

Sustainable Agriculture and Soil Conservation

Session 4 Legislation and Policy Instruments

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- **Policy instruments**
 - Mandatory instruments
 - Voluntary Incentive Based Instruments
 - Persuasion instruments: Advice to farmers
 - Knowledge improving instruments
- **Policy targets**
 - Removal of most harmful practices/Promotion of soil conservation practices: enhanced by the cross compliance
 - Agricultural externalities associated to soil management (water pollution, mudslides, carbon sequestration)
 - Agricultural land abandonment in less favoured areas (mountains, wetlands)
 - Economic drivers of farming practices/farming systems: public support to organic farming, shifts of farm income support from arable to grassland based systems, R&D orientation and its impact of farming system competitiveness.

- **Policy framework regarding soils in France**
 - Many laws and policy instruments concern soil including EU tools.
 - But no regulation focuses on soil conservation with a coherent approach of its different aspects
 - 2003 Law on soil erosion has not been implemented yet.
 - Lack of success of the certification of integrated farming (French version).
 - A large Research consortium and important research effort are now devoted to soil at the national level

- **Action arenas**
 - Identification of soil conservation issues
 - Governance of policy implementation
 - Changes in farming practices
- **Participative approach**
 - Regional workshops to discuss findings and recommendations
- **Examples of policy mix implementation**
 - Czech R. Law on soil+ AEM (arable to grassland)
 - Belgium: Municipal action plan + AEM
 - Germany: Law on soil, GAEC (soil cover) + AEM
 - Bulgaria: registration of Salinization problem, organisation of water users + investment aids

- **Cross-compliance**

- Good Agricultural & Environmental Conditions directly target soil conservation of farmland.
- Compliance with Directives and national regulations that indirectly targets soil conservation.
- Total coverage of EU agricultural land with regional adaptations, requirements easy to monitor.
- Incentive increases with the share of CAP payments in the farm income: differences across farm types and regions independent of soil threats.
- Political room for the adaptation of GAEC according to local conditions, given the potential competition distortions ?

- **Agri-Environment Measures (AEM)**

- AEM usually do not target soil conservation as a main objective
- AEM often promote soil improving practices/farming system like reduced tillage, intercropping and organic farming.
- Policy tool particularly adapted to fit locally specific problems/to experiment and adapt alternative practices.
- AEM effectiveness depends on farmers' voluntary commitments
- AEM need high and costly knowledge input at every stage

- **Advice and knowledge improving policies**
 - Different perceptions of soil degradation by farmers and public authorities (and land owners?).
 - Necessary to improve the effectiveness of other policies
 - Soil conservation was (is?) a low priority in Farm Advice Services
 - Soil conservation and agricultural education priorities?
 - Soil conservation and agricultural research priorities?
 - Importance of the awareness of the other citizens (Greece)
- **The need of locally specific knowledge**
 - Data, data, data...: involvement of local communities to build shared references on soil degradation, risks and solutions.
 - Development and uses of Geographic Information Systems to deal with locally specific problems.
 - Organisation of advice practices according to a territorial approach.
 - Compatibility with current organisation (often based on agricultural products)

- **Policy instruments are complementary with each other**
 - Especially knowledge improvement and dissemination condition or enhance the effectiveness of other instruments: SoCo is certainly a milestone in this process, but highly relevant local and inter temporal references and data are missing.
 - Success stories are based on the combination of mandatory and/or voluntary instruments with finely tuned advices and participatory approach.
 - Lack of monitoring of soil problems, flexibility and coordination of policy instruments
- **Economic incentives and soil conservation**
 - Most powerful incentives do not look aligned with soil conservation: perceived need of additional policy intervention,
 - Assessment of the contribution of existing policies in negative incentives
 - Agricultural price volatility may disturb the implementation of good crop rotations
 - Increasing prices of energy and fertilisers favour conservation agriculture.
 - Opportunities: carbon credits, re-orientation of public support (let's have cows eat more grass): CAP health check, CAP 2013.

- **Farmers' economic behaviour**

- Soil is a key asset of farmers
- Why the farmers do not nurse their soil properly ?
- What are the relationships between soil degradation/improvement and land price ?
- Insufficient internalisation of external effects in land price ?
- Short term/long term conflicts

- Is it only a problem of tradition & knowledge ?
- Selection & training of farmers.

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- **Determinants of the geographical location of farming systems**

- Understanding inadequate location of farming systems (land uses, farming practices) regarding soil degradation risks.
- Exploring opportunities and threats of land use changes
- Links with the whole food supply chain?

- This knowledge will also improve the regulation of related agricultural externalities.

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