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Judith Möllers,
Csaba Csaki and
Gertrud Buchenrieder

Major lessons for the CAP reform from the New Member States' perspective

The current discussion regarding the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is challenging due to the varying needs and interests of the old and new member states (NMS) of the European Union (EU). The NMS still display tremendous disparities in most structural and socio-economic indicators compared to the EU15 average, implying that further sectoral restructuring is needed. The Structural Change in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods (SCARLED) project, which ran from 2007 until 2010, offers rich empirical insights with a specific focus on these processes in the NMS. This policy brief summarises the project's main policy-relevant results. SCARLED offers three key lessons for CAP reform. First, it claims that the current, uniform CAP only partially addresses the needs of NMS. Second, the region's agriculture still requires support to enhance competitiveness, albeit for a limited time. Third, the issue of small, subsistence-based farms in the region needs to be recognised. However, approaches aiming at poverty alleviation in such subsistence-based households, but also in landless rural households, need to look beyond the agricultural sector. The wider rural economy and improving education, as well as rural-urban linkages, need to be included in any poverty-related policy approach, be it at the national or the EU level.

Further structural change in the NMS is needed for overcoming disparity

The NMS have undergone substantial rural economic sector restructuring and socio-economic transformation. Nevertheless, a great number of them still display tremendous disparities in most structural and socio-economic indicators compared to the EU15 average; it is therefore imperative that significant structural changes in the labour force, farming, and rural economic sectors take place. Understanding the dynamics of structural change and insights from up-to date survey data are fundamental for any policy debate on a new CAP; they constitute the particular value of the 6th framework project SCARLED.

SCARLED was a multifaceted and complex project dealing mainly with structural change in the NMS that ran over a period of almost four years. Its results and policy conclusions raise important issues that should be considered, especially for CAP reform.

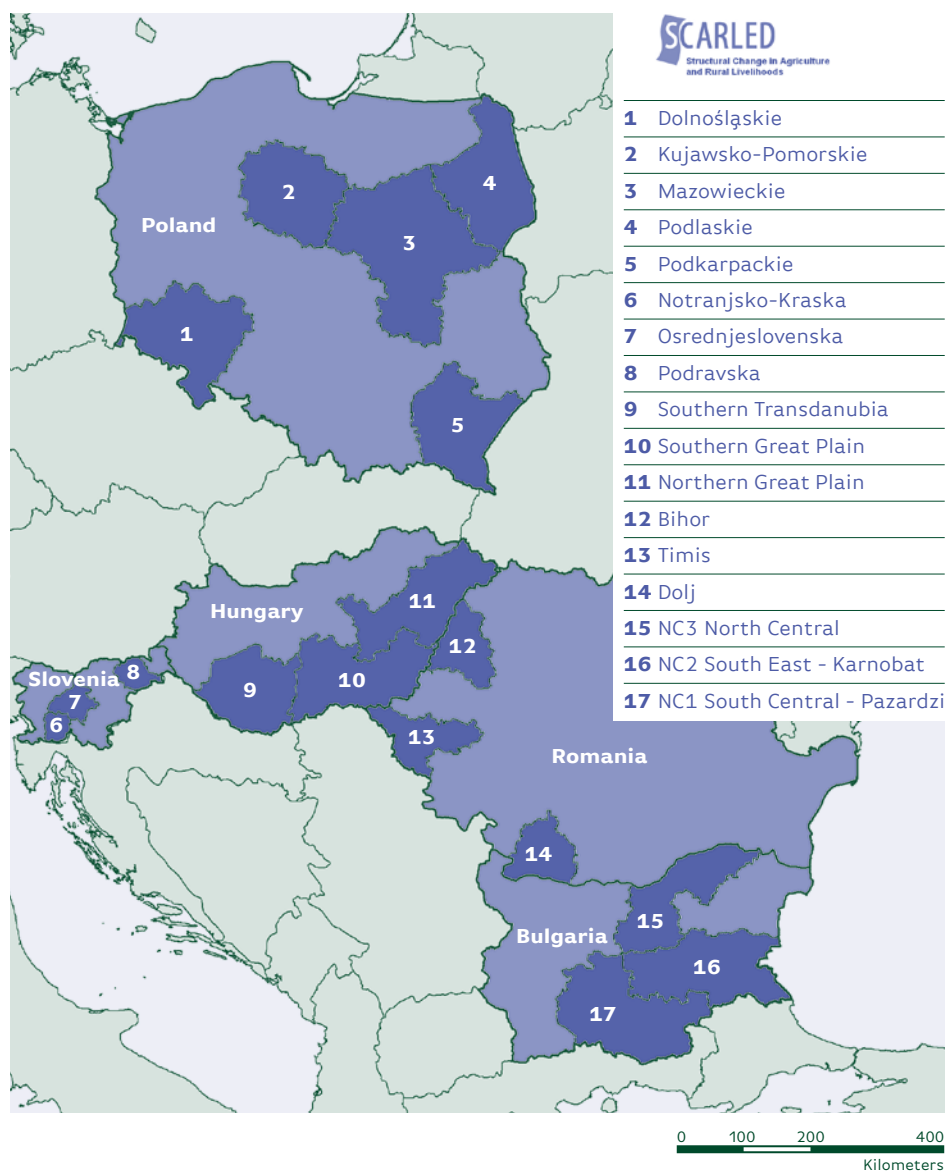
Key issues and policy implications for rural areas in the NMS

The ongoing structural change in agriculture and especially the future of small-scaled family farms in a situation of widening rural-urban disparities are issues of interest to which SCARLED results provided insights:

First, EU integration has had a discernibly positive impact on all aspects of rural life in the NMS. At the same time, however, rural-urban gaps have widened and rural poverty has increased. Agricultural policies cannot solve these issues alone, and better synergies with, for example, social policies, are needed to address issues such as an aging population and subsistence-based livelihoods.

Second, the large number of subsistence and semi-subsistence farms is a special characteristic of the EU's NMS. SCARLED compiled a great deal of analytical evidence regarding the operation and motivation of these farms, which are hardly comparable to any segments of the EU15 farming

Figure 1: SCARLED research regions in five NMS
© EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries.
Source: Eurostat



sector and require special attention and policies. Until now, the CAP was not tailored to the needs of these farms. Many of the problems that are related to small farms are, however, more related to social, rather than agricultural policy.

Third, agriculture is still important in most of the rural regions in the enlarged EU, but it is not always the major source of income for rural families. Therefore, diversified rural employment and the development of rural labour markets are of primary importance in rural regional development policies.

Fourth, many NMS have significant potential for agricultural production; however, this potential is still underutilised. SCARLED highlights a number of impediments limiting the competitiveness of farms in the region. For example, fragmented land ownership and the lack of effective farm consolidation, together with restrictions on land ownership and land markets, are serious impediments.

Fifth, rural development policies play a crucial role in shaping rural livelihoods. Lessons from the EU15 suggest that there is no unique model for managing rural development, and that there exists no single determining factor of a region's economic

trajectory. Therefore, rural policies are required to enhance local capacity and actors' participation, to mobilise initial resources and cope with external forces to best meet local needs.

Key lessons for the CAP reform

SCARLED presents three key lessons for the CAP reform. First, it is evident that a fully uniform CAP only partially addresses the needs of NMS. Because simplification is also needed, serving special interests should, however, always be critically questioned. Second, the NMS' agriculture is probably not ready for a CAP, which operates mainly by the provision of public goods: enhancing competitiveness will still be important for some time in the future. Third, the study highlights the problems of small farms in the NMS. Small farms not only face barriers to accessing CAP measures, but are often greatly affected by rural poverty during the process of structural change. This phenomenon has to be fully recognized both at national and EU levels. A CAP that equally offers its policies to small farms could be a step in the right direction. However, an

approach aiming at poverty alleviation clearly needs to look beyond the agricultural sector. The wider rural economy and improving education, as well as rural-urban linkages, need to be included in any poverty-related policy approach, be it at the national or EU level.

SCARLED tasks and approaches

SCARLED addressed two major research objectives: first, it analysed the agricultural sector restructuring process and rural socio-economic transformation, including pluriactivity in the NMS, with a particular focus on five case countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia). Second, it examined the patterns behind rural "success stories" in selected EU15 case countries (Austria, Ireland, the new German Bundesländer, Spain, and Sweden) during previous enlargements to identify and codify best practices and to draw recommendations for the NMS.

To accomplish these objectives, SCARLED performed a number of important tasks during its more than three years of operating time (2007-2010). For example, SCARLED conducted: (1) an analysis of structural change in agriculture within the NMS; (2) an analysis of the determinants of

subsistence agriculture to understand the factors that influence entry to and exit from subsistence production; (3) an assessment of the determinants of rural employment diversification (sectoral labour adjustment); (4) an analysis of cross-country differences in rural labour adjustment patterns (regional and sectoral adjustment patterns), and of the structure of the rural labour force in the NMS and EU15, by considering the determinants of rural adjustment patterns. Based on selected case studies in the EU15, SCARLED derived lessons of best practices regarding the preservation of the rural social fabric, appropriately managing farm restructuring, and/or changes in multifunctionality. Various econometric models, a fuzzy logic model, agent based modelling (AgriPolis), as well as a Delphi approach were employed for the analyses.

Outlook: Further empirical research is needed

The SCARLED project demonstrates the merits of an advanced and integrative empirical research on ongoing changes in rural areas of the NMS. Further empirical studies are therefore highly recommended.

Further information

The findings are documented in detail in the following publications:

Möllers, J., G. Buchenrieder and C. Csaki (ed.), forthcoming 2011. Structural Change in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Policy Implications for the New Member States of the European Union. Studies on the Agricultural and Food Sector in Central and Eastern Europe, Halle (Saale), D: Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO).

Csaki, C. et al. (2010). Structural Change in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Policy Recommendations. SCARLED deliverable D10.2, <http://scarled.eu/publications/deliverables.html>

Structural Change in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods (SCARLED):

Information on the FP6 project "Structural Change in Agricultural Change and Rural Livelihoods" (SCARLED) is available on the website www.scarled.eu

Contact:

Dr. Judith Möllers
moellers@iamo.de
Tel. 0345-2928128
Fax 0345-2928199
Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO)
Theodor-Lieser-Straße 2
06120 Halle (Saale)
Germany
www.iamo.de

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Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO)

The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO) is addressing with more than 60 scientists and in cooperation with further leading research institutions urgent scientific and social issues in agricultural and food economics and rural areas. Main regions under review include Central and Eastern Europe

as well as Central and Eastern Asia. IAMO is making a contribution towards enhancing understanding of institutional, structural and technological changes. Moreover, IAMO is studying the resulting impacts on the agricultural and food sector as well as the living conditions of rural populations. The outcomes of our work are used to derive and analyse strategies and options for enterprises, agricultural markets and politics.