



Progetto INTERBIO - Seminario internazionale sul tema

*L'agricoltura biologica nelle politiche di sviluppo rurale comunitarie tra presente e futuro.
Esperienze della programmazione 2007-2013 e prospettive nella riforma della PAC*

Il sostegno all'agricoltura biologica nella programmazione 2007-2013: esperienze europee a confronto.

b) Organic farming support through CAP measures – Options and best practice examples beyond the agri-environmental programmes

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Summary

In the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP 2007-2013), possibilities to support organic farming are not limited to support under the agri-environmental schemes. Dedicated funds, higher premiums or priority for organic farms under the competitiveness, diversification or LEADER axis are measures that can help encouraging farmers to convert to organic, whereas they are not yet used throughout all Member States. A study conducted by Alexandra Pohl in 2009 has analysed Rural Development programmes in 27 member state to evaluate how they make use of these possibilities.

Space for action

In Action 6 of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming from 2004, “the Commission strongly recommends Member States to make full use within their Rural Development Programmes of the instruments available to support organic farming (...)”. The conversion to and maintenance of organic farming requires specific knowledge, investments and marketing infrastructures. Additional to support under agri-environmental schemes, instruments under axis 1, 3 and 4 can be useful to perfectly target these needs if priority is given to organic farming under these measures.

Sustainable competitiveness

“Competitiveness” measures play an important role within the rural development programmes, with 18 member states allocating more than 30% of 2nd pillar budget under the 1st axis. It is possible to target these funds towards more sustainability by prioritizing investments in organic farming – either by giving priority to organic farms in obtaining funding, or in dedicating a certain percentage of the budget to organic farms, or by increased funding for participants with a focus on organic farming.

Especially the Czech Republic which considers organic farming as a general priority in the Rural Development programmes gives some good examples, but also Austria and some Italian, German and Spanish Regions consider organic farming as a priority in some axis 1 measures. Measures related to training, information and advisory systems (measures 111, 114, 115 in regulation 1974/2006) can support conventional farmers to take the step to convert to the organic approach, but may also help those farmers that do already work according to organic farming rules to further develop their management, to improve their farming methods and their profits. Support for the setting up of young farmers and farm modernisation (measures 112 and 121) can, if priority is given to organic farming, help to shoulder the investments in animal husbandry and machinery



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that come along with the conversion to organic farming and motivate young farmers to take the conversion step. Incentives to adding value to agricultural products, participating in quality food schemes, setting up of and participating in producer groups (measure 123, 124, 132 and 142) can, if organic farming is prioritized, further contribute to strengthening the capacity of organic farms to generate income and create employment.

Better quality of life through organic food and farming

The third axis of the rural development programmes, dedicated to improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity, can also be used to support the development of organic farming, especially as many organic farmers aim to diversify their economic activities as well as to contribute to the improvement of life quality in rural regions. For this axis, again the Czech Republic delivers two examples by providing increased funding for organic farms under measures 311 “Diversification into non-agricultural activities” and 313 “Encouragement of tourism activities”.

More possibilities

The LEADER axis is dedicated to bottom-up initiatives, and also in this axis it can be seen that organic farming and local food systems can contribute to fruitful partnerships, as shown by the local action groups (LAG) of Bruges in Belgium and West Cork in Ireland where the organic quality scheme was part of the creation of a regional brand.

As a possibility beyond the Rural Development programmes, the current CAP gives member states the possibility to dedicate up to 10% of their national ceiling in the first pillar to grant specific support to farmers that fulfil certain conditions under article 68. Types of farming which are important for the protection or enhancement of the environment and improving the quality of agricultural products fall under these conditions, which makes organic farming perfectly suited for this type of support. France uses this possibility to give organic farmers a flat rate top up payment.

Conclusion

Organic farming contributes to all aspects of sustainability and rural viability. Therefore, it deserves particular consideration under all measures and axes: It should be the leading measure of the Agri- Environmental measures and a bonus for organic farming should be foreseen in all the other axes.

The future CAP should finally mainstream sustainability under all axes and measures and should support and make best use of what organic farming can already deliver: An established and European –wide regulated system of sustainable farming, providing the public goods that taxpayers expect from CAP.

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Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 of 19 January 2009 establishing common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers