The role of agri-environmental programs in grassland conservation and environmental protection

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INTRODUCTION

After becoming a member of the European Union Poland implemented agri-environmental schemes as a tool of proper, environmentally friendly management. In the first period (2004-2007) 7 different packages of Agri-environmental Schemes (AES) were available and since 2007 a new version of this program, including 9 packages, has been offered to farmers.

THE AIM OF STUDY

The aim of this paper was to analyze agri-environmental programs which have been realized in North-Eastern part of Poland (Podlaskie voivodship) since 2004. A special attention was paid to the reasons of choosing specific packages by farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Podlaskie voivodship has been chosen for this study as it is the region of Poland with a percentage of grassland, in total area of agricultural land, higher than average (35 % in comparison to 20 % in Poland). This area has also a rather extensive agriculture and high environmental value.

In the first stage of study, in 2007 110 questionnaires were sent to farmers in all communes of Podlaskie voivodship. Farmers had been selected by random (one single farm for each commune) and the basic question was if they were generally interested in agri-environmental scheme (AES) for 2004-2007.

In the second stage of our study, questionnaires were sent only to 126 randomly selected farmers who decided to join the program and sign the environmental agreements for the years 2007-2013.

RESULTS

On the frame of agri-environmental program 4736 applications were sent (4.5% of all farmers). The most popular package was K01 and P01+P02 (Table 1).

Table 1 The number of applications for different packages of AEP in Podlaskie voivodship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of applications</th>
<th>S01</th>
<th>S02</th>
<th>P01</th>
<th>P02</th>
<th>K01</th>
<th>K02</th>
<th>G01</th>
<th>G02</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2004-2007)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1394</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2376</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2007-2013)</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>2058</td>
<td>1211</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (2004-2013)</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>3452</td>
<td>3497</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 The percentage of different packages chosen by the 126 farmers interviewed in Podlaskie voivodship in the frame of 2007-2013 Agro-environmental Scheme

CONCLUSION

- During the first step of Agri-environmental Scheme (2004-2007) farmers were not very interested in participation in this programme (4.3 % of total farmers population in Podlaskie voivodship and 6.6 % of tested farmers).
- The most attractive package was “Soil and water protection” but in second period of AFS the measure “Extensive grassland” seems to be also attractive for farmers.