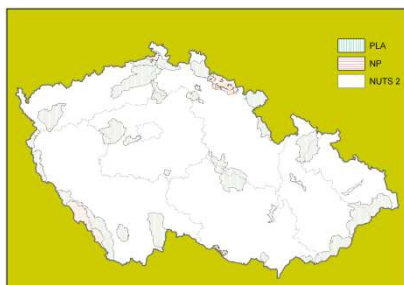


„Agri-environmental measure evaluation in Czech Republic”



Main research question

1. What are the benefits of integrating agri-environmental measures with environmental policies?
2. Why does this integration fail in some cases?

Measures

Narrow and tailored schemes under agri-environmental measure, focused on wet and dry grassland, protection of birds and insects

Methodology and approach

- Qualitative research based on in-depth interviews in two protected landscape areas (PLAs) with different performances in the implementation process of the schemes.
- Interviewees: farmers, PLA administration, staff of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), advisors.

Characteristics

Protected Landscape Area (PLA) I.

Area: 709 km²

Main features:

biodiversity-rich wetlands, landscape

Protected Landscape Area II.

Area: 746.8 km²

Main features:

dry biodiversity-rich grasslands, landscape



Findings

- Inclusion of staff from PLA administration (under Ministry of Environment) significantly increased the complexity of implementation
- Implementation was not consistent across the national territory
- The process of implementation was not smooth and imposed heavy burdens on all stakeholders during the first year (e.g. delays, IT failures)
- Advisory service does not assist farmers, and regional MoA offices have limited capacity to provide advice in sufficient detail
- Regional MoA offices are more oriented to the administrative process than to the goals of the measure
- In PLA I, there is a higher level of trust between the PLA administration and farmers than in PLA II
- The demanding implementation process led to increase of trust in PLA I and a decrease of trust in PLA II.
- The PLA administration has significant power over the content of the agri-environmental contracts but has low capacity to deal with farmers
- Some agri-environmental contracts are not favourable for the most vulnerable farmers (e.g. small, low human capital, low assertiveness).
- Conflict resolution system was introduced
- Most of the valuable habitats are under contracts
- The agri-environmental schemes are now better tailored to the needs of habitats.

Conclusions

- The agri-environmental schemes in question produced quite successful outcomes (hectares of habitats under contracts)
- The results were achieved at the expense of vulnerable farmers who sometimes bear high costs of non-favourable contracts and loss of linking social capital (already low in PLA II)
- In PLA II with high linking social capital (trust between PLA administration and farmers), the implementation process was smoother and the social capital was not diminished there
- Policy learning took place as PLA staff can now reflect on their role in the process, and the conflict resolution system was introduced
- If the scheme is evaluated under the current formal process (using CMEF indicators), the outcome would be “successful scheme” but might overlook regional differences in performance and a potential future decrease of farmer willingness to participate in some PLAs

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Suggestions

- Include the question “Why do policies fail or work well?” in the evaluation process in order to facilitate learning by policy makers and administration
- Invest in social capital or trust among administrators and farmers (e.g. by assistance farmers during the negotiation process)
- Create advisory services to assist farmers with complex policies
- Improve planning of the implementation process