AGRI-ENVIRONMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATIONS IN TURKEY

E. OLHAN*, Y. ATASEVEN

Agricultural Faculty, Department of Agricultural Economics, Ankara University, 06 110 Diskapi, Ankara, Turkey
E-mail: olhan@agri.ankara.edu.tr; yenerataseven@hotmail.com

Abstract. The agricultural sector has a strategic importance; therefore, the primary goal of every country is to ensure self-sufficiency in terms of agricultural produces. For this reason, the agricultural sector in every country is supported. Agricultural support policies for product prices and inputs have caused increased productivity and intensified the sector. Nevertheless, this intensification and growth in agriculture have also brought about various environmental problems. The adverse effects of agricultural activities on the environment can be specified as loss of biodiversity and deterioration of the quality of soil, water and air. With the increasing public awareness, governments have integrated environmental concerns into the agricultural policy to solve these environmental problems. Recently, the impact of agriculture on the environment is significant issue for agricultural policy in Turkey. Turkey has introduced many policy measures in agriculture to encourage and promote environment. These implementations are to support producers who prefer agricultural practices foreseen in the environmentally-based agricultural land protection and to encourage organic farming, to support soil analysis in using fertilisers and like these. These policies have played an important role in reducing soil erosion, protecting and restoring wetlands and creating wildlife habitat. In this article, agri-environmental implementations in Turkey will be explained and evaluated within the framework of harmony for cross-compliance policy of the European Union.

Keywords: agri-environmental policy, policy implementations, cross-compliance, Turkey.

AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Aimed at obtaining vegetable and animal products using land and water resources, increasing productivity and providing food safety and security, the agricultural sector has been the most eco-friendly sector. Ensuring increase in productivity, using productive varieties, increase of consumption of chemical inputs used in agriculture, have been carried out through soil cultivation and eventually, intensitivity. This modernisation period caused an increase in the environmental problems along with the successes it brought. Problems like pollution of water and land resources, decrease of biological variety, spreading and resistance of illnesses and pests, and the need to use more chemicals, made the agricultural sector a sector that pollutes the environment. These developments have made it mandatory for the countries

* For correspondence.
to change the agriculture policies, and the governments that have been supporting production increase have started supporting eco-friendly agricultural practices. This support system where the agricultural policies were combined with environmental policies, started to be practised particularly in the developed countries in 1990. Although limited, eco-friendly practices started to be practised in Turkey at the beginning of the 2000’s.

Precautions to decrease the negative effects of agriculture on the environment are discussed in this study, and eco-friendly agricultural practices in Turkey are mentioned. The precautions of agri-environmental policies are explained within this frame, and the compliance chance of cross-compliance policies, which has an important place in the agriculture policy of the EU, is evaluated.

RELATION BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

The agricultural sector has always been strictly bound to the environment as the soil, water and air used in the agricultural production period are parts of nature. The effects of agriculture on the environment are dependent on the structure of territorial or regional sector of agriculture, the method of agricultural production, and the amounts of resources\(^1\).

After the 1980’s, it has become widely acknowledged that agriculture has negative effects on the environment as well as positive ones\(^2\). Many studies show that senseless and intensive input use in agriculture has negative effects on environment and human health. These effects include chemical contamination of soil, decrease in soil productivity, soil erosion, chemical contamination of underground waters and endangering life in that environment, air pollution, loss of bio-diversity, and threatening the health of humans that consume those foods\(^1\).

In order to decrease the negative effects of agriculture on the environment and, if possible, to prevent them, many countries are taking agri-environment measures. For the success of the agri-environment policies, which actually integrate the policies related to agriculture and the environment separately, the relation between agriculture and the environment should be understood well because agriculture evidently depends on the quality of soil and water, both of which are the elements of the environment. In providing the continuity of agricultural production, the existence of an unpolluted environment is vital\(^3\). The agricultural sector, with the priority of increasing agricultural production in the 20th century, had to change its priority due to the environmental problems it caused, and the developed countries in particular, have made reforms in their agriculture policies in the last quarter of the 20th century to decrease the negative effects of agriculture on the environment\(^4\).

Although the development of mechanisms for preserving agricultural areas dates back to before 1949, the applications in this field were actually developed in the 1980’s (Ref. 5). The aim of the environmental measures is to promote
methods for the conservation of the environment and to preserve the countryside. Agricultural environmental policies range from obligatory approaches, such as policy instruments, legislative regulations and environment taxes, to voluntary approaches, such as technical assistance and support programmes. The participation of the growers in agri-environment measures is usually performed on a voluntary basis. The participants receive a payment in return for carrying out an agri-environmental commitment but there are rules that they have to obey in return for this payment.

Agri-environment measures are usually implemented for the promotion of more environmentally friendly agriculture in the world. Environmentally friendly agricultural production systems usually include the following measures: restricting or abandoning the use of chemical fertilisers; application of organic manure; restricting or abandoning the use of pesticides; decreasing the degree of pasture use; application of crop rotation to avoid the pollution of underground water; growing feed crops, and practising organic agriculture.

ECO-FRIENDLY AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND SUPPORTS IN TURKEY

Application of policies that will decrease and/or prevent the negative effects of agriculture in Turkey, which has rich soil-water sources and biological diversity thanks to its geography, is a new practice, because agricultural environment precautions have not become a priority, as the use of chemicals is low in agriculture in Turkey. Eco-friendly practices have become a necessity, as Turkey needs to comply with the agriculture policies because it is a member-candidate for the EU. Although aids for organic agriculture, which is an eco-friendly agriculture practice in Turkey, are new, organic agriculture has been going on for 25 years and developed greatly. The first aid for organic agriculture was made in 2004. February 25th, 2004 dated Cabinet Decree provided the entrepreneurs that produce organic agricultural products and inputs with investment and business loans at a rate 60% lower than the current interest rate. Additionally, the producers that are involved in organic agriculture were granted 30 TL (approximately $23) per ha with the decision of April 30th, 2005, and this grant was designated to be 50 TL (approximately $38) in 2008. For 2009, the aid for the producers in organic agriculture is determined to be 180 TL ($130) per ha with an increase of 400%.

A similar development in organic agriculture in Turkey was implemented with the help of good agriculture practices (GAP). GAP has started in Turkey in 2003 on vegetables and fruits without any support or legal regulation. Like in the organic agriculture, the producers within the scope of GAP were provided investment and business loans at a rate 60% lower than the current interest rate. Additionally, a decision ruling that $130 per ha are to be granted to the producers
carrying out good agriculture practices, was published in December the 5th, 2008 and was put into effect.

The producers who made soil analysis were encouraged since 2005 in order to ensure that the use of fertilisers is based on a soil analysis and to reduce the unconscious use of fertilisers. This support can be assessed as one of the agri-environmental measures executed to ensure behavioural change in producers regarding the subject of fertiliser use according to the soil analysis. The payment for the farmers who practise soil analysis is fixed to be 15$ per ha for 2009 year.

One of the agri-environmental measures applied in Turkey is environmentally-based agricultural land protection program (CATAK). Within the scope of CATAK program, a support grant is paid to the producers in the program for three years in order to maintain the quality of soil and water in the agricultural fields, sustainability of renewable natural sources and decreasing the negative effects of intensive agriculture on the environment.

Having been started as a pilot project in 2006, CATAK was started in 4 cities (Kirsehir, Konya, Isparta and Kayseri). Villages defined as sensitive regions were designated in four cities within the scope of the pilot application, and the common characteristic of the designated regions is that they are wetlands. The aim of the program is to prevent the land loss caused by water and wind erosion, desertification, saltiness, contamination by wastes and inputs used in agricultural production, and to decrease the problems.

Within the scope of CATAK, payments are made in three categories: Category 1 (fighting against erosion, rehabilitation of the land, collecting rocks); Category 2 (using appropriate irrigation techniques, controlled use of fertilisers, agricultural chemicals and hormones, using organic and green fertilisers, farmyard manure and compost, applying organic and good agricultural practices); Category 3 (formation of permanent vegetation, development of new pasture-meadow land and/or rehabilitating the existing ones, preventing overgrazing, growing feed plants).

The producers that stop their current productions and accept at least two of the categories above for three years are included in the scope of CATAK. The producers that choose the 1st category were paid 400 $/ha once a year. The producers that choose the 2nd category under the same conditions are paid 900 $/ha while those that choose the third category are paid 400 $/ha annually. 1048 producers in 4 cities (4060 ha of land) were supported within the scope of CATAK at the end of 2008. Five provinces (Canakkale, Kahramanmaras, Karaman, Nevsehir, Nigde) were added into the CATAK project in 2009. CATAK payments have been made in two categories with the new arrangement. In the first category, the producers leaving the farmland uncultivated are supported with 400 $/ha a year. In the second category, the producers applying eco-friendly agricultural techniques are paid 900 $/ha a year.
Agri-environment measures have become the principal instrument for achieving environmental objectives within the CAP of the European Union. The major reforms of the CAP in the 1990’s have taken increasingly into account the importance of the environmental dimension of farming. The reforms of 1992 marked a turning point in the EU agricultural policy, not least in terms of integration of environmental concerns. Specific measures to encourage environmentally friendly farming were introduced. Agenda 2000 maintained the nature of environment schemes as being obligatory for member state, whereas they are optional for farmers and implemented by contract. Member states are also required to set out codes of good farming practices in their rural development plans.

The 2003 reform brings greater quality to environmental integration. The reform involves decoupling most direct aid payments from production. This will mean reducing many of the incentives to intensive production that have carried increased environmental risk. Cross-compliance and modulation become compulsory. Compulsory cross-compliance refers to statutory EU standards in the field of environment, food safety and animal health and welfare at farm level. Beneficiaries of direct payments will also be obliged to maintain all agricultural land in good agricultural and environmental condition.

Cross-compliance contributes to the development of sustainable agriculture and it is also a positive response to the worries of the consumers. Within this frame, the real importance of cross-compliance occurs because the farmers or agricultural establishments face an enforcement system that makes deductions on their allowance or deprives them of these direct allowances completely if they do not maintain their land under the good agriculture and environment condition and if they do not comply with certain articles of the Community Directives that can be defined as Legal Administrative Conditions or Statutory Conditions in the fields of environment, animal and plant health, public health and animal welfare.

As cross-compliance supports transition from agri-environmental measures to high standards, there is a clear connection between cross-compliance and agri-environmental programs. Therefore, cross-compliance aims to prevent further environmental damage by enhancing legal standards to protect nature and environment. Cross-compliance is one of the tools that integrate environmental worries into basic agriculture policy series and ensures application of the current regulation related to protection of nature and environment, animal health and welfare, food safety and quality.

In recent years, many EU member countries have taken measures that integrate agricultural activities into environmental protection with various environmental aids (cross-compliance). While Austria, Belgium, Denmark and France apply voluntary and statutory limits on fertiliser use, Finland, England and Holland provide support regarding protection of biodiversity on the lands between the lots.
Turkey gained the candidate country status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, and is obliged to make its regulations comply with the related regulations of the EU. The agricultural policies are among the most comprehensive policies that need to comply. One of the important steps of compliance with agricultural policies is designating the criteria of ‘cross-compliance’ and to determine the aids according to that. When we look at the agri-environmental practices in Turkey, although direct payments are made to the producers that carry out practices to protect the environment in the agricultural activity period, this practice is not within the scope of cross-compliance. While there is no legal regulation related to the rules of cross-compliance in Turkey, with the MATRA project started in 2007, the aim is ‘to determine the cross-compliance criteria of Turkey in order to maintain the agricultural production activities in a system that is sensitive to the environment and not harmful to human and animal health which aims to protect natural resources’. The activities planned in the project are as follows:

- Determination of legal administrative conditions that will be in the Cross-Compliance Standards of Turkey;
- Determination of good agriculture and environment conditions in the Cross-Compliance Standards of Turkey;
- Increasing the knowledge, skill and practice capacities of the participants;
- Creation of application plans for the Cross-Compliance Standards of Turkey.

The calendar year of determining the cross-compliance rules and inspection of compliance with these rules was designated to be 2010 in the National Program of 2008. Additionally, the anticipated date of creating consultancy services for cross-compliance is also 2010.

Turkey has to define clearly and in detail the conditions and the standards that will be carried out regarding the cross-compliance and notify farmers about them, create the administration, inspection and deduction system, and ensure a smooth coordination between organisations. The MATRA project has been the start point for Turkey to create this substructure.

CONCLUSIONS

When the situation of Turkey, which is at a candidate position for the EU, with regards to agricultural environment is taken into consideration, it is seen that it is not as good as the EU countries. In this subject, the history of the EU is longer than that of Turkey. New supports given to the environment friendly agriculture and the less supports have the important role on this. But, it can be considered that it is a starting with regards to the adaptation to the EU agriculture policies. However, the acceptance of such implementations is not only subject to the fi-
ancial supports but also to the knowledge level of the manufacturers and their sensitivity to the environment. As a matter of fact, as Petersen stated, Turkey is insufficient about the adaptation to the agricultural environment policies of the EU, the national management and control on this issue, the knowledge level of the manufacturers on environment and their appropriation to the issue and finally the financing of the agricultural environment implementation.

The farmers are obliged to comply with the cross-compliance standards in two ways in order to take their direct payments under the scope of the common agriculture policy. These are: (1) good agriculture and environment conditions; (2) statutory management requirements. If the farmers do not comply with these conditions, either a deduction will be made to their direct payments or they can not take their payments. The pre-condition for them to take their direct payments is to comply with the cross-compliance standards. There are no legal arrangements, which regulate the cross-compliance rules, yet in Turkey. The income support payments per da are realised subject to the conditions such as inclusion to the farmer registration system, the soil analysing and the organic agriculture and making good agriculture practices. Such an implementation is not appropriate for the cross-compliance in CAP of the EU. The producers, who perform the environment-friendly implementations in Turkey, take their additional payments. Adaptation of the cross-compliance criteria and arrangement of the supporting system according to these criteria require specialised personnel at an important level, technical information, infrastructure and investment need both for Turkey and the farmers, who are directly responsible for the implementation of these criteria.

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