



Sixth Framework
Research Programme
**Global Change and
Ecosystems**



Multagri Project

Multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas:

**From trade negotiations
to contributing to sustainable development.**

New challenges for research

Capitalisation of research results on the multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas

Summary of main results

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As it emerged in the 1980's and spread in the 1990's, the word "multifunctionality" took on several conceptions, according to scientific disciplines, countries, stake-holders. This multiplicity of conceptions and works on multifunctionality was the starting point of the MULTAGRI project. The idea was to clarify the issues raised by the concept of multifunctionality at the European level through a review of the *state-of-the-art* of existing research and the identification of *research gaps* and needs to construct a solid base for future research. The project starts from the hypothesis that *multifunctionality is a way to achieve sustainable development*, thus questioning the similarities and differences between these two notions.

This report will present a comprehensive overview of the achievements and questions identified transversally in the different thematic axes of the project. It suggests directions for an analytical framework for multifunctionality, based on conceptual considerations, and gives insight for its possible implementation, supported by methodological considerations.

Conclusion: Can the introduction of multifunctionality re-orient research?

This state-of-the-art on multifunctionality has revealed that multifunctionality does not only represent a new research issue but probably a new way of comprehending agriculture and rural areas. How has this affected research?

6.1 What does the state-of-the-art reveal on current research?

Several observations were made in the different WPs with respect to research on multifunctionality:

- Concerns linked to the various functions of agriculture are *predominantly expressed through other concepts than multifunctionality*, such as diversification, sustainability, environmental measures. This induces confusion between the use of the different words, notably multifunctionality and sustainability.
- Current research on the multifunctionality is *highly fragmented*. The different issues surveyed in this state-of-the-art generally deal with the different functions in a segregated way and are not carried out in a multifunctional purpose with a global approach.
- The scientific disciplines mobilized are mainly of social sciences. The *contribution of other relevant scientific disciplines* (natural sciences, rural planning, landscape architecture) would be important in order to understand relationship between farm output and other functions. Some researchers within these disciplines, such as agronomy, have started to adopt the word and launched new works.
- *A consistent conceptual framework is largely lacking*. Methods that fully correspond with the concept of a multifunctional agriculture and rural space yet have to be developed.

In this survey, the relevant published research seems to be in the continuation of previous works on other issues. Modifications are very localized and linked to special issues (trade negotiations). The integration of multifunctionality goals and concerns into research concepts and practice is a more recent question.

6.2 Specific contributions of Multagri for future research on multifunctionality

All these observations reveal the necessity of clarification and deepening around the concept of multifunctionality. During the Multagri project, we tried to determine some relevant directions for the deepening of research and devised different frameworks to contribute to a further reflection on multifunctionality:

- WP1 has defined ***Concept Oriented Research Clusters*** (CORCs) to present, compare, analyse and classify the different research issues studied (see table in annexe). It can serve as a basis to understand the diversity of research and the opportunity to integrate partial and complementary knowledge that has been produced according to specific patterns. It remains an open classification.
- WP2 has raised the question of ***the role of political, social or market forces*** and has tried to assess their contribution in special case studies. The role of selected factors (geographical, ecological, economics, demographic, political etc.) on the evolution of demand for multifunctionality was also tested for each case study.
- WP3 has devised in an iterative way an ***evaluative framework for assessing the suitability and transferability of existing methods, techniques and models*** related to multifunctionality of agriculture. It is based on a list of main criteria, to identify the key elements of each model and method.

Multagri project: Summary of main results. September 2005.
www.multagri.net