

Efficiency and targeting of RD measures: the case of support for food quality schemes in Slovenia

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Within EU rural development policy, specific food quality schemes (FQSs) have an important position. In Slovenia, a FQS system was introduced after independence, and after EU entry in 2004 this system took over all the rules and standards of the Union. Thus, a FQS has already been operating in Slovenia for 20 years. However, it is not functioning optimally: the amounts of such products in the market and their commercial-economic effects are modest, and consumers' familiarity with the products of this scheme is still relatively weak.

The identified problems of FQS operation in Slovenia pertain both to the policy and to local producers and their social setting. The current RD policy mechanisms promoting FQS are not adequate; the RDP measures represent a continuation of the initial, segmented, 'top down' policy approach, without sufficient regard to what is going on the ground among farmers, associations of producers, and consumers.



Our case study indicates that the economic motivation of an individual producer accompanied by a group of supporters is the most important basis for creating a successful FQS project. However, the impact of the scheme is also important for success, especially in the initial phases of development. Despite the steady growth of FQS budgetary expenditures, many initial enthusiasms did not deliver the expected results. The main reason pertains to the social setting (a lack of trust and loyalty among members of producers' group, prevailing individualistic and passive behaviour among producers and farmers) as well as to insufficiently implemented control and sanctions against the violators of FQS which need to be fulfilled for the successful functioning of a FQS.

Institutional learning challenges

A learning process is required for governmental bodies as well as for producers and all others directly involved in the issue. Bureaucrats need to be more attentive not only to juridical considerations, but also to economic and sociological aspects of the scheme's operation. Producers need to be more realistic in defining the essential characteristics of their FQS products, and be more active in creating the necessary social capital. Mutual exchange of information is the basic prerequisite.

Policy recommendations

Feedbacks of farmers, producers and consumers on changing administrative proceedings pertaining to FQS should be taken into account by EU and member states bureaucrats on a regular basis.