

UACES 41st Annual Conference

Cambridge, 5-7 September 2011

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Emanuela Bozzini

The Common Agricultural Policy in the Climate Change

DRAFT VERSION

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Introduction

Over the last two decades, the CAP underwent a significant process of reform. Observers noted that the CAP shifted from a productivist and state-assisted model to a post-productivist, multifunctional one. In short, food quality and safety have been prioritised over food quantity and productivity as main policy goals for the sector. This article argues that recent developments in the sector, notably the 2008 Health Check of the CAP and the on-going debate on the post-2013 CAP, are characterised by a renewed attention and influence of productivist principles.

This article adopts a discursive coalition approach to make sense of ambivalence and argues that CAP reforms can be understood as the outcome of conflict between two competing coalitions, a productivist coalition and a multifunctional one. Coalitions are distinct as for their core policy beliefs, ideas and preferences about policy instruments and have been able to use external events – like food crises – to frame their arguments. The paper argues that after some successes of the multifunctional coalition in establishing their preferences, in recent times the productivist coalition is effectively gaining attention and relevance. In particular the climate change crises is interpreted as a non-cognitive event that is helping the productivist coalition to revert some multifunctional principles and assumption, notably on food security. By adopting a discursive

approach the article critically discusses current interpretations of paradigm change in EU agricultural policy. The article is structured as follows: the next paragraph presents an overview of CAP reforms and main scholarly interpretations of policy change in the sector. The second paragraph focuses on the empirical research and illustrates policy argumentations advanced by competing coalitions in the context of the 2003 Mid Term Review, the 2008 Health Check of the CAP and the 2010 'Future of the CAP' debate. The third paragraph discusses under which conditions competing policy argumentation proved influential in the debate over CAP reforms. The concluding paragraph discusses the added value of argumentative policy analysis for the understanding of ambivalent policy change and highlights its contribution to the debate over paradigm shift in the sector.

I. Interpretations of policy change

The CAP was set in the late '50s as a complex system of price support for a list of 22 agricultural products. Every year, during the so-called 'agricultural marathons', three types of prices were negotiated and agreed on in Brussels. The target price set the minimum acceptable return price for farmers, the intervention price that is the price paid by the EU for buying agricultural surplus, and the threshold price that is the minimum price for imports. In practice, if on the free market prices fell below the target price, the EU bought enough products - at the intervention price - to maintain the price at the agreed level. Stocks of food in intervention stores were subsequently sold on the world market, making the EU the biggest exporter of agricultural products¹. Further, the threshold price protected European farmers from international competition and ensured that the target price couldn't be cut. As Grant puts it, the basic mechanism of the CAP rests on the "purchase of the surplus production from farmers and the imposition of import levies to keep out price-competitive produce from elsewhere in the world, together with export subsidies to get rid of the surplus produce" (Grant 1997). The system provided farmers with substantial income support and guaranteed stability of food supplies to European consumers. However, most observers point out a number of adverse effects that on the whole put such positive evaluations of the CAP under question. Because of the logic of the system, farmers found it convenient to produce as much as possible; no ceiling or limit to public entitlements was in place and therefore the more they produced, the more subsidies they received. Overproduction was the usual result of such mechanism, which in turn required the EU to overspend to buy surpluses from farmers

¹ The share of EU products on the world market is around 12%, the US one is 11%.

and subsequently to store or sell it on the world market. Thus, additional adverse consequences of the CAP were recurrent budgetary crises and distorting effects on international trade. Finally, critics observed that since the CAP strongly incentivised intensive methods of farming, it has negative effects on water and soil.

A striking characteristic of the history of the CAP is that such negative effects were all very well known and widely discussed at EU and member state levels². A growing criticism of the system has been recorded by observers. Still, the policy remained unchanged for decades and for years, the main scholarly interest was to explain the lack of reform. Broadly speaking, explanations for the resistance to change highlighted institutional factors and the specific configuration of interest intermediation. First, the special institutional arrangement of the CAP contributed to the insulation of the sector. The Directorate-General of Agriculture (DG Agri) had for long the monopoly over the definition of farm issues, generally in close connection with farm interests. The CAP has its own Council of Agricultural Minister (CoAM), whose meetings are prepared by the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA), a body separated from the Coreper. Decisions resulted from intensive bargaining among opposed interests in the Agricultural Council of Ministers, where clearly divergent views on costs and benefits of the CAP can be observed.³ The mandatory character of expenditure in the agricultural sector combined with the requirement of unanimity for taking decisions contributed to raise bargaining costs and therefore made major policy shifts less likely. Finally, until the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 that changed to the ordinary procedure, the European Parliament had a limited role in agricultural policy processes.

Second, scholars strongly emphasised the enduring ability of a closed policy community to retain control over a highly complex sector. Farmers organisations, in particular COPA-COGECA the larger Brussels-based union built a strong relationship with EU institutions, and specifically DG Agriculture, that were dependent for data on in-farm production, an essential piece of information for proposing CAP prices. Thanks to the control of technical expertise farmer unions enjoyed privileged access to policy-makers, and successfully managed to circumscribe policy discussions on a limited set of farm-related issues. At the same time, supranational

² Notably the 1968 Mansholt Plan already warned against the dangers of overproduction resulting from the logic of the CAP. Sicco Mansholt, 'Memorandum on the Reform of Agriculture in the European Economic Community', (Bruxelles: Commission of the European Communities, 1968)..

³ By way of illustration one can briefly compare ideas advanced by the British and French governments. The former think that the CAP "imposes substantial costs on consumers and taxpayers but is inefficient in delivering support to farmers and promoting an attractive rural environment", while the latter for example stated that the CAP "cela représente un coût modeste si l'on considère ce que la PAC a apporté en termes de régularité des approvisionnements, de sécurité sanitaire et de qualité alimentaire, de maintien de l'activité économique dans les zones rurales, de préservation des paysages et de l'environnement, de bien être des animaux..."

agricultural organisations proved able to mobilize their constituency and targeted EU institutions directly by organising mass demonstrations in Brussels . This dual strategy proved effective in keeping environmental and consumer groups off the sector, thus contributing to maintain the system unchallenged. Such configuration lasted until the early '90s, when a first reform – called McSharry after the then EU Commissioner - was eventually approved. Since then, three further reforms have been implemented: the 1999 Agenda 2000 reform, the 2003 Fischler reform and the 2008 Health Check of the CAP. Currently, the post-2013 arrangement is under discussion in the wide-ranging 'Future of the CAP' debate.

Coleman, Skogstad and Atkinson argued that reforms of the agricultural policies in EU, (as well as in US, Canada and Latin America) have been inspired by a liberal-market ethos. In the words of the Franz Fischler – EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries from 1995 to 2004 - farmers must be 'free to produce in response to market demand', rather than to support prices decided by policy-makers in Brussels.

A general direction of CAP reforms then was a progressive shift away from price support to direct aid payments. Further, direct payments have been progressively decoupled from quantity produced in an effort to curb overproduction⁴. Another instrument to keep production under control was the set-aside regime, that required farmers to leave 10% of their land out of production.

The payment of public subsidies was made conditional to the delivery of agro-environmental measures, the so-called cross-compliance. The scope of the CAP has been expanded to rural development, with the creation of a second pillar devoted to it, funded by a transfer of financial resources from the provisions for the common organisation of agricultural market, the so-called modulation. On the whole, the policy has been significantly transformed. In terms of fighting overproduction, the reforms proved successful, effectively reducing public storage of cereals, butter and beef. Prices for European consumers decreased for a wide range of commodities. As far as the greening of the CAP is concerned, opinions are deeply divided. Goals for agro-environmental schemes are still disconnected from broader environmental targets set in EU biodiversity policy and the Sustainable Development Strategy. On the positive side, experts note that the set-aside regime proved beneficial to biodiversity conservation in agricultural areas.

Scholars proposed different interpretations about reasons why policy changes became eventually possible after decades of immobility. The problems of the CAP have been often addressed under

⁴ Decisions over the level and the pace of decoupling are taken by Member states.

pressure of specific critical events, in particular budgetary crises, proceedings in WTO negotiations, and dramatic policy crises. Budget concerns prompted a number of policy changes over the years, from the introduction of quota for the dairy sector in the '80s, to adjustments to keep expenditures under control after the 2004 enlargement.

The 1992 MacSharry and the Agenda 2000 reforms have been both driven by the need to progress in WTO/GATT negotiations, where the EU was criticized for the distorting effects on the world markets of CAP export subsidies.

In the late '90s, a series of food crises – like the BSE and MFD– and the controversy around genetically modified organisms put agro-industrial farming under intense public scrutiny. These crises started a process of social learning and compelled key actors in the field to propose new policy ideas and solutions to restore public confidence in the farming system. Policy crises had also the effect of breaking up previous alliances, undermining the cohesion of the dominant policy community. In the face of growing criticism and the accumulation of anomalies, divisions among small and big farmers, as well as among farmers and the food industry emerged. Notably COPA-COGECA proved less and less able to present itself as the unitary voice of European farmers, and its potential for mobilization declined (Daugbjerg 1999). The parallel expansion in the '90s of EU competences on environmental issues and the efforts for mainstreaming sustainability and integrate environmental concerns into sectoral policies contributed to put the farm policy community under pressure (Lafferty and Hovden 2003; Lenschow 2005).

Observers have different interpretations about how far subsequent reforms went in promoting a radical shift in the vision, the goals and the instruments for agricultural policy in Europe. According to Garzon (2006), gradual, incremental and consistent change eventually resulted in a modification of principles, core objectives and working mechanisms of the CAP, thus leading to a innovative policy paradigm organised around the concept of multifunctionality. Cardwell (2004) stresses the distinctive characters of the renewed 'European Agricultural Model' based on notions of sustainability and multifunctionality, and argues that 'consumers and taxpayer are entering into a new form of contract with the farmer, acquiring not just food but the joint products generated by the production process'. The shift toward a liberalization was moderated in its effects on farmers' income by the recognition of non-market values of farming activities.

Other scholars object to the idea that the reformed CAP is a radical departure from the old one. The formal objectives included in the 1959 Treaty of Rome have never been modified, providing a strong legal backing to the idea that a main goal for the CAP is 'to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, in particular by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture'. According to Daugbjerg, 'the underlying premise of all CAP

reforms has been the preservation of the CAP and its basic paradigm' (Daugbjerg 1999). Grant (2010) observes that the basic idea at the root of the CAP – the need to subsidise farmers for their activity – remained unchallenged and that merely the criteria for eligibility to public funds have been revised. Notably the OECD estimates that in the period 2006-2008 support to producers still represented 27% of farm gross receipts (OECD 2009).

On the whole, a mix of change and continuity can be observed. As Feindt notes a complete shift is premature and that 'the direction of policy shift is quite ambivalent' (Feindt 2008: 3). This article is a contribution to this debate on the nature of policy change in the agricultural sector. It argues that a detailed content analysis of core principles and policy preferences expressed by social and institutional actors that participate in EU policy processes allows for a better understanding of policy reforms and their ambivalence. Policy development is then understood as a process of interaction among opposing discursive coalitions. The analysis helps clarify how and why a coalition succeed in winning an argument, and aims at shedding light on circumstances under which a discourse emerges as a 'good' policy discourse (Fouilleux 2004; Schmidt 2008).

II. Discourse coalitions in the context of the CAP

The following analysis is based on content analysis of policy documents submitted by stakeholders, private and public interest groups to EU consultation processes in 2003 (Mid Term Review of the CAP), 2008 (Health Check of the CAP) and 2010 (Future of the CAP). On the basis of evidence over policy beliefs, two main coalitions of actors can be detected. A first discursive coalition - that can be termed productivist - comprises most farmer organisations, some representatives of agro-industrial business like fertilizers producers and a myriad of interest groups lobbying to support production of specific commodities. A second coalition – here called multifunctional - includes public interest groups like environmentalists and consumers' organisations, organic and small farmers' associations as well as a number of research institutes and think tanks.⁵ In the following paragraph their argumentations will be presented, highlighting both core policy beliefs as well as their strategic framing.

⁵ A third – smaller - coalition could be distinguished, including representatives of the food industry that have an interest in a radical liberalization of the sector; their argumentation is characterized by a strong emphasis on notions of competition and free market and claims like the total abolition of subsidies. Despite the relevance of these differences, they tend to embrace the basic concepts of the multifunctional paradigm and can often be associated with it.

The 2003 Mid Term Reform

The 2003 Mid Term reform has been interpreted as decisive step towards the definition of the 'European Agricultural Model' and a clear indicator of the shift from the old productivist paradigm to a multi-functional one. The debate was characterised by a vehement defence of the basic principles of the old CAP by the productivist coalition. They stressed the exceptional role of agriculture and its characteristics, in particular the inelastic demand and its vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. Such factors have been usually utilised in order to provide economic justification for public expenditure in the sector and farmers draw attention to their lasting validity.

In this light they strongly criticised Commission's plans to decoupling and cross-compliance, that links eligibility to subsidies to environmental requirements. In the view of the productivist coalition, European farmers are squeezed between two opposite policy directions: on the one hand the liberalization of the sector requires farmers to become more and more competitive in the world market, on the other hand, reforms introduced strict environmental requirements that increase costs and might undermine their competitiveness. Farmers ask for a broad, long-term discussion among stakeholders and EU institutions aiming at the development of a consistent set of measures for the agricultural sector. In this sense the productivist coalition strongly opposed the very idea of undertaking a reform in 2003.

They observed that costs were in line with the Agenda 2000 plan and therefore there was no justification for revising agreements before 2005/2006, when the negotiations on the 2007-2013 budget period were planned. Indeed in 2003 neither dramatic policy crises in the CAP nor compelling deadlines in international agreements were pressing for putting a CAP reform on the agenda. They also stress the ability of the CAP to overcome crises and stress the effectiveness of previous reforms in tackling the most intractable problems; in particular they note that overproduction is no longer an issue and ask for a full appreciation of such improvements and the positive role of farmers in delivering them. Accordingly, once negative consequences of the working of the CAP – like overproduction - have been addressed and successfully solved, the productivist coalition saw no need for further reforms in the system. Farmers organisations stress the difficulties in coping with recurrent reforms and that in a highly regulated sector like agriculture, changes in policy have a strong impact: "farmers need stability: The European Council must also acknowledge that farmers and their co-operatives have taken their investment decisions on the understanding that Agenda 2000 would be the last reform of the CAP before 2006" (Cogeca). In their view, European farmers will be out of business because of cut in prices and very high market uncertainties; continuous reforms in the CAP are making agriculture less

and less profitable. Farmers' organisations are also very critical of the CAP, insofar as it did not prevent the overall decline of agriculture in EU societies. For instance Eurostat data shows that the number of farmers is constantly declining in all EU countries.

Opposed to the productivist coalition, the multifunctional coalition proposes a different conception of the role of agriculture in EU societies. At the core level, there is the idea that in addition to food production, the agricultural sector has a number of functions to perform, like landscape conservation and the provision of a wide range of ecosystem services, like flood control, nutrient recycling, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, and atmospheric carbon dioxide sequestration. These are public goods that are strictly associated to farming activities and are greatly valued by Europeans. To the extent that farmers deliver public goods there is a sound justification for public support. Policy core beliefs are thus based on the idea that state intervention must be closely linked to market failures in the production of public environmental good. In this sense, the evaluation of the CAP and its effects is particularly negative: "the rapid disappearance of family farms, repeated health crises, increasing pollution of waters by pesticides and so on render the present CAP destructive for farmers, consumers, taxpayers, their health, their environment, our land and the Southern countries" (CPE: how to reform CAP).

The growing evidence of the adverse environmental impact of intensive farming led to frame conventional agriculture as a threat to the natural environment and to biodiversity. According to this view, farmers need to change their practices to adopt sustainable methods of farming. Farmers, far from being depicted as stewards of nature, were now accused to put the environment into danger, because of intensive methods of farming. The massive use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides poses a threat to biological diversity in rural areas and strongly contributes to climate change, since it is a powerful source of greenhouse gases like methane and nitrous oxide. The need to curb emission from the sector and therefore contribute to mitigate global warming has been emphasised as a new emerging challenge for the CAP and a strong factor to push for further reforms.

As noted, in 2003 this set of ideas supported by the multifunctional coalition proved influential in determining the direction of policy reform. Commissioner Fischler made repeatedly statements in favour of environmentally-friendly measures and supported the idea of greening farming practices as suggested by environmental groups and a number of national governments (notably Germany). The MTR promotes an integrated approach to agriculture and food, emphasising food safety and quality as main policy concern, and as noted institutionalise the concept of multifunctionality as the main characteristic of the European agricultural model.

The Health Check of the CAP and the current debate on the post-2013 CAP

The Health Check of the CAP⁶ was meant to discuss simplification in the administrative procedures for direct payments as well as to represent an opportunity to strengthen the multifunctional and green orientation of the new CAP, for instance promoting a stronger integration of agricultural and environmental policies. It can be surprising then that the outcome of the Health Check and the subsequent discussion on the post-2013 CAP are both characterised by a decline of multifunctional principles, a renewed attention to food productivity and the need for public intervention in the sector.

The 2008 Health Check gave the productivist coalition the opportunity to successfully advance some of their core claims about the centrality of food production and productivity for EU policy in the sector. The revised ‘productivist’ narrative is based on the recognition that climate change has to be taken seriously and that it poses a threat to world food security.

For long, agriculture has been marginal in the debate on climate change, mainly focused on energy, industry and transport. A reason for such neglect is the extreme complexity and variability of estimations of greenhouse-gas emissions from farming and land-use activities. It was only on occasion of the 4th Assessment Report published in 2007 that the IPCC presented a quantification of the vulnerability of world food production to global warming. The IPCC argued that ‘globally, the potential for food production is projected to increase with increases in local average temperature over a range of 1-3°C, but above this it is projected to decrease’ (IPCC 2007: 11). This worried statement has been coupled with evidence on demographic trends presented by FAO. According to UN estimations, production must increase by 70% by 2050 to meet growing food demand due to demographic growth while maintaining prices at affordable levels (FAO 2009). The current debate then revolves around how to increase food production to face world population growth in the climate change era.

Agriculture is here depicted as one of the most vulnerable sector to changing climatic conditions. As far as the CAP debate is concerned, the growing centrality of the EU agenda on global warming made it possible to the productivist coalition to remind EU policy-makers that climate change is a serious threat to farming activities and that growing food is a complicated task whose success should not be taken for granted. Providing stable food supplies crucially depends from factors that are beyond human control and farming is heavily vulnerable to the vagaries of the

⁶ The Health Check of the CAP consisted in a complex process of consultation with experts and stakeholders. A series of public hearings and written consultation processes have been organised to discuss how to simplify the payment scheme, as well as how to tackle environmental challenges like climate change, the loss of biodiversity and water scarcity.

weather and climate.

In the view of the farming community the primary contribution of agriculture to EU society consists of securing stable food supplies, a core national and EU interest. In the light of growing worldwide concerns about food security the EU productivist coalition can argue that it would be too risky for EU societies to give up food self-sufficiency. Notably, in their information factsheet, Copa-Cogeca forecasts constant decrease in the production of cereals in EU27, with an estimation of a further 2,3% decrease in 2010/2011 from 2009/2010. Further, data show an increase in the relevance of food imports.

‘Outsourcing’ food production to poor countries that are extremely vulnerable to changes in climatic conditions is against EU interest to security and the welfare of EU citizens. The extreme market volatility experienced in 2008 and then again in 2011 are signals of the times to come. Accordingly, a set of ‘old style’ claims have been made. Rising prices, food shortages and the general prospect for higher food prices in the coming decade suggest to farmers’ organisations that support to EU agricultural production should be restored: ‘it is important that the CAP contributes to the maintenance of Europe’s own productive capacity’ (Copa-Cogeca 2011: 3). According to this view, the multifunctional turn in EU agricultural policy has been an error, since it jeopardised the EU productive capacity. The argument is made especially clear by Copa-Cogeca, who states that ‘the overall impact [of CAP reforms] has been an undermining of the competitive position of EU farmers, increased dependence on imports of food from outside the EU and a contraction in jobs in agriculture and in related input and food sectors’ (Copa-Cogeca 2011: 3). The productivist coalition asked to subsidise production, to protect EU farmers from international competition, and in 2008 unanimously advocated for the abolition of the set-aside regime, arguing against any imposed limitation to food production.

Finally, a set of urgent measures (and funds) are needed to help the sector to adapt to changing climatic conditions. Adaptation to climate change is clearly prioritized over mitigation, on the basis of evidence suggesting that emissions from the agricultural sector have been constantly declining in Europe in the last 20 years. According to IPCC reports, greenhouse gas emissions from land-use activities in Europe decreased by 17% from the early ‘90s (ref). Farmers organisations argue that the only available option to further cut emission is to reduce production, that as noted is deemed unacceptable and dangerous. In addition the productivist coalition stresses their positive role in delivering the EU targets on mitigation because of biofuels production⁷ and the Europe 2020 agenda.

⁷ In 2009 the EU adopted the Energy and Climate Package, requiring to use 20% of renewable

Organisations in the multifunctional coalition struggled to propose an effective counter-argumentation. Environmental groups are – as expected – deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on agriculture but also stress that no food shortages are in sight.

In the view of leading environmental organisations as well as prominent research institutes, food availability is not an urgent issue in Europe. The analysis at global level tends to highlight the unequal distribution of supplies and food waste rather than scarcity as the main causes of malnutrition. Birdlife clearly states that ‘the world is not running out of food. The average adult requires 2500 calories per day – global food availability in 2003 stood at 2800 calories per person and is projected to rise to 3050 cal by 2030. Although these figures do not take food wastage into account ... current global food production should be sufficient to feed everyone in the world, even with increasing population and consumption levels, at least until 2030’ (Birdlife 2009: 5).

In the long term, the problem of food availability is likely increase in relevance, mainly in relation to environmental degradation, water scarcity, soil depletion. Accordingly, the conservation of biodiversity, the preservation of farmland in good environmental conditions and the adoption of sustainable agriculture are the only promising solutions to the problem of future food supplies. “There is abundant scientific evidence that crop biodiversity has an important role to play in the adaptation to our changing environment. While oversimplified farming systems, such as monocultures of genetically identical plants, would not be able to cope with a changing climate, increasing the biodiversity of an agro-ecosystem can help maintain its long-term productivity and contribute significantly to food security. Genetic diversity within a field provides a buffer against losses caused by environmental change, pests and diseases” (ref).

Restoring subsidies to farmers in order to incentivise crop production is then not the answer to short and long term food security concerns. The multifunctional coalition reinstates the principle ‘public goods for public money’ and criticise the existing policy for lack of focus and coordination. They note that the loss of biodiversity in rural areas is continuing at unprecedented rate. More specifically environmental groups lament the lack of integration between the CAP agro-environmental schemes and the EU agenda on biodiversity, the Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the Climate Package.

In the context of the Health Check of the CAP, no steps have been made to improve integration between agricultural and environmental targets. Decisions have been made to abolish the set-aside regime, thus allowing farmers to expand food production on previously unfarmed land, the

energy by 2020. The goal for biofuel production is set to 10% of the total fuel for transport.

phasing-out of milk quota, expected to be abandoned in 2015. In the 'Future of the CAP' debate the Commission reminds that 'the first and foremost role of European agriculture is to supply food', and identifies global food security as a main challenge for the sector. According to the Commission, 'maintaining the agricultural production capacity throughout the EU' should be a key objective for the CAP post-2013 (CEC 2011). Farmers are also backed by the European Parliament that in its 2009 Resolution affirms to be 'alarmed that proposed EU legislation may have a dramatic impact by reducing the tools available to maximise yields and may, in effect, lead to a dramatic reduction in EU farm output' and calls 'for a stable and constant level of EU and Member States' expenditure on the CAP guaranteeing a fair income for farmers'. The European Commission appears sensitive to this argument, when states that 'the potential to respond to this issue depends on a functioning farming sector, a maintained production capacity and a stable system of trade relations'.

III. Discussion

Evidence on the effects of global warming on agriculture shows a high degree of uncertainty. Since farming both contributes to global warming and mitigates it, scientific evidence on greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and land-use is particularly difficult to obtain [Interview JRC].

In the working document on climate change mitigation the Commission observes that 'at the EU level, no correlation has been established between the warming of the last decades and the level of crop yields, which have generally increased. The effects of technology and farm management improvements and continuous adaptation of farming practices have so far largely outweighed the impact of climate change' (CEC 2009: 4). As far as future trends are concerned, the Commission states that 'global warming will be beneficial to EU agriculture until 2050' (CEC 2009: 4). However evidence suggests that all zones in Europe will be negatively affected by changes in climatic conditions in the long term, i.e. by 2050- 2080. Further, a downscaling of global scenarios reveals that the effects of climate change on agriculture vary dramatically across localities in Europe. In the Mediterranean South 'the impacts of climate change are forecast to be so serious that land may be no longer in agricultural use' (CEC 2009), while in the Boreal and North Atlantic zones changes in climatic conditions are expected to have a positive impact in the next three decades, opening up opportunities for increasing the range of arable crops and overall levels of productivity.

Despite recognition that the danger of food shortages in Europe is minimal, still the issue dominates the policy agenda and the crucial debate on the post-2013 CAP.

First, it is important to note that a specific notion of food security has been advanced. In the discourse proposed by farmers organisations, food security tends to be equated with self-sufficiency. This notion emphasises the need for maintaining the productive capacity of EU farming and for avoiding dependency from imported food. It is this capacity of EU agriculture to produce enough food for Europeans that tends to be portrayed in danger and that proves a very influential argument to advance productivist principles. Self-sufficiency has been the main reason for very creation of the CAP and a basic priority for decades. Notably, in promoting reforms, the Commission repeatedly suggested that stable supplies of food have been a major achievement of the CAP. In the somehow self-indulgent view of the Commission, the CAP is ‘a victim of its own success’: having succeeded over the years to guarantee food security to Europeans, it had later to be reformed in order to meet new challenges and requirements. According to this account of CAP history, environmental goals in agriculture are additional to basic productivist targets. The argument seems to suggest the existence of a clear trade-off between food production and environmental protection and indirectly reveals the still limited integration of the sustainable development agenda in the agricultural sector.

Second, these productivist claims resonate with some long standing EU policy principles. In particular the productivist coalition claims for the adoption of the precautionary principle against the risk of food shortages and lack of self-sufficiency in food supply. The precautionary principle is a guiding principle of EU policy (Fisher et al. 2006).⁸ In its basic formulation, the principle states that scientific uncertainty over risks on a specific issue should not be taken as a justification for inaction. Based on the idea that it is ‘better to be safe than sorry’, the principle states that even if the adverse effects of a phenomena are uncertain or remote, it is sensible to take action in order to prevent them. In this context, uncertainties on future stable availability of food supplies have been recalled to ask for policy decisions aiming at maintaining the productive capacity of EU agriculture. This application of the precautionary principle to food security denotes its flexibility as well as some ambiguities in its formulation. As Majone noted, ‘it is an idea rather than a clearly defined concept, much less a guide to consistent policy-making’ (Majone 2002: 93). Still, the reference to it proved influential, and the capacity of the productivist coalition to frame their argument in terms of precaution denotes a great ability and knowledge of the working logic

⁸ The precautionary principle has been included in the Treaty of Amsterdam and broadly informs food safety, chemical, climate and environmental policies.

of EU institutions.

Finally, the need to prioritize production also emerge in relation to the need to integrate agricultural policy in the 20-20-20 Energy and Climate Package (CEC 2008). In this context, agriculture is required to supply fuel in addition to the traditional food, feed and fibre and by so doing to actively contribute to the fight against greenhouse gases. Despite growing scepticism over the effectiveness of biofuels in cutting emissions (Bozzini and Sicurelli 2010), still ambitious EU goals for biofuels production have been confirmed. To meet biofuel targets, an intensification of crop production might be required and therefore a strong support to agricultural productivity becomes a legitimate claim.

To sum up, in recent years the productivist coalition appeared less defensive and increasingly capable to frame its discourse making reference to established environmental policy principles, in particular the principle of precaution and the principle of policy integration. This strategy proved successful insofar as it pre-empted multifunctional coalition's arguments, and allowed for a renewed version of basic productivist discourse.

IV. Conclusions

An analysis of discursive coalitions allows for a detailed interpretation of policy change in the context of the CAP that highlights the on-going struggle among competing set of ideas about the role of agriculture in society, the goal of the policy and instruments. The outcome of such confrontation between competing policy paradigm is open and depends on the ability of coalitions to take advantages of critical crises in policy developments and to present a persuasive argumentation in line with broader, established EU policy principles.

In the early 2000s a multifunctional coalition emerged in the policy area, challenging the dominant productivist paradigm and taking advantages of policy crises and international pressures for reform to push their ideas about a new sustainable approach to farming. At that time the multifunctional approach was arguably gaining relevance in the EU political arena, and lead observers to conclude that a paradigm shift had taken place. Such interpretation however can not give account of persisting ambivalence in the CAP as well as of recent developments that seems to suggest a draw back of the multifunctional agenda.

The argumentative analysis highlights that the productivist coalition is taking advantage of the emerging climate change agenda, and proved able to reinstate the centrality of basic productivist principles. By providing evidence of such ambivalence in the direction of policy reform, this article contributes to make the interpretation of policy change in terms of paradigm shift more

problematic.

According to Hall, a paradigm shift would require a change in ideas about policy and instruments, as well as a critical revision of deep core ideas, i.e. the underlining philosophies that support specific policy programmes. More specifically, for a paradigm shift to be complete a third order change must be produced, including a modification of ideas about policy goals, cause-effect relationships and policy instruments. In the context of the CAP such third order change was said to result from coherent incremental reforms that over the years consistently contributed to the emerging EU multifunctional agricultural model.

An interpretative analysis of policy discourses highlights that the productivist coalition never changed its core policy beliefs, in particular about the exceptional role of agriculture, the centrality of food production and the view that farmers are beneficial to the preservation of the countryside. Further, the analysis shows that the capacity to re-frame productivist policy beliefs and to link them to the highly topical and symbolic EU climate agenda, proved a successful strategy. The need to support EU agriculture and to subsidise EU farmers for their contribution to food security has been put at the centre of the debate and has gained a renewed influence on the Commission, the European Parliament as well as national governments. The persistence of these arguments in the policy debates, their increasing salience and the sensitivity of the European Commission to them suggests that the shift towards a new multifunctional paradigm is not completed and that the direction of policy reforms is still open.

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