PRACTICE ABSTRACT № 20

Collective approaches in agri-environmental management in England

The Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) in England supports groups of farmers in working towards environmental objectives (as set out in England's agri-environment scheme, the Countryside Stewardship schemes).

The CSFF was launched in 2015, with the first groups set up in 2016 for a 5-year duration. Subsequent funding rounds offered 3-year contracts. CSFF funding pays for facilitators (individuals and organisations, contracted by the Rural Payments Agency) to bring farmers, foresters, and other land managers together to improve the local natural environment at a landscape scale.

The facilitator is expected to have a group agreement in place setting out how the group will operate and deal with disagreements; however, no binding obligations arise for the farmers. Applications must cover at least 2,000 ha and four separate land holdings. At the end of 2022, 180 groups with 4,000 members of farmers and land managers had been set up.

Evaluations show generally positive environmental results but there are challenges around data availability for baseline data and attributing cause-effect. There is a concern that very few groups continue to operate beyond the duration of the facilitator's agreement, and that contract arrangements are insufficient to build social capital for farmer collective action for environmental goals (i.e. action going beyond their Countryside Stewardship agreements).

For more information follow this link.

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Country/Region

England, UK

Co-design of novel contract models for innovative agri-environmental-climate measures and for valorisation of environmental public goods

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The contractual arrangements and actors involved in the CSFF are described in more detail in a paper by Sattler et al. (Global Environmental Change) on the "Institutional analysis of actors involved in the governance of innovative contracts for agri-environment climate schemes".

The Facilitation Fund has cross-links to the concept of farmers clusters that have been promoted by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (farmerclusters.com). Some farmer clusters are privately funded, but the majority apply for CSFF funding.

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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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