AGRI-ENVIROMENTAL SUPPORT FROM THE FARMER'S SIDE

Nikolett Faragó[1], Anna Dunay[1], Róbert Magda[1]

[1]John von Neumann University, Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration, 1117 Budapest, Infopark sétány 1. V. emelet

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Agri-Environmental Management Programme (AKG) is a call co-financed by the Government of Hungary and the European Union. The project's main objective is to promote the sustainable development of rural areas, improve the condition of soils and biodiversity, and strengthen agri-environmental protection for agricultural producers. Batáry *et al.* [2] emphasized that the effectiveness of successful programmes largely depends on the long-term commitment of farmers, which can only be achieved through appropriate planning and the implementation of measures tailored to local conditions. Projects meeting the requirements of the call are eligible for normative, area-based, non refundable subsidies, granted within the limits of the available resources.

In previous years, the Agri-Enviromental Management Programme (AKG) was announced for the period between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2021. This was followed by a three year cycle (2022–2024) within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy. In the course of research, the author conducted in-depth interviews with farmers to explore the impacts of the AKG on their farms and standard of living. The aim was to gain a broader understanding of how farmers perceive the objectives of the AKG programme.

2 MATERIAL AND METHODS

The author aimed to gain insight into the personal experiences of farmers regarding the objectives and implementation of the AKG. In order to understand their perspectives and experiences, the author conducted in-depth interviews with farmers in his local area who had previously participated in the AKG programme. During the interviews, participants were asked to what extent the additional financial support provided by the programme had assisted their farming operations, and what challenges or difficulties they had encountered as a result of participating in the scheme. When selecting the interviewees, the author took care to ensure diversity among the respondents in terms of age, as well as the size of their agricultural holdings. This approach allowed to obtain a broader and more representative picture of the participants experiences with the programme.

3 RESULTS

Respondents considered the programme important, particularly valuing the additional area-based support it provides. According to their accounts, in the beginning of the programme they were initially met with some reservations and a degree of apprehension, especially concerning administrative burdens and potential inspections. In certain cases, farmers reported difficulties complying with the restricted list of plant protection products mandated by the programme. However, with adequate professional consultation and advice, they were able to manage these challenges. Overall, the interviewees expressed satisfaction with the amount of additional financial support received.

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4 CONCLUSIONS

The interviewed farmers gained a wealth of experience during the previous AKG cycle. They faced numerous challenges, including technological ones, such as the use of a restricted list of plant protection products as required by the programme, as well as the preparations of a nutrient management plan and the need to comply with it throughout production. Initially, maintaining a farm logbook and managing the additional administrative burdens introduced under the programme proved to be challenging. However, with the help of adequate professional advice and consultancy, these difficulties were overcome. Participants received area-based payments in accordance with their commitments and expressed full satisfaction with the amount of support received. They also indicated a clear willingness to participate in future agri-environmental programmes.

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Contact information
Corresponding author's e-mail: farago.nikolett.66@gmail.com