



Chair Agricultural and Food Policy
Institute for Agricultural Policy and Markets

Pre-conference session at Gewisola conference

„Repurposing agricultural subsidies” for the transformation of the food system: Scope, hope and challenges

Introductory comments by Prof. Dr. Christine Wieck

The debate of “Repurposing of subsidies” became new impetus due to recent high level publications and commitment. However, the topic is not new – but nevertheless, urgently needed.

Reforming the agricultural sectors is in Europe, at the latest since the inception of the Common Agricultural Policy, a “standing issues” in the policy debate.

But also, worldwide, political interventions in the agricultural sector have a long-standing history. Either because productivity had to be stimulated, new farmland was to be made arable, peatland and wetlands were to be drained or the distribution of food from rural to urban areas were to be improved.

Given this past experience with policy reforms, we, as agricultural economists have a long experience with policy analysis and reform debates around agriculture and agri-food systems, but we also know about slow progress, strong professional associations, lobbyism, multi-layered voices and opinions, ideologised debates, and the economic forces of the markets and globalisation. Hence, all ingredients that make the for a “wicked problem” where no simple solutions are available.

Given this background, and the urgent need to improve the performance and outcomes of the modern food systems, and the large amount of subsidies that are in the system, it is clear that the call for reform or repurposing is strong! But at the same time, some of the proposal for reform may lack the understanding of the complexities that are inherent in the food systems.

Hence, in the debate running up to this pre-conference, we thought, that it is timely not only look at the need for reform, but instead, looking at factors that make reform and repurposing so challenging. And how the complexities inherent in the system can be better addressed in the policy reform process. With this in mind, we looked for speakers who can contribute to this debate from different topical and disciplinary perspectives.



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In the first part of the conference we want to focus more on conceptual issue of repurposing and reform, and in particular why it is so challenging. In the second part, we see case study applications from different policy fields.

I want to thank the speakers already at this place for being ready to present their work and thoughts, making the commitment to join our pre-conference session here in Hohenheim, and putting up with all the preparatory work that this involves.

But what would be the best line up of speakers without an audience – and hence, I also want to thank the audience for joining, and of course all of the team of the Chair for Agricultural and Food Policy for supporting the organisation of this pre-conference.

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