

Transforming Social Security in Agriculture in Transition Countries: The Case of East Germany*)

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1 Introduction

After 1989 a process of de-collectivization and privatisation started in the agricultural sector of the Central and East European Countries (CEECs) aimed at transforming a centrally planned into a market economy. In agriculture, as in other sectors of the economy, this fundamental upheaval caused new and severe social problems. Among others, these countries had to rebuild their already existing welfare state institutions, in order to adapt them to the conditions of a market economy. Some of the main questions to be answered were:

- How to replace the old social policy systems being largely enterprise- or cooperative-based and financed by the state-budget
- How to respond to new social problems resulting from steps already taken towards a market economy - for example unemployment or poverty
- How to balance cost considerations and demands for social justice
- How to find sufficiently competent and powerful actors to perform social policy tasks

Due to the very different political social and economic situations between the CEECs different options and paths have been discussed in order to answer these questions. Four distinct policy-responses - 'total welfare abstinence', 'delay of economic reforms', 'targeting of social protection' and 'quick westernization' - have been chosen in these countries (see Goetting, 1994, S. 8). In the former GDR - now the New Federal States - the latter, i. e. a 'quick westernization' of the social security system, suggested itself. Unification with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) meant creating a special framework for transformation in the Federal States, very different from conditions within the other post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In this paper practical and political problems concerning the transformation of the social security system in agriculture of the 'old' Federal Republic of Germany to the New Federal States are discussed. The intention is to analyse the impacts of transferring this system to East Germany, especially concerning social security matters and their financial and distributive effects. Furthermore, the political determinants of policy-making in this sector in unified Germany are analysed in comparison with the situation before. Finally an outlook for social security in the agricultural sector of the CEECs is attempted by drawing lessons from the East-German experiences.

The paper is organized as follows: First, the framework for

transforming the New Federal States to a market economy and the consequences of the very special conditions of the transformation process in East-Germany are sketched. Then, the problems of transferring the social security system for the agricultural sector to the New Federal States are outlined, i. e. introducing a historically grown system developed for West-German family farms into an agricultural structure very different from that. Due to this difficult starting point different options to deal with these problems are shown. In order to discuss this topic on an empirical basis, sections 3 and 4 comprise two case studies: the transfer of health and accident insurance with the unification act in 1990 and the transfer of the old age pension scheme in 1994. Both cases represent different policy options. In order to demonstrate the interdependencies between policy, politics and polity, which policy advisers have to keep in mind for a successful guidance, these differences are tried to explain, in outlining the policy process and trying to explain its determinants. In the last section some conclusions are drawn from the East German experiences for the transformation of the social policy systems for the agricultural sectors of some CEECs.

2 East Germany as a special case

In comparison with the CEECs the transformation process in East Germany has to be dealt with as a special case. The restructuring process in East Germany differed in course, speed and perhaps also outcome from that of other centrally planned economies in transition. Firstly, because of the high speed of transforming the East German state, economy and society; secondly because of the already fixed solution, i. e. introducing the institutions of the FRG to the New Federal States, and thirdly because of the amount of West German monetary transfers to alleviate the social consequences of the economic adjustment process in the New Federal States. Only concerning the starting point - the existing institutions to provide social security and its economic environment - are the New Federal States comparable with the other former member states of COMECON.

In March 1990, four months after the opening of the intra-German border and the sector border in Berlin, the people of the GDR elected a parliament. The new government of the GDR soon decided that the GDR should be united with the FRG. In July 1990, with the treaty between the two German states, an economic, monetary and social union was created. In October 1990, with the Unification Treaty, the New Federal States joined the FRG under § 23 of the German Constitution. This implied that East Germany had to manage a complete change from a centrally planned economy to a (social) market economy within a period of less than one year. Due to the speed of transformation and the necessity of creating integrated and functioning solutions the New

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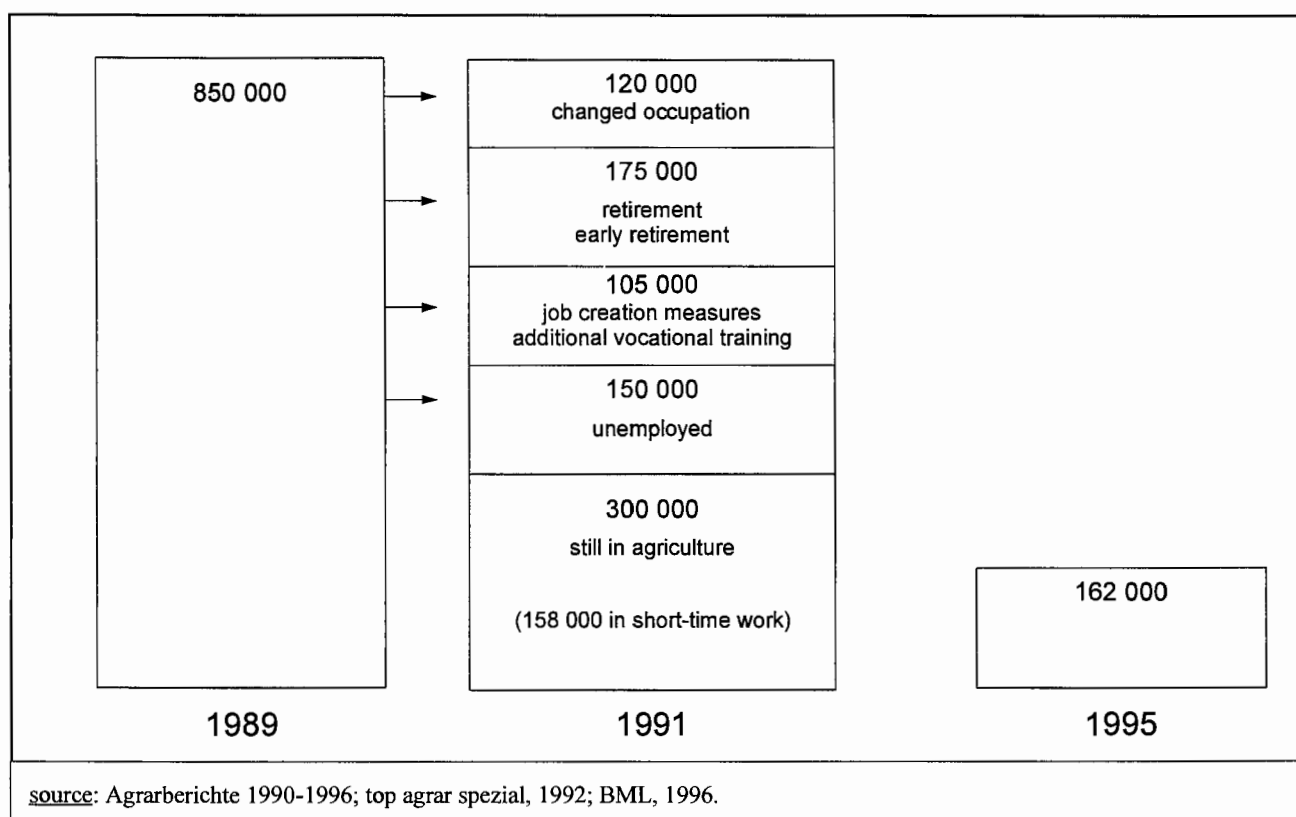


figure 1: Decrease of working population in agriculture in the New Federal States

Federal States accepted almost all of the political, social and economical principles of the FRG.

Particularly in the agricultural sector of East Germany the very rapid transition from a planned economy to a market economy led to a drastic reduction of jobs. (Fink et. al. 1994, p. 282). Due to the new conditions, the East German cooperative farms had to manage an enormous reduction of labour force in a very short period. As can be seen in figure 1 a rapid decrease in jobs in East German agriculture took place, a very difficult task especially for the cooperative farms. In 1989 about 850,000 people had been working in East German agricultural enterprises. By the end of 1991 there were still 300,000 employed persons, about 50 % of them being in short-time-work and receiving short time allowan-

table 1: Transfers to East Germany 1991-1995 (billion DM)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
transfers from federal state and länder	112	133	154,5	146,5	161,5
transfers from social security systems	43	29	24	33,5	32,5
• unemployment insurance	21,5	24,5	15,0	19,5	17,5
• old-age insurance	21,5	4,5	9,0	14,0	15,0
public transfers	155	162	178,5	180	194

source: Deutsche Bundesbank, 1996.

ces. In 1995 only 162,000 people were left working in agricultural enterprises of the New Länder. Compared with the agricultural sector in other countries of the former COMECON, this has been an extremely rapid decline of working population in the agricultural sector.

A further contrast to other CEECs in transition is that a whole string of government programmes has been adopted and contributed a lot to make this process socially acceptable. Due to massive initial financing and to a delegation of about 1000 employees from West German institutions as counselors, trainers and instructors, a functional new labour administration was soon created in the New Federal States and took effect already with the political unity (see Tegtmeier, 1993, p. 55-67). Figure 1 shows the employment status and whereabouts of persons who had lost their jobs in 1989 at the end of 1991:

- 120,000 people (14.1 %) had found another job
- 175,000 people, aged 55 years and older had retired or taken early retirement (20.6%), gaining 65 % of their last net wage for a maximum of 5 years
- 105,000 (12.4 %) were in additional vocational training, retraining or job creation measures

Especially the early retirement schemes and the job creation measures provided considerable relief for the labour market. Vocational training and retraining helped the working population to adapt to the changed demands. People becoming unemployed are entitled to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance; the latter after the claim to unemployment benefits has expired. Individual payments are on a level of 60-67 % (unemployment assistance 53-57 %) of the former earnings and are paid

for a period of up to 12 months, for older workers to up to 32 months.

It can clearly be seen that the total financial dimension behind these facts is enormous (see table 1). The transfers from the federal budget to the New Federal States amounted to 615 billion DM from 1991 to 1995; approximately 40 per cent (215 billion DM) has been spent on social policy measures, mainly for the labour market policy measures mentioned above. Additionally, contributors to the social insurance systems of the FRG were transferring another 140 billion DM to finance deficits in the New Federal States. These considerable transfer sums were caused on the one hand by the high unemployment rates in the New Federal States and on the other hand by introducing the benefit entitlement rules of the FRG (Bundesbank, 1996, p. 20f), by special early retirement schemes and minimum pensions in the New Federal States.

In this respect, the New Federal States found themselves in a unique situation which gave them a rather privileged position, facilitating and mitigating the required changes. Firstly, cost consideration was no central obstacle for social policy facing the problems of transition because of the unification with a greater and well-developed western state. Secondly, transformation was eased through the transfer of a legal system that was already functioning and written in the same language. Furthermore the relevant institutions had already know-how and experiences with the system. Therefore the consequence of this general framework of transition was that the transformation in the New Federal States meant in almost every economic sector the transfer of the West German institutions.

3 Transferring the social security system in agriculture: problems and policy options

Social security for the working population in the agricultural sector of the FRG is organized in two different systems. Farmers and their families are insured in a special system which comprises an old age pension insurance, a health insurance, a long-term care insurance and an accident insurance. The system is historically rooted (see Hagedorn, 1982; Mehl, 1997). It evolved to meet the needs for social protection of self-employed farmers and their families. With the exception of the accident insurance farm workers or employees on agricultural enterprises in the FRG can not participate in this special systems for farmers and their families. Due to different needs of social protection they are insured in the general statutory systems for all other working population. In the GDR a special system for social security in agriculture did not exist and - in terms of the social needs of the working population in agriculture - was not required (see Mehl and Hagedorn, 1993). The whole working population was part of a single social security system, covering pensions, sickness, medical care and family support altogether. There were only minor differences to the employees in other sectors of the economy.

As already mentioned the transition to a market economy meant in the case of the New Federal States adopting the institutions already in force in the 'old' FRG. The structure of agricultural enterprises in East Germany differed, however, considerably from the West German family farms and probably will remain different

table 2: Differences in benefits between the general systems and the special systems for farmers

	agricultural system	statutory system
old age/disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> partial coverage (40 years = 594,- DM old age pension in 1994 with a contribution of 219,- DM) substitute worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wage replacement benefits (40 years; average income = 1336,40 DM old age pension in 1994 with a contribution of 591,36 DM)
accident at work/ occupational disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low level of accident rents substitute worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wage replacement benefits
sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> medical care substitute worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> medical care monetary sickness benefits
source: own presentation; figures for the New Federal States		

in the future. Therefore, a sole adoption of West German institutions of social security policy for the agricultural sector in the New Federal States was problematic:

- Firstly the system had originally been set up to provide social security for self-employed farmers in West Germany. Hence it seemed questionable whether this scheme was applicable to the special situation and particular social security demands of the farm population in the New Federal States
- Secondly the agricultural social security system had become an important instrument of agricultural income policy at the national level. Since it is highly subsidised the question arose how this would influence the competitiveness between different legal forms of farm enterprises

Looking at the point of social needs, the regulations in the FRG in force before unification foresee different social security systems for self-employed farm entrepreneurs on the one side and for dependent employees in agricultural enterprises on the other (see table 2). Benefits from the accident insurance and from the old age pension scheme for wage earners and salaried employees are meant to be a wage replacement in old age or in case of a reduced earning capacity. In contrast, the level of pension and accident insurance benefits for farmers takes account of the benefits customarily provided by the family. The old age pension scheme for farmers provides only a partial coverage, which has to be augmented by private provision. Benefits in case of an accident by the agricultural accident insurance, are very low too.

Looking at the kind of benefits, it can be clearly seen, that monetary benefits will not be an adequate solution to prevent damages to the farm, if the farmer or his/her spouse gets sick or disabled. Therefore all branches of the social security system for farmers provide farm help (substitute workers) as part of the benefits in such cases, to enable the continuance of the farm. However, this is not a reasonable solution for farm workers or employees in a cooperative who instead need wage or salary replacement benefits.

Considering these differences in demand for social security and the supply offered by the different systems, it should not have been difficult to find a reasonable solution. It would have been reasonable to transfer the sectoral system of the FRG only to self-

employed farmers on newly founded or re-established family farms in the New Federal States. The working population in cooperative farms or in other enterprises in the form of corporations should have been integrated into the general statutory insurance systems for workers and employees. However, as already mentioned above, the special social security system for farmers in the FRG aimed not only at social security matters - that is to provide security in old age and to provide protection for those involved in agriculture from the financial consequences of illness, accident and invalidity. It had always been linked to structural policy and income policy objectives. This process had been stimulated by the fact that the most important area of agricultural income policy, namely market and price policy, had to be left to the European Union (EU). Hence it was replaced by the redistribution mechanisms of social policy in agriculture (Hagedorn, 1991, p. 213).

That means that the social security system for farmers is largely financed by subsidies. In 1996, agricultural social policy took about 62 %, i. e. 7 770 million DM, of the federal budget for agriculture (see Agrarbericht, 1996, p. 162). Thus, social security policy in agriculture has become one of the most important instruments of agricultural income policy at the national level. Since this special security system had been established only for self-employed farmers and their family-members, not for members and workers in corporate agricultural enterprises in the New Federal States, three policy options have been discussed for transferring social security into agriculture of the New Federal States: first a solution, that would differentiate between East and West by insuring the agricultural working population in East Germany in the statutory system, while the West-German farmers remain in their special system. Secondly, the solution of an unmodified transfer of the special system only to self-employed farmers, re-establishers of family farms and to members of partnerships whereas the working population of corporate farms were insured in the general system. Such a solution would be reasonable in terms of social security but would be complicated due to the additional objectives of the special systems for farmers in the field of structural and income policy. Since the social security contributions to the agricultural system are largely subsidised, registered cooperatives and limited corporations in the New Länder would loose out on considerable financial transfers which would only be channelled to single proprietorships and partnerships. In economic terms this means that the costs of labour would be reduced by state subsidies only for farms in single proprietorship and partnership, but not for corporate farms. Hence, political decision makers were in a dilemma: introducing the special agricultural insurance system without any significant changes in the financing system would exclude many registered cooperatives from subsidies of considerable amount. Not introducing it would create disparities between farms in the New and Old Federal States and would mean sustaining the division between the agricultural working population in both parts of Germany in social security matters. So a third policy option was to reform the system by decoupling the social security policy for agriculture from income policy objectives and reforming it using the social insurance systems for employees as a point of reference (see Mehl and Hagedorn, 1993). Now, which option has been chosen and why?

4 Introducing the social security system for agriculture into the New Federal States: Policy Outcomes

Actually the social security system in the agricultural sector of the FRG was transferred in three steps to the New Federal States. First of all with the creation of an economic, currency and social union between the two German states in June 1990, the social security system of the GDR was approximated basically to the system of the FRG. When only a few months later the treaty of unification was signed, it already contained the transfer of the agricultural health insurance (LKV) and the agricultural accident insurance (LUV) to the New Federal States. Unlike the health and accident insurance systems in agriculture the special old age pension scheme for farmers has not been introduced to the New Federal States for the time being: The working population in the agricultural sector of the New Federal States, employees and farmers, remained in the general old age pension scheme (GRV), into which the statutory old age pension scheme had been transferred in 1991. Self-employed farmers have to pay contributions oriented at the average income for the working population in the New Federal States. While farmers in West Germany are insured in the sectoral system, the general old age pension scheme continued to remain responsible for the agricultural entrepreneurs in the New Federal States. In 1994, with the act to reform the social security system in agriculture (Agrarsozialreformgesetz - ASRG 1995) the old age pension scheme in agriculture was introduced to the New Federal States and the transition of the agricultural insurance systems was completed.

4.1 Insured persons and impacts on social security

The agricultural accident insurance, like the other statutory occupational accident insurances in the FRG, is the responsibility of the employers' liability funds and therefore, accident insurance is funded by contributions of employers. This includes family farm as well as corporate enterprises. So all types of farm enterprises are covered by the agricultural system (see table 3). There are no differences between the legal forms.

In the health insurance and the old age pension schemes, however, the working population in the agricultural sector is treated in accordance to their status as self employed or employees. Whereas agricultural entrepreneurs are included into the sectoral systems, agricultural employees remain in the general statutory systems. This means: Re-establishers of family farms and entrepreneurs in partnerships are integrated into the sectoral systems; all employees in farming enterprises, i. e. managers and workers in former cooperatives or their legal successors as well as employees in family farms and partnership farms, remain in the general systems (see table 3).

As already mentioned in section 3 this was a reasonable solution in terms of the different social needs of both groups. Employees are gaining wage replacing benefits in case of old age, disability, accident at work or sickness. The benefits are depending on former earnings, in order to protect them from the financial consequences of these events and to help them keep their living standard. Benefits for self-employed farmers are fixed on a

table 3: Social insurance of the working population in the agricultural sector in the New Federal States

benefits in case of	employers self-employed farmers e.g. re-establishers of farms; members of civil partnerships (GbR)	employees e.g. members in cooperatives, farm workers
accident at work/ occupational disease	agricultural accident insurance	agricultural accident insurance
sickness	agricultural health insurance	general statutory health insurance
old age/disability	agricultural old age pension scheme	general statutory old age pension insurance
long-term care insurance	agricultural long-term care insurance	general statutory long-term care insurance

source: Mehl, 1994.

lower level and farmers can claim farm help instead of monetary benefits in all parts of the social security systems in agriculture. Benefits for farmers out of the agricultural accident insurance and old age pensions out of the agricultural old age pension scheme provide only a partial coverage, since it is supposed that farmers, like other categories of self-employed persons, have various forms of private provision, especially the traditional support by the family. For re-establishers of family farms in the New Federal States, however, it will be difficult to care for supplementary private provision in any case although re-establishers of family farms in the

New Federal States are often entitled to old age pensions by the statutory old age insurance, due to former work in a cooperative or state farm in the GDR. In accident insurance, if the earning capacity of an injured farmer is reduced by 50 per cent or more, he will be entitled to receive a supplementary pension which is financed by the federal budget. To improve the compatibility of the different systems, a couple of special regulations for insured persons in the New Federal States were adopted in order to prevent disadvantages for those farmers joining the sectoral system or leaving it (see Mehl and Hagedorn, 1994).

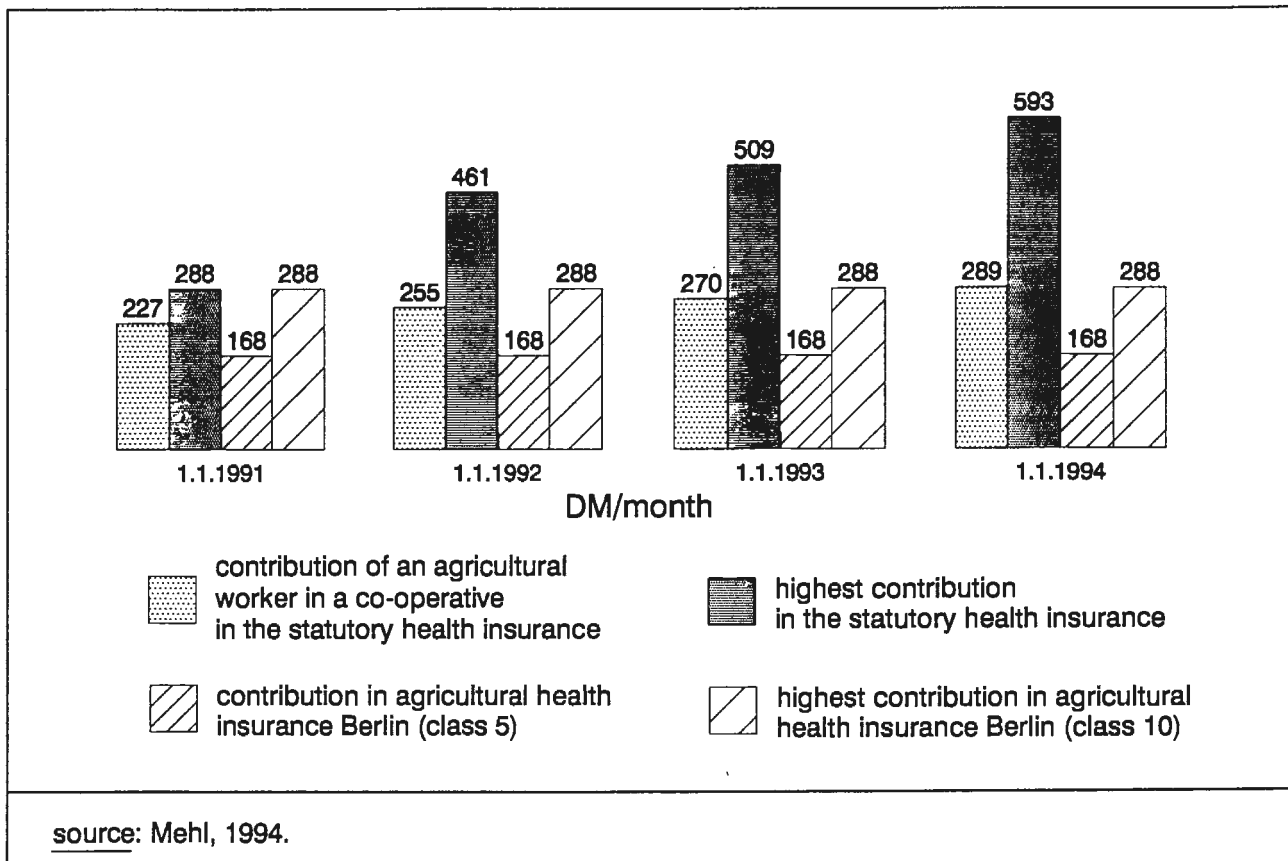


figure 2: Development of contributions in the general and in the agricultural health insurance 1991-1994

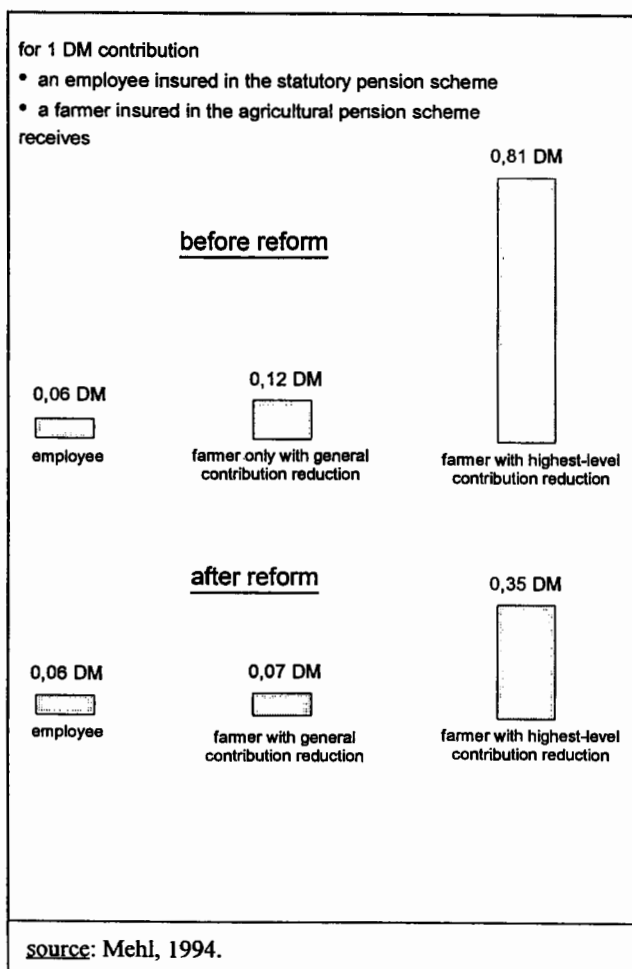


figure 3: Distributive effects of the old-age pension scheme in agriculture (1994) before and after introducing it into the New Federal States

4.2 Distributive Effects

The whole working population in the agricultural sector of the New Federal States, self-employed farmers as well as employees, is covered by the agricultural accident insurance. Hence there were no distributive advantages or disadvantages with agricultural enterprises of different legal forms. Only few debates over the regional distribution of subsidies by the federal budget took place.

In health insurance the insurance system for farmers is largely covered by state funds. Health care and other benefits to retired farmers are paid by the federal budget, not by contributors. In the general system there are no state subsidies for retired persons. Therefore employees in corporate agricultural enterprises, which are insured in the statutory health insurance system have to pay higher contributions, because this system does not get subsidies to finance benefits for retired persons. Looking at the development of contributions in the two systems between 1991 and 1994 in figure 2, it can clearly be seen, that the contributions to the general system have steadily increased while contributions to the agricultural system have remained stable. At the beginning of 1991 the highest contribution to the general and to the agricultural health insurance were on the same level. Only three years later, in

1994, the contribution to the general insurance was nearly two times higher than the highest contribution in the agricultural system. Even the contribution of a farm worker in a former state farm was higher. Given the fact that expenditures of health care for retired persons will still be covered by state funds and will increase further, the differences between the insurance systems are likely to grow further (see Mehl, 1994).

To demonstrate the distributive effects of the different old age pension schemes it has to be calculated how much pension insured persons in both systems will gain after having paid the same contribution. Since the old age pension scheme in agriculture was reformed in 1994 and at the same time introduced into the New Federal States, the relation between contributions and benefits before and after the reform are compared in figure 3. Farmers who fulfill certain conditions are entitled to a further subsidy to reduce their contribution in addition to general contribution reductions provided for all farmers insured in the farmers' old age pension scheme. Therefore three groups are compared: firstly workers insured in the statutory old age pension scheme, secondly farmers with general contribution reduction and thirdly farmers with the highest additional contribution reduction. In figure 3 the level of benefits is shown, when paying a contribution of 1 DM; the benefits are calculated for one year of payment²⁾.

The distributive effects of the two old age pension schemes are as follows:

a) Before reforming the system and introducing it into the New Federal States

- An employee insured in the statutory old age pension scheme will gain 0,06 DM for 1 DM of contribution
- a farmer insured in the farmers' old age pension scheme only with general contribution reductions, i. e. for all insured farmers, will gain 0,12 DM for 1 DM of contribution
- farmers fulfilling the conditions for graduated contribution reductions are gaining further subsidies to reduce their contributions; those with the highest level of contribution reductions will gain 0,81 DM for 1 Mark of contribution

b) After reforming and transferring the agricultural system to the New Federal States:

- An employee insured in the statutory old age pension scheme gains 0,06 DM for 1 DM of contribution
- a farmer insured in the farmers' old age pension scheme only with general contribution reductions now gains 0,07 DM for 1 DM of contribution
- farmers with the highest level of contribution reductions gain 0,35 DM for 1 DM of contribution

Comparing the distributive effects of the two old age pension schemes shows that there are still considerable advantages for the

²⁾ Comparing the benefits on the base of one year of payment follows special rules in calculating the benefits in the agricultural old age pension system before the reform (see Mehl and Hagedorn, 1992; 1993a; Mehl, 1997). The calculations in figure 3 can be explained with the following example: A worker insured in the statutory old age pension scheme paying a monthly contribution of 591,36 DM in 1994 will gain an old age pension of 1336,40 DM after 40 years of payment (see table 2). That means, 1,- DM of payment leads to an old age pension of 0,06 DM per year ($1336,40/591,36 = 0,056$).

farmers' system after introducing it within the New Federal States, but, compared with the system before 1994 there is a remarkable decrease. Furthermore after the reform, it should be noted that with the new system it should be much easier to limit the advantages of the sectoral system in the future, for example to cut the highest-level contribution reductions or to decrease the income-limits for these reductions. Unlike the drafts submitted earlier there were no long term entitlements for benefits, which could not be changed.

5 Introducing the social security system in agriculture in the New Federal States: Policy-Determination

Politicians have chosen different options in transferring the social security system for agriculture of the Old Federal States to the New Federal States. In health and accident insurance the policy-option of an unchanged transfer of the West German institutions was preferred. In the old age pension scheme the policy-option of a transfer was linked with a partial reform of the system, reducing the distributive advantages of the sectoral system.

Transferring the accident and health insurance in agriculture was part of the treaty of unification. Hence, the decision-making process was untypical for policy-making in the agricultural sector but it was, with respect to decision-making, outcome and content, typical for the policies unifying Germany: Unification meant almost without exception the unchanged transfer of the West German institutions. Additionally a rapid restructuring of the farming sector of East Germany was expected in 1990, with an increasing number of family farms as well as the fast disappearance of cooperative enterprises. This expectation proved to be wrong.

Introducing the agricultural old age pension scheme into the New Federal States proved to be much more difficult than transferring the health or accident schemes. There are three reasons for the delay:

- The farmers' old age pension scheme received a very high level of subsidies from the federal budget and provided high contribution reductions for the insured farmers
- This system was already in need of reform; reform concepts had failed to be adopted within the last ten years before unification
- Every old age pension policy has to be a long term policy: The insured persons have to trust the system, because their income after retirement is based mainly on the old age pension scheme

Within the policy-making process we have to distinguish several steps in decision-making, each of them leading to changes in policy proposals (see Mehl, 1997, p. 431ff). In a first step a working group of the governing parties in parliament made a proposal in summer 1992. This proposal comprised very attractive conditions for the insured farmers; especially benefits for the spouses of farmers with benefit entitlements on a high level without paying contributions, due to additional money in order to compensate the CAP-Reform 1992. Based on this proposal and after discussions within the government, the federal ministry of agriculture published its own proposal in September 1992. This proposal was discussed in an informal hearing with the Farmers Union and the Länder representatives. Especially those of the New Federal States opposed the proposal. They could not agree to

the unequal treatment of farms of different legal forms and to the distribution of subsidies between the Old and the New Federal States. This critic led to a moderate reduction of income transfers and of benefits for the spouses of farmers mentioned above in the official proposal of the Federal Government, submitted after nearly one year of informal discussion within the federal government, the ruling parties in Parliament and the Länder. According to the German Constitution, the agreement of the Bundesrat, the chamber of the Länder, was obligatory to pass the bill. But the German Bundesrat with its majority of Länder governed by the SPD rejected it. In order to find a politically feasible solution a "group of consent" was founded. Members of CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD and the Länder have met several times in search of a compromise - which was reached in July 1994 and was implemented in 1995. It comprised further reductions of the benefits of the bill on the one hand and the introduction of a long term guarantee of the federal state to pay the deficits of the scheme on the other hand.

Consequently, the policy content of this bill changed profoundly from the first proposal to the adopted version: From a very attractive bill for the insured farmers in 1992, widening the income transfers for self-employed farmers to the finally adopted bill, reforming the system by reducing the general contribution benefits for farmers and improving the compatibility of the different old age pension systems. In conclusion - the bill to reform the social security system in agriculture is attributed correctly as a reform and not only a transfer of West German institutions. This is true, especially in comparison with the first proposals or earlier attempts aiming to reform the agricultural old age pension scheme.

Analysing the determinants of decision-making means in most cases dealing with many variables and only a small number of cases. Within this policy field at least four groups of variables influence policy outcomes (see figure 4):

- Firstly the dynamics of policy outcomes, e.g. the relation between contributors and beneficiaries in old age pensions scheme
- secondly developments in related policy fields such as the general social policy, the common agricultural policy of the EU and the budgetary policy
- thirdly the policy network of social security policy in agriculture, i. e. actors negotiating and deciding within this policy field and their linkages
- fourthly the polity-system, i. e. the formal rules within the political system of the FRG

Obviously, answering the question which variable has determined policy outcomes to what degree is difficult. However, analysing the determinants of the reform in the old age pension scheme in agriculture might be less difficult in this case because we really do have a most similar case design: The dependent variable we are trying to explain is the reform of the old age pension scheme in agriculture in 1994. In the field of independent variables, comparing this decision-making process with others before German unification makes clear, that there were no or only minor changes in the influence of policy outcomes from the existing system and of related policy fields, and no change in polity, i. e. the formal rules in decision-making in the FRG. These comparisons show that only the policy-network has changed, i. e. the political subsystem, described by its public and private corporate actors, their

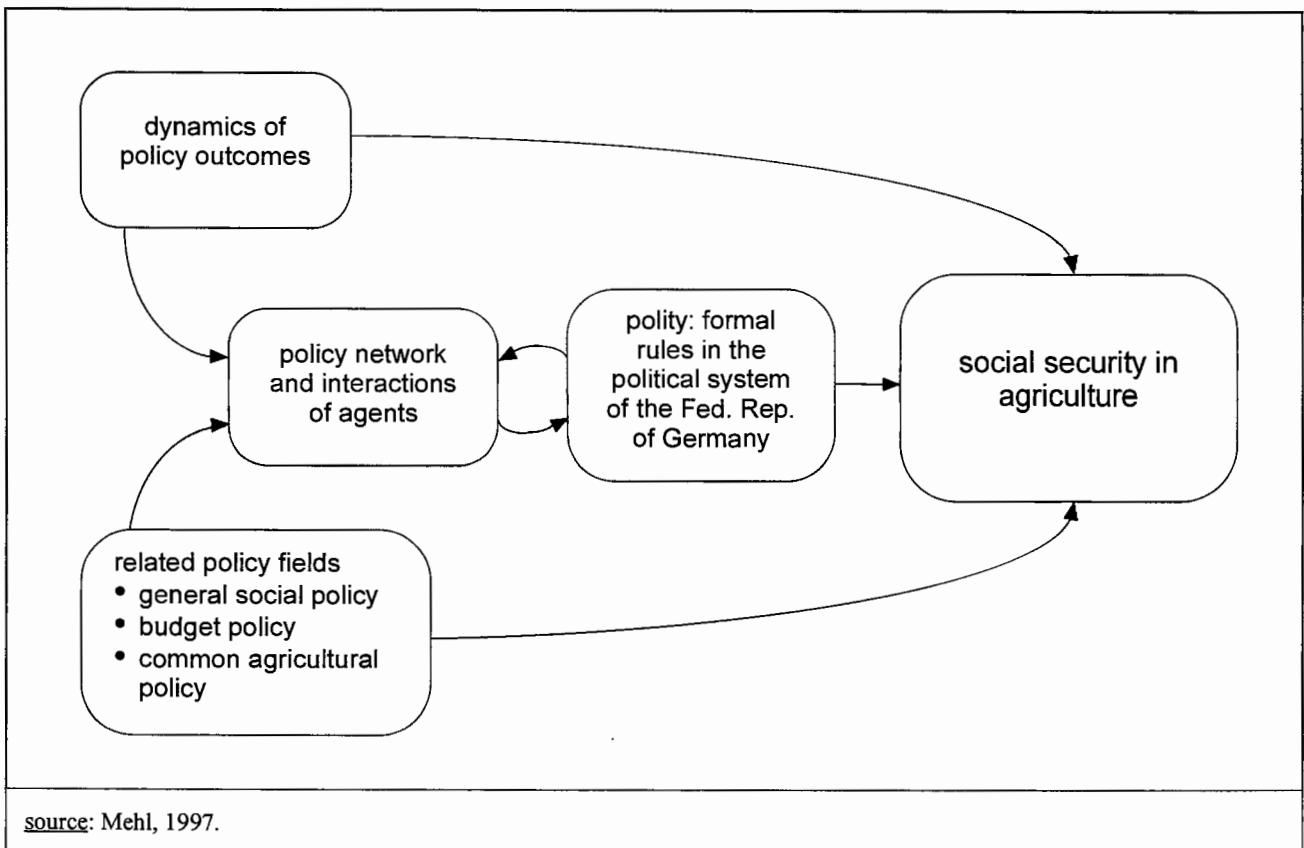


figure 4: Social security policy in agriculture and its determinants

linkages and its boundary, formulating and implementing social policy in agriculture.

Therefore explaining the difference in policy outcomes in social security policy in agriculture before and after the German unification has to focus on policy networks. Comparing the different framework before and after 1989 shows important differences which probably could explain the differences in policy outcome. Before unification social policy in the agricultural sector was highly separated from other policies. The policy network used to be small and homogenous; it looked like a triangle, comprising the parliamentary committee on agriculture, the Federal Ministry of agriculture and the German Farmers' Union as core members. As a study of policy determination between 1976 and 1990 in this policy field shows, this sectoral corporatist network was building a 'robbery coalition' seeking additional rents in the field of social policy in times of budgetary surpluses and a 'defense coalition' in defending the status quo in times of budget savings. For both forms of sectoral corporatism the influences from the CAP in the 1980s was important, because it helped to separate the policy network from other rival actors, especially from the fields of budget policy and of general social policy (see Mehl, 1997).

After German unification the main strength of this policy network, their unity against opponents from outside the sector, was weakened: The Farmers' Union had to take into account the interests of its member organizations in the New Federal States. Members of parliaments from the New Länder in the agricultural committee in the Bundestag, the German parliament, represent the interests of all agricultural enterprises in East Germany.

Agricultural ministers and governments of the New Länder too were insisting on equal treatment for all legal form of enterprises. This assistance of actors within the agricultural policy network strengthened the position of those parties in parliament opposing the proposal from the Federal government.

Especially the SPD, which had the majority in the Länder Chamber ('Bundesrat'), insisted on a equal treatment of corporate and family enterprises in agriculture, declaring the statutory old age pension scheme to be the appropriate framework for a reform of the old age pension scheme in agriculture. Political decisions in the FRG require agreement at several stages in the political system. One of the most important obstacles to a proposal in the policy process is the right of the Länder Chamber to reject decisions of the German parliament. In this case this right was used by the majority in the Bundesrat, especially those Länder where the SPD was in office to oppose the proposal of the Federal government.

This sketch of the decision-making process underlines the difficulties in analysing the determinants of a policy process and its policy outcomes. On the one hand the reform of the old age pension scheme in agriculture was strongly influenced by changes in policy network mentioned above. The political pressure demanding an equal treatment of all agricultural enterprises in social security matters will continue in the future and will probably lead to further adjustments in health insurance, if the legal forms of the enterprises continued to be an important factor. But on the other hand the policy process has proved to be path dependent and influenced by situative variables: Unlike former reform attempts in the

1980s the decision-making process started with a very favourable draft from the perspective of the insured farmers. Unlike earlier decisions farmers would have lost subsidies in a considerable amount without a decision. That is why the old core of the policy network did not oppose the reform at the beginning of the policy process and was at a later stage forced to agree to a compromise with actors from the opposition and from the New Federal States. This path-dependency and in some way contingency of the policy-process and its results make it almost impossible to draw general conclusions, in order to provide guidance as to how to manage reform processes in agricultural policy.

6 Lessons for Central and East European countries?

A social security system cannot simply be copied for another country. Due to the fact that all CEECs are undertaking or initiating reforms of their social security systems, however, these countries are in need of or do have a particular interest to find the best possible solutions for the social problems in which they are involved.

A look at social security systems in West European countries demonstrates the wide range of possibilities available for organizing social security. There is obviously more than one model of social policy compatible with a market economy. Comparing the EU-countries and their respective construction of the welfare state shows that there are very different possible solutions. Even within the EU there are at least "three worlds of social protection". First the Bismarckian social insurance model, mainly based on income transfers designed to replace earned income and to preserve status differentials by security schemes attached to class status, and occupational sector. Secondly the "universal social citizenship" model of the Scandinavian schemes, pursuing welfare state for all citizens on high standards and thirdly the "residual welfare model" of the United Kingdom, where entitlement rules are strict, benefits are typically modest and compensation through income transfers is given only in the last resort (E s p i n a, 1996, p. 185.)

In Central and East European countries too there was not one single socialist system of social security policy. There were at least three different groups: Social law of the former GDR, social law in states with a continuing national law tradition such as Poland and Hungary, and the social law of the former Soviet Union. The Bismarckian social insurance model is the dominant one throughout continental Europe. But still within the Bismarckian tradition national schemes vary considerably, as comparisons between public pension schemes of different countries in the Bismarckian tradition have shown. Hence each state has to be the subject of a separate examination. This does not, however, imply that experiences from social security in western democratic countries or the transformation process in East Germany may not be of interest to the other states undergoing transformation. Therefore the question arises, whether the transformation of the social security system in the New Federal States can serve as a model.

However, as already mentioned in section 2, the reunification of the two German states by the transfer of the New Federal States to the West German System has to be dealt as a special case. The overall circumstances, the New Federal States joining the FRG,

created a framework totally different from conditions in the CEECs. Differences in prerequisites, in available personnel and financial resources are so pronounced that a model character of the German experiences for CEECs have to be ruled out (see v. M a y d e l l, 1993, p. 340). In the words of Jan J o n c z y k, „there is neither the need nor the possibility to follow the very specific German-German case (J o n c z y k, 1993, p.40f).

Furthermore the very rapid transformation of the East-German systems of social security can be seen as a special case in German history too. Despite the fundamental political changes during the last 100 years, the development of social security policy in (West-) Germany has been characterized by a great continuity. Unlike the revolutionary changes in their political and economic systems even in the CEECs the social system proved to be relatively stable. Transformation in the sector of social security has taken an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary path and pace. Especially the difficult economic situations in many of the transformation countries made it necessary to operate the reform of the social security system step by step. This gradual approach usually meant starting from the existing structures and not rebuilding them from scratch. So, an evolutionary approach seems to be characteristic for social security policy. However, given the fact that experiments with social security systems are scarcely feasible, informing oneself about what is practised in other states before introducing a reform in social security system suggests itself (v. M a y d e l l, 1993, p. 338).

Subsequently, it may be useful to look at the social security systems of the working population in agriculture in the 15 member countries of the EU (see table 4). In all countries employees in agriculture and self-employed farmers as well are covered by comprehensive compulsory insurance schemes. But especially the insurance schemes for farmers, obligatorily insured in old age pension schemes in all states, are very heterogeneously organized:

table 4: Old age pension schemes for farmers in the member countries of the EU

special systems for farmers	general system for the whole population/ working population	system for self-employed persons
Germany	Denmark	Spain (farmers with larger enterprises)
Austria	Ireland	
France	Great Britain	Belgium
Luxembourg	Netherlands	
Italy	Portugal	
Greece	Sweden	
Spain (farmers with smaller enterprises)	Finland	

source: Winkler 1992; BMA 1996.

- In the FRG, Luxembourg, Greece, Italy, Austria, France and for farmers in Spain with small enterprises there are special agricultural systems
- in Spain (farmers with large enterprises) and Belgium farmers are included into a social security system for self-employed persons
- in 7 countries (Portugal, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Ireland) farmers are members of the general social security systems

Despite great varieties in entitlement rules, insured persons (spouses and family members working on the farm), level of benefits etc. the sectoral systems for farmers have the following in common:

- more old age pensioners than contributors
- high dependency on state subsidies
- low level of pensions
- problems of compatibility with other old age pension schemes, if a farmer decides to change occupation

Up to now only Poland has a special system of old age pensions for farmers (see Ciepłinski, 1996; Delekt, 1992). In the other CEECs, farmers as the entire working population in agriculture were insured within the general system: partly farmers have to pay the general contribution rate on their declared income, and partly can choose their contribution (above a minimum contribution). Experiences in Poland with KRUS, the agricultural social security fund, are similar to those in Western European countries with special security systems for farmers (CCET, 1995, p. 132 f).

- The pension fund increased eight-fold in 1990, because of inflation and because of an increasing number of private farmers benefitting from retirement pensions
- Pensions will be financed by more than 90 % by the national state budget
- The budget of the ministry of agriculture is largely dominated by expenditures for social security policy
- Farmers' pensions continued to be much lower than that of wage-earners (40 % 1992)

Therefore it seems very questionable whether the CEECs are well advised to implement the following proposal of the scientific board of the federal ministry of food, agriculture and forestry from the FRG: „Temporarily introducing a specific old age pension insurance for the agricultural sector is sensible, in order to promote the necessary structural change.“ (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat, 1997, p. 68.) Looking at the experiences in the FRG, in the other West-European countries with special systems for farmers and in Poland, it seems not to be a recommendable solution, at least since introducing these systems will always prove to be much easier than reforming or finishing them.

Summary

In this paper practical and political problems concerning the transformation of the social security system in agriculture of the 'old' Federal Republic of Germany to the New Federal States are discussed. The intention is to analyse the impacts of transferring this system to East Germany, especially concerning social security matters and their financial and distributive effects. Furthermore some conclusions from the East German experiences for the trans-

formation of the social policy systems for the agricultural sectors in Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) are drawn. Since insight into the interdependencies of polity, politics and policies are important for a successful guidance the political determinants of policy-making in this sector in unified Germany are examined too.

In comparison with the CEECs the transformation process in East Germany has to be dealt with as a special case. The very rapid transition from a planned economy to a market economy lead to a drastic reduction of jobs particularly in the agricultural sector of East Germany. But unlike other CEECs in transition, a whole string of government programmes has been adopted and contributed a lot to make this process socially acceptable. The transfers from the federal budget to the New Länder amounted to 615 billion DM from 1991 to 1995; approximately 40 per cent (215 billion DM) has been spent on social policy measures, mainly for the labour market policy measures. In this respect, the New Federal States found themselves in a unique situation which gave them a rather privileged position, facilitating and mitigating the required changes. A further consequence of this general framework of transition was that the transformation in the New Federal States meant in almost every economic sector the transfer of the West German institutions.

The structure of agricultural enterprises in East Germany differed, however, considerably from the West German family farms. Therefore, a sole adoption of West German institutions of social security policy for the agricultural sector in the New Federal States was problematic: On the one hand it seemed questionable whether this scheme was applicable to the special situation and particular social security demands of the farm population in the New Federal States. On the other hand the agricultural social security system in the Federal Republic of Germany had become an important instrument of agricultural income policy at the national level. Since it is highly subsidised the question arised how this would influence the competitiveness between different legal forms of farm enterprises. Hence political decision makers were in a dilemma: introducing the special agricultural insurance system without any significant changes in the financing system would exclude many registered cooperatives from subsidies of considerable amount. So an alternative policy-option was to reform the system by decoupling the social security policy for agriculture from income policy objectives and reforming it using the social insurance systems for employees as a point of reference.

Politicians have chosen different options in transferring the social security system in agriculture of the Old Federal States to the New Federal States. In health and accident insurance the policy-option of an unchanged transfer of the West German institutions was preferred. In the old age pension scheme the policy-option of a transfer was linked with a partial reform of the system, reducing the distributive advantages of the sectoral system. With the exception of the agricultural accident insurance covering all types of farm enterprises the working population in agriculture is treated in accordance to their status as self employed or employees. Whereas agricultural entrepreneurs are included into the sectoral systems, agricultural employees remain in the general statutory systems. This was a reasonable solution in terms of the different social needs of both groups. Comparing the distributive

effects of the two systems however shows, that there are still considerable advantages for the farmers' system, despite a remarkable reform of the farmer's old age pension scheme. Explaining these policy outcomes in social security policy in agriculture has to focus on changing policy networks before and after German unification. The path-dependency and in some way contingency of the policy process and its results make it almost impossible to draw general conclusions, in order to provide guidance as to how to manage reform processes in agricultural policy.

Due to the fact that all CEECs are undertaking or initiating reforms of their social security systems, however, these countries do have a particular interest to find the best possible solutions for the social problems they are involved, bearing in mind, however, that a social security system cannot simply be copied from another country. A look at social security systems in West European countries demonstrates the wide range of possibilities available for organizing social security. In Central and East European countries too there was not one single socialist system of social security policy. Hence, CEECs have to reform their own schemes due to the overall conditions and the historical backgrounds in each country. This does not, however, imply that experiences from social security in western democratic countries or the transformation process in East Germany may not be of interest to the other states undergoing transformation.

In all 15 member countries of the EU employees in agriculture and self-employed farmers as well are covered by comprehensive compulsory insurance schemes. But especially the insurance schemes for farmers, obligatorily insured in old age pension schemes in all states, are very heterogeneously organized. Partly, farmers are insured in special agricultural systems or in social security systems for self-employed persons, partly, farmers are members of the general social security systems. Despite great varieties in entitlement rules, insured persons, level of benefits etc. all sectoral systems for farmers have the following in common: more old age pensioners than contributors; a high dependency on state subsidies; a low level of pensions and problems of compatibility with other old age pension schemes, if a farmer decides to change occupation.

Up to now among the CEECs only Poland has a special system of old age pensions for farmers. In the other CEECs, farmers as well as the entire working population in agriculture were insured within the general system. Experiences in Poland with KRUS, the agricultural social security fund, are similar to those in Western European countries with special security systems for farmers. Looking at the experiences in the FRG, in the other West-European countries with special systems for farmers and in Poland, it seems not to be a recommendable solution for other CEECs to follow these examples.

Transformation sozialer Sicherungssysteme in der Landwirtschaft in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Das Beispiel Ost-Deutschland

Die Transformation der Wirtschaftsordnung in den Staaten Mittel- und Osteuropa hat nicht nur die bestehenden Systeme der sozialen Sicherung und deren Institutionen beeinträchtigt, sondern zugleich zusätzlichen Bedarf an sozialer Sicherung erzeugt, so

daß eine grundlegende Umgestaltung der bestehenden Sicherungssysteme unumgänglich war und noch ist. Dies gilt auch für den Bereich der Landwirtschaft. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht die Probleme der Umgestaltung der soziale Absicherung der in der Landwirtschaft der neuen Bundesländer Beschäftigten und die Wirkungen der getroffenen Entscheidungen. Dabei wird auch der Frage nachgegangen, ob und inwiefern die für die Neuen Länder gewählte Transformationsstrategie und ihre Zielrichtung auf die Länder Mittel- und Osteuropas Anwendung finden können. Die Untersuchung behandelt schließlich die politischen Bestimmungsgründe der Transformation des agrarsozialen Sicherungssystems in den neuen Bundesländern vor dem Hintergrund der Vorstellung, daß vermehrtes Wissen um die Zusammenhänge zwischen politischen Rahmenbedingungen und Politikergebnissen zu einer adressatenorientierteren Politikberatung beitragen kann.

Eine Betrachtung der Ausgangssituation und der zentralen Rahmenbedingungen der Transformation in den neuen Bundesländern verdeutlichen, daß sich diese erheblich von den Gegebenheiten in anderen Staaten Mittel- und Osteuropas unterscheiden. Die rasche Verwirklichung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion und die dadurch ausgelösten Anpassungsprozesse waren auf der einen Seite maßgeblich verantwortlich für einen sehr schnellen und starken Anstieg der Arbeitslosigkeit in der ostdeutschen Landwirtschaft. Auf der anderen Seite wurde die westdeutsche Arbeitslosenversicherung und Arbeitsmarktpolitik bereits mit Inkrafttreten des Einigungsvertrages in den neuen Bundesländern eingeführt und über Transfers aus den alten Bundesländer, die ein beträchtliches Ausmaß erreichten, finanziert, so daß diese Anpassungsprozesse sehr viel stärker als in anderen Staaten Mittel- und Osteuropas sozial abgedeckt werden konnten. Die ostdeutsche Sonderstellung kommt nicht allein im raschen Tempo der Umgestaltung und im Ausmaß der aufgewendeten finanziellen Mittel, sondern insbesondere in den vorgegebenen Lösungen zum Ausdruck: In nahezu allen Wirtschaftssektoren war die Einführung der in West-Deutschland geltenden institutionellen Ordnung Zielpunkt der Transformation.

Im Bereich der agrarsozialen Sicherung erwies sich die Übertragung der westdeutschen Institutionen auf die völlig anders strukturierte ostdeutsche Landwirtschaft als problembehaftet. Einerseits, weil die agrarsozialen Sicherungssysteme für die Inhaber von Familienbetrieben und deren Angehörigen konzipiert worden waren, nicht jedoch für die in der ostdeutschen Landwirtschaft dominierenden abhängig Beschäftigten; andererseits, weil die landwirtschaftlichen Sozialversicherung stets auch ein Instrument landwirtschaftlicher Einkommenspolitik waren, das durch seine Ausrichtung auf Familienbetriebe indes auf die Betriebe in Form juristischer Personen keine Anwendung finden konnte. Man hat sich für eine Lösung entschieden, die die sektorspezifischen Einrichtungen der sozialen Sicherung nur auf diejenigen landwirtschaftlichen Unternehmen des Beitrittsgebiets überträgt, die denen der alten Bundesländer entsprechen, für die diese Systeme konzipiert worden sind. Beschäftigte in anderen Unternehmensformen im Beitrittsgebiet sind hingegen den allgemeinen Systemen der sozialen Sicherung zugeordnet worden. Diese Lösung ist zweifellos einerseits sachgerecht, bedeutet aber den Ausschluß einer großen Zahl landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe von

Einkommenstransfers in beträchtlichem Ausmaß, wenn die west-deutschen Systeme unverändert in den neuen Länder eingeführt werden. Dies war im Bereich der Landwirtschaftlichen Krankenversicherung der Fall, die bereits mit dem Einigungsvertrag in Ostdeutschland übertragen wurde. Hingegen wurde die Überleitung der landwirtschaftlichen Alterssicherung 1994 mit deren Reform verknüpft, die eine deutliche Reduzierung der relativen Vorzüglichkeit der Alterssicherung der landwirtschaftlichen Unternehmer gegenüber der Alterssicherung von Arbeitnehmern enthielt. Ein Abriss der politischen Entscheidungsprozesse und der Bestimmungsgründe dieser Politikergebnisse verdeutlicht deren Kontingenz und Pfadabhängigkeit. Über diese Fälle hinausgehende, generalisierbare Ergebnisse, die zur besseren politischen Durchsetzbarkeit politischer Konzepte im Entscheidungsprozess beitragen könnten, können daraus nicht abgeleitet werden.

Gleichwohl sind die Erfahrungen mit der Transformation der sozialen Sicherungssysteme in Ost-Deutschland für die mittel- und osteuropäischen Staaten ebenso von Interesse wie die Frage nach der Organisation der agrarsozialen Sicherung in anderen Mitgliedstaaten der EU. Deren vergleichende Betrachtung zeigt eine große Heterogenität in Art, Umfang und Organisation der Absicherung der Landwirte, die indes überall pflichtversichert sind. In den Staaten, deren Landwirte in Sondersystemen versichert sind, zeigen sich dennoch Gemeinsamkeiten der Problemlagen: Alle diese Sondersysteme haben mehr Leistungsempfänger als Beitragszahler und sind demzufolge weitgehend von staatlichen Zuschüssen abhängig, ein niedriges Rentenniveau und eine häufig geringe Kompatibilität mit anderen Alterssicherungssystemen, die besonders beim Berufswechsel von Landwirten problematisch wird. Auch in Polen, dem einzigen Staat in Mittel- und Osteuropa mit einem landwirtschaftlichen Sondersystem, sind eben diese Probleme bereits aufgetreten. Insofern kann die - verschiedentlich bereits vorgeschlagene - Einführung spezieller Sicherungssysteme für Landwirte auch in den anderen Transformationsstaaten nicht als empfehlenswert gelten.

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