Impacts of voluntary agri-environmental measures on Austria’s agriculture

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Abstract: With about 78% of farms in the Agri-Environmental Programme (AEP), Austria has one of the highest participation rates in the European Union. The programme reflects a key concern in Austrian agricultural policy, which is to reconcile agricultural production, environmental protection, social cohesion and rural development. This paper reviews the changes in agricultural policy leading up to the implementation of the AEP. Spatial, policy and institutional patterns favouring such a high participation rate are identified, highlighting the importance of understanding an AEP in its historical and socio-political context. The orientation of farming towards the provision of environmental amenities may be indicative of future farm strategies, which are increasingly focused on broader rural development activities.

Keywords: Agri-Environmental Programme; ÖPUL; Austria; participation rate; rural development.


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