

Dream contract factsheet 11: North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)



Dream farming-landscape

The CIL North Rhine-Westphalia has to this day no operating contract implemented. Therefore, we do not have a specific region as a reference point. North Rhine-Westphalia has a very diverse farming structure. High-yielding regions with fertile soils and intensive farming (maize, cereals) alternating with large fattening farms (pigs/poultry) as well as extensive cattle raising in the low mountain ranges. Since the starting point as well as the objectives for each type of the above mentioned farm differs quite strongly, a shared vision encompassing the opinions of all potential stakeholders is a complex task, which needs a little more specific information about the actual set up and spatial distribution of the planned collective. However, in our Workshops we collected issues that could potentially enable or hinder the successful implementation of innovative approaches to AES in general.

Enablers

Governance

- Well-functioning infrastructure for advice and administration.
- Existing AES offers a good variety of measures.
- Positive examples from collectives.

Social aspects

- Willingness and motivation of farmers to improve the implementation of AES.
- Positive feedback from society on visible nature conservation measures.
- Generally, a good knowledge base regarding biodiversity measures within the farmer community.

Inhibitors

Governance

- Complex EU restrictions (e.g., monitoring).
- Uncertainty of current and future CAP developments.
- Parts of the administration are hesitant about profound changes and prefer status quo.
- Institutional fragmentation, quarrels of responsibilities.
- Lack of trust in administration on part of farmers, due to the current monitoring practices and the fear of (“unfair”) sanctions.

Payments

- Limited budget: current rate of payment does not offer an incentive and even fails to cover the opportunity cost (e.g., in high-yielding regions/profitable crops)
- Calculation of fair (individual) remuneration is complex and in itself costly
- How to finance overhead cost of a potential collective not yet clear

Other

- Increasing land pressure (also linked to higher leasing rates) leads to less arable land available for implementation of measures.
- Climate change and extreme weather conditions influence success of measures.
- “One-sided” perspective for farmers/nature conservationists leads to ideological prejudices and hampers productive discussions/agreements.
- Increasing awareness of sustainability by society and farmers.

Actors involved in defining the dream landscape/contract

Participants of our CIL (farmers, conservationists, administrators, advisers, researchers)

Method used

Together with the participants of our CIL (farmers, conservationists, administrators, advisers, researchers) we collected aspects that potentially enable or inhibit an effective implementation of measures supporting farmland biodiversity (**Figure 1**). This Information was the starting point in the process of developing the theoretical underpinnings and must-have contractual modules for a concept of a collective, which has the potential to motivate farmers to scale up their enrolment in agri-environmental programmes as well as to increase the effectiveness of measures.

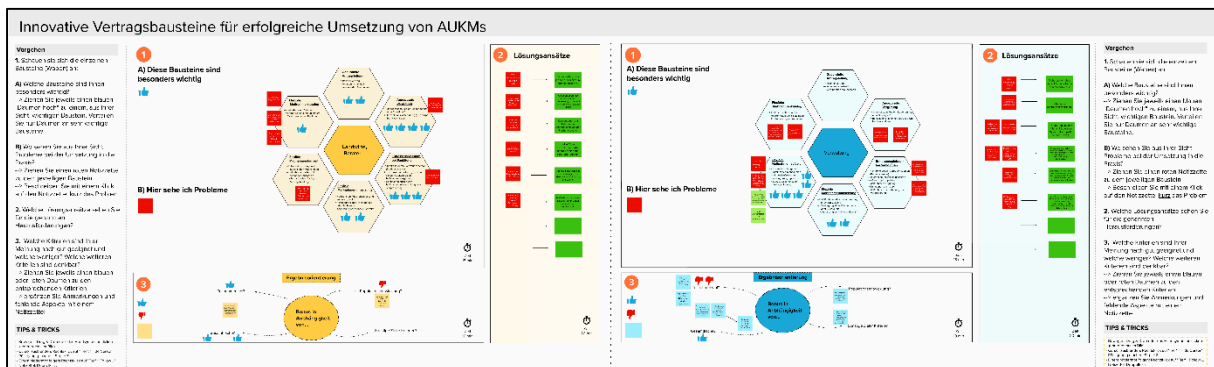


Figure 1. Developing dream contracts via online workshops using Mural in CIL North Rhine-Westphalia.

Dream contract: The Biodiversity Collective

Objective

The contract concept is still in the development stage. Its overarching goal is to encourage more farmers to take part in the AEC-schemes and to increase the number of hectares under AEC-schemes in the region of North Rhine-Westphalia. Important feature of the contract is a higher flexibility within the AEC-scheme. CIL participants expressed the wish to pursue a collective approach inspired by the Dutch model, where the collective (“die Kooperative”) acts as a middleman between farmers and public administration. The coordination (& combination) of suitable measures on landscape/regional scale within the collective is thought to improve the connectivity of habitats and thus contribute to an overall increased level of biodiversity in the region. The contract could also contain a results-based component (as a top-up) to increase the flexibility for farmers even more.

Measures

Measures will be tailored to specific regions and should be drawn up jointly by representatives of agriculture and nature conservation, leading to increased ecological benefit, easier implementation into existing farming structures, better understanding for different points of view, and the legitimisation of measures by all stakeholders involved. Measures are expected to benefit native flora/fauna (to be further defined).

Benefits envisaged

- Societal/environmental benefits:
 - Increased number of landscape features and/or connected natural habitats (“Green band”), which will potentially lead to an increased number and variety of species (esp. farmland birds, insects). This ecological effect will be even greater, when the measures are embedded in a management plan, which takes the specific set up of the region and the spatial distribution of the farmers plots into account.
 - Tourism as well as inhabitants of the regions are likely to also benefit via an elevated recreational value of the landscape.
- Benefits for farmers: The implementation of biodiversity friendly measures will provide certain ecological benefits, which also support the agricultural production (e.g., feed resources for pollinators, habitat space for beneficial insects etc.) In addition, being part of a collective when implementing agri-environmental measures could provide the following benefits for the farmers:
 - Appropriate remuneration for the implemented measures (with the possibility of top-ups if goals are achieved).
 - More flexibility in implementing measures (e.g., dates for sowing/mowing).
 - feeling of reassurance and “togetherness”, when being a part of a group instead of being a “lone warrior”
 - Possibility for sharing machines or supporting each other with certain treatment measures
 - Regular trainings /workshops
 - A trusted and personal contact person permanently available for helping with questions and problems.
 - Regular exchange with fellow farmers of the region/cooperative
 - “Buffer” effect through the cooperative regarding the goals agreed upon with the EU paying agency.
 - Fair & appropriate “sanctions” by the collective.

Application domain

- Farm types: North Rhine-Westphalia has very diverse farm types/ farm sizes. Access to the contract design is not limited to a certain farm type, so the targeted farm types range from pure arable farms over mixed farming with dairy, pig/poultry fattening up to smaller cattle farms on grassland areas in low mountain ranges.
- Land use: Arable land and grassland.
- Land tenure conditions: Private land (leased/owned).

Contract duration

Varying from one or two years up to five years (depending on type of measure), but 2–3 years are considered as the most favourable contract duration. Two ways of dealing with the fixed contract duration are proposed:

A framework contract, which sets out the main conditions of the contract, where individual measures can be easily prolonged year after year (or others added), or

A five-year contract with a cancellation option.

Actors

Since a collective implementation is envisioned, there will be a group of farmers involved, who will carry out the measures and who will be paid through the collective. The farmers will also be involved in important decisions within the collective and in setting up the rules and statutes.

An important aspect of the collective will also be to raise farmers' and society's awareness for biodiversity, the value of ecosystem services and the potential of nature protection measures in the agricultural landscape.

Access to land

N/A

Payments

The payments will be provided by public funding, and farmers will be preferably paid through the collective. Payments will be based on the implemented actions (possibly with a results-based top-up payment).

If the increased recreational value (or other ecosystem services) are sufficiently communicated, tourism could potentially bring some additional income for the region. While the farmers would not directly benefit from these payments, they could potentially benefit from the overall (rural) development process of the region.

Monitoring

Mainly the implementation of the agreed actions will be monitored, but an introduction of a results-based component (as an add on) is considered.

Indicators need to be set up and should be monitored easily with the help of new technologies (use of GIS, remote sensing, apps, photos/videos etc.), which ideally lead to a decrease in transaction costs (for both collective/administration AND farmers).

The monitoring will most likely be done by a representative/advisor within the collective, but it is also imaginable that farmers do some of the monitoring themselves and report it via photo/video/app etc. to the collective/administration. The overall objective (agreed upon with the EU) will be documented and reported by the collective