

The legitimacy of a multifunctional agriculture

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Abstract

What is the legitimacy of an agricultural policy directed towards collective goods production? This Norwegian study based on qualitative interview material with representatives of the agricultural sector, supplemented with two quantitative surveys, explores the acceptance of and adaptations towards a more multifunctional role for agriculture both within and outside the agricultural sector. Although Norwegian agricultural policies for a long time have had a number of various objectives, including regional and environmental aims, the greatest legitimacy within the agricultural sector is still the "traditional farmer role", seeing the farmer mainly as a food producer, and collective goods as by-products, in which maintained cultural landscapes, settlement and rural viability are seen as the most important ones.

The interviews show that the cultural landscape is seen as the most important common good, and is the one most frequently mentioned by all informants. Agriculture's role as a cultural carrier was also stressed, as well as its importance for contributing to social goods through voluntary communal work – *dugnad* – a role that now is weakened due to harder economic and time pressure. Areas with tourism have somewhat more focus on the cultural landscape, more awareness of the issue and also more positive attitudes towards agriculture's multifunctionality, mainly identified as cultural landscape. Northern Norway and parts of coastal Norway do not see themselves as a "part of the cultural landscape".

The qualitative study shows that those focussing the least on the landscape as a common good, are mainly concerned about agricultural policy measures for rural settlement, farm transfer and new entrants. Within the agricultural bureaucracy and farmers' organisations maintained settlement in rural areas is considered agriculture's most important contribution to collective goods. There are, however, great regional and local differences, and most of all differences between the various levels within organisations in terms of knowledge, interest and perceptions. Further, the farmer role and work ethics are complex and many-dimensional. "The general public" express great support for multifunctional agriculture; however, what they do as consumers may prove to be more important. Trade leakage suggests a strong preference for inexpensive food; however, also in Norway a certain demand for local, quality and niche products is developing, creating new rural development possibilities for some actors.

The ongoing marginalisation of farming in many areas may lead to increased diversification and new rural futures; however, abandonment of farming and recolonisation of vegetation may make large areas lose landscape and biodiversity values, becoming less attractive, less accessible and less multifunctional.

Introduction

Norwegian agriculture and agricultural policies are going through a profound process of restructuring and changing of objectives to such an extent that one may say the agricultural sector is reconstructing its role and legitimacy. This process is going on in other western countries as well. By analysing the Norwegian case we may identify some aspects of its general character and also some that may be more specific to the Norwegian situation.

The restructuring of policies partly reflects the need for increasing legitimacy externally, and is an adjustment to international trade agreements and regulations. Partly it may also be seen as a reaction to nationally weakened legitimacy of the previous strong agricultural policies that led to widespread relatively small-scale agriculture in a country covering over 324.000km² and with only 4,5 million people. Although only 3,9% of the labour force is directly working in agriculture¹, many rural communities have a very high dependency on agriculture, with over 25% not unusual. Only 3% of the total land area is in agriculture, making farm land a scarce resource. Relatively strong support to agriculture and rural areas has been crucial for a dispersed settlement all over the country, making the rural and agricultural issue an important factor in Norway's voting no to EU-membership in three referenda (Almås, 2002). This also reflects the importance ascribed to control over the country's natural resources in general.

Due to the great variations in geographical, topographical and climatic conditions, the Norwegian farm influenced landscapes are extremely diverse (Moen 1998). Due to the strong restructuring in agriculture following a gradual liberalisation of agricultural policies, and adaptations to international regulations, over 4000 farms are closing down annually. Although the best land is still managed, often by neighbours renting the land, the consequences in terms of forest recolonisation are profound.

Many areas, including many of those listed in the inventory of the country's most valuable agricultural landscapes² (DN, 1994) are falling outside the agricultural payment system, not even qualifying for cultural landscape payments. It is thus decisive that new agri-environmental schemes take this into account.

The term multifunctional agriculture "*refers to the fact that agriculture produces jointly a number of food and non-food outputs, some of which exhibit the characteristics of externalities and public goods*" (Laankoski, 2002). Norway has been active in the multifunctionality debate related to the WTO negotiations on liberalisation of agricultural trade. The multifunctionality of agriculture, according to this argument, is that agriculture produces other values besides food and fibre; these include public or collective goods such as cultural landscape, biodiversity, recreational opportunities, rural settlements and food security (Ministry of Agriculture, 1998, 2001, OECD, 2001). These are external effects of agricultural production that are not internalised in product prices and therefore need to be compensated for. Worldwide, a number of national studies have been undertaken to analyse the links between agricultural production and collective goods or non-commodities (see, for example,

¹ 2001 figures– <http://odin.dep.no/html/multifunc/multifunc6a.html>

Phan-huy et al., 2001, Kwon, 2001, Laankoski, 2002, Rønningen, 2001), initiated and financed by the OECD. To the OECD, a central issue for investigation is whether these collective goods or non-commodities may be de-coupled from agricultural production (OECD, 1999, 2001). As explored by Daugstad et al. (2003) a major Norwegian argument has been that only a "living agriculture" may provide these goods.

Since the late 1980s agriculture's responsibility and importance for maintaining environmental values, especially related to landscapes and biodiversity has been acknowledged through various agri-environmental schemes implemented within the EU's CAP. In non-EU member Norway, the issue of agricultural landscapes or countryside, usually termed cultural landscapes (*kulturlandskap*), has been stressed. Neither the Minister of Agriculture nor the leader of the major Norwegian Farmers' Union make a speech without mentioning the importance of agriculture for maintaining the cultural landscape³, and agricultural policies have gradually been turned more towards acreage, landscape payments and other types of environmental payments and regulations. The Government is increasingly stressing its new invention "Landbruk Pluss", which in reality means multifunctional agriculture and "new" rural land use. However, the term remains poorly defined, following a long tradition of introducing new concepts signalling new times, but being careful not to define it too thoroughly. However, most agricultural payments still come under the WTO's 'blue box' and are production oriented, and a starting point or hypothesis for this study was that the farming sector still can be seen mainly as production-oriented in its self understanding. The agricultural sector for a long time seem to have resisted the landscape management role by pointing to its greater sensitivity for changing political winds, food production having greater legitimacy (Rønningen, 1999). To what extent is it now giving in to these pressures?

Research questions addressed

There are many complex issues linked to this attempt at reconstructing agriculture's content and legitimacy. The major question raised in this paper is:

What legitimacy does a multifunctional agricultural policy geared towards collective goods production within the agricultural sector have?

This question may be elaborated into the following sub-questions:

- How do various actors within the agricultural sector relate to the concept of multifunctionality of agriculture? How is it interpreted and understood?
- How do they relate towards a possible future situation in which a major part of "agricultural" income may be related to the production of collective goods? What appeal does a transformation of the content of farming from food and fibre to collective goods production have?

² In Norway the term 'cultural landscapes' has come to be associated with the 'farmed landscape', although the term includes all landscapes influenced by humans

³ Based on observations of radio and TV programmes during 2002 and 2003.

- What adjustment strategies are chosen or may be expected? Is it possible to point out who will be the future farmers, and what will characterise them?

These are all questions linked to the internal legitimacy of collective goods *within* the agricultural sector. The obvious following-up question is: What legitimacy does a policy geared towards productive goods among the Norwegian general public have? The paper mainly focuses on the first issue, but will also touch upon this latter one.

This paper presents results of a study⁴ based on qualitative interviews on the local and regional level in two regions, supplemented by two national surveys respectively on farmers' and the general public's perceptions, exploring the legitimacy both within and outside the agricultural sector. The paper mainly focuses on the results of the qualitative study to analyse some aspects of this "internal" reconstruction process in agriculture, and how various actors within the agricultural sector react and adjust to the new role of agriculture as a provider of collective goods.

Although recent policy documents show that Norwegian agricultural policies are heading towards a much more post-productivist approach (Ministry of Agriculture, 1998, 2001), at least in rhetoric, our starting hypothesis for the study was that this way of thinking further downstream in the agricultural sector still lags behind. To what extent and how are the ideas linked to the concept of 'agriculture's multifunctionality' integrated into the agricultural sector?

Some central concepts: Post-productivist strategies, legitimacy and farmers' work ethics

This paper examines the issue of agriculture's multifunctionality in the light of economic and environmental accommodation of western agriculture. 'Agriculture's multifunctionality' may be seen as mainly an issue of seeking legitimacy for continued support to the agricultural sector and rural areas. However, it may also be seen as a post-productivist strategy to meet the rural issue, combining environmental demands and demands for rural survival and development. We will argue it is mainly a necessary solution to some of the consequences of productivism, as well as in order to allow productivism to continue, as elaborated further below.

Legitimacy can be studied structurally, but it does deeply concern every individual that is facing restructuring in agriculture. Coleman (1990) has defined legitimacy as "simply the right to carry out certain authoritative actions and have them obeyed". North (1990) points out that legitimacy is not a static juridical institution, but an institution in constant change according to how the one having legitimacy breaks down or builds up the trust of others in him or her. In the context of agriculture's multifunctionality, legitimacy can be understood as solutions, policies or measures that are perceived as acceptable by a majority (Almås, 1999).

Ilbery et al. (1997) identify two major phases of change in the restructuring of agriculture in developed market economies in the postwar period: The first, from the early 1950s to the mid-

⁴ The three year research project was financed by the Norwegian Research Council and was conducted in the period 2000 to 2003.

1980s, was a productivist phase, characterized by a continuous modernization and industrialization of agriculture, with emphasis on raising farm output. Since the mid-1980s, a second post-productivist phase has emerged, characterized by the integration of agriculture with broader rural economic and environmental objectives, with emphasis upon reducing farm output. In the 1990s and onwards, both productivist and postproductivist farming systems coexist, with intensive, high input-high output farming and its emphasis on food *quantity* and low costs now being complemented by low-input-low output farming, with an emphasis on sustainable farming and food *quality*.

Productivism can also be analysed as a *logic of production* at the farm level, as a way of thinking about farming or the set of values held by farmers themselves, as pointed out by Ward (1993). State agencies and agribusiness corporations have succeeded in linking the high-input high-output approach to farming to notions of modernity, innovation and skill among farmers (Tovey, 1997). Some consequences have been intensification, concentration and specialization, and increased need for transport, structural rigidity in farm production, and well known environmental problems in terms of pollution and loss of landscape qualities and biodiversity.

One may date the end of ‘the productivist era’ in the mid-1980s (Ward, 1993), although the start of decline may be defined as 15 years earlier – the beginning of the 1970s. The oil crisis in 1973 led to a fall in the income level of productionist industries. However, the expected food crisis, the Limits to Growth-debate, etc., contributed to continued incentives for production growth in agriculture. Norway finding oil in the North Sea gave rise to an optimism that was reflected in increased public spending and investment, including agricultural subsidies and expenses. During the 1980s surplus production in agriculture also became the norm in Norway, although far from as dramatically as within the EU.

Since the late 1960s, capitalism has been going through a major restructuring (Lash and Urry, 1987). A key feature of this is a crisis in mass production, a trend away from the mass production of standardized products towards more *flexible production* systems. Along with technological changes which have made it possible to produce in small batches, there have been changes in consumer tastes and expectations in favour of more differentiated products, which open up for more niche markets (North 1998, p.162). Critics argue that this is rather neo-Fordism than post-Fordist, and that the ‘Fordism crisis’ should rather be seen as a part of the continuing Fordist revolution, or of the revolutionising of industrial capitalism itself (Tovey 1997). Another way to think of this is as ‘Sloanism’, referring to A. Sloan, the head of GM who in the 1930s introduced the concepts of upgrade and variety marketing. Bonnano et al (1994) describe how the car industry and then later other industries create and nourish demand through upgrade (new models) and variety marketing (aiming at particular classes of consumers).

Several attributes can be identified for what has been referred to as the postproductivist transition (PTT) internationally (Lowe et al 1993, Ilbery et.al, 1998). This transition is characterized by:

- overproduction, surplus land, set-aside programmes to reduce output of land
- the progressive withdrawal of state subsidies for agriculture

- the production of food within an increasingly competitive global market,
- the growing environmental regulation of agriculture.
- environmental goods – payments to farmers for environmental protection and landscape management – paid for via agri-environmental schemes
- pluriactivity – defined as the generation by farm household members of income from on-farm and off-farm sources, in addition to income from 'conventional' agriculture.

As identified by Rønningen (1999), land use development in rural Europe may be divided into three parts: The best agricultural areas may seem to undergo further rationalisation and specialisation (including organic farming), also turning towards biotechnology; some of the more attractive countryside and areas within reasonable distance from larger conurbations may develop tourism and small-scale niche strategies, while a third category of areas will increasingly be marginalised and even abandoned.

Consumption and environmental risks

The issue of post-productivism is to a large extent about introducing new types of utilisation of agricultural land, and is thereby within a context of broader rural issues. A main issue or concept here is 'consumption', which is linked to both food and landscape. 'New cosmopolitan consumers' are often concerned with questions of taste and questions of health and safety (Tovey 1997). Consumption in post-fordism, or within 'sloanism' (see Bonnano et al 1994) enables the display of taste and distinction from others, signalling social and intellectual status. This makes it possible for parts of agriculture to turn towards niche markets, differentiation, local origin, labelling etc. The many food scares and animal diseases internationally (more or less absent in Norway) have led to an increased awareness of the industrialised methods of production which drive globalization. In general, the risks connected to the consequences of modernity (Beck 1992), including the threat of environmental destruction, are becoming increasingly clear for larger groups in society. Thus, according to Tovey (1997), consumers have turned back to 'local' and 'natural' foods seeking ecological healthy products, traditional values and animal-friendly practices, hoping this might be a way to meet the problems of productivism/fordism.

It is important to point out that in general Norwegian consumers until now have not been very risk centred. As a study (Storstad, 2001) shows, Norwegian consumers have high trust in Norwegian agriculture and agricultural products as clean and healthy. Actually, in an international comparison, this still holds true, as there have been very few food or animal welfare scandals. Due to strict import control and restrictions, also deemed as very protectionist, Norway has succeeded in maintaining very high safety standards on e.g. meat. The cold climate has made the need for pesticide use lower than in many other countries, and the country's geography and topography along with historical and legislative factors have led to a relatively small-scale structure of farming and widespread ownership structure. The right of common access to mountains, forests and even to farmed land in winter-time, has also contributed to less negative attitudes to farmers than in many other countries with a more elitist and exclusive ownership structure and with much more restricted access. However, in spite of this seemingly idyllic situation, also to some extent in certain areas in Norway some

of the same negative attitudes to farmers may be found for the same reasons. The writer and entertainer Hans Rotmo (Nationen, 22.11.2003) polemically phrases agriculture's cultural landscape as "ugly" due to the power relations that may be read into it, criticizing the agricultural authorities and the National Farmer's Union for using the 'cultural landscape' to maintain or strengthen their position.

So far, as our literature review has shown Rotmo is the only one having expressed this particular view of the cultural landscape in Norway. More important, however, have been the negative attitudes to farmers due to the high level of subsidies, often reflected in political debates. In addition, Norwegian attitudes related to risks and ethical concerns, including animal welfare issues, are gradually changing, increasing the still very low share of vegetarians and organic farmers, just to mention two important indicators. Concerning local foods and other types of farm diversification, since the mid-1990s there has been a marked increase in entrepreneurship within this "sector" (Flø, 2003).

From pollution control to cultural landscape to multifunctionality and new rural development

This heading may in short summarise the development of the environmental issue within Norwegian agriculture and policies from the 1970s to the present.

We will here mainly relate to events and strategies from the mid-1980s and onwards, but of course these are the results of processes that started earlier. Although Norway is not an EU-member, the signals from CAP are important for Norwegian policies. Particular events of importance in the 1980s are the EU's Council Regulation 797/85 which for the first time introduced environmental payments within agricultural⁵ policies to farmers, and which later was succeeded by the Regulation 2078/92 – the agri-environmental regulation.

The 1990s witnessed a consolidation of agri-environmental policy as a feature of postproductivist agriculture. Agri-environmental measures represent the main current political mechanism that supports agricultural restructuring while perhaps simultaneously directing the sector towards a greater sustainability (Whitby and Lowe, 1994) – or not? Agricultural interests have tended to promote it as a radical departure, ending the post-war production-oriented ethos of EU agricultural policy by bringing the "environment to the centre of the CAP" (MAFF quoted by Clark et al., 1997). However, its inherently accommodationist qualities are perhaps more obvious (Whitby and Lowe, 1994), trying to satisfy the agricultural sector as well as environmental groups (Clark et al., 1997). Yet, the introduction of the landscape and environmental payments must be seen as radical, compared with the productivist policies (Whitby and Lowe, 1994). Today one may conclude that biodiversity and landscape management are key words related to the agricultural issue.

⁵ Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries in Britain, now termed Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Although the term "multifunctionality" was not used by agricultural authorities until the end of the 1990s in conjunction with preparations for WTO negotiations (see Ministry of Agriculture, 1998), Norwegian agricultural policies may be claimed to have had multifunctional objectives for a long time (Blekesaune, 1999). During the last fifty years regional and defence aspects, rural settlement, employment, production and since the 1970s also income and environmental objectives have been embedded in government policies. Payment levels have been set according to geographical zones to compensate for production difficulties and disadvantages. From the 1970s environmental objectives linked to pollution prevention were added as a central objective (Sødal et al, 1990, Vatn et al, 1996). Since the end of the 1980s environmental objectives have developed into a strong focus on maintenance of cultural landscapes. As documented elsewhere (Jones and Daugstad, 1998), in Norway the term cultural landscape has become more or less synonymous with agriculture's cultural landscape, due to the focus given to it by the agricultural sector, and the lack of funding within the environmental sector (Daugstad et al, 2003). To a great extent it seems that the environmental sector has been relatively pleased or relieved by having the Ministry of Agriculture to finance this issue, although there has been some critique of lack of competence and quality of the measures (Rønningen, 2001a). The issue of biodiversity was stressed in the late 1990s, and was then added as an important objective, as the awareness agriculture's importance for biological diversity conservation was increasing; a large number of red list (threatened) species are linked to the agricultural landscape, dependent on a certain level of agricultural land use (Olsson and Rønningen, 1999, Framstad, 1998). Also non-listed but threatened species endemic to Norway are dependent on it (Olsson et al, 2004).

The Government, via the Ministry of Agriculture, negotiates annually with the two farmers' organisations, the Norwegian Farmers' Union and the Small Farmers' Association, about the agricultural budget and its content. This system may have contributed to the strength of Norwegian agricultural policies and the survival of many farming communities in rural Norway. Although the larger Norwegian Farmers' Union, like most of its European counterparts, may have contributed to policy favouring the larger and most efficient farmers, and it has also been negative to a reorientation to more landscape-based payments. However, the Union now strongly argues for the importance of agriculture for the cultural landscape and cultural heritage both in public debates and in its own publications (see Norges Bondelag undated), while the Small Farmers Association have been stressing the importance of a small-scale farm structure all over the country for settlement and employment (Daugstad et al in progress).

Farmers' work ethics and professional legitimacy

Two central questions are raised by Tovey (1997): What is the meaning of a post-productivist on-farm logic of production? Do farmers in the post-productivist era continue to use productivist ways of thinking? One could add: What about the agricultural sector as a whole?

Jones (1988) describes three major modes of explaining landscape development related to farmers' decision making at either a structural, a functional or an intentional level. Structural factors, particularly those of international and national policies, are of course of immense

importance for farmers' and land owners' adaptations. Further, economic and practical factors connected to the individual farms to a large extent determine the choices farmers take. However, personal attitudes and preferences and ideology may also be important (ibid.) for choosing productivist or post-productivist strategies. Also, farmers may be choosing both, on different parts of their land.

We may identify a productivist work ethic seen as that productive farmers are better farmers (Lowe et al, 1997). Of course, producing high and good yields have always been parts of a farmers' work ethic. However, in this century the rationale became not only to provide food, but above all, to expand (ibid.).

Farmers have to a large extent adapted to policies and an agricultural bureaucracy encouraging investment, rationalisation etc. Farmers who resisted have been seen as "traditional, backward or even stupid" and a part of the rural sector's structural problem (Tovey, 1997, Leeuwis, 1989, Ward, 1993).

The change towards agri-environmental payments no doubt challenges the legitimacy and self-identity of farmers as has been documented in a study of agri-environmental schemes in different European countries (Rønningen 1994). Several British farmers interviewed in 1991 felt that the landscape management agreements (in that case the ESAs – Environmentally Sensitive Areas) which they mainly accepted for economic reasons were "*taking the pride out of farming*" (ibid., p.133). It was the "bad farmers", the lazy and backward ones that never did as the agricultural advisors told them that now were profiting from these environmental schemes, as their rubbish land now suddenly was "good land" according to the biologists and the planners making the new schemes (ibid.). Yet, a gradual adaptation seemed to take place to the new situation, partly due the increased economic pressure in ordinary farming, partly due to increased knowledge and interest in landscape values, and partly due to increased acceptance as an increasing number of farmers took part in the scheme. Follow-up interviews with some of the same farmers eight years later showed that several now were actually using the ESA scheme as a label for marketing the landscape and area for tourism (Rønningen, 2001a).

Farmers' work ethics are complex and diverse, and "the traditional farmer role" is nothing one-dimensional, as shown in a comparison of intensive and extensive farming by Ploeg (1990). In large parts of the country, and not least within the two study regions of Nordland in Northern Norway and Sogn and Fjordane on the western coast, part-time farming and pluriactivity has been common. While in the inland parts of Norway forestry has been important, on the coast combinations with fishing, handicrafts etc. have been common. Today other combinations are common; mainly linked to the tertiary sector and transport (Statistics Norway, 2002). This means that the overall household strategies are important, thus increasing production is not necessarily, or has not been, the most appropriate strategy for increasing income. In Norway most farms are family owned, and 90% of farms are sold to someone within the family, usually transferred to son or daughter. This strengthens a feeling of obligation to turn the farm over to the next generation in better shape than when taking over oneself. Flø (unpubl.) has shown that many farmers feel great respect for the hard work of previous generations, not wanting to remove landscape elements that symbolise this.

Others on the contrary feel that the reminders of previous poverty are nothing to preserve. Setten (2002) in a study from one of the most intensively farmed areas in Norway, Jæren, shows how work ethic and pride are connected to this highly productivist landscape.

Agricultural and agri-environmental schemes

Until the end of 2003 more than 50%, or over NOK⁶ 7 bill. of national agricultural subsidies have been categorised as 'direct distributed subsidies.' Most of these are direct payments. The General Acreage and Cultural Landscape Payments (AC) costs over NOK 3 billions. It was introduced in 1989 and was a major adaptation to international signals calling for the reduction in production driven subsidies. AC replaced more production oriented subsidies, and is to support income levels and income equalization between different types of production, farm sizes and districts within crop production and grazing-based livestock production; to take care of the cultural landscape through farming; and to maintain the production capacity of the land. All farmers are eligible, and there are only some relatively general demands and requirements in terms of not removing or permitting deterioration of landscape elements. A prerequisite is that there be a certain minimum production of 'normal crops' on the land in order to qualify. This is to prevent passive reception of money and serves to maintain the production capacity of the land. Violation of these requirements may lead to the withdrawal of payments. As the AC payments are a substantial part of many farmers' incomes, this is a risk few are willing to take. In certain areas, AC makes up to 40% of some farmers' total income (Vikan, 2001) A conclusion of one study (Rønningen, 2001a) is that the maintenance of agricultural production, the reproduction of the landscape and the maintenance of the landscape structure are important outcomes of the scheme.

Some central concepts related to the WTO negotiations have been 'blue, yellow (or amber) and green box'. The Uruguay Round "Agreement on Agricultural Trade" set out a series of decoupled payments that were seen as compatible with WTO rules; the "green box", including environmental programs. The "blue box" include payments related to acreage, headage etc., and are in other words production-linked, while the "yellow box" is related to various "trade distorting policies" such as import barriers, export subsidies and other trade limiting measures.

AC comes under WTO's "blue box", and Norway has been arguing for allowing a certain part of agricultural subsidies to be within the "blue box" instead of under the "green box" in order to maintain the coupling between food production and the production of other multifunctional goods, which is perceived as the most sensible and realistic approach (Ministry of Agriculture 1998, Ministry of Environment 2001). However, AC would be easier to defend at the WTO if somewhat revised and included in the green box, on the other hand, what further restrictions that may be placed on the "green box" is yet uncertain. Nevertheless, this issue raises some fundamental questions regarding *whether* subsidies are to be allowed in the future, *what type* of subsidies to allow, and *what farmers' roles* are to be; food producers having landscape and ecological benefits as side effects (that is, side effects that are aimed and planned for), or

⁶ 1 US dollar = appr. NOK 7.5

solely or mainly landscape producers. However, we should also bear in mind that it is probably unrealistic that a green-washing of a large number of payments will be accepted.

The decision to change previous production subsidies to Acreage and Cultural landscape payments was not an easy one (Almås, 2002). Symbolically this was an important break with what agriculture used to mean to the sector. A study shows (Rønningen, 2001) that some farmers and representatives of the agricultural sector find the name of the scheme stigmatising with a direct link to landscape production, yet in general it seems mainly to have been perceived as a new name for agricultural support. One reason may be that the requirements are general and easy to adapt to. Many subsidies for drainage, levelling out and ploughing up new land etc. were withdrawn during the 1980s, and most farms took advantage of them when they existed (Vikan, 2001, Time, 2002). So in general the scheme has not led to landscape enhancements but to some extent prevented further negative landscape changes. However, there has been a relatively high share of exemptions from requirements for carrying out mainly minor changes on farms. In sum, this may be considered as negative; on the other hand, it perhaps also shows the need or pressure for changes and alterations within a "living" or "active" agriculture.

If the AC payments are to lead to an improvement in landscape quality, a tiering of both requirements and payments is probably needed. This will, however, also require more administration and control. With the implementation of an environmental plan for all farms (*Miljøplan* – see below) from 2004, such a system is now being formalised.

STILK - Payment for Special Measures in the Agricultural Landscape including Protected and Protection Worthy Buildings, the most genuine measure decoupling the production of agricultural commodities from production support, is a scheme from 1990 which resembles the agri-environmental schemes for landscape management and conservation within many EU member states. Farmers may apply for payments (total budget approximately NOK 100 million annually), with payments for special practices, divided into six major issues:

Conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, management of semi-natural grasslands, improved possibilities for access, maintenance of cultural memorials and heritage, conservation of protected and protection worthy buildings; i.e., buildings that may be used for farming or other types of economic activity on the farm, planning of coordinated measures including one or several owners and NGOs, local organisations or the municipality. In general, only active farms, that is those farms that qualify for ordinary production subsidies, may apply for such payments. It is nationwide, and there is no spatial differentiation in eligibility for participation in this scheme. In general, the scheme is popular and is perceived as making a valuable contribution to landscape and cultural heritage maintenance, and not at least increasing awareness about these issues. As it is a discretionary scheme that one must apply for voluntarily, it does not seem to be confronting farmers' identity as food producers. Many farmers have welcomed the STILK scheme as a means of carrying out measures they would have liked to do, but have not been able to fully finance themselves. However, there is no "profit" linked to this scheme, as the payments in general only cover up to 70% of the costs.

In many respects the scheme is a success, in terms of increasing the general awareness and interest in the value of cultural landscapes (Rønningen 2001). Brandtzæg et al. (2001) have

pointed out that an improvement would be to get larger connected areas together, and improved administrative management of the scheme itself. One effect has been that STILK has increased the demand for skilled craftsmen (Brandtzæg et al 2001) for restoration works etc. As the STILK scheme is voluntary, in general only the most motivated farmers would have applied for money at its inception. Positive experiences and the informal spread of information among farmers have increased interest in it considerably. A general critique has been that biodiversity measures have been given too low a priority.

With revision and renaming of STILK and some other environmental schemes into SMIL from 2004 on, a compulsory *environmental plan* will become a precondition for payments (Statens landbruksforvaltning 2004). An important aspect is to make more visible the environmental goods produced by the agricultural sector versus the general society. These changes may be seen as a response to the international pressure for cross-compliance; one may also speculate whether this is a soft introduction to further decoupling.

Economists have engaged in an academic debate on agricultural subsidies and landscape goods, some wanting them to be more directed towards environmental production, loosening the ties to food production (Brunstad et al.,1995). In other words, are farmers and food production needed for providing these various collective goods? However, the agricultural economists Romstad et al. (2000) conclude on basis of studies of multifunctionality and agricultural subsidies in Norway, that although some of these goods may be produced more cheaply by other actors, the "total multifunctionality package" including settlement, employment, rural viability, environmental goods, recreational goods and food and fibre, is delivered more cheaply by farmers.

About the study

The study, "The Legitimacy of multifunctional agriculture," was based on qualitative interviews and a national survey among households, supplemented with data from a previous survey among farmers. This paper will mainly draw on the interview material, but also supplement it with some findings from the surveys. A representative selection of households – n = 1500 (Storstad in prep.) – were interviewed on phone. The other, "Trends in Norwegian agriculture", was postal and sent out to a representative selection of farmers, n = 1678 (Rye and Storstad 2002).

Altogether 31 informants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews with public management and various local and regional agricultural organisations in two regional county districts of Nordland, Northern Norway, and Sogn and Fjordane on the western coast.

As an aim was to cover various dimensions in terms of variations in regions, production and inland v. coastal agriculture, for the qualitative study we chose to focus on two quite different regional county districts⁷. While Nordland at that time only had limited activities and focus on cultural landscape issues, Sogn and Fjordane must be considered active, as is reflected in the use of landscape management payments; there have been several cultural landscape projects

⁷ Norway is divided into 18 different regional county districts further divided into appr. 430 municipalities.

going on. The region is noted for its fjords and the tourism industry is very important in parts of the area. Representatives of the tourism industry have expressed a concern regarding the marginalisation and close down of farming in the area, as the landscape is losing its qualities which may mean it becomes less attractive for tourism. Both counties have mainly small-scale agriculture that is still important for settlement and employment, and relies heavily on agricultural subsidies; a liberalisation of agricultural policies would have a dramatic impact on these areas.

Our intention was to see how various representatives of the agricultural sector understand or interpreted the concepts of multifunctionality and production of common goods or collective goods, as well as their reactions to and attitudes to the issue of multifunctional agriculture. This serves as a basis to interpret the legitimacy of and support for multifunctional agriculture.

In both counties, two representatives of the regional county agricultural administrations were interviewed, including the director and one colleague. Further, the leaders of the regional branches of the two farmers' organisations were interviewed. Five municipalities within each of the two counties were selected for interviews with agricultural administration leaders⁸ and local agricultural organisations' representatives. Further, the leaders of the agricultural experimental stations were interviewed. These stations cover 22 municipalities. Many of the interviews were conducted as group interviews (31 persons interviewed in 23 interviews), with two persons together. Group interviews may give valuable information related to how meaning, opinions and values are developed and negotiated, leading to consensus and expressed outwards.

Several of these informants were farmers in addition to their other positions. However, we chose not to interview farmers as such, partly due to restricted resources, but mainly because previous studies (related to CRR), both mainly qualitative studies (Rønningen, 1999, 2001, Flø unpubl., Time, 2002, Berger, 2002) and also a quantitative study (Rye and Storstad, 2002) have been carried out which provided sufficient background material. Also, other studies (e.i. Setten, 2002, van der Ploeg, 1990, Stenseke, 1997) have been carried out on farmers' attitudes.

The municipality agricultural sections are responsible for guidance on applications to various schemes, such as agriculturally related rural development schemes, development schemes for ordinary farming and forestry, landscape management schemes, welfare schemes etc. The regional county level are more important for control and advice. For advice on practical farming matters, the Agricultural Experimental Stations⁹ are important, and the local and regional farmers' organisations are generally very active and important. We found it interesting to see how these actors that are an important intermediating between farmers and their local communities on the one hand, and central authorities, organisations and policy

⁸ All municipalities have well developed public authorities. Previously the municipality agricultural offices were separated from other offices. Now they are included as a part of the communal planning system, and are often joined with environment and economic development sections of the municipalities.

⁹ There is a nationwide system of Agricultural Experimental Stations (termed 'Rings' in Norwegian, several municipalities belonging to one station (ring), with agronomists employed to carry out experiments and tests within farming, giving advice to farmers.

makers on the other hand, interpret the new political signals and communicate them within their respective spheres. At the same time they receive messages and signals and communicate them back to central decision making levels. As an increasing number of decisions are going to be taken locally and regionally due to recent reforms, these intermediators are in an important position.

Major findings and results

The understanding of the concept of collective goods production and multifunctional agriculture

Analysing the interviews, it becomes obvious that the concept of “multifunctional agriculture” is not integrated into the agricultural sector to any great extent. There is no doubt that the issue of cultural landscapes and multifunctionality is dependent on individuals in central positions and their interest and competence. In general the term is very little used, and in meetings with informants other terms were needed to explain what we were looking for, and as we expected beforehand, the term "cultural landscape" was what most informants related to the term. However, the term cultural landscape is less well known in Nordland than we expected. In general, there is a relatively high consciousness within the agricultural sector regarding agriculture's importance for the cultural landscape (here read as agriculture's cultural landscape) and cultural heritage. The other collective goods seem more unclear to the informants interviewed. Keeping the landscape open, preventing further vegetation and forest re-colonisation on farm land, is seen as a major issue.

The interviews show that the cultural landscape is seen as the most important common good, and is the one most frequently mentioned by all informants. Areas with tourism have somewhat more focus on the cultural landscape, more awareness of the issue and also more positive attitudes towards agriculture's multifunctionality, mainly identified as cultural landscape. The study showed clearly that Northern Norway and parts of coastal Norway do not see themselves as a "part of the cultural landscape". Cultural landscapes was identified as mainly "something they have inland" and were related to old farm landscapes with timber buildings etc.

The qualitative study shows that those focussing the least on the landscape as a common good, are mainly concerned about agricultural policy measures for rural settlement, farm transfer and new entrants. Within the agricultural bureaucracy and farmers' organisations maintained settlement in rural areas is considered agriculture's most important contribution to collective goods.

Most farmers look pragmatically upon cultural landscape measures. One example is that in some places the STILK-payments are termed "fencing-payments" (many measures have included fencing-in, restoration and grazing of pastures). This does not need to be problematic in terms of achieving landscape enhancement aims, but it shows very clearly the desire the agricultural sector has to see collective goods production in relation to "normal" agricultural production.

This may be supplemented by findings from one of the two quantitative studies, the agricultural trend survey of 2002 (Storstad and Rye, 2002), which showed that when asked to evaluate their own role in terms of production of collective goods, farmers found that "providing consumers with safe food" and "maintaining competence with respect to food production" along with "to provide consumers with Norwegian food" as the most important. Environmental objectives have a much lower score, except for "maintaining production area". This indicates that the new environmental tasks are much less internalised among farmers than within public management and farmer organisations. Variables linked to viable rural communities and rural settlement all have relatively high scores. "Providing consumers cheap food" had the lowest score.

One methodological aspect that probably explains why the cultural landscape is frequently mentioned during interviews, but receives low score in the survey, is of course the context of being interviewed in a personal interview situation about landscapes and collective goods, versus the quantitative agricultural trend survey of 2002 that was postal and had a broader perspective. This must be taken into consideration when discussing the different findings in relation to each other. However, we judge these findings to complement each other very well.

The interviews made it clear that AC (Acreage and cultural landscape payments) had met considerable resistance in the beginning; informants pointed out that *"it has taken several years to gain acceptance for AC, and now the farmers' organisations do not want it withdrawn"* [due to its economic importance]. The STILK-scheme is in general unproblematic, these are extra payments for carrying out measures, and a considerable own work effort and/or economic contribution is needed, so there is no direct "profit" in these payments.

There are large differences between regions, and also within the regions between different municipalities in terms of knowledge about and understanding of the issues related to multifunctional agriculture. The more geographically close the informants are to farming and farmers, the less legitimacy for the idea of multifunctional agriculture. The study partly shows a large mental distance between practitioners such as local agricultural experimental ring leaders at and regional agricultural advisors and managers within the agricultural bureaucracy. The bureaucracy and those who are working directly with farmers (and often are also farmers themselves) have different understandings of and give different importance to production of collective goods or agriculture's multifunctional role.

Regional levels in the organisations are much more positive than informants at local level. It is quite clear that the ideas are more internalised the more central the actors are working, such as at regional level versus municipality level, and leaders of the farmers' organisation at regional level versus at local level. However, this was much clearer in the counties of Sogn and Fjordane than in Nordland. Among the leaders at the regional county administration and in the regional farmers' organisations in Sogn and Fjordane, the concepts of cultural landscape and agriculture's multifunctionality in terms of also providing non-commodities were well known and were used as a part of their vocabulary. They were issues that were considered important for the future of agriculture. The concept is no doubt being used politically as legitimising the work of the farmers' organisations, especially the National Farmers' Union.

The regional county level representatives displayed an academic approach, and tried to internalise the concept, making it "their own". The municipal authorities are in a more difficult intermediate position between farmers who they usually know personally and the regional bureaucracy.

One unexpected finding in the interview material was that many of the informants identified the previously crucial role of farmers in rural communities as a social, cultural and practical "glue" – especially related to the tradition of *dugnad* – voluntary communal work. These informants identified this as a part of what they understood as agriculture's multifunctionality. With heavier economic pressure, need for more stock, more land or more off-farm income, the time pressure increased, and reduced their previous flexibility, forcing them to withdraw from communal work in the community such as building a new football field, club house etc. In the smaller communities there are few others to replace them. Social activities are being reduced, and thus the attractiveness of living in these communities

Our assumption is that other types of more commercialised and sponsored NGOs may become more important in the future for communal work. However, this is not realistic in very small communities.

What appeal does a change in the content of farming from food and fibre to collective goods production have?

The majority of the informants clearly consider food production as the basis for environmental goods etc. Informants estimate no lower share than 60% of income to be related to "normal farming". This may be related to the AC payments that have had a requirement that farming output must not be lower than 60% of normal production to qualify for payments, but there is also a psychological aspect related to the fact that more than half of their income is production linked.

When analysing the interviews, our interpretation is that there is one group that finds "rural viability" and other collective goods as important as food production. These are mainly informants that are relating to part-time farmers. Typically representatives of the Smallscale Farmers Association hold these views, and see farming to a large extent as a matter of choice of lifestyle and pluriactivity.

"Multifunctional agriculture more or less legitimizes small scale production and pluractivity (mangesysleri)" (representative of Norwegian Smallscale Farmers Association).

Those informants who most heavily argued for continued food and fibre production, are income oriented and concerned about farmers' professional identity, typically Farmers' Union members.

The agricultural trend survey 2002 based on a representative sample of all Norwegian farmers showed that an important concern of farmers was the lack of legitimacy of farming among the general public, especially in the media. This was seen as one important major de-motivating factor for remaining in agriculture.

The use of the STILK-scheme shows, as noted earlier, that the sector mainly wish and feel a need to see production of collective goods, mainly perceived as cultural landscapes, in connection with "normal" agricultural production. The payments from the STILK-scheme are mainly set in where they have a practical function related to farming. On the other hand, the large amount of the scheme spent on restoration of old buildings and footpaths also show that cultural heritage, recreation and improved access for the general public and tourism are seen as important. Our interpretation is that an increasing number of farmers see such measures in relation to future diversification into tourism etc. However, interviews suggest that many farmers like the idea of contributing to better access to a landscape of which they themselves are proud.

Strategies – or who will be the future farmers?

Who will be the future farmers and what will be their strategies? Estimates based on statistics (SSB.no) show that today's approximately 50.000 farmers will be halved by 2013. This makes for bleak prospects for future management of the Norwegian countryside. Regrowth and recolonisation of forests is considered a major threat to Norwegian landscapes and biodiversity (Olsson and Rønningen 1999). As only 3% of the total land area is farmed, and 366% is forest, maintenance of open landscapes may be seen as important. A dominant landscape development currently taking place is one of massive recolonisation of vegetation in many areas where farming has ceased. Northern Norway and many coastal areas in Western Norway are the most affected by this development.

The study indicates that many part time farmers will carry on as long as they can due to a choice of lifestyle and because off-farm income makes it possible. They will try to do this in spite of unfavourable changes in agricultural policies. Changing the subsidy system towards more environmental payments may ease their situation. However, recently introduced stricter definitions linked to qualification for agricultural payments may also lead to more farms falling outside the system (Nationen, 2003). The larger farms do in general possess the human, cultural and economic resources necessary for restructuring. According to our informants and the signals given in the agricultural trend survey, there is a large group of intermediate and small size farms that find further changes very hard to perform. Changes in the previously strict legislation linked to transfer of agricultural land may make it easier for people without a connection to agriculture to buy (formerly) agricultural properties. The consequences may be very different in different parts of the country. In some areas it may lead to a high number of second homes that are empty large parts of the year, while in other areas this may initiate new activity. As an increasing share of the population are being relatively well-off, retired people, there is a trend towards a more active use of second homes. Also, the internet and greater flexibility in working hours and working place for many may contribute to more activity in some rural areas.

Are there alternative ways of managing the landscape? Do we need farmers or what we until now have considered "normal farming" for maintaining and reproducing these landscapes or for creating new attractive landscapes? It may be that the Norwegian debate regarding this issue lags behind that of other countries. Widespread farming has been desired until now

because agricultural policies related to production have been relatively strong, at the same time as Norwegian agriculture has been perceived as relatively environmentally friendly in an international comparison. This issue was only to some extent touched upon by informants. There is no doubt that cultural landscapes were seen as the main common collective good as a product of multifunctional agriculture, and this was seen as something that should be provided by farmers. Further, there is no doubt that informants within the two regions studied still believe that collective goods should be positive *side effects* of food production.

The term multifunctionality has become a central concept in the argument for continued agricultural support and protection. How strong is this argument? Does it have sufficient legitimacy for continued future support to the agricultural sector? Preconditions are a continued growth in societal groups with sufficient resources to demand recreational products and sufficient social and cultural capital or taste for various rural qualities or values. Further, an unquestioned perception of living in a polluted, high environmental risk society may strongly add to such a legitimacy.

"External" legitimacy

The quantitative survey among a representative selection of Norwegian households showed a surprisingly positive view of agriculture's importance for the cultural landscape, food security understood as safe food and other collective goods. There was also a widespread wish for maintaining agriculture at current levels. From this perspective, the confidence in Norwegian agriculture and its commodities and non-commodities, is high.

However, do we know that this also implies an understanding of or preference for active agriculture or living agriculture based in food production? How much do people care whether the landscape is based on a "fake" agriculture based on landscape payments, and perhaps even based on discarding the agricultural product? Many European farmers participating in landscape schemes that decoupled agriculture's links to food, including letting hay rot, felt this to be unethical and in deep conflict with their identity as farmers (Rønningen, 1999). The negative attitudes to the EU's set-aside programme reflect the same issue (Thuseth, 1994).

On the other hand, peoples' actions as consumers cannot be overlooked. The survey shows that somewhat more than fifty per cent felt that foodstuffs are too expensive in Norway. There is a significant trade leakage to neighbouring Sweden, and also Denmark, where especially meat, alcohol, cigarettes, sweets and chocolate are cheaper. A study (Storstad, 2003) concludes that "border shopping" partly must be seen as a political protest against the high price levels in Norway.

Does this imply that "the general public" want viable rural areas, beautiful landscapes and safe and cheap food? At the same time there are segments of consumers who are willing to pay more for niche products, local food etc. The issue of willingness to pay for collective goods are in other words very complex, both in terms of how to measure them and what political and management consequences this ought to have.

Concluding remarks

What is the relevance of the terms of multifunctional agriculture and post-productivism in the current and near future situation, seen in the light of this study?

The process of productivism has led to the marginalisation and exclusion of more and more areas from participation in productivist farming. The postproductionist regime, currently popularly termed agriculture's multifunctionality (see Wilson, 2001), must be seen as a necessary solution to some consequences of productivism. The development of post-productivist strategies such as identified in the concept of multifunctional agriculture's non-commodities, are necessary in order to maintain a productivist regime. Trade liberalisation and technology may lead to the exclusion of more areas from the productivist regime. Thereby more land will become available for fulfilling multifunctional purposes. So productivist agriculture may give us a lot of very post-productivist, multifunctional rural space. However, unless these are managed – how and by whom are crucial issues – forest recolonisation may lead to large areas of less multifunctional space in Norway. New rural business development based on agriculture's production of collective goods cannot be seen separated from the marginalisation taking place in agriculture. Many areas, including many of those listed in the inventory of the country's most valuable cultural landscapes (DN 1994) are falling outside the agricultural payment system, not even qualifying for cultural landscape payments. It is thus decisive that new agri-environmental schemes take this into account.

Agriculture and the agricultural landscapes in western Europe are to a large extent divided through a process of spatial polarization - one in which agriculture needs to undertake stronger adjustment to market forces and deregulation of agricultural support systems through increased rationalization of production. Within areas of good production conditions this may lead to further intensification and industrialization of farm production. In less favourable areas, a process of marginalisation is continuing, including abandonment, regrowth and afforestation of agricultural land. At the same time, parts of these areas may be interesting for conservation, tourism and recreation, and this function or potential may be strengthened due to various agri-environmental measures, landscape payments, rural development subsidies etc. The development of a multifunctional agriculture, delivering a range of social, economic and environmental services, may offer some new development opportunities for *parts of* these rural areas.

There is a need to redefine the agricultural and rural land use role, so that it also is psychologically sustainable for farmers and other 'rurals'. These processes have started but to a varying degree throughout the country, within the different regions and local communities. At the same time authorities have a high degree of responsibility in terms of realism in the advice given for diversification of farm businesses.

One conclusion is that more information, training and education is still needed regarding the possibilities that may exist in the new multifunctional tasks, both for creating more optimism and for agriculture to become a better producer of collective goods. Further, if authorities are serious about this rural and agricultural reform, and are not merely exercising rhetoric and adjustments of policy measures to satisfy WTO requirements, the policies, measures and

general system of regulations need to be better adjusted to this new multifunctional role. If one succeeds in that, it may lead to a more environmentally and economically sustainable agriculture and rural areas in general. If not, the result will be an increasingly marginalised agriculture and rural areas where both environmental and social goods are lost.

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