procedures - for the farmers this does not give the

impression of a new approach which depends mainly on their choice and motivation.

- In all three countries the incentives for environmentally sound production methods resulting from the implementation of the agri-environmental measures are relatively weak and do not cover the territory equally. This can be said also when a high application for measures is observed. A further major weakness of the agri-environmental measures results from its insignificant and supplementary role they have been given within in total CAP-reform. The strengthening of its effects at regional level requires considerations like the following ones: Is it better to focus on specific areas or include all areas and as many farmers as possible? How to safeguard a long-term effectiveness of the measures (beyond the contract period of 5 years)? How to integrate the measures in the existing management systems of rural areas with participation of local actors and the agricultural population (to avoid bureaucratisation of implementation and control)?

- The financing system of the agri-environmental measures differs from the measures of market organisation in that way that every Member State has to contribute a co-financing of 50% or 25%. Because of this co-financing system some Member States or regions show little interest to establish agri-environmental programmes which are adequate for the existing agri-environmental problems. Only Member States and regions having sufficient financial means can offer elaborate programmes which are adequate to combat the existing environmental problems. As a result only these Member States and regions can offer well developed programmes to their farmers. If this system is continued, agri-environmental policy - in the long run - might become a domain of the rich EU-members.

To improve the conditions of success of the measures all over the EU, country-specific assessments on the basis of specific experiences in the first implementation phase be carried out. For the three countries of this research this included the following conclusions.

Specific conclusions for the three countries:

For France: The negotiation problems proved to be decisive. The actors included and the time of realisation determined the selection and the impact of the measures. The procedures of decision-making should become more transparent, with all local groups included in the selection of measures and the zones of application. Training should be improved for the agricultural profession as well as for nature protection associations.

For Germany: Critical questions about the site-specificity and zoning of certain measures were not discussed intensively. This contrasts with the situation in France and is a consequence of the more formal and governmental programme formulation. The policy implications of this situation will not primarily be that of capacity building for the actors but the strengthening of their roles in cooperation and participatory decision-making. This would allow for broader legitimation and motivation than government-dominated decision-making processes of the regional ministries of agriculture.

For Portugal: When Portuguese agriculture enters into a process of modernisation, it should be an ecological development path from the beginning, however it is not clear at all, if such a development path can be chosen and what the rest of the EU can contribute to it. The dominant element of an ecological development path will be traditional extensive agriculture, through the preservation of which policy makers implicitly can contribute towards the maintenance of the rural society. Agri-environmental measures can be seen as a subsidy toward the preservation of rural society. But this requires further support beyond the measures. It requires the articulation of traditional agricultural systems with a strengthening of social and community life and the participation in it and the manifestation of attitudes and practices which indicate concern with nature protection.

To avoid interpreting the agri-environmental measures as just another agricultural subsidy programme, the relationship between agriculture and the environment should be made explicit by the policy makers to the farmers. The future of traditional agriculture and the increasing importance of the farmer in environmental and landscape protection should be transmitted by the Ministry of Agriculture at the national, regional and local level. Bureaucratic impediments should not prevent a systematic and concerted attempt to integrate local actors in a discussion of the future of agriculture and of its role with regard to the environment. Portuguese farmers would further benefit from professional training programmes that transmit agri-environmental issues through scientifically informed production methods such as those associated with chemicals and pesticide use..