

CORK WORKSHOP 2 (V2)

DAY 2

Presentation Outline

Presentation: Identification of current policies impacting on rural environment and climate (both regulatory and incentivising instruments), with brief reference to strengths and weaknesses

*Q: How to innovate and improve performance of strategies and policies supporting context specific transitions to resource efficient, low carbon rural economies and ensuring effective and efficient delivery of (environmental)public goods and ecosystem services?
(NB No power point so some flexibility possible and desirable. Will adapt somewhat to identified drivers and barriers)*

Given the scale and urgency of transition to a more sustainable and resource efficient rural world and the barriers identified, the challenge is to work together on solutions and ways forward. These will include initiatives at a variety of levels from the European to the local and individual. Robust policies that deliver European priorities whilst being well adapted to local contexts and stakeholders are of particular value.

Policies need to be motivating and dynamic to inspire engagement, not simply boxes to tick and rules to follow.

There is a global level which provides a framework:

- The SDGs, which put a focus on sustainable agriculture at the global level (cf Falkenberg report)
- The Paris Agreement on climate change, which has increased awareness of climate issues and forms the foundation for policy change within the EU

On climate issues the EU already has legislation and targets which cover the period to 2020 and is soon to reach agreement on new measures for the period to 2030. These include policies that apply particularly to rural areas such as :

- The “Effort Sharing Decision “ leading to Member State targets for sectoral emission reductions to 2030, which include an important agricultural element.
- A new policy including “Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry” in EU climate policy, with impacts on monitoring and reporting as well as action within agriculture and forestry. New policies affecting sequestration need to be put into place and there is an opportunity to do so in ways that either enhance or damage the rural environment, as well as addressing climate goals.

Other important EU initiatives include the emerging framework for the Circular Economy. Many elements are relevant to rural areas, including a wide range of value chains and networks, reaching through to food waste for example.

It can be helpful to envisage a transformation towards a Green Economy in rural areas that incorporates both climate and resource efficiency elements and addresses these alongside continuing priorities such as clean water and the reversal of the long decline in biodiversity.

Is this a useful framework?

How could green rural economies be achieved?

There are several strands we could consider.

For example there is a role for active planning, led by public authorities but with a concerted effort to achieve buy in from key stakeholders. What are the best ways to involve different communities and interests, including farmers, foresters and the private sector? How do we identify the economic and job opportunities and the scope for new value chains? What synergies and trade offs need to occur amongst the different goals, including the environmental ones? (Climate and biodiversity priorities may differ in some respects for example).

Plans can be thematic, territorial or otherwise integrated. There may be a role for several approaches. They do need to prepare rural players for meeting changing expectations and to actively address the knowledge and awareness gap which can be a major barrier. There may need to be investment in measurement and metrics. What are the best ways to bring rural people into the same frame?

Transparency and trust are key issues. Many farmers are not engaged in the best way of responding to a low carbon world for example.

Plans can support the best use of incentives. How do we set new priorities and realistic expectations? How do we support this with well considered programming and utilise RDPs in the best way?

How do incentives fit with regulatory compliance? Can we target control and compliance systems on the issues that matter most and avoid unnecessary and annoying controls which alienate farmers in particular?

We need to simultaneously address efficient targeting, even handed compliance, simpler and less time consuming requirements where these are not essential and deal with limited capacity in many public agencies without losing trust. This can be a tall order!
How do we do it? Is there a bigger role for new technology and different forms of organisation? (eg agri-environment collective schemes in the Netherlands?)

Do we need more room to experiment and learn? For example is there a bigger role for promotion of pilot projects and active learning from those approaches that work (and those that fail)?

Do we have enough willingness to utilise more innovative approaches eg results based agri-environment schemes?

Essential to build in advice, support, extension to initiatives in this area; many examples of why this is critical

More engagement of private sector and supply chains eg water companies, dairy supply chain where there may be opportunities to add value?

Could there be greater use of collective approaches to give farmers more autonomy within agreed deliverables and reduce public sector admin, which is a critical issue? We can learn from the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Greater focus on territorial coherence and dynamics where this fits institutionally; questions of regional identity are vital

Rural budgets often are vulnerable and so demonstrable added value is important but this does not have to be immediate economic returns; robust delivery of public goods can take time.

Please bring your ideas and experience to the table. Be constructive, honest, critical as appropriate. This is an opportunity to learn from each other and refine our thinking.

David Baldock