

Where is Portuguese Agriculture Headed? An Analysis of the Common Agricultural
Policy

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Introduction

On July 10, 2002, the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Franz Fischler, presented a proposal for intercalary revision to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The revision focuses on “the important question of how better to support the rural zones and agriculture of the European Union” (Commission Européenne 2002:2). In fact, such concerns have been part of every stage in the institutional evolution that led to the EU; their ongoing gravity is signaled by thousands of official documents, beginning with the Treaty of Rome.

The central issue addressed in Fischler’s proposal gains full clarity only when placed within the context of the tensions, criticisms and negotiations set in train, on the one hand, by the need for the World Trade Organization to deal with the CAP, and, on the other, by the ongoing discussion on the consequences of the models of agriculture and rural development employed since World War II.

The immediate stimulus for the Commissioner’s proposal was the heated debate that has drawn the attention of consumers and the decision-making bodies of the EU’s member states. Over the last several years, the crisis precipitated by BSE (or Mad Cow Disease) moved the discussion from the farm and ranch sector to the whole of industrial agriculture and the future of the CAP. For decades of concern only to farmers and other agricultural specialists, these topics have come to concern consumers and influence their purchasing patterns. Fischler’s proposal is motivated by pressure from consumers and some critics who have used the window opened by public concern to reemphasize

alternative solutions. The ability to influence the CAP seems to be shifting from producers to consumers.

European citizens¹ have demonstrated a growing interest in understanding how their tax money is used in efforts to guarantee the safety and quality of consumer goods and to protect the environment. The measures announced by Fischler are intended to increase the transparency and coherence of the EU's budget for agriculture and also both to meet the general objectives for controlling surpluses of essential goods and to offer more support for sustained rural growth. When presented, the measures were characterized as one more step on the road leading to greater emphasis on the social-structural aspect of the CAP, and a movement away from the politics/policy of prices and markets which have dominated since the Policy's inception.

The questions stemming from the politics of prices and markets promoted by the EU have prevailed also in the many analyses of the political and economic causes and consequences of the CAP's mechanisms for intervention. In the last decades these studies have tended to reveal that while in terms of external relations the EU's mechanisms have distorted the conditions for free competition on the world market, in terms of internal relations they have helped accentuate regional and sectoral inequalities. Subject to the interests of northern Europe's powerful industrial agriculture, the CAP's instruments have not been sufficiently adaptable to the specific conditions of countries added in the course of the various European expansions. In southern Europe, official spokespeople and mainstream critics have pointed to various oversights and contradictions in decisions

¹ The Commission sponsored a broad survey of European citizens focused on attitudes toward the CAP and ideas about what direction they would like to see it go.

coming from Brussels: demonstrating that these threaten the rural world's agriculture and ability to compete, they argue that an effective social-structural policy requires greater budgetary support for the countryside.

Since the 1960s, views on how best to promote the CAP's support for agriculture have varied. In the current conjuncture, the need to restore the confidence of consumers and to respond to the anxieties of the average citizen seem eminently compatible with the practice of a sustainable agriculture and rural development. This means shifting the emphasis from the politics of prices to a social-structural policy. Our view is that the proposal for intercalary revision made in July is one more element of a transition that began in the middle of the 1980s.

In the first part of this paper we analyze the conditions in which this change of perspective was effected. We also ask how well the CAP has adjusted to the ecological and social characteristics of the countries of southern Europe and whether it has actually supported the agriculture and rural citizens of these countries. In the second part of the paper, we present some of the results of the application of the CAP in Portugal, and discuss what role agriculture might have in developing the rural sections of the country.² Broadly, our goal is to determine to what extent attempts to shift the CAP's focus from agriculture to the rural world and from productivity to quality can benefit Portugal and the other countries of southern Europe. Different countries and interest groups received

² The title of the current paper is a direct echo of the title of a book published by Francisco Pereira de Moura in 1969. Pereira de Moura's *Where is Portuguese Agriculture Headed?* ignited a controversy involving members of the New State, political opponents to the New State, and academics.

the intercalary revision with a varying mixture of fear, caution and hope, and have opened a serious debate. Our paper is a contribution to this debate.

Affirming a Structural Policy

At the end of the 1950s, the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) engaged in complicated negotiations to the end of defining an agricultural policy that would keep to the spirit of the Treaty of Rome while doing nothing to undermine the relative position of each national agriculture.³ As in the rest of Western Europe, the “six” had distinctively diversified agricultural systems that had taken on certain characteristics due to the national protectionism developed during the inter-war period. In contrast with what transpired in the U.S.A., the modernization took place slowly, as both distribution and productive specialization faced innumerable obstacles. The ecological, organizational and technological conditions of northern European agriculture facilitated the application of measures aimed at achieving equity with U.S. productivity in both agriculture and industry. The “six” were among those countries with the greatest ability to foster modernization simultaneously in each of their agricultural sectors. This type of modernization was the focus of discussion in the 1950s. The CAP facilitated it. The common view was that EEC agriculture could only compete

³ The Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957 by six countries: France, West Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, and Belgium. Agriculture received privileged treatment, with ten articles (numbers 38 through 47) dedicated to it. These state clearly that a common policy should assure rural populations a high standard of living, guarantee the availability of inputs and stable markets, and secure reasonable consumer prices.

with U.S. agriculture and meet the objectives of the founding treaty by promoting an increase in the mean size of property, a drastic reduction in the population employed in agriculture, significant growth in the incomes of individuals remaining in the sector, ongoing technological modernization, and productive specialization.⁴ In fact, “this statement of EC policy objectives for agriculture was unremarkable in that to a considerable degree it reflected the goals implicit in the existing agricultural policies of the constituent member states” (Ingersent, Rayer 1999:150).

The negotiations among the “six” focused on establishing a common budget, as well as on setting the terms for harmonizing prices of European products and for resolving structural disequilibria affecting agriculture. The CAP had twin anchors: the first was a market-oriented policy intended slowly to shift patterns of demand in such a way as to avoid unbalancing farmers’ incomes; the second was a structural policy meant to eventuate in the removal of obstacles to productivity and competitiveness.⁵ But these anchors had different political, budgetary and strategic components, and were based in different principles. While the market policy was based in principles of Community-wide solidarity – common prices, a common budget, and a common preference for European goods – the structural policy was based in national difference. It was, that is, shaped by the historical and geographical particularities of the agrarian and rural social forms found in each state, and was limited by what were understood as the established rules of

⁴ In 1960, there were around six million farm enterprises in the six founding countries, which supported about 20% of the working population. Small holdings predominated, the majority with less than 5 hectares. Farmers’ incomes were low. The technologies used in many regions were outdated. Infrastructure was lacking (Ingersent, Rayer 1999:151).

⁵ The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, more commonly known as the Fonds Européen d’Orientation et de Garantie Agricole (FEOGA), generates the budget for the CAP. It is divided between the Guarantee Section, focused on price and market policy, and the Guidance Section, which deals with structural measures.

competition between economic sectors within national boundaries. “In the liberal economic philosophy that inspired the CAP since its inception, direct structural supports were always suspected to alter the competitive character of the market. They were viewed as needing justification and legitimation in terms of their economic rationality” (Coulomb, 1993:183).

Though economically weakened, the agricultural sector remained politically and socially influential within each country, albeit to different degrees. The CAP measures had been conditioned by interests consolidated in earlier years, among which the grain producers stand out for their power. Various analysts emphasize that pressure from farmers, exerted through different agricultural organizations, determined that from the outset the policy of common prices took the highest price of each member country as its baseline. This provoked a general increase in prices and stimulated production.

The new conditions set by the CAP – namely an enlarged and protected market accompanied by guaranteed prices – were consistent with the economic theories dominant at the time in leaving to the market the main role in transforming agriculture. The criteria adopted and the instruments for their fulfillment were oriented toward those producers thought to be most able and inclined to apply the methods, technologies and seed that would make them competitive in the Community-wide market. The indices of growth and modernization pointed to a broadly positive performance, and announced the passage from traditional to industrial agriculture.

In practice, however, agricultural diversity, the pressure of competing interests internal to Europe, and the prevailing conceptions of development combined to make it “difficult to establish an objectively based policy of complete and homogeneous sectoral

intervention” (Fabiani 1993:45). The CAP dedicated 90% of the budget to guaranteeing prices for producers of grain, beef, dairy products, and oils, which effectively granted a considerable advantage to northern agriculture.⁶ This was the least troublesome method for obtaining consensus from the member countries (ibid.). The result was that in the 1960s and 1970s the EEC/EC achieved self-sufficiency in mass consumer goods, and accelerated structural adjustment in the primary sector.

Between 1960 and 1980, structural changes were dramatic in the EEC/EC countries.⁷ Employment in the primary sector fell from 18.2% to 7.8%, while income from agriculture fell from 11% of total income in 1958 to 3.4% in 1980. At the same time, levels of mechanization and part-time employment in agriculture doubled. The contours of agricultural enterprises altered significantly: the total number of enterprises decreased from 7.3 million to 4.7 million. Simultaneously, the percentage of enterprises with more than 20 hectares grew from 14.7% to 25%. About 5 million hectares were removed from production. Specialization was accentuated: there was a sustained increase in seed yields. Wheat, for example grew from a yield of 25 kilograms per hectare to 40 kilograms per hectare. Taken together, these changes indicate that agriculture became much more fully integrated into the overall European economy, as growth was accompanied by a greater dependency by farm enterprises on external credit, labor markets, and production inputs. Individuals working in agriculture increased their standard of living and consumed a wider range of goods. The EC achieved a strong position in the world agricultural market.

⁶ Italy was unable to negotiate a CAP better fitted to the agricultural particularities of southern Europe (Tracy 1989).

⁷ In 1973 Denmark, the United Kingdom and Ireland joined the EC.

In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, critics of the CAP countered the data trumpeted by its promoters by emphasizing the limitations and perverse effects of the measures.⁸ They stressed that the increase in production failed to result in price reductions, which meant that European citizens were doubly penalized in that they helped finance the CAP while being required to pay prices higher than those on offer in the world market. From the middle of the 1960s the costs of the CAP grew in connection with an expanding production, while demand stabilized. Unable to reduce production levels, the solution adopted by the CAP was the warehousing and destruction of surpluses and support for exports. The result was that the CAP absorbed three-quarters of the total annual EEC/EC budget (Varela 1996). If at the beginning the policy of stimulating production was easy to justify, when self-sufficiency was attained, internal and external criticisms of the policy multiplied rapidly. For example, West Germany and Britain, the largest contributors to the common budget, frequently threatened to end their participation, which would have made the CAP completely inviable.

The structural policy maintained its separate character. Certainly since the 1960s structural assistance resulted from political pressure brought to bear by the member states in the context of sectoral crises and preparation for the accession of other European states. The aim of the structural policy was to assist less competitive regions, especially if

⁸ There were numerous critics, representing different social, economic and political sensibilities, nearly always with a regional or national tenor. They expressed themselves in various modes, in diverse contexts, and could attract an expanded and heterogeneous support, depending on the strategies and questions of the moment. When the CAP was altered, critics multiplied and sometimes found ties with interest groups in Brussels. The number of Eurogroups grew from 300 in the 1970s to 3000 in 1992 (Bindi 2002:151). The general features of the criticism voiced in the 1960s, 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s differ from the general features of later criticism, which focused on the ecological and social costs of industrial agriculture, sometimes to a well-nigh hegemonic degree.

they could generate political contestation able to threaten the common project. As national political principles guided EEC/EC policy measures, the Community was committed to contributing only 25% of its budget to such measures. The remaining support was to come from the budget of each member state.

The basic rules for financing structural measures were issued in three directives published in 1972. They remained in force until 1985.⁹ Their aim was to support enterprises able to modernize, agricultural restructuring (unifying dispersed holdings, irrigation, etc.), farmers associations, the retirement of farmers over 55 years old, and the development of information systems for the rural population. Though limited by a small budget, the structural policy targeted regions and sectors with conjunctural problems or those with the most promise of fulfilling the efficiency criteria imposed on agriculture by the “second green revolution.”

Investments were not made in all regions showing signs of weakening economic and social activity. They were made, rather, where a temporary investment promised results. A justifiable structural adjustment was one that allowed a sector or region to enter and remain in the market. Some zones in the nine member states acquired the status of depressed area by virtue of the accelerated destruction of traditional production systems, the lack of infrastructure, geographical particularities, and the attraction of workers to non-traditional economic sectors, among other variables. With the exception of Ireland, however, the economic and social lineaments of regional contrast paled in comparison with the regional differences between the north and the countries of southern Europe

⁹ The content of the Structural Directives (as EEC/72/159, EEC/72/160, and EEC72/161 became known) derives in part from some of the proposals of the Mansholt Plan, presented in 1968. The Mansholt Plan was the first document with a structural conception of Community agriculture (Snyder 1987).

joining the EC in the 1980s. The 1980s brought changes with a strong impact on the orientation of the CAP. We underline three: the changing character of the world market, shifts in the agricultural geography of the EC, and a reconsiderations on the agricultural and developmental models used up to that point. Understanding the role played by these factors in the fates of southern European countries and in the 1992 revision of the CAP demands a more detailed analysis.

A) A New Phase in the World Agricultural Market

From the end of World War II to the beginning of the 1970s the U.S. led the modernization process from a hegemonic position in world agriculture. In the latter part of this period, protectionist EEC/EC agriculture saw its productivity grow considerably (labor at a rate of 6% and land at a rate of 2.5%), while consumption of food products barely grew at all. Slowly the Community's agricultural system spread to newly joining countries and became a reference point in the world agricultural and food system. This was visible in the increasing circulation of European money and agricultural goods in the world market. By the end of the 1970s, the EC had become a powerful competitor for the U.S. in essential products (grains, meat, oil seed).

In the 1980s the CAP continued operating with its established mechanisms and their inherent costs. However, both the European internal market and the world market became increasingly glutted with agricultural products. The farming and food horizon altered: European agriculture was integrated into international commerce, which came to have as its other pole the U.S. (along with Canada, Mexico, and, increasingly, the rest of

Latin America). Japan became the center of a vast, diversified, and aggressive economic area, with clear potential for agricultural expansion. With a host of resources, Australia and Oceania became serious potential competitors. This was becoming “a decidedly multipolar agro-food system, difficult to administer” (Fabiani 1993:62).

Such difficulties were obvious from the lengthy negotiations of the First Uruguay Round.¹⁰ Writers such as M. Eduarda Azevedo (1996:113) characterize the meeting as a “true ‘commercial war’ between the world’s two greatest agricultural giants: the U.S.A., largest world exporter and second-largest world importer, and the European Community, largest world importer and second-largest world exporter.” Until this meeting the characteristics and socio-economic and political pressures specific to agriculture had prompted the granting of exemptions to the sector. But now agriculture took a central role in the discussions. The basic objective was the complete liberalization of international commerce in agricultural goods. Commitment to this meant that for the negotiations to be closed the EC would need to revise the CAP. This revision was made in 1992.

B) EC Expansion to Southern Europe

In the 1980s, the EC accepted the applications for Community membership submitted by the countries of Southern Europe in the previous decade. Greece joined in 1981, while Portugal and Spain joined in 1986. Agriculture in these countries was similar to that of Ireland in failing to meet the EC criteria structuring agriculture in the other

¹⁰ The negotiations of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) began in 1986 in Punta del Este and ended in 1994 in Marrakech.

Community states. In the South, the socioeconomic weight of agriculture was relatively high (it employed 20% of the working population and represented 10% of Gross Domestic Product). The accession of the southern countries more than doubled the size of the population working in agriculture and increased the number of agricultural enterprises in Europe by more than two-thirds. “Thus enlargement must inevitably reduce both the Community’s average holding size and, by implication, the average level of farm incomes – a retrograde shift vis-à-vis the objectives of the CAP”(Ingersent, Rayer 1999:234).

In the southern countries there was a strong support for the industrialization of agriculture, and various plans meant to accelerate the process were put forth. However, natural, budgetary, social, institutional and political conditions acted to constrain the reforms designed to stimulate the changes necessary for modernization. In some regions measures (such as irrigation, mechanization, and seed improvement) helped establish more modern enterprises. This occurred in the center and south of Portugal, for example, and, above all, in Spain. Yet in vast rural regions, many of them mountainous, the most visible change remained the depopulation provoked by the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the 1960s and 70s.

In raising structural issues, the entry of the southern countries changed the terms of agricultural commerce in the Community. Each new country imported large amounts of the essential goods produced by the more senior member states, including not only grains, but also traditionally Mediterranean items – such as citrus fruit, tomatoes, olive oil and wine – produced in two of the senior states. The fact that Italy and southern France had productive systems and levels of wealth and investment more comparable to those

found in the new member states than in the states of the northern region led to protests by Italian and southern French growers. These were aimed at the fact that the financial assistance received by the new members would be much greater than their contribution to the already straitened agricultural budget. To lessen the effects of Iberian (and above all Spanish) competition, the older southern member countries promoted the adoption of measures that would protect their agricultural systems. Farmers and agro-industrial entrepreneurs in the new member countries exerted pressure of their own for special benefits and conditions. They were interested in defending the positions they had achieved within their national markets against the effects of accession while simultaneously capitalizing on Community incentives and supports.

In the middle of the 1980s, a set of measures was crafted specifically for the Mediterranean countries. Some of the measures applied to both old and new members of the EC – for example, the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMP), put in force in 1985. Structural funds were increased for Italy, Greece, and the southern portions of France, and were made available also to Portugal and Spain. The Iberian countries benefited from measures applicable to large sectors of southern agriculture approved just prior to the two countries' accession. Producer associations, various horticultural products, and controls on wine surpluses were all supported, for example. Both countries were allowed to benefit from relatively long transition periods (between 7 and 10 years), designed to secure the harmonization of prices for basic agricultural products in each country with the prices set by the CAP. In the meantime imports were limited by an “indicative import ceiling.” With the entry of the three southern countries, the EC came to embrace ecosystems that differed significantly from their northern counterparts and

also from each other. Each country harbored agrarian systems variably integrated into the market economy. Precedent required that they either be opened up to investments, and accompanying increases in efficiency, or consigned to extinction.

What were the effects of European integration on the southern countries? A shorthand response to this question can be found in the Report of the European Commission for 2000: “The member states with higher average revenues are generally those with large farm enterprises specializing either in field crops or in the more competitive sectors (pork and/or poultry, dairy products, or truck gardening). With a high number of enterprises based in mixed agriculture, or in “other permanent crops,” the southern member countries have average revenues below the mean for the EU as a whole (Comission Européenne 2002:21). In panoramic view the situation takes on lineaments closely comparable to those on view in the 1960s and 1970s. In the second part of this paper, we analyze the Portuguese case in more detail.

C) Alternatives to Industrial Agriculture and for Rural Development

During the “golden age” of European economic growth neither industry nor agriculture was preoccupied with environmental questions. This changed in the 1980s. After thirty years of involvement with machinery and chemical products, soils began to evidence significant erosion, and water quality diminished drastically. It became evident that the modernization model for agriculture followed in western Europe and by the CAP had been wasteful of both financial and natural resources.

From the end of the 1980s countless studies (many of them funded by international agencies) have drawn attention to the environmental consequences of “industrial agriculture,” and the instability caused by an exclusive reliance on non-renewable energy sources and material inputs, as well as on market-based services. These factors made supplying and controlling the productive process increasingly expensive and problematical. The criticisms of industrial agriculture put in question the rural model of development followed in western Europe.¹¹ New models of rural development gained increasing numbers of supporters. These differed from their predecessor in emphasizing that the promotion of increases in income and living standards should be based in the use of natural and social resources particular to each region. Abandoned was the emphasis on importing production methods and inputs, which entailed heavy capital investments and profound social and structural transformations. Integrated development within each region was emphasized over rigid cross-regional criteria of modernization. The reasoning was that agriculture is one of various activities that keep populations in rural spaces and stimulate other sustainable economic activities, and not necessarily the most important of these (Baptista 1993, 2001).

These are some of the factors underlying the legislative reports and regulations that strongly contributed to shifting the CAP into a new phase in the middle of the 1980s. The report *Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy* and EEC/797/85 were issued at the same time.¹² There was agreement that the CAP would be based in a more realistic program, one which accepted, for example, proposals for developing alternative

¹¹ In recent years strong critiques of the dominant model of development have been put forward by such authors as Escobar (1995) and Peet & Hardwick (1999).

¹² The report came to be known as a Green Paper for agriculture.

products and conducting research into different uses for them. Other topics with increased visibility included market equilibrium, ties between agriculture and the environment, and agriculture in disadvantaged regions.

When the Single Europe Act came into effect in 1987, social-structural measures had come to focus clearly on promoting regional development, which was viewed as necessary to European economic and social cohesion. Structural funds were increasingly distributed with attention to national necessities.¹³ Critics repeatedly emphasized the deep inequalities in the distribution of the CAP budget – with 80% of the support received by 20% of farmers – and the grave results of unequal regional development, especially in countries like Portugal, which had nearly all of its territory classified as a disadvantaged area.

In disadvantaged areas, the Commission coordinated efforts for economic and regional development and the financing thereof by drawing on different European funds ... in such a fashion as to order socio-structural policy in agriculture according to a new logic: it was no longer a matter, as it had been in the 1960s and 1970s, of integrating the agricultural sector into overall economic growth and thereby fostering the entry of an elite group of agrarian entrepreneurs into industrial markets, at both the input and output end of the sector, in the interests of conquering European and world markets; instead, the goal was to make agrarian development part of regional development and thus to convert it into one of the means for reducing regional disparities in living standards. (Coulomb 1993:189)

The CAP reform of 1992 was intended to adjust the Policy both to international market tendencies and to the expectations of all the member states. Concluded while

¹³ Much of the support for reducing regional inequalities and promoting rural development was channeled through the Structural Funds. Some action was also taken in the contexts of the Community Programs and the Community Initiatives (through the various LEADER programs, for example) (Pérez del Olmo 1999:30-35).

Portugal held the EC Presidency, the reform focused on three principles: multifunctionality, diversity, and indissociability. The first principle moved the CAP toward new functions, such as the production of goods at world market prices, the conservation of natural resources, and the integrated management of rural resources. The second principle supports agricultural systems with different technological and social-structural characteristics (above all for social, environmental and regional reasons). The last principle emphasizes that the fate of the rural and agricultural worlds depends on an integrated set of developmental measures. In following these principles, the new CAP provided not only instruments for balancing supply and demand and ending surpluses, but also greater support to the most disadvantaged regions, thereby promoting the retention of population and environmental protection. In practice these measures expanded financing to keep farmers in production and lower their production prices. The measures are also foci of intense contestation among agriculturalists (Caleiras 1999).

For some researchers and activists in the sector this reform was merely a change of discourse to fit new circumstances without substantially altering the old solutions or budgetary priorities.¹⁴ For others the reform was radical in that it strengthened the structural and developmental component of the agricultural policy, which has reduced the effects of an increased competitiveness on the part of national agricultures while keeping

¹⁴ Despite the reaffirmation in 1992 of the need to increase the budget of the Guidance Section of the FEOGA and reduce the budget of the Guarantee Section, action seems not to have been taken. For example, in 1992 Guarantee received 32.1 billion Ecus and Guidance received 2.7 billion; in 1993 Guarantee received 34.4 billion and Guidance 3.4 billion; in 1994 Guarantee received 34.8 billion, Guidance 2.6 billion; in 1995 Guarantee received 36.9 billion, Guidance 2.8 billion. In 1994 and 1995, presumably years in which the budget shift should be visible, the foundation of the social-structural policy received about 7.5% of funds earmarked for the CAP, while in the two previous years it had received 8.4% and 9.5% of those funds (Caleiras 1999:64).

the imposition of productive restrictions from creating organizational problems for the world market. It has furthermore safeguarded the means of preventing environmental degradation. These principles were reinforced by Agenda 2000.

In our view, the reforms of 1992 and 2000 changed the CAP in substantial ways. However, the changes can only be understood as radical in the context of the fundamental changes in the world market and conceptions of development taking place after the 1980s. With the reforms of the last 10 years the Agricultural Commission has sought to give the CAP the flexibility to adapt to the pressures of globalization. July's proposal for intercalary revision retains such flexibility as one of its goals.

Portugal: 15 Years of the CAP

As the preceding suggests, the division of institutional Europe into northern and southern countries has been operative with regard to agriculture (among other sectors).¹⁵ Two natural factors stand out in distinguishing North from South: scarce water and a dearth of flat land. The southern landscape is dominated by mountains of average height (with elevations between 400 and 1000 meters) and, because of low rainfall (generally less than 700 millimeters annually), by low-growing vegetation and trees adapted to dry conditions. Agriculture is dominated by fragmented and widely dispersed holdings, which stretch from the most fertile valleys into mountain ecosystems. Where traditional

¹⁵ Democratization in central and eastern Europe may well mean that the question of southern agriculture loses its spotlight on the European stage. "If up to 1989 there was significant emphasis on north-south rebalancing, since 1990 Brussels has spoken more about central and eastern Europe than the southern zone (Tamames, López 1999:343).

farming systems or recent investment allowed for the construction of irrigation infrastructure, dry crops are being replaced by intensive fruit and vegetable production. Extensive areas with no agricultural promise are left in forest.

These features have led to an interchangeable use of the phrases “Mediterranean agriculture” and “southern agriculture,” but Josefina Cruz emphasizes that they are not in fact synonymous. The first phrase stresses the role played by natural elements in the specificity of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and Greek agriculture; but, Cruz claims, “structural and political elements contribute more than natural features to the character of agriculture in the countries of southern Europe” (1993:517). Though capitalist farm enterprises imitating those predominating in northern Europe are found in the South, the zone remains the home of a high number of small- and medium-size family-operated farms with varying organizational characteristics: while some exhibit high levels of specialization and intensive links with the market, others emphasize mixed-crop production and run by people with full-time employment outside of agriculture or significant income from other economic sectors. Often a farm is based in mutually dependent crop and animal production (the latter often supported through the use of land held in common), with numerous family members producing mainly for family consumption.

The distinction between “Mediterranean” and “southern” agricultures echoes the (venerable) attempt to answer the question: are natural conditions are insuperable obstacles to the spread of industrial agriculture, or would a committed program of financial and technological investment overcome the natural constraints? The issue is to what extent indices of backwardness found in the southern countries (relatively low

levels of productivity, specialization and competitiveness, for example) stem from incapacity, and to what extent from lack of political interest in taking measures that would transform not only agriculture but also, inevitably, rural society.

In the 1980s, the decline in environmental and food quality following the implementation of the CAP-promoted agricultural model lent new facets to the old debate about the cause of backwardness.¹⁶ Instead of assessing the contribution of natural and political factors to the industrial model's lack of success, more and more authors ask if the model should be promoted, and treat the expansion of a sustainable agriculture as a viable alternative. The valorization of the environmental and social aspects of agriculture, along with the multiplication of studies focusing on the regional scale, have permitted glimpses of a dynamic small-scale agriculture that opens the classification of "backward", based in the analysis of data collected at the national level, to serious criticism.

When Portugal joined the EC, its main agricultural indices contrasted significantly with those of the other member states. The structure of landholdings was strikingly unbalanced (dominated by parcels less than 5 hectares in size and greater than 50 hectares). Agriculture made up 12% of Gross Domestic Product, and provided employment to roughly 20% of the active population. The largest segment of this population was made up of people over fifty-five years old, a large percentage of whom

¹⁶ According to a study done at the end of the 1980s by the CORINE program (cited by Cruz 1993:519), 42% of the territory of the four southern countries had elevated risks of soil erosion and more than 35% had a moderate risk. That is, only 23% of territory belonging to the southern countries presented no risk of erosion. It is thought that in Portugal 1.5 million hectares, or about 20% of national territory, was taken out of cultivation due to erosion. 20% of land in Greece is considered to have become unproductive, while more than 40% declined in productive capacity due to inappropriate agricultural practices.

were illiterate.¹⁷ Fifteen years later, agriculture has come to represent 14% of employment in the economy as a whole and 5% of Gross Domestic Product. In 2000, the European Commission assessed Portuguese agriculture in the following terms:

In Portugal, the social and economic importance of the agricultural sector is above the European average. The main problems faced by the sector constrain competitiveness and modernization. In large part they stem from the landholding structure, climatic conditions, low levels of professional training, the advanced age of farmers, and the lack of infrastructure for processing and distributing agricultural and forest products. (European Commission 2002:133)

The drastic diminution of agriculture's weight in the Portuguese economy, which began in the 1950s, endangers the survival of vast rural areas and has spurred myriad criticisms of European policy and the ability of the Portuguese government to negotiate solutions truly fitted to the realities and interests of the country. Historical analysis suggests a convergence between Portugal and its European neighbors, but most of the players involved continue to assess the trajectory of Portuguese agriculture in sweepingly negative terms. At times this assessment works to hide the fact that some crops and farmers have benefited significantly from the CAP. A brief regional analysis will clarify how the benefits have been concentrated. The three large regions to be examined are: the North Coast, with a rainy, humid climate (of the Atlantic type), and a somewhat mountainous terrain; the Northern Interior, rainy and cold in the winter, dry and hot in the summer, with a rough terrain of mountains and plateaus; and the Center and South, a

¹⁷ At the beginning of the 1990s, 58% of the heads of farming enterprises were older than fifty-five. Of these, 47% had no school diplomas, and 24% were illiterate.

zone with decidedly Mediterranean characteristics, including light, irregular rainfall, and a landscape of rolling plains.

In the North Coast one finds farms with 20 hectares or more, but the landscape is dominated by small-scale family holdings (with an average size of half a hectare). These farms are operated by individuals also working full-time in the region's myriad industries and services. "The tie between agriculture and other sectors through the labor market is the basis of the dynamic in this rural society, and explains the region's elevated population density (245 inhabitants per square kilometer, in a country where the average is 107)" (Baptista 1993:383). This tie underwrites the systems of mixed crop production that provide wine, cow's milk, beef, corn, potatoes, and wood for family consumption and sometimes for the market.

In the last fifteen years the area has seen a growth in wine monoculture oriented exclusively to the market (Wateau 1996). Ideas imparted from Brussels, both within and outside of the CAP, have contributed to increasing the regional importance of *vinho verde* (green wine). The emphasis on *vinho verde* contradicts the Portuguese policy, in place since the 1950s, of promoting North Coast milk production for the national market. Rice, with a robust production in the Vouga and Mondega river valleys since the middle of the 1900s due to irrigation projects and the restructuring of landholdings (Hespanha 1994), benefited from grain price policies in the early CAP. It is one of the crops most affected by the cuts in support phased in since 2000 and reaffirmed by the intercalary revision.

In the Northern Interior agricultural systems vary significantly, but most are based in a production mix involving wine, wheat, forest products, potatoes, fruit, olive oil, cattle and goats. Small family farmers in the area are finding it increasingly difficult to

compete with the market, and out-migration has sometimes led to the complete abandonment of farms and villages, so that at the beginning of the 1990s population density in the region was about half of the national average. More than a decade of rural development projects has failed to reverse depopulation consistently (Black 1992; Ribeiro 1997).

The disappearance of Northern Interior family farms has facilitated the realization of the CAP's objectives of reducing employment in agriculture and the amount of land under cultivation. In the demarcated wine regions along the Douro and Dão rivers, as well as in the green wine areas, EU measures promoting goods with controlled origin and quality have contributed to expanded landholdings, an increase of land under wine production, and increased mechanization in agriculture (Parkhurst 2000; Sobral 2000). Despite continuing out-migration and an unequal income distribution, these sub-regions have demonstrated great vitality in their market-oriented agriculture. The disappearance of family farms has also freed up large areas for forestation. Industrial demand for wood is high in Europe, and European measures have lent continuity to Portuguese policy, which began promoting forestation of land held privately and in common in the 1940s.

In the Center and South, the Portuguese zone with Mediterranean characteristics (above all in the Ribatejo and Alentejo), agricultural enterprises have a size and work organization that allow them to benefit from the CAP with fewer transformations. Large holdings (of greater than 200 hectares) predominate. Mechanized production has increasingly taken over from wage labor. Since the 1960s, farming has shifted in three significant ways: cultivated areas have been abandoned; extensive products such as grain, cattle, wood, olives, and wine have grown in importance; and intensive agriculture (with

increased specialization and levels of technical input) has increased, as well. Intensive agriculture, based in vegetables, fruit and rice, has been centered in the Sorraia and Sado river valleys and other parts of the Alentejo where an irrigation system planned in the 1950s has slowly been made operative.

In this zone ongoing construction of irrigation infrastructure expands the area available to intensive agriculture. The most noteworthy example is the Alqueva Dam, the first phase of which was concluded this year. It will lead to the largest artificial lake in Europe. While significant European support has been provided to cattle, wine and rice, the greatest assistance has been given to wheat. To get access to subsidies some growers have planted wheat in tracts previously abandoned due to their poor soils. Oftentimes the wheat is so poor that it has been left unharvested.

Within Portugal there are sectors, areas and producers – focused above all in market-oriented wine and wheat – clearly able to benefit from the CAP as currently formulated. Yet often the criteria for assigning benefits have excluded the great majority of Portuguese farmers. Moreover, in many cases farms given assistance have not increased their competitiveness. Assessing the first years of Portuguese membership in the EC, Fernando Oliveira Baptista argues that “contrary to the claims made by advocates of the CAP and the high functionaries responsible for applying it, successive Portuguese governments had the strength in negotiating with Brussels and adapting Brussels directives to the national context allowing them to channel a significant amount of support to smaller farms” (Baptista1993:385).

Certainly following accession small and medium farms benefited from the overall growth of the Portuguese economy, and some received European funds via a variety of

channels: they include the Special Plan for the Development of Portuguese Agriculture (for the restoration of traditional irrigation systems, the construction of rural roads, and support for livestock sanitation); compensation for CAP-induced removal of land from crop production; subsidies for sheep and goats to be run on land removed from cropping; and projects for local development under the LEADER programs. However, this assistance did not result in a substantial increase in regional income. Nearly the whole of the national territory remains classified under Objective 1 of the Plans for Regional Cohesion. The category is for regions in which the per capita Gross Domestic Product is less than 75% of the EU average.¹⁸ This classification applies to the greater part of the area in southern Europe.

Since the 1980s an extensive bibliography has grown around the question of fairness in the application of the CAP. It has been demonstrated how guaranteed prices have promoted regional inequalities and how the mechanisms favoring the largest and most efficient farm enterprises have led, via increased economic and social costs for member states, to the disappearance of local productive systems.

These studies, along with others that analyze efficiency and sustainability in connection with problems of regional fragmentation and citizens' resistance to the mechanisms of integration, have led politicians to a greater awareness of the part played by the CAP in the marginalization and depopulation of large regions.

The various organs of the EU have responded to the criticisms through documents ranging from doctrinaire tracts to programs for action. The Social-Structural Directives of 1985, the Delors Plan of 1988, and the CAP revisions of 1992 and 2000 are examples.

¹⁸ Only the Lisbon and the Tagus Valley regions, with the country's greatest concentrations of industry and services, escape this classification.

They share in common an insistence that an increase in personal income for rural populations will be achieved not by subsidizing higher levels of agricultural production, which would produce even greater surpluses, but rather by pursuing development that creates alternative sources of income: activities compatible with environmental protection such as some forms of tourism, artisanal production, or the small-scale production of quality agricultural goods. The idea is to use subsidies to transform agricultural producers into “guardians of nature.”

It is clear, however, that there have been problems fitting action to intention. Difficulties in reducing the budget for market regulation have led to a shortfall in funds for rural development in the new mode and for structural change. At the same time, the discourse on sustainable agriculture has been shadowed by ongoing support for the expansion of productivist agriculture into new spaces (Ingersent, Rayner 1999). For Josefina Cruz (1993), simultaneous support for an environmentally friendly agriculture able to compete in the free market and for non-agricultural rural development is only apparently schizophrenic. Most voices in the debate on southern Europe argue that the area is fully equipped to develop a competitive fruit- and vegetable-based agriculture, and that such an agriculture should be pursued, even if should run up against the special agreements made with the Mediterranean countries such as Morocco and Israel currently selling these products within the EU. At the same time, measures should be taken to prevent depopulation and the destruction of ecosystems in the most disadvantaged areas, and to keep the space emptied through agricultural concentration productive (through forestation and leisure industry, for example).

The aim of such ideas is avoiding the polarization between productive and supported countries stemming from the revisions of the CAP. Northern Europe is the home of agricultural enterprises able to compete on the world market and the source of essential farm products, with the exception of a few fruits and vegetables purchasable under favorable conditions from the non-European Mediterranean countries. In southern Europe a “paying farms not to farm” policy serves to contain the EU’s agricultural production, to control the CAP budget, and to secure a good negotiating position for the EU in the World Trade Organization, while simultaneously promoting environmental preservation, opening spaces to the leisure industry and fostering local artisanal production and quality agricultural goods. In this context Portuguese agriculture might abandon the idea that it could compete in the enlarged market, focusing instead entirely on the local scale and accepting that it is simply one activity among many in the development of rural spaces.

An Intercalary Reform to What End?

All member states of the European Union view reform to the CAP as necessary, but do not agree on the specifics of the alteration. After the changes of 1992 and 2000, there was further need to reformulate the CAP, placing greater de facto stress on the Guarantee Section of the FEOGA, because of the budget, the World Trade Organization’s commitment to market liberalization, and an emphasis on sustainability. Over the last few months the acceleration of EU enlargement to include the ten countries of central and eastern Europe has brought enormous pressure to bear on the current policy. The

candidate countries are comparable to Greece, Portugal and Spain at the time of their accession in having significantly larger agricultural sectors than the EU average.¹⁹ The previous reforms are not inconsistent with enlargement toward the East, and the intercalary revision presented in July can serve as preparation for the accessions.

Portuguese criticisms of Franz Fischler's July proposal fiercely challenge the necessity of reducing agricultural costs prior to the accession of the new countries. The recent demonstrations organized by Portuguese farmers' organizations contest immediate and medium-term cuts in support and call attention to the consequences of the proposal's disincentives to production.²⁰ In the few Portuguese news stories published on the subject (which fact in itself reveals a general lack of interest in the primary sector), the terms of the reform are not analyzed. Moreover, these stories generally echo the position of the Portuguese Government in representing the reform as harmful to the country.²¹ Portugal was one the seven signatories of a document discounting the criticisms made of the CAP

¹⁹ In the mid-1990s, 26.7% of the candidate countries' working population was employed in agriculture (as opposed to 5.7% in the EU). These countries have half the arable land contained by existing EU countries, an average farm income below the EU mean, and prices on average half of EU prices. The most important crops are the same as those supported by the CAP of the 15: grains, milk, fruit, vegetables, meat and wine (Conselho Económico Nacional 1997:17).

²⁰ The demonstrations were rare in attracting not only the Confederation of Portuguese Farmers, aligned with the Portuguese Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Popular Party (PP), but also the National Confederation of Farmers, aligned with the Communist Party (PCP), and even the National Representative Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and the Association of Young Farmers, the latter of which competes directly with the Confederation of Portuguese Farmers. The demonstrations took place in front of the National Assembly building and the Jean Monet Center, both in Lisbon, during the visit of the Commissioner on October 3.

²¹ The national political parties take different positions on the reform: the governing (PSD and PP) parties take a negative view, along with the PCP, while the Socialist Party (PS) views the reform as positive. Former Minister of Agriculture Capoulas Santos announced in June that the Fischler proposals would closely follow a proposed revision to the CAP his ministry had presented to the EU Agricultural Commission.

over the last years, some of which apply to the industrial agriculture promoted by the Policy.

As in other countries he visited after July, in Portugal Commissioner Fischler promised to take into account the appeals of farmers' organizations and the national government before sending the proposal into legislation (prior to the end of 2002). We believe that the alterations to be expected will not radically change the content of the proposal. Three aspects in particular call for analysis.

A) Agriculture and Rural Space

“To promote participation of European agriculture in the evolving world market, Agenda 2000 emphasized the promotion of an increased orientation to and competitiveness in both internal and external markets on the part of European agriculture” (Commission Européenne 2002:6). In combination with budget reductions, these emphases led to newly decreased price supports for grain and beef production, and to a progressive equalization of supports for oilseeds and grains, with milk subject also subject to equalization beginning in 2005. These reductions are necessary for the continuing adjustment of internal prices to prices on the world market. Farmers operating in a market protected by EU policy find them perplexing.

Projected dissolution of a certain number of farm enterprises following the removal of insulation from the world market has led to proposals for increasing direct income assistance. The aim is to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion in rural zones, which make up 80% of European space, and avoid increasing jobs in

unstable urban and industrial areas. In contrast to the pattern that prevailed through the 1980s, the emphasis now is on keeping the rural population in place. “Decreases in agricultural employment, quite sharp in earlier years, softened in the middle of the 1990s. Though the rate of decrease was stepped up in 1999 and 2000, the reduction for 2001 was less than for any year since 1993. This general tendency is explicable in part by the stabilizing effects of direct income assistance” (European Commission 2002:7).

Keeping direct assistance separate from production has resulted in myriad criticisms and divergent opinions. The Agricultural Commission’s objective is to allow farmers to respond rapidly to market stimuli without risking a serious drop in their average incomes. More important than farm production is the preservation of rural space, and farmers with occupational flexibility are best able to promote such preservation. In the literature produced by EU institutions, the natural, structural and socio-economic characteristics of agriculture in the southern countries are no longer portrayed as obstacles to be removed. Now they are viewed as basic to sustainable development in rural areas. However, both direct financial assistance and support for the production of quality goods depend on the fulfillment of a set of EU norms characterized as environmentally friendly agricultural practices even if they should collide with local practices.

B) Guaranteed Quality

“Prices are only one component of a competitive market orientation. Guaranteeing the quality of food products is at least as important” (Commission

Européenne 2002:6). In Fischler's proposal, quality is important in generating consumer trust: "Without foods of guaranteed quality there is no market" (p.7). But consumer trust is now based in a new concept of quality. In arguments for industrial agriculture, quality was the highlighted feature, and was thought to reside in the size and consistency of the goods produced. Currently, increasing numbers of Europeans reject size as a measure of quality in agricultural products, and focus their attention on what has been used to produce their food (types of fertilizers and types and amounts of preservatives, for example).

The measures announced for promoting high quality foods aim to make such foods available to everyone who can afford them. Of course, many Europeans can only afford industrial foods, priced lower due to established distribution circuits and economies of scale. We can see, then, that there are not only two types of agriculture in Europe, but also two types of European citizen: those with the purchasing power to acquire quality foods, and those without it. This divide is promoted instead of reduced by the established framework of economic globalization, which provides essential goods at lower prices than those available within Europe. If the current policy orientation continues, at some point poorer Europeans will be able to purchase only low-quality agricultural goods produced outside of Europe.

C) Member States and Citizens

Though Franz Fischler rejects the "renationalization" of the CAP advocated by some member states, his proposal effectively grants each state more ability to intervene in the preservation of its territory and the activities found there. For example, it falls to each

state to define the specific criteria of ecological sustainability, with an understanding that regional differences will be taken into account. Each state will also have a greater influence on strategies for particular agricultural goods, as Brussels will no longer determine which crops are to enjoy the greatest support. Above all, each state will be responsible for adapting the policy according to farm type and regional necessities. Funds will be transferred within a system obliged, rather than merely allowed, to modify itself dynamically.

If in fact many decisions are to be made by member states, citizens will find it easier to pressure the members of governing organs, whom they elect and can contact directly. A shift of responsibilities to the member states will also improve the image of EU institutions, which in the last years have drawn increasing criticism.

We cannot predict with any confidence exactly how Portuguese political interests will contribute to the final shape of the proposal for intercalary revision. It is likely, however, that the position taken in 1997 by the Portuguese Social and Economic Council will have an effect on the final form. The Council determined that the reduction of prices in agriculture and of the funds available through the FEOGA Guarantee Section worsened production conditions for grain and livestock, among other goods basic to Portuguese agriculture. However, Portuguese deficits in agricultural production meant that the national economy benefited from lower prices; and such benefits could be even greater if additional support were offered to agriculture and the rural world. The Council thought Portugal should keep three goals in mind with regard to the revision of the CAP, which was, recall, made in preparation for enlargement (Conselho Económico Nacional

1997: 40-41). First, it should push for making the funding reductions planned for agriculture apply more to the FEOGA Guarantee Section than to the FEOGA Guidance Section. Second, it should promote the idea that cuts in the FEOGA Guidance Section should be made more to products predominating in the agriculture of northern Europe and the candidate countries (grains and livestock, for example), even if these were also of some importance in Portuguese agriculture. “Only in this way,” the Council argued, “can deeper cuts be avoided in spending for such products as olive oil, tomatoes, and fruits, of great interest mainly to Portugal and other Mediterranean countries” (p.40). Third, it should demand that support to the FEOGA Guidance Section be organized so as to secure increases in productivity for products with the best future prospects and to facilitate the adaptation of farmers most affected by coming market transformations.

In our view, though there are risks in the current proposal for intercalary revision, the EU’s criteria for change and the instruments to be made available for this potentially offer more benefits to the economies of southern European countries than the last version of the policy. Putting special emphasis on the quality of agricultural goods may lead to a valorization of the small-scale production systems contoured by the ecological and social diversity found in these countries. Supporting small farmers and otherwise promoting local development could end the stagnation and reverse the depopulation threatening the rural parts of the South.

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