

# **Farmers' attitudes towards CAP eco-schemes: A case study of Murcia, Spain**

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Eco-schemes are a new policy measure in the 2023-2027 CAP designed to support EU environmental goals. Through these schemes, farmers are subsidized for implementing a certain sustainable practice on their farm. This study is conducted in Murcia, Spain and investigates farmers' attitudes towards eco-schemes and their supported practices. First, a conceptual framework is designed to explore how certain factors identified in the literature contribute to attitude formation. Next, for context, the eco-schemes and their supported practices in Murcia are explained. The study uses a qualitative approach to measuring attitudes to address the knowledge gap of how attitudes form and why farmers hold certain attitudes. 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with farmers and local eco-scheme experts. Data are analyzed using a thematic analysis. The analysis finds that Murcian farmers' attitudes towards eco-schemes are formed largely by their perception of their profitability. While farmers in Murcia do not necessarily find the practices profitable or useful, they rely on government subsidies to sustain their livelihoods and therefore may think more positively towards schemes simply because they receive a direct payment for implementing them. Implementation of the practice prior to its subsidization contributes heavily to knowledge formation and to more positive attitudes. Farmers tend to hold the same attitudes towards eco-schemes and the associated practices as their families, but the influence of broader cultural attitudes or the attitudes of others in a farmer's network on an individual farmer's attitude is unclear. The study recommends that future eco-scheme practices be tailored to the individual regions of Spain rather than determined at a country level. It also recommends more aid in implementation, such as subsidized seeds or demonstration farms showing the practices. Finally, it recommends that future policies address other concerns in the Murcia region, including rural depopulation and financial insecurity amongst farmers.

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