COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CAP AND SDG INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

232 indicators have been selected to monitor the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation. The European Union (EU) Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), introduced with the aim of measuring the performance of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) implementation of the CAP reform 2014-2020, counts 45 context indicators, 84 output indicators, 41 result indicators, 24 target indicators and sixteen impact indicators. Given the mere number of indicators and the importance for measuring SDG achievement, numerous questions arise: Regarding overlap and synergies between different indicator systems, but also regarding the appropriate choice and targeting of chosen indicators (e.g. environmental issues or state of animal welfare). In addition, it is also necessary to analyze, in spite of the large number of indicators, if there is a lack of indicators for specific context and fields of controversies (e.g. external dimension of the CAP).

This work aims to address questions of choice, overlap and synergies across different indicator systems with a focus on CAP indicators and the SDG indicator system. Special attention is be given to the proposed indicators of the three dimensions of the CAP: 1) viable food production, 2) sustainable land use and climate change and 3) rural development. In a comparative, descriptive analysis, we qualitatively compare the indicators chosen for the measuring of the EU agricultural sector and SDG performance and identify synergies, overlap or lack of alignment. The results further the understanding of synergies and linkages between the indicator systems and facilitate an informed policy debate about potential achievement of policy goals.

Keywords

Common Agriculture Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, CMEF, Indicator Framework,

1 Introduction

The most recent reform of the European Union´s (EU) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) were carried out in 2015 (European Commission, 2018a). Since then, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris climate agreement were adopted and notable extreme climate events and variability became acutely relevant for EU farmers and governments and shifted their political needs and priorities (European Commission, 2018a). In addition, deficiencies with the CAP 2014 reform, for instance regarding complicated implementation which caused high bureaucracy and expenses, ineffective or missing indicators and the failure to concentrate on results and performance (European Commission, 2018b; Fährmann & Grajewski, 2018) also internally raised the pressure to improve performance, accountability. This holds for internal issues such as social and economic coherence, environmental aspects as well as insufficient external coherence between the CAP and international goals and obligations (Pe'er et al., 2017).

Discussions about how to improve the CAP beyond 2020 started in 2017 with the communication of the European Commission (EC) "The Future about Food and Farming" (European Commission, 2017) Additionally, in 2018 the EU published the official proposal for the CAP 2021–27 (European Commission, 2018a). This proposal (COM (2018) 392) is introducing the element of strategic planning. This means that member states (MS) should formulate individual strategic plans for the achievement of the CAP´s goals, hence, the quality of the strategic plans depends on the MS and their commitment to the CAP´s goals. The performance of the MS will be evaluated against a revised set of monitoring indicators. (Erjavec, Lovec, Juvančič, Šumrada, & Rac, 2018; European Commission, 2018a). An adequate system of indicators is necessary for the monitoring of the effectiveness of policies

(Wilson & Buller, 2001). However, the EU monitoring framework was often criticized for being too general and may therefore not able to evaluate performance and potential improvements (European Commission, 2018b; Pe'er et al., 2017; Wilson & Buller, 2001).

Meanwhile in September 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly implemented the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and in 2016, the EU officially announced its commitment to the goals (European Commission, 2016; United Nations, 2015). Agriculture is an important aspect of the SDGs due to the goals that support sustainable farming, land and water usage (Pe'er et al., 2017). Consequently, the SDGs can only be accomplished, if they are strongly supported and coherent with CAP objectives.

This paper is divided into three parts: First, the literature review gives general information about indicators and the EU monitoring system. Second, the analytical part and the discussion compares and debates first, future CAP objectives and indicators, then these objectives and indicators are compared with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal objectives and indicators. In the last section, the paper concludes.

2 Methodological approach (material and methods)

This study uses a qualitative comparative approach to compare indicator systems. In a deductive manner, we describe independently two indicator systems and subsequently, compare these systems. The comparison focuses on the dimensions of synergies, overlap or lack of alignment as these are important issues to understand how the CAP contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. For the EU CMEF, as they are potentially going to play in important role in the performance measurement in the next CAP period, we also critically assess, if these indicators fulfill theoretical indicator design criteria. As "material" for the analysis, we use the indicator systems provided by the EU with the CMEF and the one provided by the UN for the performance measurement of the SDGs. We reduce our data set by only focusing on that part of the indicator systems that deal with the measurement of agri-environmental issues, viable farm income and rural development outcomes.

3 Results

As results, apart from a conceptual discussion on definition and use of indicators, we provide a comparison of SDG and CAP indicators to further the understanding of synergies and linkages. Our results show that, in parts, the chosen indicators lack a clear definition and would benefit from better formulation. Also the alignment of CAP and SDG can be improved.

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