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European farmers and agricultural practices

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Common Agricultural Policy on the 'Payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the environment and the climate'

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Abstract

The global agricultural situation faces serious challenges. At the European level in the last decades farmers are diminishing. Farmers in fact face many threats such as price volatility, high market competitions, and difficulties in the intergenerational farm succession. Likewise the state of European environment presents many issues derived from food production. However at the institutional level many institutions and government try to address the situation of agriculture and the environment. Especially, the new Common Agricultural Policy claims to address such situation. In order to understand the role of such policy, this thesis presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of the regulation about direct payment scheme on 'agricultural practices beneficial for the environment and the climate'. By analysing the regulation it is possible to understand how this payment scheme made by the European Commission supports farmers and what the implications for the farming practices are.

Keywords: farmers; Common Agricultural Policy; Critical Discourse Analysis.

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1. Introduction

The world population increases, the world food production increases but the number of farmers declines. Although agricultural production increased (United Nation 2014) in the last decade three million farms disappeared in Europe (La Via Campesina 2013). Farmers are facing many challenges and threats. Nowadays they have to deal with market price fluctuations, market competition, access to capital and technology and high difficulties in the intergenerational succession of farming activities (Davidova and Thomson 2014).

In contrast, large scale farmers are able to cope better with such stresses, nevertheless contributing to reduce the competiveness among farmers, due to their production capacity and better access to capital (Evans 2014). Technological and policy choices by large producers and landholders fuelled the growth of inequality in rural areas contributing to squeezing out small farms (van der Ploeg 2006; De Schutter 2014). According to the 2014 State of Agriculture 1% of farmers control 65% of all agricultural land (FAO 2014). Although many small farmers keep on struggling to survive, Europe became in last decades one of the leading power in agricultural trade (Fritz 2011). Furthermore large agro food corporations control the access to food supply chains by setting prices and requirements (Pimbert 2009). The growth of supermarkets also drastically influenced the farming sector (Burch, Lawrence, and Hattersley 2013).

The expansion of large farmers has also an environmental downside. The diffusion of agricultural monoculture is in fact often associated with the burgeoning use of pesticides and fertilizers and damages to ecosystem while contributing to the decline of biodiversity (Carvalho 2006; Stoate et al. 2001). Moreover, the increasing demand for biofuels and its production expansion challenges the land availability for food production (Weis 2010) while contributing to deforestation (Borras 2010). Impacts on biodiversity resulting from damaging ecosystems will in turn affect not only the production of food and fibres but also affect biodiversity services (Altieri 1999), having consequently impacts on human activities.

The continuous decline of biodiversity, environmental degradation, the decreasing number of farmers, put the state of agriculture at risk. For this reason it is important to acknowledge how agriculture policy is addressed in Europe. The intervention of international institutions on trade and agricultural policies strongly marked the current political framework where farming takes place. At the European level the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the agricultural policy that is supposed to address the development of the farming sector. The CAP started in 1962 with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress, ensuring fair living for farmers, stabilizing

markets and ensuring food availability (EEC, 1957). However the CAP received many reforms that changed its objectives through the years. Yet some criticisms claim that it promoted production unevenly among farmers (Fritz 2011).

The current situation of agriculture in Europe is therefore characterized by many challenges faced by farmers, the threat of agriculture on biodiversity, and the uneven policy support. Because of this drastic condition there is a need for steering away from this situation. Specific policies could in fact address the issues faced by small scale farmers. Appropriate polices could address the current situation small scale farmers are facing by giving them easier access to technology and capital in a way to enhance competitiveness.

Given the decline of small family farms, and given the need for more ecological modes of production (which are in many cases small scale), this thesis will investigate how the support of large farm by the CAP might be related to the decline of small family farmers. This will be done by analysing the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' from the latest CAP 2014-2020, and by looking particularly at the payment scheme about 'agricultural practices beneficial for the environment and the climate' also known as 'greening'.

In order to understand the role of CAP I will investigate what are the potential discursive implications of the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' on European farmers. Further, to understand the influence of the CAP on farmers I will enquire how the CAP supports small and large scale farmers. In order to understand what the impacts on nature are I will investigate over the implications for farming practices.

In the next section I will introduce the context where agriculture takes place in Europe with some more information about the development of the CAP. Further I will present the methodology I will use to analyse the discourse of the CAP regulation. I will then analyse the regulation part and summarize the findings in the conclusion.

2. Contextual framework

In order to explore the current state of agriculture this part of this thesis describes the current situation of farmers in Europe. By doing that this part will look into the threats farmers are facing. Further this will place the current farmers' situation in a wider political economic context, particularly by looking at the evolution of the CAP reforms. In order to conclude this part, I will explore potential alternative paths to the current agricultural situation. It is important to note that this part also stands for the state of the art of agriculture as well as deliberate base for the construction of the thinking process that characterize this thesis.

Farmers threats

Within the farming sector it is possible to discern between small and large farms based on the agricultural land, output size and number of farmers operating on a single farm. It is important to note that 70% of farmers worldwide are small scale and that only control 8% of agricultural land (FAO 2014). In Europe there are 12 million farmers, and half European population lives in rural areas (European Commission 2014f). Small scale farming in this thesis will generally refer to farms holdings with about two/eight hectares size which are managed by a farmer, or a family, or a group.

The farming situation in the last years can be represented by a series of vulnerabilities and challenges. Farmers and especially small scale ones are exposed to many threats such as: volatile global market prices, intergenerational succession, competitiveness, increasing number of workers leaving the agricultural sector (Rabinowicz 2014), yet this differ according to farm size and the capacity to cope with such stresses.

Looking at the market price volatility, the financial viability of farming nowadays is continuously exposed to risks such as the fluctuating balance of input and output prices. Price fluctuation in fact is a threat for farmers which cannot cope with such an uncertainty have to consider the abandonment of the farming activity due to more convenient occupations or continuing the farming activity without financial gains (Strijker 2005).

The increasing length of education, long distance from secondary schools and university hinder the intergenerational succession and open up new career path for young people diverse from farming (Davidova and Thomson 2014; DLG 2005) while many young people strive to get access to agricultural land. The intergenerational succession is also characterized by the probability of family succession, the possibility of having a potential successor, the timing of succession (Glauben et al. 2002) with differences among European member states.

Moreover, competiveness among farmers is characterized by different aspects such as equipment, access to capital, technical support and increasing number of labour force shifting sector. Failing to cope with competitors, many farmers have to consider land abandonment as alternative (Strijker 2005). The access to technology can be considered an important market condition to participate in trade, additionally it might help to optimize resources use and cope with lack of labour. Moreover small scale farmers have difficulties to obtain loans (Altieri 2002). Further, agricultural policies can contribute to increase and/or reduce the competiveness among farmers and supermarket chains. Besides the replacement of subsistence farming activity with cash crop production contributed to sweep away sustainable traditional farming systems and to increase environmental degradation due to intensive methods (Wilson 2007).

The discontent on market price fluctuation has also been expressed in the last year by farmers with many protests that attracted the attention of the media. French farmers dropped tons of manure against the decrease of cereals and grains exports after the trade sanctions to Russia and Ukraine (Farmers Weekly 2014a); again French farmers dumped vegetables against ban on trades (Farmers Weekly 2014b); further European dairy farmers sprayed milk over buildings and soaked the streets of Brussels against European milk quotas (BBC 2014).

Industrialization

It is important to note how these threats are rooted in a larger process that saw the increase of food production. The increasing population and the advent of modern lifestyles changed food provision. In order to supply large amounts of food also the productive sector had to adjust its capacity. Farms in fact became more specialized. Through specific programmes it has been possible for some farmers to scale up their production. Large farmers in fact due to fast capacity of enlargement have been capable to expand their agricultural production (Evans 2014; van der Ploeg 2006), supplying the market with goods at prices lower than the costs of production. This has enormous impacts on small scale farmers that do not rely on wide amount of capital but which in turn overuse labour force to stick to market prices (Koning 2007). The growing concentration of supermarket and the creation of private label brands contributed to unequal power relation between supermarket chains, farmers and food processors (Burch et al. 2013).

Farmers have to comply with various technical requirements to supply the agro food industry. Often this pushes farmers to up scaling, forcing them to change their way to practice agriculture. However the costs in small scale farms to upscale production are often uneasy compared to large scale farming, which might lead to let them fall in a vicious circle of debts (McMichael 2013). In turn also food taste is affected by the agro food industry (Arce 1993), in a way to influence the food

production deciding which products to commercialize. This contribute not only to undermine farming but it will encourage farmers to perform agricultural practices that do not include traditional crops because not economically viable.

The difference between small and large farms in Europe in fact is substantial not only because of the farm size or the output but also because of the type of production performed. There are in fact many types of farming practices such as intensive, multifunctional, organic, biodynamic and more. The type of production can have different impacts on the environment.

Intensive agricultural practices such as monocultures are characterized by biodiversity loss, loss of non-crop species, replacement of wildlife with common species, soil erosion, loss of organic matter, contamination with pesticides, water contamination, air pollution, reduce capacity of carbon sequestration (Stoate et al. 2001). It is needed to note how the production of chemical input is heavily dependent on the use of fossil fuels.

In contrast alternative practices such as agroecology, biodynamic and organic reject the use of chemical inputs. Such practices rejecting the use of chemical substances avoid food contamination and biodiversity loss (Hole et al. 2005). Organic farming also shows a major crop diversity in comparison to conventional (Stoate et al. 2001).

Geopolitical Context &the CAP

In order to understand better the state of agriculture, it is important to situate its characteristics in a wider political economic context. In fact although there are many factors that characterize farming, an important role is played by the European Commission which, through the CAP, influences the state of agriculture in Europe and abroad. Below the main events that characterized the state of agriculture in Europe are explained.

In order to understand today's situation it is important to look back to the most important events that shaped our current food system. The post war period after World War II marked a moment in history generally described by many infrastructural damages, scarce state of agriculture and poor food supply. The post war in Europe was also featured by the creation of the European Union by its initial members. Because of the drastic situation left by the war and the need to improve the state of agriculture European member states decided to create a European agricultural policy which would later become the Common Agricultural Policy.

The post war period saw also the creation of international financial institutions to regulate the financial situation left after the war. The Word Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were

created in the Bretton Wood conference in 1944 organised by the United Nations (UN) to lend money to countries facing financial difficulties and giving them advice on trade (Garcia 2007). Beside the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was also created in 1947 to control international trade. It is important to note how the founders of such institutions strongly advocated for neoliberal ideologies. The creation of such institutions also played an important role in opening up national trade barriers.

Following McMichael (1997), the liberalization of nation-states and the nation-state building anchored in colonialism engraved over the state of agriculture because gave space for new food systems strongly dependent on import-export dynamics to take shape contributing to the phenomena of "de-peasantization". Moreover within the construction of new nation states it is possible to identify how agriculture has been commercially organized letting communities negotiate their dynamics with 'instituted market' processes (McMichael 1997).

The reforms adopted by international financial institutions were accompanied by the creation of the CAP. On June 1960 in fact the European Commission presented a proposal to the freshly created European Union aimed to unify the market based on free trade of agricultural products, abolish trade barriers, organise markets by products with prices, set and European agricultural fund and establish financial solidarity (European Commission 2014i). Aims which were in net accordance with the advocacy of the above mentioned international financial institutions.

In January 1962 the European Council introduced rules: to create common agricultural markets for cereals, pig meat, eggs, poultry meat, fruit and vegetables and wine; on competition; to establish trade measures for dairy products, beef and veal and sugar; and to establish an European agricultural fund to finance the operations of the CAP (European Commission 2014i). This was done by introducing guaranteed minimum prices to protect European market and contrast imports. Further the Commission set market interventions for the EU to buy surplus food in the market and set export subsidies for farmers to cope with prices discrepancies between European and world markets (Erjavec and Erjavec 2009).

In the following years the agricultural markets were put in place. The first reform of the CAP was prepared by Sicco Mansholt with the aim of encouraging five millions farmers to give up farming in order to redistribute their land and increase the size of farms in order to guarantee average income among productive sectors, however only three directives were approved in 1972 such as the modernization of agricultural holdings, the abandonment of farming and the training of farmers (European Commission 2014g). Although the CAP succeed to boost post war food production it led to

generate surpluses of agricultural products and the consequent distortion of world markets (European Commission 2014h).

However during the decade between 1970s and 1980s the CAP contributed to increase food production by intensifying agriculture leading to overproduction and dumping practices (Koning 2007). Dumping practices consist of having overproduced subsidised food sold at prices lower than the costs of production. This contributed to distort markets, not only Europe. Overproduced products in fact have often been reversed in form of food aid in countries striving for better food system. Further food aid hampered the development of local food systems (Kripke 2005).

From 1984 quotas were introduced on milk and sugar to control production. In order to limit expenditures for the CAP on 1988 budgetary rules were set for the creation of a maximum ceiling for the CAP budget.

The introduction in 1992 of the McSharry reform represented a strong deviation from product support (prices) to producer support (income) (European Commission 2014d). The introduction of direct payments replaced price support. The reform aim was: "to improve the competitiveness of EU agriculture, stabilise the agricultural markets, diversify the production and protect the environment, as well as stabilise the EU budget expenditure" (European Commission 2014d) besides other measures about agro-environment programmes, afforestation, retirement and diversification were introduced.

Since 1995 the entire CAP is subject to WTO discipline which set up a Dispute Settlement Body to ensure that signatory states comply with the new multilateral rules (Massot 2014). The continuous historical changes such as the liberalization of the markets, the various World Trade Organization (WTO) and international Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms influenced the state of agriculture. Such changes influenced the state of agriculture promoting international trade. Market policies towards trade favoured the growth of the agro food sector promoting trade, increasing unevenly world imports among countries (WTO 2012). Financial intervention on production stimulated the use of chemical inputs such as fertilizers and pesticide, favouring the growth of the agrochemical industry (Fritz, 2011).

However from the 2000 year onwards the agenda set for the agricultural policy marked the introduction of new objectives such as: more market orientation and increased competitiveness, food safety and quality, stabilization of agricultural incomes, integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policy, development of the vitality of rural areas, simplification and strengthened decentralization (European Commission 2014a).

The consequent 2003 reform was characterized by aiming at enhancing the competitiveness of the farm sector, promoting market oriented sustainable agriculture and strengthening rural development (European Commission 2014e). The 2003 reform was also characterised by the introduction of the 'decoupling' consisting in removing the link between payment and production, 'cross compliance' consisting in rules to respect in order to receive a payment and 'modulation' consisting in a reduction of direct payments and the transfer of money within the CAP schemes (European Commission 2014e).

In 2005 the European Commission introduced a simplification of the CAP to reduce the regulatory burden and bureaucracy, making it more transparent, easier to understand and to comply with (European Commission 2014c). Moreover in 2008 a Health Check was introduced with the aim of simplify the payments' administration, let farmer decrease their contribution to carbon emission and to adjust farms to climate change's effects.

It interesting to note how throughout the CAP, the intervention of international financial institutions on markets additionally influenced the conception of local based initiatives. Such reforms entangled in international financial reforms clearly boosted large scale food production, which in turn generated support for the creation of systems highly dependent on intensive modes of production (Stoate et al. 2001).

From November 2010 a process started for the creation of the new CAP, this process was characterized by a long negotiation between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council which reached a political agreement and a consequent adoption of regulations by the end of 2013.

On January 1st 2015 the new CAP for the next five years entered in force. The current CAP is divided into two pillars. Pillar I contain intervention in farm commodity market by regulation and price support but also support for farm incomes via direct payments schemes. Pillar II contain support programme for Rural Development which focus on improving the competitiveness of farming and forestry, protecting the rural environment, diversifying the rural economy and promoting quality of life for rural inhabitants (Hennessy 2014).

Currently within direct payments there are three compulsory schemes: basic payment (or single area payment), green payment and young farmers scheme; three voluntary schemes: redistributive payment, support in areas with natural constraints and coupled support; or a voluntary simplified scheme for small farmers.

The new CAP is characterized by giving more room to member states to decide which percentage of the national ceiling to transfer to which scheme. Among all CAP schemes, direct payments have been widely criticized of being unequally distributed (Fritz 2011). The amount of direct payments in fact is granted according to farm size, output and country in a way advantaging larger farmers in receiving more funds. But if the previous editions of the CAP fuelled overproduction, uneven distribute subsides the new CAP claims to provide a better structure of the direct payments that also address the gap between large and small farmers (European Commission 2011).

Potential alternative paths

The various reforms adopted by international financial institution and the related consequences on farming call for urgent action. Farming in fact although heavily affected from structural reforms still represents a potentiality for the country side life to flourish again.

Small scale farmers should be protected from the threats they face nowadays. This can be done in several ways. For instance regulations at the structural level could enhance the position of small scale farmers, by limit the power exercised by large farmers controlling the market. The access to land could either be subsidized for small holders or facilitated by setting an effective system for demands and requests for agricultural lands such as the French example Terre de Liens (Terre de Liens 2013).

The agro food industry has a big influence on farmers (Akram-lodhi 2013). The relation between farmers and the agro food corporations could be adjusted perhaps having farmers contributing to set limitation to product requirements. Contributions could also help to set fair prices for farmers. The process of innovation furthermore should not be envisaged based on the capacity of agrochemical industry to grow but it should be based on a more democratic process.

At the same time ecological sound solutions are expected to cope with the phase European environment is facing nowadays. A regulation could effectively control and guarantee environmental impacts. Agroecology and organic agriculture can represent valid alternatives to intensive methods of production. A local food production and consumption would contribute to assuring better livelihoods to farmers. This is possible to a certain extent within the concept of food sovereignty (Burnett and Murphy 2014). A local food production and consumption would also contribute to decrease ecological impacts especially when it comes about decentralized agriculture, where production, processing, distribution and consumption are controlled by people and their communities (Akram-lodhi 2013) although some authors argue that intensive agriculture is more efficient feeding the growing population (Tilman et al. 2002). The success of small scale agriculture is not only represented by enhancing the social situation of farmers but also challenge large scale agriculture to be more

ecological resilient by making use of natural input instead of being dependent on chemical inputs with consequent environmental impact. This has to be in net contrast against monoculture.

However farming dynamics are highly dependent on the political economic frameworks they operate on. The development of local based farming initiatives such as farmer's collectives, CSA schemes, and urban agriculture representing an avant-garde for future food systems should be supported by food policies. The realization of local based initiative can represent an endogenous contribution to agriculture which reflects local knowledge. Therefore policies should not promote unevenly international trade, boost agricultural production, favour economic growth, but should rather address the modes of production which strongly affect our health and our livelihoods.

Farmers should be involved in the decision making of policy change that strongly affects them in a way to empower farmers as well leading to more democratic policies. Agricultural practices should also reflect the knowledge of practitioners rather than only knowledge of their bureaucrats. A policy should also guarantee fair market prices for farmers among countries preventing inequalities..

Because the CAP is the European agricultural policy it is crucial that through regulations it supports farmers. Policy at the European level should in fact address the situations farmers are facing by adopting more fair measures that guarantee equal access to agricultural support. This can be done by opening up support to various agricultural initiatives, which are not only represented by individual farmers or their family, but also by new configurations of farming management. In this way farming can be also supported indirectly for example with community agricultural education.

Although there are many factors and externalities influencing the state of agriculture, at European level the CAP representing the agricultural policy plays an important role. In order to understand how the CAP intend to address the decline of small farmers and the need for ecological modes of production a policy document will be analysed. The document that will be analysed is the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' contained in pillar I. Specifically only chapter three on "Payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment" will be taken in account in the analysis. This chapter contains the so called 'Greening' scheme. This chapter is about general rules for the adoption of compulsory agricultural practices such as crop diversification, grassland maintenance and the creation of ecological focus areas. The chapter also includes information about the financial provision of the payment.

3. Methodology

In this section I will unfold the methodology that will be used to analyse the CAP regulation. This section will also explain how and why I decided to use this specific methodology.

In analysing the policy regulation Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used. Elaborated by Fairclough, CDA builds upon the concepts of discourse and power previously elaborated by Foucault (Hewitt 2009). CDA is a tool to make a linguistic analysis of the discourse. The key of Critical Discourse Analysis is to grasp the semiotic features of the discourse contained in the regulation and put these in relation with the knowledge available about these social practices. For this reason the work of Fairclough (2013) is specifically relevant because it allows to identify the semiotic features deriving from social practices that constitute social fields, organizations and institutions. In doing so, CDA will place discourse in a wider context. In this thesis discourses are understood as "semiotic ways of constructing aspects of the world, which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors" (Fairclough 2013). Further, the discourses produced from a particular social field (i.e. neoliberal discourse originated within economic) can be re-contextualized in others (i.e. agricultural field) (Fairclough 2013). Discourses can be in fact reproduced by institutions through speeches and written texts. It is important to acknowledge, using Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) words, that language can be understood as "a 'machine' that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world" in which "changes in discourse are means by which the social world is changed".

The work of Alvesson and Karreman on discourse analysis (2000) is also relevant and it will make a structural contribution to this thesis. They point out four different discourse analysis approaches: micro discourse approach, consisting in the analysis of language of social text; meso discourse approach, which consists in bringing the language in a context and finding broader patterns that can be generalized in a broader context; grand discourse approach, which refer to constitute organizational reality, for example dominating language use about corporate culture or ideology; and mega discourse approach, which refer to language constituting a certain type of phenomena (Alvesson and Karreman 2000). Because of the opportunities that these approaches give in exploring the regulation, a threefold approach will be used in the analysis including micro, meso and grand discourse approach that will be called macro for convenience.

Although van Dijk (1998) reject the idea of distinguishing the analysis between micro and macro when using CDA, I believe instead that in this case it will help to fully explore the meaning of the

regulation in question. A threefold approach will allow to intersect different layers of meanings by transposing the meanings on different context.

In order to analyse the above mentioned regulation i initially identify the different sections of the regulation. Subsequently I summarize the whole regulation in a way understanding the general meaning behind each section and briefly understand the various payment schemes. I then analyse the various definitions used in the regulation such as farmer and holding. I further proceed by focusing on chapter three. In chapter three I look for social practices that characterize the discourse. It is fundamental to look at such practices in order to understand how semiotic features characterize the discourse. Having these practices identified I continue to apply the threefold analysis approach.

The first part of the analysis, micro, will consist in deducting meaning from the language used in the regulation. This will be done by understanding what is the problem behind the language used, what assumption are underling, what effect this is likely to have and what is left unchanged. Practically it will be necessary to inquire what knowledge is represented in such regulation. As a result the regulation will be paraphrased and meaning will be explored when going through relevant social practices. In the second part (meso) the language will be placed in a broader context by connecting the study of the language with the context of the previous section. The meso analysis will give the opportunity to understand how the language used might affect farmers and the environment as described in the context. Lastly with the macro approach it will be possible to understand the relation between the regulation and social practices. This will be done by linking the measures of the regulation with potential impacts they might have on the current state of art of agriculture. It is important to make a clear distinction between meso and macro, as the first will compare the language with the context while the second will rather try to understand what the impacts of the measure ascribed on social practices are. A threefold approach is needed to better understand the complexity of the regulation. The analysis will in fact enable to discover overlapping layers of meaning.

For this reason it is important in the analysis, especially at the meso and macro level, to refer to the context as base for comparison. The purpose of the context is to expose arguments about the current state of small scale agriculture. The context is characterized by describing the situation farmers face, but also describing the context in which farmers operate nowadays. The context is necessary to further understand, how the discourse in the regulation contribute either to creating difficulties or bringing solutions.

It is also important to note how the micro analysis will focus on unravelling the meaning behind of the language, for this reason, the length of this section might be slightly longer than the subsequent ones. Further meso and macro analysis might be respectively slightly shorter because the analysis builds up on the previous section. Figure 1 show how the analysis narrows down in the different levels.

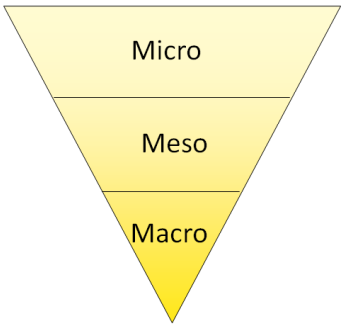

Figure 1 Analysis funnel

CDA will contribute to answer the research questions because through the analysis of the language it allows by looking at semiotic features to uncover how Commission intend to enhance the state of the environment through specific practices that affect farmers. The three fold approach especially allows understanding the meaning of such chapter. In fact the meso analysis will allow connecting what uncovered in the micro analysis to the current context of European agriculture and further help to understand how this might affect farming practices.

CDA is particularly relevant because it allows to understand what prescriptive characters contained in a regulation contribute to shape the condition of farmers and the environment. Other authors used discourse analysis to examine the CAP (Erjavec and Erjavec 2009, 2015; Potter and Tilzey 2005). It is important to note that I will make a linguistic use with CDA, but I will not link to mega phenomenological discourses due the impossibility of generally grounding the results of the analysis.

Taking in account one single regulation from one single institution not all semiotic features that characterize small scale farming decline will be explored. For this reason it's important to acknowledge how there are extra semiotic features such as the relation between farmers and agro-food industry and the bureaucracy of member states that will be taken in consideration but not analysed. Further, by using a CDA approach it will be difficult to assess the impacts on farmers and the environment, because it does not give the ground for such assessment.

In order to investigate the role of the CAP through the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' and specifically the chapter 'Payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment' over European farmers and their farming practices in this thesis I will answer to the following questions:

> **What are the potential discursive implications of the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' on European farmers?**

How does the CAP, through this part of the regulation, intend to support small and large scale farmers?

What are the implications for farming practices?

In this section I have explained how Critical Discourse Analysis will contribute to answer the above mentioned research questions. In the following section I will proceed to analyse the regulation.

4. Analysis

As mentioned above in this part I will analyse a CAP regulation. Among all CAP regulation I will take in consideration the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' contained in pillar I will be analysed. The analysis will focus only on chapter 3 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy'. The analysis section in this thesis as mentioned in the methodology part will first look at the main definitions given and used in the regulation. Further this section contains the three level of analysis: the linguistic study (Micro), the placement of the linguistic study in a broader context (Meso) and the exploration of discourses constituting realities (Macro).

The regulation is divided in seven titles. Prior to the titles there are 67 specifications about the regulation. The specifications refer to the features of the regulation. The specifications are about: criteria, objectives and justifications for the various payment schemes adopted in the regulation.

The titles contained in the regulation are the following: I Scope and definitions, II General provisions on direct payments, III Basic payment scheme, single area payment scheme and related payments, IV Coupled support, V Small farmers scheme, VI National restructuring programmes for the cotton sector, VII Final provisions.

Each title is also further divided in chapters, which are in turn divided in sections. The seven titles contain 74 articles. The first two (I & II) titles entail general rules and definitions about farmers, their activities and requirements and the creation of national ceilings. The third title (III), extensively addresses the main payment schemes such as Basic direct payment (Chapter 1), single area payment (Chapter 1), redistributive payment (Chapter 2), payment for beneficial agricultural practices (Chapter 3), payment for areas with natural constraints (Chapter 4), payment for young farmers (Chapter 5). This title entails the set-up of the schemes, the creation of national reserve, and the implementation of the schemes. Further title IV is dedicated to voluntary coupled support and crop specific payment for cotton. Title V is about small farmers scheme. Titles VI and VII are about national restructuring programmers for the cotton sector and final provision respectively.

4.1 Definitions

Before starting looking at the payment scheme for agricultural practices it is crucial to look how the Commission perceive farmers and other concepts used in this regulation. Article 4 gives us the definitions of concepts used in the regulation.

Farmer

Firstly farmers are conceived either in a natural or legal person, or a group of persons. In this way not only farmers have access to payments but also corporations such as agro food industries who exercise an agricultural activity. It is not clear if the farmer has a technical or economic responsibility. The lack of specification might contribute to the ambiguity of the definition. However such a definition discards the legal status attributed to such groups. Secondly entitled farmers have to be situated within the European territories as defined in the EU treaty.

A more comprehensive definition of farmer would rather be characterized by embracing the diversity among European farmers. Small scale farmers in fact substantial differ from large scale farmers. The difference is consistent not only because of its size but also because of agricultural activities performed. With this definition farmers are homogenised when is evident that agro corporations (legal person) are often detached from small scale farmers' realities in terms of productive means, size and output. A specification on the different type of farmers might also contribute to address better each category and avoid unequal benefits among them.

Holding

The definition of holding is not clear on whether it represents an economic unit or it rather entails a set of possessions such as land, livestock and production means. The holding in fact is understood as 'all the units' 'used for agricultural activities' and 'managed by a farmer'. The ambiguity left by this definition might favour also actors which do not necessary have to be farmers like previously mentioned but also embrace other actors such corporations. It is in fact important to distinguish the difference among holdings. Size and type in fact characterize the structure of the holdings. By specifying holding size and type might contribute to better address each category of holding.

Agricultural activity

This definition reflects the agricultural activity performed by farmers in their holdings. The definition clearly states the activities entailed. In this representation the activity that give payment entitlement to farmers are mentioned. However it is difficult to understand from such a definition, how the Commission will distinguish certain activities that do favour specific beneficiaries of the CAP. A more elaborated distinction among farming activities might mark the differences among beneficiaries.

Article 4 further describes *agricultural products* as listed in annex I of the EU treaties. Moreover it defines what *agricultural area* means including arable land, permanent grassland, permanent pasture or permanent crops. Further in article 9 the definition of active farmer has generated

controversies in the CAP negotiations (Fritz 2011) as people operating in airport, railway services, waterworks, real estate services, permanent sport, recreational ground shall not be granted with direct payments unless they can demonstrate that they have genuine farming activity. However member states are delegated to verify this evidence but the Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts to guarantee the protection of the right of the farmers.

It is important to note how the above definitions in the regulation have a conceptual meaning. Therefore it is crucial to further understand how these concepts are further operationalized in the regulation.

4.2 Micro analysis

Chapter three entails five articles (43 – 47). The articles are organized as follows. Article 43 General rules, is about the scheme entitlement, it briefly describes what the following beneficial practices included in the following articles are about, propose equivalent practices, states how farmers shall commit and it mentions the role of member states and of the Commission. Article 44 Crop Diversification, defines how crop diversification should occur in different cases. Article 45 Permanent grassland, is about how grassland shall be maintained. Article 46, Ecological focus areas, is about how to create such ecological focus areas. Finally article 47, Financial provision, is about the modes how the payments shall be disbursed.

The self-explanatory title of the regulation 'Payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment' suggests that there are agricultural practices beneficial and not beneficial for the climate and the environment. However in order to understand better the aim of this scheme, it is important to look back at the specifications in the regulation. The objective of this scheme mentioned in the specification (37) is the enhancement of environmental performance. In the same specification the scheme analysed it's also recognised as "greening" component of direct payments. The practices contained in the scheme should take according to the specification 'simple, generalised, non-contractual' form and 'annual actions that go beyond cross-compliance'.

In specification number 40 equivalent agricultural practices to the ones that will be proposed are justified. The justifications often refer to legal matters such as legal clarity and legal certainty but without enough clarity about what these refer.

It is equally important to report how following specifications (41, 42, and 44) introduce some features of the agricultural practices to adopt before the articles.

Article 43 General rules

The article proposes three main beneficial activities without stating what is not beneficial. By offering a payment for agricultural practices the article represents a responsibility for each scheme's beneficiaries to adopt such measures. However many beneficiaries although practicing agriculture as main activity might have also other activities which are not tackled from this regulation that might negatively contribute to the climate and environment. The mechanisms behind the attribution of such payments could be differently set, for example by granting payments to limit environmental pollution.

The activities that aim to tackle the climate and the environment further show which specific problems to address. Crop diversification can in fact be understood as a tool to increase biodiversity and reduce monocultures. Further the maintenance of existing permanent grasslands and the creation of ecological focus area on the agricultural area might contribute to enhance the general state of the environment. There are several ways in which the adoption of such agricultural practices might still be harmful for the climate and the environment for example by the use of chemical inputs. Further the regulation states that there are other activities considered of equivalent level of benefit for farmers involved in environmental certification schemes. However it might appears quite restrictive to consider only few practices beneficial.

It is important to note how practices included in national and regional environmental certification schemes should not be subject to double funding. Besides member states under the conditions set by the Commission are allowed to restrict the activities farmers have to comply with. The commission and member states are in fact capable of modifying activities considered equivalent for the compliance. The article especially refers to the list of equivalent practices contained in annex IX of the regulation. In the regulations farmers can use the environmental certification schemes as requirement only if they cover the whole obligation. Farmers partially complying with the obligation within the environmental certification will be excluded.

Further member states have to pay the payments in annual trances per eligible hectares. According to the regulation the amount should be calculated by dividing the amount dedicated to such payments in article 47 (30%) from national ceiling by the number of total eligible hectares.

Farmers whose holdings are situated in areas covered by directives on the conservation of natural habitats (92/43/EEC) and establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (2000/60EC) or of wild fauna and flora or on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC) shall also be entitled to the payment. In this way farmers that already participate in environmental schemes do not need to comply with the obligations to obtain the payment. Farmers practicing organic farming shall also be entitled ipso facto to the payment although only when they comply with European

regulation on organic agriculture. It is interesting how the Commission considers organic agricultural equivalent to the other practices beneficial for the climate and the environment. Because of the feature of organic agriculture the Commission could have considered for instance its introduction as agriculture practices to benefit the climate and environment by avoiding the use of chemical substances.

In paragraph 12 the Commission is empowered to adopt: a. extra equivalent practices; b. requirements for certification scheme; c. detailed rules for the calculation of the payment amount. The Commission is also to adopt implementing acts establishing rules for notifications, submission. It is important to note how the Commission is considered the power holder, with delegate member states to take decisions within rules set by the Commission.

Article 44 Crop diversification

Article 44 introduces the first agricultural practice beneficial for the environment and the climate. Before looking at article it is important to look at what are the premises about this practice contained in the specifications. In article 40 of the specifications, the Commission claims that 'the obligation relating to crop diversification should be applied in a way that takes into account the difficulty for small farmers to diversify, while continuing to make progress towards enhanced environmental benefit, and in particular the improvement of soil quality'. According to such a claim, crop diversification should take in account the conditions of small farms, but in contrast in the regulation small farms with less than 10 hectares are not subject to such compliance. The doubt is how the obligation to large farmers enhances the situation of small farmers? Small farmers in fact cannot directly benefit from such measure. It is not clear either how farmers have difficulties on diversifying. In the article it is mentioned how each category of farmer should adopt such agricultural practice. Farmers are in fact divided par farm size. The article continues: farmers with arable land between 10 and 30 hectares shall cultivate at least two crops and the main crop shall not cover more than 75% of the total while farmers with more than 30 hectares should cultivate the main crop for no more than 75%, and the two crops together shouldn't exceed 95%. The article reports there are some exceptions when land is covered with grasses, herbaceous forages, permanent grassland, and lands above the 62nd parallel. Although this article strives for diversification it does not stand for a multi diverse idea of diversification. Crop diversification in fact does not directly push for the growth of different varieties but rather marks an obligation for extra crop.

Article 45 Permanent grassland maintenance

Article 45 introduces the second agricultural practice beneficial for the environment and the climate. Prior to the article the specifications introduce the justification for such practice. In the specifications (42), permanent grassland should be maintained for 'the sake of its environmental benefits'. However it is not clear what is 'the sake of environmental benefits' for permanent grassland and why to focus only on permanent grassland. Other types of land which are also at risk such as afforested areas could equally contribute to environmental benefits.

In the article member states should designate permanent grassland which are environmentally sensitive areas covered by directives on the conservation of natural habitats (92/43/EEC) and of wild fauna and flora or on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC) including pet and wetlands. Member states according to the regulation may designate other areas outside areas covered by the above mentioned directives including permanent grasslands. It's clear here how the Commission delegates the member states to design eligible areas for such obligation. Therefore it is plausible that incongruences on the application of such obligation might diverge among member states driving to different outcomes. The ratio between areas of permanent grassland and total agricultural area declared by the farmers according to the directive on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy (Art. 72 (1) Reg. EU 1306/2013) should not decrease by more than 5% compared to the ratio established by member states in 2015. At the same point the Commission specifies the meaning of 'areas of permanent grassland' as land under permanent pasture declared in 2012 and 'total agricultural area' as the agricultural area declared in 2015. These definition are rather operational than conceptual and are used only for the purpose of this article. In fact such concepts might take other meanings depending of their context. Following in the regulation, recalculation should occur when farmers are subject to the obligation to reconvert an area into permanent grassland; in this case these areas shall be added to the areas of permanent grassland. The ratio of grassland shall be established each year on the basis of the area declared by the farmers under this obligation. When the ratio decrease more than 5% member states shall impose obligations to convert land into permanent grassland for farmers that have land at their disposal which was previously converted; although this does not apply when the decrease is result of afforestation but not when it is the result of plantation of short rotation coppice, neither Christmas trees nor fast growing trees for energy production. It is consequent that these measures might have impact on the climate and the environment notwithstanding the impacts that it can have on the way farmers practice agriculture, with evident discrepancies among farmers. Further the Commission is empowered to adopt acts about the maintenance of permanent grassland. Besides the Commission can according to the regulation, also be empowered to adopt delegated acts about the designation of further sensitive areas and the establishment of methods for the determination of the ratio of

permanent grassland. It is important here to note how again the Commission holds the power to set the rules on how permanent grassland should be maintained.

Article 46 Ecological focus area

Article 46 is the third agricultural practice beneficial for the environment and the climate about the creation of ecological focus areas. Looking at the specifications the Commission declares the objective of the creation of ecological focus areas as 'to safeguard and improve biodiversity on farms'. However there is no definition of the term biodiversity mentioned in the regulation neither there is any reference about it. The absence of a definition makes unclear why farmers should increase biodiversity. The pretence of addressing biodiversity pushes farmers to establish an ecological focus area which might include: land lying fallow, terraces, landscape features, buffer strips, hectares of agroforestry, strips of eligible hectares along forest edges, areas with short crop rotation, afforested areas, areas with catch crops or green cover and areas with nitrogen fixing crops. Once again the Commission lists few practices that can 'improve biodiversity'. However many more practices beneficial for biodiversity exist which are not mentioned here. In the article, the farmers having arable land of a holding covering more than 15 hectares shall ensure that at least 7% of the arable land is an ecological focus area. Note that there has been an increase from the previous edition from 5% to 7%. However there are exceptions for small farmers. This article in fact does not apply:

> *"a. where more than 75% of the arable land is used for the production of grasses or other herbaceous forage, is land lying fallow, is used for cultivation of leguminous crops, or is subject to a combination of those uses, provided that the arable area covered by those uses does not exceed 30 hectares"*
>
> *"b. where more than 75 % of the eligible agricultural area is permanent grassland, is used for the production of grasses or other herbaceous forage or for the cultivation of crops under water either for a significant part of the year or for a significant part of the crop cycle, or is subject to a combination of those uses, provided that the arable area not covered by these uses does not exceed 30 hectares"*
>
> (European Commission 2013a)

It is important to see how farmers cultivating leguminous are exempted from this obligation. Leguminous are very diverse as their cultivation and its impacts on the environment and food consumption. An idea of the diversity within leguminous plants can be given by distinguish between beans for human nutrition (chickpeas, brown beans) and beans for animal nutrition and biofuels

(soya beans). It is evident that the support of one of these types of plantations will have completely different impacts on farmers and the environment. Further member states may designate ecological focus areas at the regional level to obtain adjacent areas. Beside they should also designate the areas and the obligations for farmers and groups of farmers according to the Union policies on the environment, climate and biodiversity which are not specified in the article. This type of delegation can lead to very different forms of implementation of the same practice among countries. Following the regulation, member states with more than 50% of their total land covered by forest shall not apply this article to holdings situated in areas facing natural constraints. Further member states should notify the Commission about the decision taken in the above mentioned cases. Therefore also farmers that have more than half of their land covered by forest should not be subject to this obligation. In this way farmers might still receive contribution but do not further contribute to 'improving biodiversity'. The article concludes having Commission empowered to adopt delegated acts about: criteria to qualify ecological focus areas; other feature of ecological focus areas; collective implementation; methods for determination of the ratio between agricultural land and forest. Lastly it is important to note how the Commission claims to favour small scale farms with the creation of ecological focus areas:

> *"the obligation should be laid down in respect of the ecological focus area should be applied in a way that avoids putting disproportionate burden on smaller farms in comparison to the additional enhanced environmental benefit"*
>
> (European Commission 2013a)

however, it is not clear how partially excluding small farms can let these farmers benefit if not under monetary aspects.

Article 47 Financial provision

Article 47 is the last article of this chapter; the information included in this article refers to the modes of provision of the payment for the agricultural practices above explored. According to article 47 member states should use 30% of the national ceiling to finance the 'payments for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment'. Figure

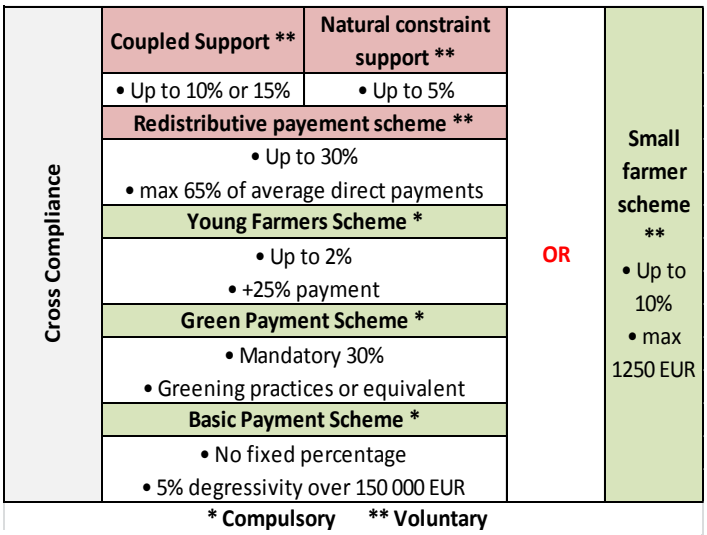

Figure 2 Design of Direct payments
(European Commission 2013b)

2 show the distribution of payments within the regulation analysed. However it is questionable wheatear a 30% of the ceiling is an opportune percentage to dedicate to the mentioned scheme. Member states may decide to apply the payment at the regional level. Member states shall adopt the implementing acts corresponding to ceilings for payment on a yearly basis. In order to guarantee a more elastic measure the Commission could have given member states the opportunity to decide what percentage of the ceiling should have been dedicate to this payment scheme. Again member states are entitled to converge more or less funds from the national ceiling towards specific schemes, in a way contributing to discrepancies in support among countries but even within the country level.

General remarks

In the analysis it is possible to find several common traits. Based on the review above, the whole chapter is characterized by: references to many other European regulations and directives; the Commission delegating member states; the Commission holding the power to modify and act over the regulation; small scale farmers' exemption from many practices.

The language used by the Commission although technical and often explanatory includes many references to many other European regulation and directives such as on the conservation of natural habitats (92/43/EEC), on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC) and more. Although the information contained in this regulation might be made available to farmers through specific material, the reading of this regulation might be complicated for farmers that do not have deep understanding of European dialectics and other regulations. Further the definitions used have not few ambiguities such the ones of farmer and active farmer.

In delegating member states often the Commission leave the freedom to bureaucrats to interpret and adapt the regulation on the national scale. However member states are substantially different in terms of productive capacity and agricultural practices. This is a difference that has impact on the effect of this regulation, on farmers and therefore on market dynamics and the state of climate and the environment. This might contribute to different modes of implementation among countries, creating discrepancies in the outcome of such regulation.

Having the Commission setting criteria makes this regulation not the result of a democratic process. Although other stakeholders might have been consulted in the first stages of the writing up, following steps do not assure the engagement of further part in the decision of further criteria. This might consider problematic as it does not directly embrace farmers knowledge.

The power is held by the Commission and often delegated to member state in specific cases. It is obvious that governmental institution detain the power over such manoeuvres and their recipients.

In this way such institutions controlling the development of community based initiatives which are not conceived in the conventional way of thinking of the institutions. The institutions in this way preclude farmers and their initiative to be included in such payment schemes. By doing this, institutions bring forward only the ideas conceived in their optic discarding the others. Especially now that farmers and the state agriculture pass through a difficult moment, small initiative should be supported more than ever.

It is evident how small scale farmers are often entitled to payments but exempted from 'greening' practices by 'taking in account their difficulty' 'avoiding disproportionate burden' (European Commission 2013a).

This section showed an unclear formulation of the title of the chapter. It also showed imprecisions in the conceptualization of the definitions of farmers, holdings and agricultural activity. The section described the main features of the beneficial agricultural practices, who is entitled and what are the exceptions. Additionally this section also showed inconsistences between the scheme objective and the measures adopted.

It is important to notice how CDA in this part of the analysis enabled to focus on significance of the text which will be in turn interpreted depending on the contextual framework in the next section.

4.3 Meso analysis

In this section the evidence uncovered by the micro analysis will be placed in a broader context as described in the contextual framework.

Definitions

Differences among farmers initially do not emerge already in the definitions. Farmers in fact are all grouped without taking into consideration the differences in size (hectares) and output (yield). This homogenises their diversity and their whole contribution to the climate and the environment. A difference emerges in the application of certain features of the payment scheme analysed however without a clear link indicating the efficacy of such choices.

Article 43 General rules

It is evident from the micro analysis how difficult it is to consider the 'greening' practices beneficial for the climate and the environment. It is not comprehensible how such practices can bring positive contribution to the decline of farmers and the environment. The justifications given in the specification are in contrast with what is claimed in the articles. The scheme indicated in fact appears

not efficient as they often exclude small scale farmers and recipients of other environmental schemes from complying with the obligations about agricultural practices although entitling them to receive the payment. For this reason most practices will have minimal effect on large farms and very little on the environment while engraving over European finances.

Further the contribution to such a decline is dictated by how agriculture is performed. For this reason it is important to tackle this aspect of agriculture. However the Commission do not often refer to agriculture types but rather to agricultural practices.

Farmers practicing organic agriculture are especially considered by the Commission and exempted from the obligation because it recognised environmental benefits of such farming systems by considering organic agriculture an equivalent practice. It is important to acknowledge how organic agriculture discard the use of chemical inputs and it rather entail a use of input already present within the farming cycle. However in the regulation there is not reference about decreasing the use of chemical input. In this way the wide use of chemical inputs will keep on contributing negatively to the environment and holding the power of agrochemical industries.

Article 44 Crop diversification

Further looking at the practices, crop diversification can be a tool to increase biodiversity (Altieri 1999). However there are many ways to do so. From an agro ecological point view crop diversification can also be understood as a combination of crop strengths to favour a dual plant support. However the implementation of this different concept of agro ecological crop diversification would be different than how explained in the article. Agro ecological crop diversification could enhance not only the state of environment by truly enhance soil quality while contributing to increase yields. Moreover agroecology systems are dependent on their implementation taking in account markets, machinery but also labour (Altieri and Nicholls 2012). The impact of such practice could have different outcomes based on the eligible hectares. Other practices such as crop rotation could also represent a valid alternative.

Crop diversification has indeed the potential to bring additional crops. However in the scheme analysed there are not further obligations for farmers to incorporate extra crops in a way to support the growth of local products, but there is free interpretation about the implementation of such practice.

As emerged from the micro analysis there are not evident benefits for the climate and the environment through crop diversification as mentioned in the article 44. Only a small share of the land (2%) will be subject to crop diversification (European Commission 2011) further characterizing

the ecological inefficiency of such tool. Additionally the costs of diversification might have impacts on farm's income and revenues. The crop diversification might further have impact on the type of agriculture performed, dictating farmers the way to practice agriculture. This will affect also biofuels producers however without limiting the use of land for such purposes.

Article 45 Permanent grassland maintenance

In Europe there are many types of categories of land at risk that should be addressed for example: forests facing deforestation, marginal lands facing abandonment, etc. The Commission however decided to focus on the maintenance of grassland. This maintenance is intended as ban on plough. Avoiding plough on land according to the Commission means maintenance and this is intended as beneficial.

Further having the Commission delegating member state to designate eligible areas, it opens up for unequal conditions among European farmers. By setting rules about the maintenance of grassland the Commission discarded the knowledge of farmers. Farmers in fact as recipient of this regulation could bring substantial support in the creation of such 'greening' measures. Further there are no specifications about the use of chemical inputs in the maintenance of grassland, in this way creating uncertainties about the efficacy as tool beneficial for the climate and the environment.

Article 46 Ecological focus area

With the purpose of safeguarding and improving biodiversity the Commission oblige schemes' beneficiaries to create ecological focus area. As previously mentioned, biodiversity is not defined but it is described by how ecological focus areas ought to be. However there could be many ways to safeguard and improve biodiversity. It is important to note that only farmer with more than 15 hectares will be subject to the agricultural practices unfolded in this article. Further, a dedication of 7% of the whole agricultural land might represent a marginal effort to reach the above assumed goals.

Moreover there is an exemption among others for leguminous cultivators. It is important to note that there is a huge diversity among leguminous cultivators. Among leguminous crops there are beans, peas, lentils, soybeans cultivated for different purpose. It is interesting to note how soybean falls under this category. Leguminous are very important source of protein, but soybean is also widely used for biofuels and animal feed monocultures (Gelder, Kammeraat, and Kroes 2008). According to the regulation some soybean growers might be exempted from the creation of ecological focus areas. In this way the Commission facilitates large productions of animal feed and biofuels that

challenge land availability for food production. In fact the land destined for the cultivation of animal feeds could be used to cultivate food with high protein intake.

In this section CDA allowed to interpret the meaning extrapolated in the previous section. This section showed how small scale farmers are exempted from the compliance with crop diversification and the creation of ecological focus areas. It further showed how crop diversification will affect a minimal share of European lands. Additionally there is no measure regarding the use of chemical inputs. This is important because the production of chemical inputs strongly relies on fossil fuel which heavily engrave over greenhouse gases emissions and therefore on the climate. Furthermore leguminous producers are also exempted from the compliance with the creation of ecological focus areas.

The meso level analysis represents and intermediate stage of the analysis in between the study of the language and its explanation. By having the meaning interpreted it will be possible to explain these in the next section.

4.4 Macro analysis

Macro analysis here intends to transpose to another comparative ground the results emerged from the above micro and meso analysis. For this reason the scope of this section is to understand the meaning of the regulation on social practices.

It is possible to recognise in the text how the Commission holds the power over the regulation. By looking at the different practices it has been possible to notice how the Commission having very high goals (agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment) partly justified, fail to put into practices such big hopes. Although with such regulation farmers are entitled to such payment scheme, large scale farmers due to their higher number of eligible hectares still receive large amount of payments. This might contribute to the unequal distribution of payments of the previous editions. Figure 3 shows the distribution of beneficiaries and direct payments in the European Union for the year 2013. Considering the broader production capacity of large farmers this regulation might contribute to widen the gap between large and small scale farmers.

In contrast the Commission brought up three measures which are not efficiently contributing to the climate and environment. The Commission instead assures payments to a wide slice of European farmers but exclude small scale farmers from compliance with most agricultural practices contained in the chapter analysed. Small scale farmers in fact do not have to comply with crop diversification and the creation of ecological focus areas. Although large scale farmers are the main recipients for

the implementation of the beneficial practices, some aspects of their practices such as the use of chemical inputs are not completely addressed in this scheme.

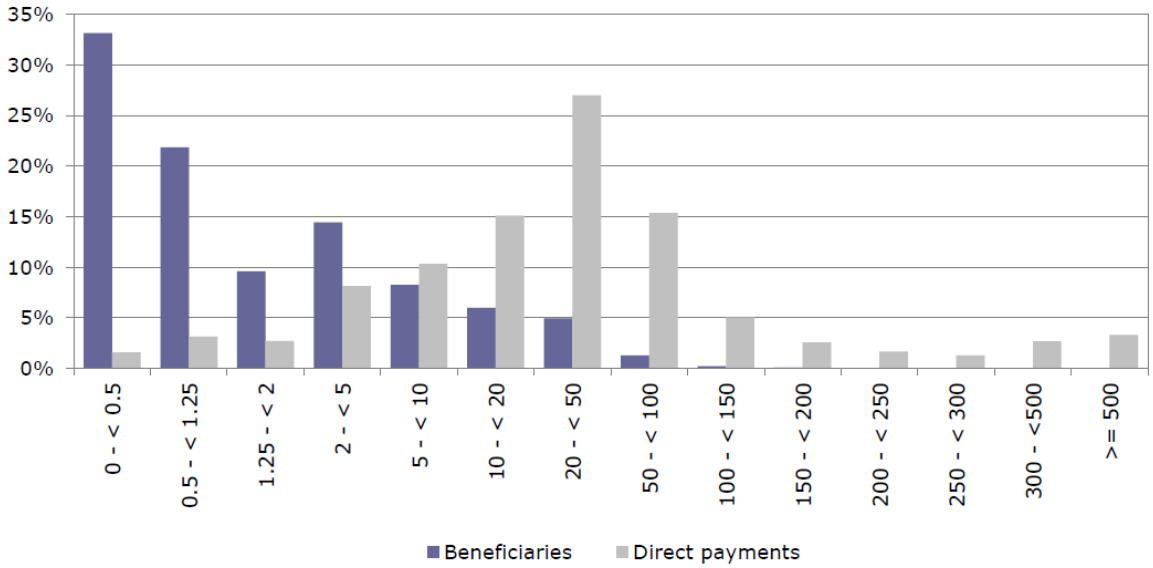

Figure 3 Distribution of beneficiaries and direct payments in the European Union (EU-27) by amount of direct payments received (thousand EUR), 2013 financial year (European Commission 2014b)

At the same time such scheme do not foresee market protection measures destined to protect the vulnerability which farmers are exposed to. In doing this the Commission with such scheme loses an opportunity to address unequal distribution of power among actors involved in the production, process and commercialisation of agricultural products.

In other words the Commission still supports intensive agriculture and does not take an explicit position against chemical inputs and its supporters, producers and lobbyists. Not only but it might support the production of biofuels and animal feed by facilitating soybean production. In Europe soybean oil (17%) is the second contributor to the production of biofuels, preceded by rapeseed oil (66%) and followed by palm oil (7%) (Gelder et al. 2008). Although, Europe imports large quantities of soybeans from the Americas, especially for the production of animal feed (Gelder et al. 2008). This support might represent an incentive for farmers to cultivate soybeans and other leguminous.

The power held by the Commission is not used in fact to steer away from agricultural practices harmful for the environment but it rather tries to embrace large and small scale farmers with scarce success. In fact such scheme partially fails to reflect what it advocates about the enhancement of environmental performance. Such scheme will leave unchanged the situation for small scale farmers while contributing minimally to protect the environment. However other schemes might differently contribute to reach the multiple objectives of the CAP.

The exclusion of farmers from the consultation for the drafting of such regulation strongly influences its outcome. The Commission, supporting business as usual, continues to neglect the growth of small farming initiatives. The Commission by obliging farmer to comply with specific agricultural practices might contribute to hinder the realization of community based initiatives not conceived within the Commission optic. Such scheme do not even support the growing amount of small initiatives related to farming from citizens and farmers. In fact if farmers do not comply with the regulation obligations are easily left out from such schemes.

Extra semiotic features

It is important to note how many extra semiotic features did not manifest in the regulation.

The power exercised from agribusiness in fact does not explicitly have to be related to the scheme analysed. However the scheme analysed does not specifically tackle the unequal power relations between farmers and agribusiness. But it is important to say how these relations might further take place outside the regulative arena.

Thus international policies remain the driver of such global and then local dynamics in terms of power among actors involved in food production, process and trade. Further these dynamics were taken in account but not explored.

Furthermore it is possible that some of the issues addressed in the scheme analysed were additionally addressed in other payment schemes such as the Young farmer or the Small farmer schemes.

At the same time it is important to note that the bureaucracy of member states will facilitates the obtainment of the payment schemes. Bureaucracy in fact substantially differs among member states, leading to different implementation of the scheme. Therefore a different implementation might contribute to have different outcomes of this regulation among member states.

This section explained the study of the language and its consequent interpretation on farming practices. This section showed discrepancies between some of the objectives and the possible outcomes of the scheme. The section also showed how farmers are differently addressed in the scheme. It is also showed how exempting soybeans cultivators might affect the European production of biofuels, animal feed, and human food with high protein intake.

Further this section also concludes the analysis of the regulation. Next section based on the analysis will answer to the previously formulated research questions.

5. Conclusion

The above analysis of the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' and especially of the "Payment scheme for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment" gives the ground to answer the questions earlier formulated. In this section the research questions will be answered.

What are the potential discursive implications of the 'European regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the common agricultural policy' on European farmers?

The language used by the Commission strives for an improvement of the environment by proposing different practices, which adopted by farm might contribute to this ultimate goal. However it is not clear why and how the farming practices proposed supposed to be beneficial for the environment and the climate, if not with minimal effort. The implementation of the practices proposed in this regulation might not coincide with the desired outcomes. More specific measures could have better contribute to the Commission objectives.

The Commission with this chapter of the regulation continues to be aligned with neoliberal market policies provided by international financial institution such as the WTO by assuring income support (De Schutter 2011). The reproduction of the language and ideas in time contributes to a consolidation of the power held by international institutions. In doing so the political articulation of the Commission contributes to the subversion of the natural attitudes of European farmers' realities. In other words the contingency of such discourse might hamper the conception of other initiatives conceived in a different optic than the Commission's one.

How does the CAP, through this regulation, intend to support small and large scale farmers?

The analysis showed how farmers are differently addressed. The Commission favours an implementation of the green practices by large farmers. In doing this the Commission also support farmers already complying with national and regional environmental schemes by exempting them to further comply with 'greening 'practices.

However it is possible to observe in the analysis above how small scale farmers are often exempted from the compliance with the green practices proposed in the scheme. In this way farmers are still entitled to such payments but not all obliged to comply with practices 'beneficial for the

environment and the climate'. A more target policy would better address each category of farmers, promoting a green transition where it is most needed.

What are the implications for farming practices?

The practices proposed hardly affect the state of environment and the climate. The 'greening' through its practices is unlikely to tackle the phase European environment and climate is going through. Crop diversification will minimally contribute to improve biodiversity and to diminish monocultures due to its weak obligation. Further grassland although might contribute to keep green areas might hamper the development of other sustainable practices while do not protect by maintenance other natural areas at risk such forests. The dedication of 7% of agricultural land to ecological focus areas might demonstrate to be a minimal effort to increase biodiversity. With this regulation the dependency on fossil inputs will also not considerably decrease the contribution of agriculture to greenhouse gases emissions, continuing to negatively contribute to the climate. It is important to note that the exemption for soybean producers might affect the European production for biofuels, animal feed and human food with high protein intake.

Overall the introduction of the greening scheme might appear as an improvement in the latest CAP; however it does not tackle many current issues of European agriculture, and not effectively reach the objectives of such scheme.

Further it is important to acknowledge how the analysis of the 'greening' scheme does not allow for a generalization about the whole CAP given the others schemes, beside there are many other externalities playing an important role in the development of European farming.

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