

1.3. Stakeholders sustainable management in agriculture - lessons from participatory processes

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Abstract

Stakeholders are nowadays encouraged to become actively involved in the sustainable management of the territory and, in rural areas such as Castro Verde which is Natura 2000 Special Protection Area and nowadays a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, as well as in the all country, equilibrium between nature conservation and farm production systems is a key factor for sustainability. This paper focuses on the contribution of local actors to evaluate the agro-environmental commitments applied during the last Portuguese Rural Development Program (PRODER/2007-2013). It aims to propose adjustments and new ideas to improve agricultural sustainable practices by assessing the existing commitments and supporting new public strategies regarding the new 2014-2020 programming cycle of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. This was accomplished through the participation of local stakeholders in a set of five workshops, each one in different agricultural region of Portugal. The three-hour workshops were based on interactive techniques as drivers to generate debate, promote knowledge exchanges and produce new knowledge to be presented to policy makers.

Keywords: Active Public participation, Stakeholders, Interactive techniques

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a world leading force in taking action in environmental sustainability (1) promoting biodiversity through the implementation of Agro-Environmental Measures (AEM). These are intended to support agricultural production methods providing sustainable development to rural areas, and are used to support farmers and promote good agricultural and environmental practices by promoting their adoption of agricultural land uses that meet the requirements of environmental protection, rural landscape, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity. The National Rural Development Program (NRDP, which in Portugal is called: PRODER) provides the framework for the implementation of the EU rural development policy at national, regional and local level. Available for the period of 2007 to 2013, PRODER provided a variety of interventions in rural areas including AEM. Integrated production, organic agriculture, sustainable forest management, conservation of endangered local breeds, the conservation of the countryside or landscape and biodiversity conservation in Natura 2000 are some examples of Agro-Environmental Measures.

Financial support is available to those farmers getting involved in "Agro-Environmental Measures" and wishing to implement sustainable farming practices. The amount of funding is calculated based on income lost and additional costs resulting from the implementation of these measures, in order to encourage them to respect the environment.

Despite the existence of a substantial body of literature advocating the importance of public participation for a long time, in Portugal, active public participation processes are still becoming accepted in different fronts now. In 2007, the Commission of European Communities recognized, in the Green Paper(1), that without public intervention and the strong commitment of all actors it would be impossible to reach ambitious objectives such as promoting environmental sustainability, reducing dependence on external resources, ensuring the competitiveness of European economies, halting loss of biodiversity or preserving natural resources.

This paper focuses on the contribution of local actors to improve the uptake in the development and implementation of the agro-environmental commitments present in the last National Rural Development Program (PRODER) and to help on the conception of new commitments considering the new 2014-2020 programming cycle for Rural Development Programme. It shows that a) active public participation processes are actually on the field and b) it is possible in a short amount of time, when appropriate methodology is used, to promote dialogue and to create knowledge and use it as a driver for further discussion that ultimately can nourish and influence the adoption of future agro-environmental measures.

2. Public Participation and Sustainability

2.1 The Framework

To think about sustainability implies to think in a holistic, integrated systems approach addressed to the biophysical, economic, social and cultural systems. To answer these complex issues, it is common nowadays to propose a participatory and collaborative work in order to achieve a more robust environmental decision-making process.

The importance and the need to include community perspectives in natural resource management is a long time debate and there is an interesting historical overview by Lynam et al(2) on the changes on participatory tools over decades. This overview starts from a point of awareness through the incorporation of local perspectives in the data collecting to the recognition of local knowledge and the production of knowledge itself until the present where public participation is viewed as a tool and a norm for sustainable development. Citizens around the world demand greater participation in democratic systems and greater power of direct intervention to their governments(3)

Public Participation is (4) the practice of consultation and involvement of civil society on the agenda of decision and policy-making processes within organizations/institutions responsible for policy development. Looking into what can be expected in terms of “sustainability” from equitable decision-making processes and policies that consider alternative perspectives of natural resource management-Therefore it is not surprising that participatory management has gained enormous popularity in academic discourse and current practices(5), (6), (7). This is particularly evident if we think about active public participation as advocated by Rowe et al (4), Vasconcelos et al(8) or Pretty et al(9). In most European countries, there are agreements allowing direct involvement of citizens in policy-making regarding matters as diverse as urban development, environmental planning issues or political science. Most of them are locally based(10), having a intense and immediate impact in local communities, making issues such as representativeness become less pronounced in small electorates and the use of local knowledge of citizens more attractive (10). Blackstock (11) points out three reasons for the active involvement of stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes: a) individual and social learning results from the exchange of experiences; b) better understanding of the issues, thus bringing about the development of more adequate solutions, meaning that new knowledge brings with it both reflection and a better understanding of the problems, and c) mitigation of existing conflicts results from dialogue practices. A general understanding of the added value of active participation is building up among the public increasing the demand for it and making it quite attractive in different contexts.

2.2 Why is public participation attractive

For Ravez(12) despite the fact that the human species used and modified natural systems over thousands of years, its impact on the planet seems now to be out of control and failures in systems can now be seen globally. He also calls attention to the prospect of a break in our civilization and even the extinction of species making us recede to earlier times of life on Earth. Recognizing that now it is obvious that there are many flaws in the systems from which modern society depends, Ravez(12) believes that these systems are complex / reflective, i.e. they have to engage people/institutions and must be considered in their various aspects - technical, social and ideological. Nowadays, the implementation of participation is expected to promote sustainable policies, efficient and equitable and collaborative decision-making practices to assure sustainable resource management(7), (13). Without making the most out of the knowledge available in society, it is difficult to consciously bring about the necessary changes. Indeed, the greater the complexity, the greater the uncertainty, the more(14) and earlier(15) urgency to have citizenship and active agents with distinct social, political and economic profiles involved for joint solution building. The involvement of stakeholders/ citizens contributes to the creation of a participatory network that allows for better a) agreements capacity building b) knowledge of reality and c) appropriate solutions(14), (15). So, active public participation turned out to be a key element of environmental planning to enhance the protection of natural re-

sources and support sustainable development benefiting individuals, communities, institutions and governments. It contributes to the betterment of the whole society (16).

3. Workshop methodology

Methodologically, the challenge was to develop a process design for the five half-day workshops, which would be sufficiently standardized and robust to be applied in five different regions of Portugal - namely Castro Verde, Évora, Idanha a Nova, Torre de Moncorvo e Cadaval - to deliver comparable results, while at the same time offering a design open and flexible enough to be adapted to regionally different logics and content driven challenges. Adaptations may be necessary depending on the number of participants, the team, the date or the technical equipment what could have to undergo unexpected changes.

Content driven adaptations would result, for example, from the diversity of the agricultural situations in the chosen locations. Above all there was a constant need to encompass lessons learned from previous workshops without generating distortion when comparing results. The methodological scheme was finally set up as described below (table 1), proving to be able to fulfil all above mentioned requirements.

Table 1: Methodologic activities sequence for workshops

Time	Program
14:30-14:40 Reception Participants Preliminary Activities	Interview with each participant on used agricultural exploration + inventory of his/her preference to discuss between two possible Agro-Environmental Measures (AEM) - Mode of Production (MP) or Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI). A Flash on “Best Agricultural Practice and Biodiversity” (collection of written ad-hoc answers to 2 questions): - To me, “means... Meeting with invited experts and consultants
14:40-14:50	Opening Session and Welcome
14:50-15:00	Presentation (project team): The project and the Workshop Methodology
15:00-15:30 Group Work Part 1	- Evaluation Agro-Environmental-Measures (AEM): Mode of Production (MP) and Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI) (collective voting of “favorable” and “disadvantageous” Agro-Environmental Measures (AEMs) – 2x3 votes/participant) - Working groups (3-4 pax): Work sheets to explain in depth a consensual evaluation of Mode of Production (MP) and Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI) - Parallel: experts may be requested by groups to explain unclear issues

15:30-16:15	Presentation of Results (group-wise) + Discussion
16:15-16:30	Prioritization of Mode of Production (MP) and Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI) regarding 3 criteria: (1) easy to implement / (2) low cost / (3) efficient in result (3x3 votes per participant)
16:15-16:30	Coffee-Break
16:30-16:50	- Each participant selects from a set of objects the one that symbolizes "Biodiversity" and chooses a related key-word - Presentation of his/her choice and the key-word
16:50-17:30	- Working groups (2 pax): Work sheets to propose Best Practice in order to promote and increase biodiversity
17:30-18:00	Presentation of Results (group wise) + Discussion
18:00	Closure and (written) Evaluation of the Workshop Methodology

These workshops implemented within the project "Dissemination of best practices for biodiversity in the application of agro-environmental measures", were promoted by the League for the Protection of Nature (LPN), a Portuguese NGO, in partnership with the Portuguese Farmers Confederation (CAP). The main objective of this project was to disseminate knowledge among Portuguese farmers on the best practices in Agro-Environmental Measures regarding the preservation of biodiversity.

4. Workshop outputs

Farmers were invited to discuss the actual agro-environmental commitments, to choose individually the three best and the three worst commitments, regarding MP and ITI. Then, in groups, they discussed their individual opinions.

After this discussion, groups presented the conclusions to the others. Throughout the presentations, it turned out to be evident that some commitments were considered very positive for all (e.g. traditional culture rotation), while for others unanimity could not be reached (e.g. bands without weed control). For all the debated commitments and opinions were well justified to be integrated into the final report.

Adapted to the cultural specificity of each region, some commitments seem to affect more intensely some regions than others, depending on the agricultural practices of each region, since reactions to a specific Agro-Environmental Measure were very different. For instance, pastures' improvement is a positive commitment in one region (Idanha-a-Nova, center of Portugal) but a negative one in another (Cadaval, in midwest Portugal). According to farmers, this happens because commitments vary according to the regions.

More than evaluating actual environmental commitments, farmers discussed them and, in some cases, proposed new or adapted ones. They explained why commitments were good or bad; what needed to be upgraded, needed implementation. They offered many inputs, suggestions or just comments in order to come up with agriculturally and environmentally friendly solutions.

We can say that workshops knowledge was disseminated and new knowledge about good practices was built. Moreover, farmers pointed out the constraints they faced to apply actual measures in their daily life activity, namely, AEMs to promote biodiversity –.

The five workshops carried out took into account the major specificity of the regions according to the 2007-2013 Portuguese Rural Development Program (PRODER) and the Natura 2000 classification. The results should be seen, on a global perspective, as a national contribution to a better knowledge for good practices regarding the implementation of biodiversity conservation measures both for farmers and for policy makers.

At the regional scale, the social learning resulting from the three-hour debate sessions could contribute to: a) analyses of implementation of the existing commitments and its effectiveness for biodiversity; b) to promote the dissemination of individual knowledge/experiences exchange and to contribute to a better implementation of measures aimed at biodiversity conservation; and c) to contribute to a greater awareness of farmers to the market opportunities created by the promotion of biodiversity and the promotion of environmental services.

5. Participants assessment

In a process such as this, it is of utmost importance to know how the participants evaluate the sessions, in order to make re-adjustments and improvements when needed and to improve these methodologies to make them more efficient. Therefore, the main results of the evaluation accomplished at the end of the sessions are presented here.

From a total of 105 participants, 98 answered to the survey, highlighting as the most positive aspects: a) The straightforward way all farmers exposed the problems of the region; b) The contact with farmers with different ways of doing agriculture; c) The interaction between participants and the exchange of ideas in a constructive and structured dialogue considering it as always a positive; d) The open and interested participation of all stakeholders and openness from facilitators and organizers; e) The opening of the debate on issues that directly affect this region; f) The freedom to select the measures to be put into practice; g) the plurality of ideas and opinions included in the debate.

In the opinion of the participants, the benefits of the process are:

- the awareness regarding the existence of institutions that study/listen to them and talk to the responsible authorities, proposing new insights to be incorporated in the legislation for the primary sector
 - the knowledge about different point of views on certain topics and different opinions and
 - the exchange of experiences and creation of synergies, and
 - a better understanding of various topics resulting from their discussion and the highlighting of the problems farmers are facing.
- The understanding that the problems are common to all farmers and the possibility to correct some of the Agro-Environmental Measures (AEM) according to the specific needs of each region were aspects very relevant also.

Concluding Remarks

Besides, being possible to identify the economic, generational and gender profile of the participants, one of the positive results of the five forums that took place in different parts of the country, within a period of two months, was the development of a global vision in real time.

The farmers in these sessions, insistently expressed the inexistence of the rural extension support, and therefore the absence of sound technical support to farmers in their daily management decisions and/or access to funding – governmental subsidies.

The rural extension, previously implied a technician of proximity working closely with the farmer giving the technical requested. This technician guided the farmer on the best way to explore the land taking into account the social, economic and environmental factors. Government extinct these services of rural extension for over a decade and farmers were left on their own.

The technicians and farmers enjoy the debate, agreeing that these moments for debating and sharing experiences and ideas are very important, namely a farmer comment “we should have a better interaction with local technicians”.

To overcome this difficulty, farmers associations and/or cooperatives of producers often hire a technician, to explore funding opportunities, to inform farmers about the existing available funding and helps them to develop projects directed at these funds. This sort of technical support often advises farmers to take up management strategies directed to changing their estates into land uses eligible for funding, making decisions that are quite often perverse to the type of exploration of the region. Measures imported directly from the EU might have been more adapted and ad-

justed to the country reality if farmers were effectively heard before they were implemented, to adequate them to the region, adapted to the local economy, the cultural values and able to preserve the environment. The standardization of these measures responding to a different reality – the Nordic models – are having perverse consequences that discourage the collaboration of many farmers already overwhelmed with measures, stating that – “The existing ones are enough!”.

Our society is based on networks. Therefore, any effort to reinforce the existing ones and to build new ones is indispensable to contribute to our society’s long-term resilience. The aim of a participatory process is to connect people in a genuine effective way so that these links are able to make a difference for direct intervention in the generation of public policy. Making the most of local knowledge emerging from different stakeholders, in an equitable and respectful approach to their joint work, it is possible to make this difference come true.

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1.4. Fruta feia: uma cooperativa portuguesa que salva “fruta feia” do lixo

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Abstract

Developing and implementing better systems that reduce wastefulness is a cornerstone of any transition to a more sustainable world. In Europe, estimates say that up to 50% of wealthy edible food is lost along the entire food supply chain. Massive waste occurs in the field and at large groceries if products fail to reach pre-defined marketing standards that include rules stabilising what products should look like (not related to health issues) in terms of size and shape and so are considered “ugly” and unsellable. Grocers argue that they have to follow strict cosmetic standards for fruit and vegetables since otherwise consumers will not buy them. The consequence is that tons of edible food are thrown away every year in the most developed countries.

However, nowadays there is a growing movement to promote and sell ‘ugly’ products and even large groceries are changing their practices and creating areas dedicated to the sale of out-of-size products at lower prices. In Portugal, it led to the creation of the cooperative Fruta Feia. A young environmentalist created this cooperative in Lisbon in 2013 under the motto “Pretty People eat Ugly Fruit”. The rapid growth of the cooperative moving from an idea to a successful business that has 14,000 people on the waiting list shows that many people review themselves in a more sustainable consumption model that helps to rescue 15 tons of potential food waste per week. The aim of this paper is to discuss food waste in Portugal and creative ideas to fight it, like the one proposed by Fruta Feia.

Key words: food waste, food supply chain, sustainability, Portugal

1. Introdução

“Cada día a natureza produz o suficiente para nossa carência. Se cada um tomasse o que lhe fosse necessário, não havia pobreza no mundo e ninguém morreria de fome”. Mahatma Gandhi

Num mundo cada vez mais globalizado, o desperdício de alimentos representa um sério problema de sustentabilidade, seja pela pressão colocada sobre os ecossistemas, com o gasto inútil de recursos ambientais e económicos associados, que pode comprometer a capacidade de crescimento das gerações presentes e futuras, seja pelo facto de milhões de toneladas de alimentos serem lançadas ao lixo anualmente, num mundo onde um sexto da população mundial passa fome (FAO,2009)