

Advisors and facilitators as key players in novel agri-environmental contracts

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Theme: Sustainability transitions of agriculture and the transformation of education and advisory services: convergence or divergence?



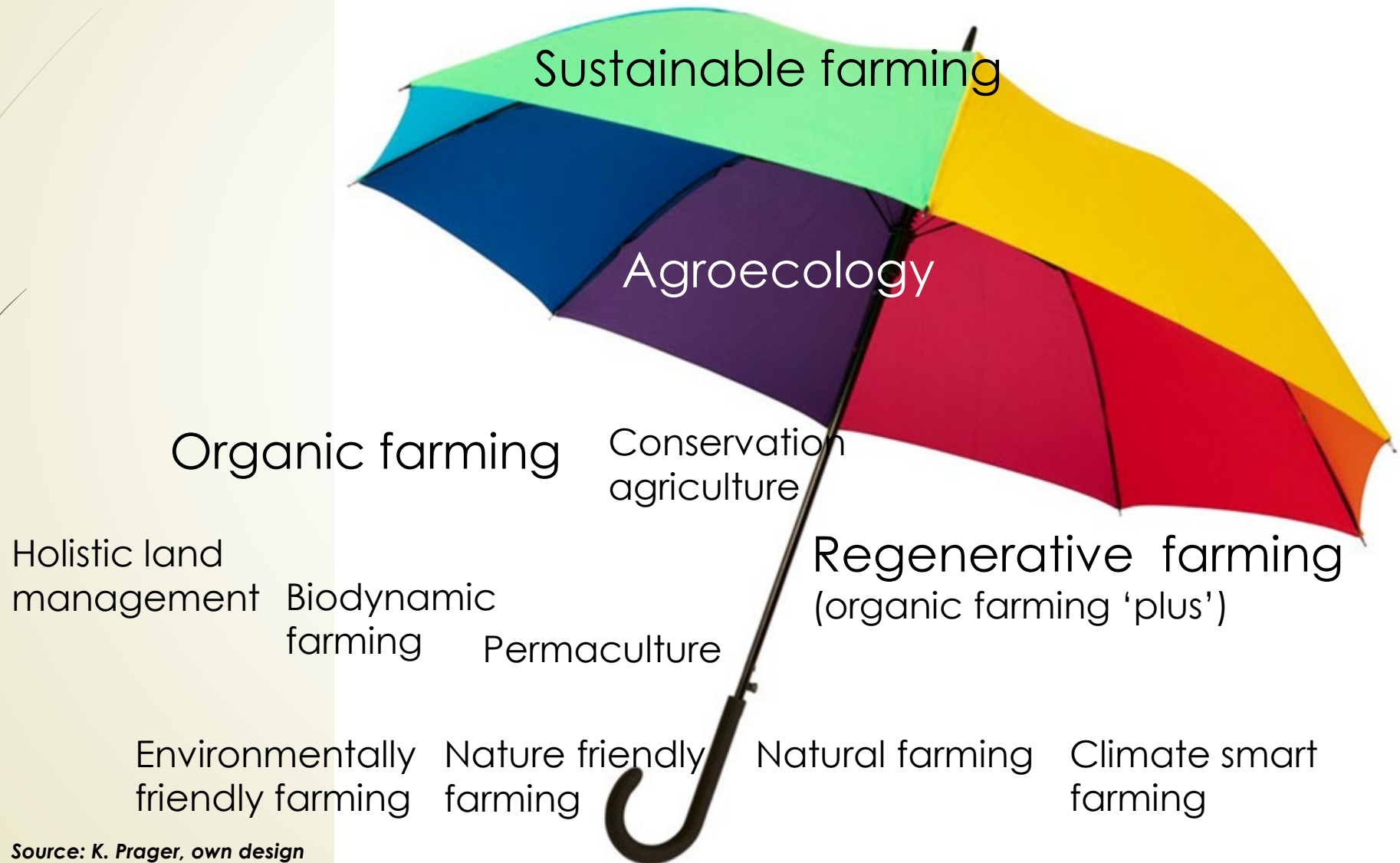


Intro



- ▶ Premise: farming in Europe at present is largely not sustainable
- ▶ Assumption: to make farming more sustainable we need to
 - ▶ Reduce certain inputs (synthetic fertiliser, fuel in cultivation and processing)
 - ▶ Increase other inputs (e.g. labour, knowledge)
 - ▶ Change consumption habits and thus demand
 - ▶ Build resilience into the system (e.g. short supply chains)
- ▶ This talk: explore the public policy perspective (CAP/ AECS), and identify where advice fits in current policy frameworks aiming to combine agricultural and environmental issues

Attempt to fit under an umbrella



Source: K. Prager, own design

What are “sustainability transitions in agriculture”?

- Alternative approaches share more similarities with each other than with conventional agricultural approaches
- They share a common goal of striving for sustainability, incl. environmental AND social and economic considerations

(IUCN report (2020)

“Approaches to sustainable agriculture”)

Approaches to sustainable agriculture

- 3.1 Agroecology
- 3.2 Nature-inclusive agriculture
- 3.3 Permaculture
- 3.4 Biodynamic agriculture
- 3.5 Organic farming
- 3.6 Conservation agriculture
- 3.7 Regenerative agriculture
- 3.8 Carbon farming
- 3.9 Climate-smart agriculture
- 3.10 High nature value farming
- 3.11 Low external input agriculture
- 3.12 Circular agriculture
- 3.13 Ecological intensification
- 3.14 Sustainable intensification

Supporting activities

- 4.1 Genetic improvement
- 4.2 Precision farming
- 4.3 Mixed farming systems
- 4.4 Integrated farming tools
- 4.5 Pasture-based and free-range farming
- 4.6 Landscape and ecosystems approaches
- 4.7 Supporting socio-economic activities



Approaches to sustainable agriculture

- ▶ Each approach is valid in a given set of circumstances – their diversity is a strength in itself
- ▶ Common challenges:
 - ▶ low profitability and/or low productivity
 - ▶ more costly in terms of knowledge/ labour
 - ▶ issues around uptake and scalability
 - ▶ lack of common metrics for environmental performance



Increasing skill range required of advisors



Public policy tool: Agri-environment schemes

- ▶ Theory of Change: by incentivising certain farming practices, farmers will adopt them and continue without (e.g. AES) payments AND
- ▶ AE payments can cover (interim) the shortfall of cost of production that isn't met by the market
- ▶ CAP seen as flawed, but has tools to mitigate impact of agriculture (Kelemen et al. 2023)



Standard AECs

single objective focus,
individual, action-
based, short-medium
term (5 years)

Novel contracts

tailored combinations
with group contracts,
action/result-based
hybrids,
longer terms possible

Advisor skills and knowledge

Different demands on advisors to implement novel contracts



Contracts2.0 UK case study artist's impression of farmer views

- Facilitation of group processes
- Negotiation
- Ecological knowledge for field-based assessment of results
- Social knowledge for assessment of non-environmental outcomes of contracts
- Systemic knowledge of agro-ecosystem, alternative approaches and practices

Contracts2.0



- ▶ Looked into how the design features of such contracts can be tweaked to achieve higher effectiveness, greater farmer buy-in, social acceptability, integration of wider rural concerns and stakeholders
- ▶ So why aren't we doing more of this?
 - ▶ Some leading examples: Ireland – payment by results
 - ▶ Netherlands: collective contracts
- ▶ Results-based and collective, including hybrids – all of these showed a requirement for intermediaries or facilitators, and in many instances advisors can take on this role

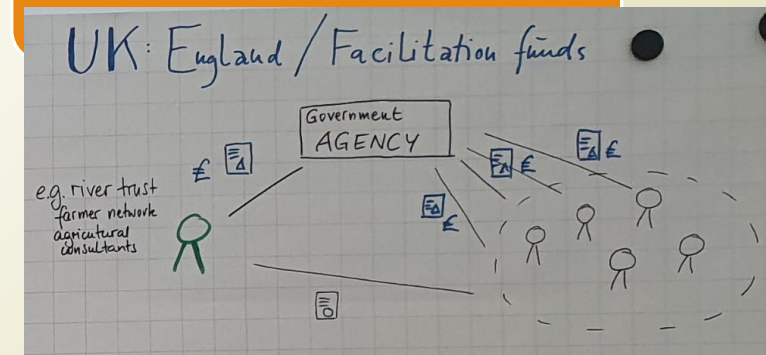
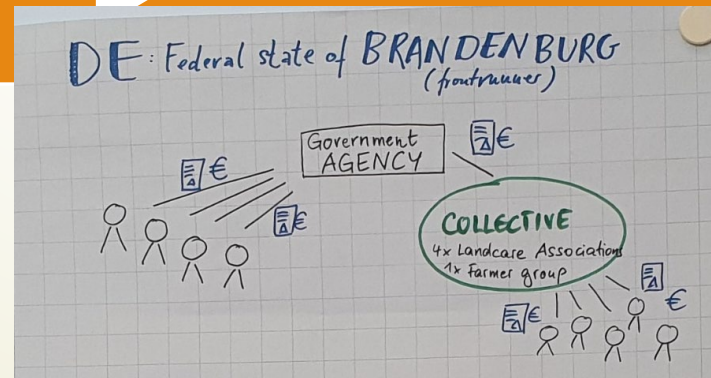
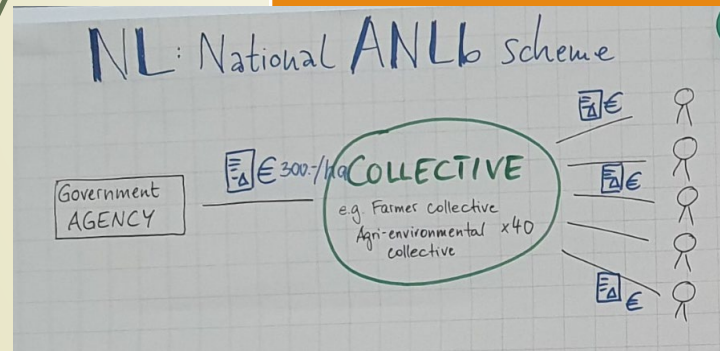


Where are we on collective contracts?

Netherlands Collective contracts established country-wide

Germany Piloting in selected regions of some states

England Funded facilitator to 'align' members' contracts where possible

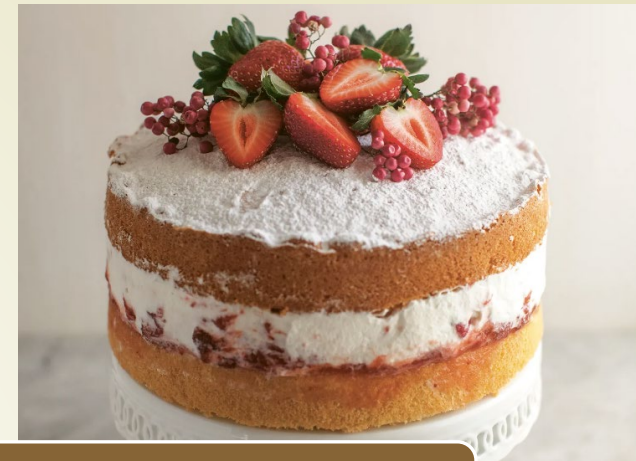


Where are we on collective contracts?

	Netherlands (National ANLb scheme)	Germany (Federal state of Brandenburg)	United Kingdom (England – Facilitation Fund)
Country level	Whole country	2 systems in parallel (but pilots)	Selected projects
Collective level	Continuous (pre-existing and mergers)	Pre-existing and new groups	3 year projects; few pre-existing groups
Funding for intermediary	Share of AECM (15-20%)	Share of AECM (20% but flexible)	Via dedicated scheme (or 'member' fees)
Certification	Independently certified	Only minimum requirements (formalised, bank account)	Criteria-based (expertise, farmer contacts)
Roles	Administrative, negotiating, facilitating	Administrative, negotiating, facilitating	Facilitating

e.g. Prager 2022

Where are we on payment-by-results?



Ireland

- Pure and hybrid versions implemented in various regions

PBR is key ingredient

- combining sponge with cream and fruit, i.e. other payments added for taste and stability

England

- Building on pure pilots, now working to incorporate hybrid into new scheme

Experimented with icing

- how PBR as the icing could work on its own; now adding some sponge to address risk perception

Flanders

- Various pilots, small-scale/ municipality-based

Light sprinkling of icing

- favouring a lot of sponge (action-based), with PBR top-up

Measures:

rough grassland, pond, oak woodland, nettle patch, pollinator plot, bird boxes maintained, 2m field margins, hedgerows without gaps, invasive species, free from disturbance



Barriers – policy and governance I

- ▶ Perceived high administrative burden → lack of **willingness** and **ability** of administrative actors to experiment with novel contracts – but needs experimentation and piloting (tailoring to context!)
- ▶ Funding: if existing schemes are well-funded, administration is not incentivised to make changes – path dependency
- ▶ Weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis of Member States in the development of their CAP Strategic Plans, e.g. measures to improve AKIS/ advisory services
 - ▶ limited coordination, cooperation and communication between AKIS actors



Barriers – policy and governance II

- ▶ Departments for environment/ nature and departments for agriculture are **separate** → limits coherent approach to the agri-environment
- ▶ Agroecology (e.g. agroforestry): agriculture and forestry in different departments/ agencies, **different sets of funding schemes**
 - ▶ Leads to disjointed action/ policy and lack of support across depts for developing novel approaches
 - ▶ Lack of data what topics advisors deliver advice on; lack of database of 'agri-environmental' advisors

Barriers – cont'd – Advisors



- Advisors receive regular training (Prager et al. 2017) VS Advisors don't have the right skills
- Knowledge of tools
- Advisors have vested interests – even publicly funded advisors
- Cooperation between providers is limited – but increasingly needed for sustainable farming approaches
- Limited 'signposting' – advisors being able to refer client to relevant expert/ advisor



Barriers – cont'd – Farmers

- ▶ Low levels of farmer education (ES, RO, GR, CZ, PL)
- ▶ Or: not the 'right' knowledge
- ▶ Extensive 'conventional knowledge' but low on average regarding regenerative/ agroecological/ organic practices
- ▶ Limited access to advice (e.g. young, subsistence and part-time farmers underserviced Prager et al. 2017)
- ▶ 'Groundswell' – farmers networking amongst themselves, knowledge sharing, support (in particular for regenerative ag, agroforestry, organic, NFFN, global networks)



Conclusion

- Advisors and facilitators are key players
- In particular if they adopt the role of knowledge broker and intermediary
- Diverse skillsets
- Professionalisation
- Combining multiple sources of funding/ finance
- Increased recognition of transaction costs



References



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