DESIGNING PRINCIPLES OF AGRI–ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

1Karol KOVÁČ, 2Peter SABO, 3Eva UHLIAROVÁ, 4Anton KRIŠTÍN, 5Ján JANČOVIČ

1-5Slovak Agricultural University Nitra, 2The civic association Living Planet, Piešťany, 3Research Institute for Graslands and Mountain Agriculture, Banská Bystrica, 4Institute for Forest Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Zvolen

Summary

The paper presents results of a three-year project for designing agri-environment schemes for different types of Slovak countryside. The substantial project budget was financed by the Dutch OIN-MATRA Fund under supervision of the Ministry for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands. A consortium of the three western partners, consisting of the Avalon Foundation, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (London) and Veen Ecology (Netherlands), implemented the project in association with national partners in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The outputs of the project are proposals of agri-environmental programmes for Slovakia. Agri-environmental schemes proposals were used by Ministry of Agriculture SR for the SAPARD program.

Key words: agri-environmental schemes, implementation, evaluation, monitoring

Introduction

Agri-environmental programme tries to integrate agrarian and environmental policies. Main goals are ecologization of the agricultural technologies, protection of the environment, preservation of biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage. The presented proposal of agri-environmental programme was preceded by the analysis of the negative impacts of agriculture on land, presented in the study „Analysis of environmental situation in agriculture of Slovakia“ (Kováč, Krajčovič et al., 2000). The aspects of the environmental crisis in agriculture are also elaborated in a brochure „Agri-environmental programmes in Slovakia“ (Sabo, Šubová, Kováč et al., 1999).

Material and methods

The basic framework of the agri-environmental programme has been defined by the Manual of the project „Agri-environmental Programmes for Central and Eastern Europe“, prepared in the first phase of the project by the above-mentioned Consortium of foreign partners. The aim was to propose a pilot agri-environmental programme, suitable for testing in one or two selected regions and also to propose a general agri-environmental programme (AEP) for Slovakia. In our papers we present only AEP for Slovakia.

In formulating the strategy of the agri-environmental programme creation for Slovakia, the work-group took into consideration also these specific criteria:
- centuries-long extensive use of the agricultural landscape has contributed to its high biodiversity,
- agricultural activity contributes to the preservation of the rural areas and rural communities,
- in Slovakia today, the arable land area decreases, and permanent grasslands face abandonment.

Results

AEP for SR I represents a comprehensive analysis of the environmental situation in agriculture with the emphasis on the analysis of environmental impacts of the agricultural practices on the basic components of the environment and on biodiversity of the agricultural landscape.

AEP for SR II represents the proposal of the agri-environmental programme presented in this study - the system of the agri-environmental schemes proposed for the respective types of the land use and also for the needs of the more strict protection of its important habitats. These schemes can be combined and composed to so-called management packages in various ways. AEP II contains also estimates of agri-environment payments and a basic proposal of its administration.

The working study for AEP represents agri-environmental policy of the European Union, the arguments for introduction of the programme, it defines basic aims of the agri-environmental programme and describes certain selected legal and economic tools to be used in the programme realisation.

Basic types of agri-environmental measures: Horizontal schemes, which are applicable especially in the agricultural land as a whole, zonal schemes, which are applicable especially in environmentally-sensitive regions and supplementary schemes, which are applicable especially in the landscape as a whole, focused on the support of sustainable development in agriculture, such as integrated production, lower farming systems, organic agriculture, breeding of rare local and regional breeds and growth of local and regional varieties and renewal of the management on the abandoned land.
Basic structure of the agri-environmental schemes: Sets of agri-environmental schemes (AES) represent guidelines for agricultural activities in order to protect the environment and improve its state. Each scheme consists of two types of the sets of agri-environmental measures: The prohibitions denote the excluded agricultural activities, which exceed the admissible measure of the load on the environmental components, decrease the biodiversity and ecological stability. For keeping of these measures, no payment is mostly provided (with the exception of the prohibitions causing a financial damage to the agriculturalist. The regulations prescribe environmental land management (the ways of land management) which have not only a restricting, but also a stimulating character - support of a particular activity. It is essential that unlike the basic scheme (for keeping of which no payments are provided), these are active measures of the care for the environment. Their keeping entitles the agriculturalist to receive the agri-environment (compensation) payments, as for a presumed loss of profit or increased expenses.

Education of the programme participants: The integral part of the programme is an obligatory participation in a training for the programme participants. The aims of the education are as follows:

- increasing environmental awareness of agriculturalists and clerks
- providing necessary knowledge and enhancing skills of the agricultural holdings entering the agri-environmental programme
- building capacities of the institutions dealing with administrational, educational, advisory and other agri-environment payments aspects

Control of the obligations fulfilment: The fulfillment of the agri-environmental obligations by the programme participants has to be controlled. According to the EU requirements, the controls have to check fulfilment of each agri-environmental measure. We recommend to choose for control at least 10 % of farms (the choice is made at random or among the risk farms). A suitable period for the control is from May to July.

In case that the control reveals breaking agri-environmental obligations from the given contract, sanctions will have to be imposed. Since the programme has been entered voluntarily, we do not recommend to begin with the system of penalties. It is sufficient to delay the payments until the things are improved or to require that the payments will have to be returned if measures are not kept.

Indicators for agri-environmental programme monitoring: The indicators simplify and quantify information on a studied region. The proposed AEP indicators should answer the questions: what is happening with the environment and with the socioeconomic complex (the environmental questions having priority in the programme) - they evaluate the state, then the reasons for it - they evaluate the impact, and at last what we do with it - they evaluate the effectiveness of our response for the given state, i.e. efficiency of the adherence to agri-environmental measures of the individual schemes.

The programme monitoring should quantify achievement of the planned aims by means of: general indicators, environmental indicators of the agri-environmental programme effectiveness, socioeconomic indicators of the agri-environmental programme effectiveness.

References

SABO, P.,-ŠUBOVÁ, D., -KOVÁČ, K. et al.: Agri-environmental programmes for Slovakia. The Living Planet civic association. Piešťany, 1999, s.44