



## PRACTICE ABSTRACT No 2

### Keywords

collaboration, strategies for motivating farmers, economic incentives, personal norms, social norms

## Motivation of farmers to engage in collaborative agri-environmental schemes

Collaboration of farmers and other regional stakeholders for nature conservation actions could improve ecological effects of measures. At the moment, there is little knowledge on farmers' motivation for participation in collaborative approaches. For individual agri-environmental schemes, it is well known that farmers' motivation is an important variable that influences their participation. Their motivations are shaped by the combination of context specific, agronomic, cultural, social and psychological factors.

In *Contracts2.0*, we specifically focus on factors that affect motivations in the context of collaborative agri-environmental schemes. The advance in knowledge on the reasons behind certain motivations and possible ways to influence them should help to develop strategies for collaborative initiatives to improve commitment of farmers.

Preliminary results from a literature review and own field data obtained by conducting a survey and a workshop with board members and staff of Dutch collaborative initiatives confirm that an interplay of diverse factors is at play and shapes motivations. Most importantly, factors include farmers' environmental awareness and responsibility for landscape protection which both play an equally relevant role as payment specifics. A feeling of collective efficacy, cooperative traditions and peer pressure were indicated as less important. These social factors play an increasing role with experience and age of collaborative initiatives. Discussed strategies to foster motivation were increasing communication among farmers, adequate framing and trust building by the facilitators, and economic incentives like the bonus payment by a Dutch sales company that supports farmers who participate in the collaborative scheme.

### Author(s)

Rena Barghusen

### Contacts

rena.barghusen@zalf.de

### Country/Region

The Netherlands

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the European context, informal collaborations gave rise to the introduction of group applications for agri-environmental schemes (cf. Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, article 28). Apart from collective contracting, collaborative initiatives are based on local participative structures to coordinate measures. In the Netherlands, bottom-up initiatives for agri-environmental collaboration exist since the 1990ies. As of 2016, the government implemented a mandatory group scheme to systematically enhance collaboration: public authorities contract environmental farmer cooperatives which contract individual farmers.

Participation of farmers in collaborations is more than adopting a measure. By providing opportunities for engagement in decision making and exchange of local knowledge, farmers' ownership and commitment is supported. Hence, the importance of farmers' motivation for participation including additional voluntary engagement may be even higher than for individual agri-environmental schemes. Social norms about environmental measures and cooperation become more important, next to the personal attitude towards nature and considerations of costs and benefits.



Photo: Sabrina Schulz 6/2019

## ABOUT CONTRACTS2.0

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Contracts2.0 aims to develop innovative contract-based solutions, which increase the motivation for farmers and land managers to produce more environmental public goods and allow them to reconcile the profitability of their farms with sustainability objectives. To do so, 28 research and practice partners closely cooperate to co-design and evaluate the novel contracts. Lessons learned from successfully tested contracts will also provide support for policy makers on local, national and EU-Level.

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 [contracts2\\_0](https://twitter.com/contracts2_0)  
 [contact@project-contracts20.eu](mailto:contact@project-contracts20.eu)

### Research partners



### Action partners



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