

Extended Abstract

Please do not add your name or affiliation

Paper/Poster Title	Food (policy) for thoughts: Drift in food policies? Case study of <i>Comunitat Valenciana</i> .
--------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Abstract prepared for presentation at the 97th Annual Conference of the Agricultural Economics Society, The University of Warwick, United Kingdom

27th – 29th March 2023

Abstract	200 words max
	<p>This research aims to shed some light on this situation by analysing the policies applied to the organic agribusiness sector in the EU. Could it be that this policy that, expressed by different national and regional governments, also wants to contribute to rural development contributes more to sustainable urban development than to sustainable rural development? Could it be that the primary beneficiaries of these subsidies and policies are large landowners and companies and not small rural producers and processors? To answer these questions, we are going to try to transfer some well-defined concepts, accepted by the literature in the field of the study of welfare policies, to the field of the study of food policies. To do so, we will first define, according to the literature, the concepts that make up this Retrenchment: drift, conversion, and layering. Accompanying the definitions with examples is used to illustrate these concepts further, to finally see their alignment with the situation of organic food policies. We will collect data on the application of organic food policies in the Valencian region, comparing the affections between rural vs urban and small landowners and small companies vs large landowners and big companies.</p>
Keywords	Food policies; Organic agriculture; Local development; Rural development, Urban planning
JEL Code	Agriculture: Agriculture policy; Food policy; Animal welfare policy. Q18. Regional Economic Activity: Growth, Development, Environmental issues, and Changes. R11. Economic development: Agriculture, Natural resources, Energy; Environment: Other primary products. O13. Economic development: Urban, Rural, Regional, and Transportation Analysis; Housing; Infrastructure. O18.

Introduction**100 – 250 words**

In Europe, the agro-industrial sector has been affected by an enormous amount of policies trying to maintain that historical and strategic sector. Despite this, the sectoral stakeholders complain in various forums about the languishing support and policies, while on the other hand, the reality that more than 31% of the 2022 EU budget is going to the CAP, being the first EU budget item not only for this year but historically. How can there be such a broad criticism of the lack of political and economic resources when, on the other hand, the largest EU budget line is earmarked for this purpose?

This research aims to shed some light on this situation by analysing the policies applied to the organic agribusiness sector in the EU. We are going to try to transfer some well-defined concepts accepted by the literature in the field of the study of welfare policies (Béland et al., 2016; Galli et al., 2020; Hacker, 2004) to the field of the study of food policies, checking whether they suffer from the same situations, which, despite having a more or less fixed and stable general structure, suffer from “Retrenchment” (Pierson, 1994).

We do this in order to fill the gap recognised in the literature itself, which argues that Retrenchment can exist in any policy, but existing studies are limited to dealing with it in policies with clear and explicit rules and not so much in policy sectors where the situation is more blurred (Hacker, 2004).

Methodology**100 – 250 words**

In order to analyse Retrenchment in food policy, we have used different qualitative methods that will allow us to argue, based on different perspectives, how there are phenomena that can be attributed to the concepts defined in the fields of welfare analysis.

The structure of this research is based on a case study for the Valencia region. This methodology has been widely used and tested by the literature on many occasions, proving to be of great use in identifying the characterisation of the processes under study by being able to answer questions such as *what?* And *how?* (Yin, 2009). For this study, different techniques and methods have been used to collect information and data on the impact of food policies. First, several informal interviews were held with the coordinators of these meetings, university researchers and other actors in the sector. Secondly, we have carried out participatory observation in the planning and design meetings of the *II Pla Valencià per a la Transició a l'Agroecològia* (II PVTA). Finally, an in-depth documentary analysis was conducted to collect secondary data, including academic publications, grey literature and different specialised websites and publications. Data has been obtained from different sources and practices to triangulate this information.

Results**100 – 250 words**

Rural sustainable development Vs. Urban sustainable development.

In answer to our first research question, do these plans help more cities' sustainable development or rural development? We can indicate that, although we have been able to make clear the bias of food policies in the political rhetoric towards rurality. We cannot assert in the same way that these policies are not helping and will, in the very near future, help cities more than rural areas.

Small farming vs large landowners.

With the difference between the average farm size per primary producer in traditional and organic farming, we can deduce that these policies are not reaching the small rural farmer as much as the large landholders. Despite these data, the political rhetoric insists that this policy aims to favour rural development and avoid depopulation through organic farming to capture an increased percentage of the production added value by the primary producers who make this choice.

Discussion and Conclusion**100 – 250 words**

We find that, although we have indeed been able to demonstrate the bias towards rurality of food policies thanks not only to the evidence that most of the primary production is located in non-urban areas but also to the political rhetoric that amalgamates the argumentation of these policies.

With the actions taken by cities, such as those shown in this paper, they will be in a position to capture even more resources than are currently available, which according to the logic discussed and argued above should be allocated, at least to a greater extent, to rural development.

Our results also show that the plots dedicated to organic primary production are, on average, more than three times larger than those dedicated to total agriculture. This situation implies that these initiatives are not reaching small producers, who, because of technical conditions such as drift pollution or because they do not see the attractiveness of changing their system, do not go organic.

Joining the total of arguments and conclusions shown in this work, we believe that these effects and situations are very similar to those already shown in the study of welfare policies that have accumulated in the literature and which can be summarised as the policy retrenchment. We can observe drift in the food policies analysed in this research because the effects of the unchanged policy are causing effects not contemplated by the policy.