

Encouraging Collective Farmers' Marketing Initiatives – Insights into the Strategies and Impacts of Farmers' Collective Action

Final Conference, 8 May 2008, Brussels

Research Teams

WU Wageningen University, Rural Sociology Group, Netherlands

FiBL Forschungsinstitut für biologische Landwirtschaft, Switzerland

QAP Decision, France

IfLS Institut für Ländliche Strukturforschung an der J.W. Goethe Universität, Germany

IU Innsbruck University, Centre for Mountain Agriculture, Austria

BSC Baltic Studies Center, Latvia

CRPA Research Centre on Animal Production, Italy

AU Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Aarhus University, Denmark

IPS Institute for Political Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

CUA Czech University of Agriculture in Prague, Czech Republic

Project co-ordination

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Conference organisation

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For further information on the project:

www.cofami.org

Background

Collective action by farmers has played an important role in the history of European agriculture and rural development. Joint actions such as marketing co-operatives and study groups have contributed to better market access, increased farm incomes and regional employment and the spread of sustainable production methods.

European agriculture now faces a range of new challenges, such as a gradual loss of farmers' control over supply chains and a general decline in, and reorientation of, policy support. At the same time, there is a need to respond to changing demands for food safety, quality and an attractive countryside. Collective action may also help in finding appropriate responses to these new challenges.

Against this background the EU-funded COFAMI project has studied the role of collective farmers' marketing initiatives (COFAMIs) in finding appropriate responses to changing market and policy conditions. The results show that new collective initiatives of farmers are emerging throughout Europe in response to these challenges. Examples include farmers' groups that: jointly produce specialty or organic products; collectively promote and market regional foods; make joint investments in bioenergy production; develop new forms of producer-consumer co-operation; and collectively supply services (tourism, care, etc) or public goods (landscape, water management).

The conference presents key results of the COFAMI research, which has been carried out since September 2005. Eighteen case studies in 10 countries provide insights into the different strategies employed by the initiatives and the factors that limit and enable their establishment and development. The COFAMI project has also assessed the impact and contribution of these initiatives to sustainable rural development, and through two rounds of stakeholder and expert consultation has developed a set of recommendations for support strategies and policy measures to further enhance the performance of COFAMIs.

We invite you to participate in this conference on May 8. It will provide a platform for stimulating discussion between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders on the potential of collective farmers' actions in addressing the challenges facing European agriculture and rural areas as well as possible strategies and measures to support them.



Provisional Conference programme

- 9.00 Welcome and opening by the Chairperson**
- 9.15 The role of COFAMIs within the European Model of Agriculture**
Key speaker from European Commission or EU Parliament
- 10.00 The diversity of COFAMIs across Europe and challenges they face**
Henk Renting (COFAMI)
- 10.45 Coffee break**
With Poster presentations of COFAMI cases
- 11.30 Factors that limit and enable the development of COFAMIs**
Markus Schermer (COFAMI)
Discussant: Christine Rudmann (EU Project "Entrepreneurial Skills of Farmers")
- 12.45 Lunch Buffet**
With tasting of COFAMI products

- 13.45 COFAMIs' contribution to sustainable rural development**
Key speaker (COFAMI) or workshops
- 14.30 Policies and strategies to support COFAMIs**
Karlheinz Knickel (COFAMI)
Key speaker from farmers' organisation
Key speaker from a policy background
- 15.15 Coffee Break**
- 15.45 Round table discussion on Support strategies for COFAMIs**
With representatives from the DGs for Agriculture and Research, farmers' organisations (COPA-COGECA, CEJA), COFAMI initiatives, COFAMI researchers
- 16.45 Concluding remarks**
Henk Renting (COFAMI)
- 17.00 Close of meeting**

Registration

The number of participants is limited to 100. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Registration should be confirmed **before 30 April 2008** by sending your name, address and institution to: heidrun.moschitz@fibl.org, entering "COFAMI registration" in the subject line.

Meeting venue

Félicien Cattier room
Fondation Universitaire Stichting
Egmontstraat 11,
1000 Bruxelles

Hotel accommodation

Information is available on:

<http://www.brussels.org>
<http://www.bnb-brussels.be>

Attendance to the seminar is free of charge. A buffet lunch will be provided to all participants. Participants are responsible for their own travel and hotel costs.

