



Patterns of agri-environmental scheme participation in Europe: Indicative trends from selected case studies

Evangelos S. Pavlis^{a,*}, Theano S. Terkenli^a, Søren B.P. Kristensen^b, Anne G. Busck^b, Georgia L. Cosor^c

^a Department of Geography, University of Aegean, University Hill, Mytilene, 81100 Lesvos, Greece

^b Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, University of Copenhagen, ØsterVoldgade 10, DK-1350 Copenhagen K, Denmark

^c University of Bucharest, Department of Systems Ecology and Sustainability/Research Center in Systems Ecology, Eco-diversity and Sustainability, Splaiul Independentei 91–95, Bucharest 050095, Romania

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 January 2014

Received in revised form

16 September 2015

Accepted 25 September 2015

Keywords:

Agri-environmental schemes (AES)

Subsidy use

AES participation

Motives

Farm size

Farming engagement

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the personal and property characteristics of landowners who use EU Rural Development agri-environmental schemes (AES), as well as their motives for participation or non-participation in such schemes. The study is based on a questionnaire survey with landowners, in selected study areas in the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, Italy and Greece. Our principal findings show that AES tend to attract more the owners of larger farms, who are frequently full-time, younger, post-primary school educated and agriculturally-trained farmers. The latter findings are contingent on local geographical particularities and on subjective factors, farmers' individualities, different rural cultures, landscape types, EU and national policies and special needs of the study areas—all areas where agricultural production is increasingly marginalized, for different reasons. Subsidy scheme participation motives did not seem to be strictly economic; they also regarded personal satisfaction. They are all together generally appeared to be place specific, since the respondents from peri-urban Northern European areas were more motivated to participate in AES than respondents from Central and Southern European areas with marginal potential for agriculture. Motives for non-participation were also found to be dependent on the level of farming engagement and on case-area landscape types.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction and context

For more than two decades, agri-environmental schemes (AES) have been among the most important EU policy instruments, in motivating farmers to improve environmental conditions, in rural areas (Buller et al., 2000; Latacz-Lohmann and Hodge, 2003; Vesterager et al., 2016). They are part of the Rural Development Program (RDP), which supports farmers' income and farm viability and continuity and regulates the impact of agricultural production in the European environment (European Commission, 2015).

The RDP including the AES represent a challenging policy field. On the one hand, they are designed as a uniform and transparent European policy framework, which should be applicable to all member states. On the other hand, rural landscapes and farming

communities are very diverse across Europe; local conditions for policy implementation, therefore, vary widely. Hence, there is a need for more in-depth knowledge about the implementation process and uptake of AES under the Rural Development Program, in different landscapes, under different conditions for agricultural production, across Europe.

This paper investigates European landowners' motives for participation in AES, in five study areas, namely in the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, Italy and Greece. The focus of the present study is on marginal agricultural areas and areas in transition which are of interest since there is 'a clear need for targeted interventions in marginal and remote rural areas, which involves either reversing abandonment or managing a transition to a new landscape structure' (Pedroli et al., 2015). For the purposes of our study, we categorized land owners into four types of farmers: full-time, part-time, hobby farmers and non-farmers. Specifically, the survey attempts to answer the following three questions:

- What are the personal and property characteristics of those landowners who participated in AES?

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: epavlis@geo.aegean.gr (E.S. Pavlis), terkenli@aegean.gr (T.S. Terkenli), sk@ign.ku.dk (S.B.P. Kristensen), agb@ign.ku.dk (A.G. Busck), georgialavinia.cosor@g.unibuc.ro (G.L. Cosor).

Table 1

Key figure for AES implementation in the countries with case studies.

Country	% of UAA under AES ^a	Annual EU expenditure per ha supported in 2007–09 (euros/ha)	Total expenditure per ha supported (EU and national co-financing) in 2007–09, (euros/ha)
Denmark	11	80	120
Netherlands	4	130	450
Austria	70	190	340
Greece	10	340	400
Italy	19	85	190
EU-27	22	84	163

^a The agricultural area under AES represents the physical surface covered by AES, without double counting of areas enrolled in several measures. Source: [European Union \(2011\)](#).

- What are the main motives for (non-) participation in AES?
- What are the environmental impacts of AES participation in terms of farm-level land use changes?

In accordance with previous studies, we would expect smaller farms to be less likely to participate in AES, and such participation to be mostly influenced by family-centred motivations, while there would be different perceptions of ‘farming’ and ‘tradition’. Furthermore, we would expect a considerable amount of non-profit-driven motives in AES participation. In addition, we would expect to find non-production-oriented motives in land use change, whereas an increasing number of farmers to be more and more concerned with environmental issues (e.g. improvement of habitats).

2. Agri-environmental scheme use and farm development—dynamics and motives

2.1. The diversity of AES in the European Union

The basic aim of the AES is to encourage the protection and management of the farmland environment by European farmers, through economic subsidies (Council Regulation 1698/2005). AES are a part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and are, therefore, co-financed by the Member States ([European Commission, 2015](#)). They were first introduced in the EU, in the 1980s, through the voluntary regulation 797/85, in order to improve natural and environmental conditions, in agricultural areas. Until 1992, their implementation remained optional.

The “accompanying measures” (2078/92/EC), introduced as part of the MacSharry CAP reform in 1992, were the first set of mandatory AE measures, requiring all member states to implement AES. Following the “subsidiarity” principle, member states were free to design measures, which were either targeted at particularly sensitive areas (“deep measures”), sub-groups of farmers (e.g. livestock owners), or landscape types (“broad measures”). Hence, a variety of measures developed in the EU member states, during the 1990s, including the protection of grasslands, reduction of fertilizer use and/or wetland restoration ([Buller et al., 2000](#); [Latacz-Lohmann and Hodge, 2003](#)). In several cases, the measures were a continuation or adaptation of existing national AE programs ([Buller et al., 2000](#)). With the Agenda 2000 reform, in 1999, and the subsequent Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development, AES became a key element of the RDP, under the “second Axis” of the CAP. The measures included under the 2007–2013 EU RDP were grouped into 12 categories (e.g. organic farming, management of landscape, pastures and High Nature Value farmlands, integrated production and other extensification of farming systems). The EU budget allocated to AES has increased rapidly since 1993 and reached 3026 million Euros in 2010, which is still only 5% of the total CAP budget (close to 56,000 million Euros, in 2013). In addition, national co-financing increased the total amount spent on AES, to around 5.035 million Euros, in 2013 ([European Union, 2011](#)).

The present research refers only to the recent 2007–2013 RDP. The total budget for the 2007–2013 RDP was 96.3 billion Euros (20% of the total CAP budget, for the same period). AES are part of Axis 2 “Improving the Environment and the Countryside through Land Management”. The budget allocated to AES measures constituted 22% of the total expenditure for rural development, in the 2007–13 RDP ([European Union, 2011](#)).

According to the statistical and economic information report on rural development, the level of AES implementation varies considerably between member states. On average, 22% of the agricultural area (UAA) for EU-27 was under AES. However, this varied considerably, from 92% of the UAA in Luxembourg, to less than 5% in Bulgaria. The most important types of agri-environmental commitments, in terms of area enrolled, were those aimed at the management of landscape, pastures and High Nature Value farmland (39% of the total area committed in EU-27). 14% of the total agri-environmental area (almost 5 million ha) is classified under the category “other extensification of farming systems”, which includes measures aimed at the reduction or better management of fertilizers, at plant products protection and at livestock extensification. Around 8% of the total area committed in the EU-27 was devoted to organic farming and a similar share was directed to soil conservation actions ([European Union, 2011](#)).

Table 1 is based on the above report and shows the proportion of agricultural area covered by AES contracts, in 2009, in the countries where the case studies in the present paper are located. It reflects the diversity of implementation strategies developed, by country: In Austria, the agri-environmental ÖPUL scheme addresses many areas and landowners, as illustrated by the very high proportion of agricultural land covered (70%). Italy is close to the average for EU-27, both in terms of area covered (19%) and annual EU expenditure (85 euros/ha). The remaining countries (Denmark, The Netherlands, and Greece) have less area under AES contracts (between 4% and 11%), well below the EU-27 average. Interestingly, two of these countries (The Netherlands and Greece) have the highest total expenditure per ha (EU and national co-financing combined), amounting to 450 and 400 euros/ha respectively (more than twice the EU-27 average), which indicates a “deep” approach to AES implementation: funds are targeted to specific areas, which receive substantial subsidies. In the case of The Netherlands, this is primarily achieved with national top-up funds (72% of the total expenditure per ha supported), while, in Greece, national top-up only constitutes only 25% of the total expenditure per ha ([European Union, 2011](#)).

2.2. Factors influencing participation in AES

Member states have designed and allocated funds to AES, based on a variety of principles and strategies, as discussed in the previous section. Whatever the strategy applied, voluntary scheme participation is common to all countries and land owners and therefore their decision whether or not to participate is based on a number of parameters. These are typically classified as either farm charac-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6547147>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6547147>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)