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Learning in Governance

Climate Policy Integration in the European Union

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5 Learning in Policy Reform Processes: Early Greening of the Common Agricultural Policy, 1985–2003

Greening the CAP is an example of CPI over a longer time period—it dates back to the 1980s and thus offers insights into learning in policy reform processes beyond the ten-year time frame. I focus on the 2002–2003 Fischler Reform as a major policy reform that resulted from learning in the 1990s and 1980s. In the first part of the chapter, I provide an overview of the policy developments and changes in the overall sociopolitical landscape with regard to shifting public opinion on European agriculture and the beginning of greening the CAP in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the second part, I evaluate the extent to which various elements of learning influenced the 2002–2003 Fischler Reforms as the most far-reaching, yet unconventional reforms that set the CAP on a new pathway toward combining economic with environmental objectives.

Greening the Common Agricultural Policy since the 1980s and Shifts in the Sociopolitical Landscape

Greening in the 1980s and 1990s

In 1985, the concept of ecological set-aside areas and premiums for environmentally friendly practices beyond compliance was introduced on a voluntary basis when the president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, and the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Frans Andriessen, recognized the negative environmental impacts of intensive agriculture as one of the CAP's policy failures (Feindt 2010, 303). The green paper emphasized the "choice of society in favour of a 'Green Europe'" (Commission of the European Communities 1985, II; Feindt 2010). This green paper set out a number of major reform elements that the CAP followed over the next twenty-eight years.

The reform headed by the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ray MacSharry, in 1992 marks the formal introduction

of environmental considerations into the CAP (Daugbjerg 1999; Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2007). It coincided with an increasing public environmental awareness in the run-up to the 1992 Rio Earth summit (EC 25; ENGO 9) and a rising interest of green nonnational actors in agricultural policy. The green movement strongly criticized the negative environmental consequences of intensive agriculture, which prompted MacSharry to strongly emphasize farmers' crucial contribution to a vivid rural society and their central role as stewards of the environment, in an attempt to win support from the green movement (Moehler 2008, 78). The 1992 MacSharry reform responded to the environmental movement's criticism in three ways. The key aspect was a shift from encouraging intensive agriculture to supporting extensive agriculture. This included replacing price support with direct payments to farmers. Furthermore, setting aside land as a carbon sink and to support biodiversity became obligatory, which was seen as a major change in the policy paradigm (EC 21; EC 24; EC 25). Member states could reward farmers for going beyond the minimum requirements for good agricultural practices with the agri-environmental program and penalize insufficient compliance with environmental protection requirements via reducing direct payments, using the cross-compliance mechanism (Daugbjerg 2003; Moehler 2008).

In 1995, the Council requested the European Commission to propose a set of reforms that would prepare the EU for the environmental, economic, and social challenges of the twenty-first century, including the introduction of the single currency, the enlargement to more than twenty-five member states, and the reform of the CAP (Feindt 2010). This resulted in the Agenda 2000 reforms. The run-up to the Agenda 2000 reforms coincided with the Cardiff process on EPI, which also required the Agriculture Council to revise its contribution; meanwhile, the environmental outcomes of both the MacSharry reforms and the Cardiff process remained far behind these aspirations (Feindt 2010, 305).

The Agenda 2000 reform was prepared by the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Franz Fischler, and was adopted in 1999. It continued the 1988 and 1992 reform direction with the objective of making the CAP more acceptable to the average citizen and consumer via higher direct payments and further price cuts (Swinnen 2008a). The instrument of modulation served the purpose of decreasing incentives for intensive agricultural production. It allowed member states to cap the premiums paid to farmers by up to 20 percent and to redirect these funds to the new second pillar on rural development. Key aspects included the introduction of such a second pillar on Rural Development, which supplemented the direct payments to farmers in the first pillar. The second pillar also contained further

environmental measures on a voluntary basis; its overall financial volume, however, remained less than 10 percent (Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2007, 8; Feindt 2010, 305). There were interdependencies to the trade negotiations, especially as the CAP reforms facilitated the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Syrrakos 2008, 117). However, the EU's chief negotiator in the Uruguay round also emphasized that the GATT/World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations were a side effect (Pirzio-Biroli 2008) rather than a key motivation, as hypothesized by some academic contributions (e.g., Olper 2008; Swinbank and Tanner 1996; Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2007). EU internal considerations were more relevant drivers for CAP reform.

In the 1990s, the public debate shifted, as various food safety crises, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), better known as "mad cow disease," and the dioxin scandal, became a major public concern, along with an increased awareness of the need to improve standards on animal welfare (Moehler 2008). At the same time, ENGOs and consumer organizations began agricultural lobbying in Brussels and in the EU member states. This new group of actors worked closely with the media and were seen as representing wider public concerns (Nedergaard 2008). Their presence changed the policymaking dynamics, which until then had been dominated by the farm lobbies influencing their member states' ministries for agriculture within the Agriculture Council of Ministers and the DG Agri in the European Commission (Swinen 2008b, 142).

ENGOs based their criticism on scientific studies that confirmed the negative environmental effects of agricultural production and criticized its negative implications for biodiversity and cruel practices regarding farm animals (ENGO 1; ENGO 2; ENGO 3; ENGO 8; ENGO 9). They used this knowledge to build momentum and convince society and decision-makers on the national and European levels via the media, conferences, and direct discussions to take into account wider societal perspectives and to question the business-as-usual industrial agricultural production, with its negative effects on the environment and food safety:

I think certainly the NGOs shifted their positions. I think this is a very important point. It was not only about agriculture which damages the environment, but also the role that agriculture plays in terms of land management, biodiversity and so on. Certain NGOs became very strong advocates in terms of a certain type of farming. . . . Good agriculture needed to provide a service to society. (EC 25)

They worked together more intensively to "form common positions and then we go to the decision-makers with these positions, most of the time . . .

try[ing] to harmonize at least those positions also with other [environmental] organizations” (ENGO 2). This increased coordination and professionalization allowed ENGOs to form a counterbalance to the agricultural industry lobby. They articulate environmental interests by taking on the role of teachers (Bomberg 2007; Haas 2000) who educate policymakers and the public by disseminating information on the negative environmental and social effects of agricultural policy. The line between teacher and lobbyist blurs with political demands for environmental focus areas, cross-compliance, decoupling, and farm payments from agricultural production. ENGOs succeeded in influencing the European Commission to integrate these aspects into the 1992, 2000, and 2003 CAP reforms and to gradually tighten their applicability with the subsequent reforms (EC 14; EC 19; EC 24; EP 4).

A key prerequisite is that ENGOs established a high level of trust with representatives of the European Commission so that they could be trusted to safeguard confidential information and act with high integrity. The European Commission saw them as having “very convincing arguments, and they certainly have a much stronger control over public opinion, a much better support in public opinion therefore than most farmers’ organizations” (EC 24). Yet the imbalance between environmental and agricultural lobbyists involved in the CAP reforms is remarkable. Of the dozen major ENGOs represented in Brussels, only a few are involved in the CAP reform discussions deeply enough to effectively carry out lobbying work and engage with the European Commission on the technocratic level:

[It is only] a handful that are really on the fight, I am not talking about people who come to meetings and follow because they don’t add anything, they don’t, they put their logo once in a while but they don’t do any of the real footwork. (ENGO 2)

With the overproduction of the 1980s, worries regarding food security gave way to worries about food safety, especially regarding beef, pork, and chicken. Food safety became a major issue of European concern with the BSE crisis of 1996 (Moehler 2008, 79). In particular, the food scares of the late 1990s and early 2000s such as BSE and dioxin, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), foot-and-mouth disease, and the high use of antibiotics in animal feed raised questions of negative implications for human health. This sparked an interest in food production, which resulted in an increase in media reports and shifting public opinion, as well as increased consumer demand for organically produced food and higher food safety standards (Nedergaard 2008). The food scares pushed food safety and agricultural production higher on the political agenda, where it in turn influenced public

opinion and resulted in reflection processes, as food scares were “still a top priority of EU citizens. Regardless of what the CAP really had to do with these food scares, the political reaction was to put these problems at the top of the agenda” (Olper 2008, 89). The media supported a change in public opinion, giving “the impression that there is something wrong with our farming industry” (EC 24). Thus, a number of different factors opened a window of opportunity:

There was, you know, a great increase in the criticism on the CAP's impact on the environment, but also food safety and the various crises alerted people. Also, the argument about wasteful production in agriculture and . . . this idea that I think Fischler was attached to, the family farm providing a certain role in society. And I think public opinion, this idea of organic farming, and I think you also had a general criticism of the CAP as wasteful. (EC 25)

As a result, factors such as the perception that the CAP had negative environmental impacts, the increasing concerns around food safety, and the difficult relationship with EU trade interests led to the impression shared by policymakers, ENGOs, and media alike that “the CAP had lost its legitimacy among the EU public” (Swinen 2008b, 143).

Common Agricultural Policy Reforms of the 2000s

Due to the EU's enlargement process and the “partial failure of the Agenda 2000 reforms” (Olper 2008, 86), provisions for a *Mid-Term Review* in 2002–2003 were included in the Agenda 2000 decisions. Commissioner Fischler used the *Mid-Term Review* to introduce more far-reaching reforms of the CAP, which were even coined as radical by key actors and observers and facilitated by a window of opportunity (Swinen 2008a). The Fischler Reforms changed the policy instruments toward the introduction of a single payment scheme by further decoupling farm income from production (Moehler 2008, 78). Farmers were allocated payments per acre of land regardless of production (Olper 2008, 87). It also strengthened cross-compliance, as payments became conditional upon farmers' compliance with environmental and food safety rules, animal welfare regulations, and overall sound environmental practices (Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2007, 8). However, as in the previous reforms, unavoidable compromises with the member-states watered down the original proposals considerably (Swinen 2008a).

Three interest groups influenced the policy outcome of the CAP (Nedergaard 2008). ENGOs can be regarded as members of a coalition calling for ambitious and far-reaching CAP reforms. Lobbyists from the agricultural industry confirmed that their influence decreased in the 1990s and 2000s

(Industry 4; Industry 5), while ENGOs became a counterbalance to the agricultural industry's status quo coalition, which retained close links to several agriculture ministries in the member states (Nedergaard 2008). Greening and the need for reforming the CAP emerged as intrinsically motivated processes within the European Commission, which were not linked to the ENGOs' lobbying activities, but rather coincided with them.

Greening served as a convenient argument for the European Commission to justify its reform course, aimed at maintaining the CAP (ENGO 9). The European Commission's interests could be best described as a moderate reform coalition (Nedergaard 2008) with the ability to steer the reform process. When compared with the MacSharry reform in 1992, the 2000 and 2003 Fischler reforms (Feindt 2010; Nedergaard 2008; Swinnen 2008b) could be understood as a continuation in the shift toward a public-goods model (EC 21; EC 22; EC 25). Different actors questioned whether European agricultural policy should be organized through a system of subsidies and public monetary transfers at all (Nedergaard 2008). Especially finance ministers in the member states, ENGOs, social NGOs involved in developing countries, and major trade partners voiced their demands to "scrap the CAP" (ENGO 5) more or less forcefully since the 1980s (Moehler 2008; Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 104; EC 21; EC 24).

The rationale behind the unacceptability of the impact and price support model was the argument of public money for public goods, requiring strong justification why the public should subsidize a policy with negative environmental impacts that seems to benefit only a few. The key argument was, "Why waste public money when people don't do what they are supposed to do? . . . Why should we waste good public money that is so scarce to subsidize one sector out of many sectors, and at the same time they are undermining all the environmental values?" (EC 14). While the motivations and associated worldviews behind this demand were very different, ranging from market liberalization and open competition to environmental considerations in favor of the polluter pays principle, governmental actors saw this coalition's coherent demand as having had an impact on public opinion (Nedergaard 2008; Swinnen 2008b):

What is clear from opinion polls . . . throughout Europe is that citizens want a more diverse landscape, that agricultural policy should not only pay subsidies, but link these to public services. In this aspect citizens became more sensitive, on the issue that they are paying for something with taxes, the farmers can have this support, but we can expect a little in return. . . . I think the public became a little more political. (MS 4)

The coalition in favor of abandoning the CAP and introducing a new, more market-based form of agricultural policy became strong enough to convince top decision-makers that the only way to save the CAP would be to justify its existence by changing its objectives toward a public goods model. This was achieved by trying “to change the image of the European agricultural sector as a major polluter jeopardising long-term sustainability, into that of a conservationist emphasising quality, health, and sustainability” (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 103). The main instrument of choice was decoupling farm payments from the production and conditionality of the subsidy payments upon cross-compliance with environmental regulations:

Decoupling was driven by a number of different concerns, I mean; it is an idea which time had come. . . . In terms of the cross-compliance, this was once again something that was called for by environmental groups, but at the same time, it fitted into this idea that policies should be more in support of environmental expectations. (EC 25)

Corrado Pirzio-Biroli, the European Commissioner for Agriculture’s head of cabinet and key architect of the Agenda 2000 and the 2003 Fischler Reforms, pointed out the following changes in European public opinion, and thus in the sociopolitical landscape, as major drivers for pushing the CAP reform forward to increase popularity and avoid budget cuts:

- a) farmers had become a tiny minority, and farm organisations lost dynamism and clout;
- b) the widening of the EU and the proliferation of its policies against growing EU budget stringency had increased the competition for funds within both the Commission and the Council, as well as within the European Parliament;
- c) the image of the farmer, large and small, had become that of a polluter, although this was not directly because of the CAP, but because of the industrialisation of agriculture, which the CAP had entertained; and
- d) the CAP no longer had the votes to continue the status quo. (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 102)

Thus, the motivation to introduce greening objectives into the CAP can be seen both from an environmental perspective and as a tactical move in response to, or at least in anticipation of, perceived changes in public opinion to further tolerate its continued existence. A representative of the agricultural industry concluded on the motives for introducing environmental objectives that these resulted

more out of necessity than design. . . . The Fischler Reform in 2003 again was out of necessity to ensure that if you had a decoupled payment, it would have to be

attached to something which meant that this concept of cross-compliance was introduced . . . , that opened really the door for a wide discussion about the role of the CAP into the great environmental benefits, and of course you've got a very vocal environmental lobby led by Bird Life International in particular, but [World Wildlife Fund], Friends of the Earth, and other organizations who were all trying to ensure that more public money is spent on environmental causes and the CAP is a big source of public money at European levels. . . . Our hope is that we can ensure that it's delivered in a way that doesn't compromise the competitiveness of farming businesses. (Industry 7)

Policy change in the CAP was a result of shifts in the sociopolitical landscape throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. ENGOs emerged as a counterbalance to the agricultural industry. The food scares of the 1990s and subsequent shifts in public opinion were articulated via the media, which in turn influenced how politicians and high-level civil servants perceived public acceptance of the CAP. This opened windows of opportunity for policymakers to reflect on the CAP and reconsider the most criticized elements, in terms of both detailed policy instruments and the wider goals and objectives of the policy. Such changes in the sociopolitical landscape can be drivers of policy change. The wider public (i.e., voters), politicians, civil society, and representatives of interest groups influenced the key actors. The media was a key intermediary between civil society and politicians, as it conveyed messages that were frequently framed by interest groups.

Learning on the Individual Level

The shifts in the sociopolitical landscape since the 1980s resulted in a continuous reform process and opportunities for individuals in the European Commission and the wider European policymaking community to justify greening. These changes can be regarded as a driver for learning, but not as learning itself. Factual learning among decision-makers occurs when individuals reflect on an input such as new information, and their expertise increases as a result. Experiential learning occurs when an individual reflects on being involved in a policy field, and thus accumulates working experience or learns how to maneuver the political process to influence policymaking. The most obvious learning on the individual level is experiential learning among those involved in policymaking. It occurs as soon as policymakers reflect on their experience and learn by doing (see chapter 2).

This section examines the extent to which individuals learned in CAP reform processes between 1985 and 2003, with a focus on Fischler reforms. Learning is measured as a change in knowledge, experience, and/or beliefs

at the time of the policy outcome compared to when the actor became involved with the policy.

Learning among Key Actors in the European Commission

Factual and constructivist learning remained incremental in the European Commission due to high levels of existing knowledge and formed beliefs. Civil servants in both the DG Agri and in the European Commissioner's cabinet had very high expertise in their field and usually more than ten years of experience working on CAP reforms. Especially the policy subfield of agricultural policy, and the CAP in particular, have been a domain of specialization that encouraged a close-knit network of experts. Almost all individuals involved in the close decision-making circles studied agricultural economics or agronomy and frequently held PhDs and postdoctoral qualifications in agricultural economics or related fields. Furthermore, several of them were farmers themselves or grew up on farms, so they were also familiar with the situation on the ground, at least in their home countries (e.g., EC 20; EC 21; EC 22; EC 24; EC 25). Thus, they closely reflected on new input that they were presented by external experts, stakeholders, and interest groups from a peer-reviewer perspective, and also constantly asked how the information was relevant to their immediate task of CAP reform (EC 14; EC 16; EC 21; EC 23; EC 24; EC 25).

European Commissioner Fischler as Policy Entrepreneur:

The Fischler Reform

Franz Fischler is frequently portrayed as an outstanding example of a policy entrepreneur who acted as a key architect by using various negotiation strategies and tactics to ensure the success of "his" reforms—the Agenda 2000 reform and the 2003 *Mid-Term Review*, which is widely known as the Fischler Reform (Feindt 2010; Nedergaard 2008; Swinnen 2008a). Through policy entrepreneurial activities and carefully controlling what and how much information the Council of Agricultural Ministers was provided prior to the negotiations, Commissioner Fischler controlled the policy process:

Throughout all of the reform talks, Council reluctance had been addressed by Fischler and a "green team" with one spokesman for each member state drawn from the cabinet and the DG for Agriculture informing the relevant stakeholders and public opinion. Fischler and his staff went on the offensive, participating in literally hundreds of conferences and in interviews by all sorts of national and regional media, as well as through contacts with nongovernmental organizations. The aim was to let reluctant ministers realize that society at large demanded a less

bureaucratic and more environmentally-friendly agricultural policy, and a shift from market-distorting support towards rural conservation and renewal. (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 108)

A member of Fischler's team commented on the Commission's reaction to their drafting process by pointing out Fischler's strategic role in avoiding large controversies within the European Commission:

The first thing to say is that the reform was prepared, I would not say in secret, but certainly . . . it was prepared in a very smooth, quiet way. . . . Now, I think in terms of the Commission, it played out in the process quite well in relation to the main actors involved. DG Environment had been doing communications on environmental integration and internalization of externalities and so on, I think the approach that was taken was very well in line with that, and I think there was a good working relationship with DG Environment and DG Trade. . . . Clearly, in relation to trade and cross compliance, there were many different DGs who saw different issues they were concerned about, reflected in the regulatory framework, but certainly there was not a big battle, it was a reform that had broad support, but I think this was also down to Fischler, who had a very strong role in the Commission. (EC 25)

Fischler had a reputation as reformer. He was an agricultural economist who had been a long-serving Austrian minister for agriculture and negotiated Austria's accession to the EU. He had extensive expertise on agricultural policy, and by his second term of office, he had considerable experience in negotiating CAP reforms (EC 25; Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 102). To avoid early opposition from the status quo coalition, Fischler prepared the 2003 *Mid-Term Review* in a close-knit team of six experts that included his head of cabinet, Pirzio-Biroli, a member of his cabinet, and three experts from DG Agri.

Fischler managed to gain a unanimous vote among the European Commissioners in favor of his proposal before the agriculture ministers from the member-states, who were predominantly opposed to the proposal and had time to regroup and prepare their counterarguments (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 106). Before the vote of the Council, Fischler made a deal with British prime minister Tony Blair to convince Spain to withdraw from the blocking minority of reform-critical countries, which was led by French president Jacques Chirac, who had played a key role in watering down the Agenda 2000 CAP reform and had tried to prevent Fischler from being reelected for a second term as European Commissioner for Agriculture (Pirzio-Biroli 2008; Syrrakos 2008; Swinnen 2008b). Fischler used policy-entrepreneurial negotiation tactics and his own expertise to push his reform proposal through the Council against strong French opposition:

On the 26th of June 2003, during the last night of negotiations in Luxembourg, the commissioner refused any suggestion of a further postponement, because he feared the creation of a new blocking minority (for example, with Italy replacing Spain). . . . During the last night “finish,” all experts were asked to leave the negotiating room, while ministers were asked to stay there without interruption, and it was made clear that no more written compromise papers would be tabled by the Greek presidency and Commission until an agreement was in sight. This allowed Fischler to submit his personal compromise proposals on all outstanding issues orally, such that they could not be leaked to capitals, and to ask for oral ministerial reactions on the spot: “yes or no, and if no, why not.” (Pirzio-Biroli, 2008, 107)

This strategy was possible only because Fischler possessed the necessary expertise to defend the proposal himself. He gave himself a negotiating advantage by blocking off the agricultural minister’s contact to the capitals, because their staff could have provided them with arguments and expert knowledge. He was also at an advantage because the agricultural ministers had not been in the loop during the drafting process of the CAP proposal, what would have allowed them the necessary time to prepare counterarguments and corresponding studies (Swinnen 2008a). A major factor for the successful adoption of the 2003 Fischler Reform was Fischler taking on the role of a policy entrepreneur with strong beliefs (in his case, he advocated that the CAP needed to be saved via greening reforms; Pirzio-Biroli 2008) and who used all available strategies to steer the political negotiations toward a desired policy outcome that is in line with deeper and policy design beliefs:

Fischler has been portrayed by both supporters and detractors as admirably indefatigable, persuasive and possessing a mind that understood every technical detail while forgetting nothing, sheer lasting power (while in this case seemingly necessary) was certainly not sufficient to get the measure passed in the Council. (Syrrakos 2008, 123)

A key environmental lobbyist also confirmed Fischler’s key role in integrating greening objectives into the institutional machinery:

I think a lot had to do with Fischler himself. . . . I think he was just an influential person generally. . . . [Countries] may send politically expedient choices but not necessarily people with big personalities and big ideas and Fischler over the last twenty years has been one of those people, and we saw that too because he was responsible for the fisheries reform in 2002, and although that didn’t have as much promise as we hoped at the time, it was still a pretty important greening process officially and Austria’s not well known for its fishing fleet, so it’s evidence again of somebody who just has passion and that’s the people around as well in his cabinet. (ENGO 9)

While the changing sociopolitical landscape opened a window of opportunity for Fischler to propose his ambitious *Mid-Term Review*, it was not the decisive motivating factor:

Fischler was extremely involved, and he was a very active Commissioner. I remember in terms of the communication [i.e., the legislative proposal], well I mean he was right into it and he didn't delegate to this Cabinet. . . . He was certainly the guiding force in the reinforcement of agri-environment, on decoupling, and I think on cross-compliance, he was very active. . . . He was always somebody who was very involved in the detail, but I think this is part of his background, he was a specialist, he understood it all. And the second thing is he was not only a "technician," he had a very strong political sense. . . . It was very much his reform. It was "the Fischler Reform." I remember, the communication went through 20 drafts, and most of the drafts we discussed with him, so you see he made the investment. I think he had his ideas, and politicians are politicians. I think his reform was successful because the circumstances were favorable. (EC 25)

In conclusion, active involvement in the Fischler reforms at the European Commission was limited to Fischler and his small team of dedicated agricultural experts, who had engaged in factual learning about agriculture for decades before the late 1990s and early 2000s. Fischler and his team reflected on their experiences during the Agenda 2000 reforms and adapted their behavior by limiting information on the policy reform proposals to a very small circle of experts. While these experts engaged only in very incremental factual learning, with no detectable change in deeper, policy design, or policy detail beliefs, they used policy entrepreneurial strategies to achieve policy change via conventional bargaining strategies without teaching other actors, and thus allowing a learning process to take place among the member states or other actors in the European Commission.

Separating Learning from the Negotiation Position

It is important to differentiate between additional knowledge, experience, or changes in beliefs and changes in official negotiation positions—the former points toward learning and the latter toward other explanations for policy change. These two aspects can be easily confused when changes in negotiation positions or any involvement of coalitions in the policy process is regarded as learning. There is the risk that analyses fail to acknowledge that learning can occur even though there has not been a detectable change in negotiation positions, or that negotiation positions can change without any learning, but rather due to other explanations. An individual can reflect on new input, gain new knowledge and experience, and even change underlying beliefs. Whether this is transmitted to a change in the

negotiation position (i.e., the position of the organization that the individual represents) depends on many political factors that are at least partly beyond the individual's control:

It's very difficult for one person in a realm like mine [to change positions, but] you can feed back [to your home country] on these sorts of things and send back reports and point to people. . . . It could be someone from another member state doing the same thing, sending it back to their capital saying, "This is interesting. Does this mean that we might change our position on this?" You're likely to hit some sort of machine, which, if it doesn't agree with what you say, then your idea's not going to get very far. I think there are probably influential people who you can target and if you persuade them, you're more likely to be persuasive overall. (MS 9)

Learning on the individual level can occur without changes in the negotiation position, as this requires a multitude of beneficial circumstances including active policy entrepreneurs who successfully use windows of opportunity to convince others that changing a position to reflect previous learning is in the organization's interest (i.e., it is in line with its existing deep core and deeper beliefs), and that it is possible for the organization to adapt its official negotiation position without negative political consequences in the short term:

But it was with regard to sustainability, because ministers tend to have a short-term view related to the likely duration of their office and therefore seek to minimize difficulties for their constituencies in order to enhance their staying power and hand over the hottest potatoes to their successors. (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 102)

Defensive avoidance (Janis and Mann 1977) is the second factor (after political interests) that explains why individuals, and subsequently their organizations, frequently cannot change their negotiation position, although they may have learned. This occurred in the Fischler Reform with regard to the member states and agricultural industry. Defensive avoidance means ignoring evidence that is not in line with an individual's or organization's deeper beliefs. This was especially the case with representatives of the status quo interest group that represented the agricultural industries' interests and aimed to preserve the CAP in its traditional form, with as little conditionality of payments upon greening and bureaucracy as possible. In particular, the lobbyists of the agricultural interest groups and representatives of several member states emphasized the importance of the CAP as an instrument of income support to farmers, food security, and affordable food prices for consumers.

It is important to recognize that these individuals had to represent their employer's position, regardless of their personal point of view. Thus, it is not possible to determine whether their personal opinion and beliefs regarding

greening changed, and therefore whether these individuals engaged in constructivist learning, as this may have been obscured by loyalty to their employer's interests that prevented changes in their negotiation position:

Because people believe or do not care about the evidence depending on their mind-set and you see it with . . . I mean the people whose job is based on not understanding the evidence will never understand it. You see it with the farm lobby and various decision-makers that are controlled by the farm lobby. There is no amount of scientific evidence that you could ever present; it will not make any difference. Because, you know, if you are paid by people whose interest it is to do "A," you can get all the published literature in the world showing that "A" is bad, they will just keep saying that "no, it's good." Or try to find their own evidence or twist the interpretation in order to say "but yes, that is only because you are looking at the bigger scheme." Yes, there are many ways to justify the unjustifiable. (ENGO 3)

Over the past thirty years, the farmers' associations strongly defended the status quo of production-based support in the CAP and displayed a "massive opposition to reform" (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 102). They formed their own coalition (Nedergaard 2008), which was based on a "strong survival instinct of national ministers for agriculture and . . . scepticism in Mediterranean countries" (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 102). Farmers' associations tried to keep their policy design and policy detail beliefs aligned with their deeper belief about the necessity to protect European agriculture from international competition and to focus primarily on food security and agriculture as an industry that was already facing tough conditions (ENGO 2; Industry 1; Industry 5) and too much regulation, so the additional so-called green tape of cross-compliance with environmental measures in the first pillar would cripple their competitiveness (MS 4).

However, a change can be identified in the rhetoric used by representatives of farm associations, such as Copa-Cogeca, the largest farming association that predominantly represents the interests of intensive farming and industrial production (ENGO 3; Industry 4; Industry 5). Given the overall consensus of policymakers that in order to save the CAP, it needed to be reformed to reflect a public goods model, and the status quo coalition needed to move and acknowledge the overall societal consensus. The head of the Agriculture Cabinet at the European Commission pointed out that a few years after the Fischler Reform, "the farm organisations in Europe today admit that the Fischler reforms saved the CAP for the time being, and recognise that if Fischler had given in to Chirac's request to postpone reforms until after the WTO round, this could have meant the end of the CAP as we know it" (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 108). The agriculture industry also recognized

that its influence diminished due to the counterbalance provided by the ENGOs:

I think it's been a gradual process quite honestly. I mean [the environmental NGOs have] . . . been there for a quite a long time and . . . always been quite vocal, but obviously the environment issue generally has taken more precedence in all debates, has grown in that way, so I think the power of the environment is all there. Their influence has increased quite dramatically I would say. (Industry 5)

Thus, the overall political negotiation position of the farm lobby has changed to accommodate the perceived sociopolitical consensus for a public goods model of the CAP, but they maintained their original position within that new policy framework. They still tried to minimize the regulatory burden for farmers in the form of environmental measures (MS 3; Industry 4; Industry 5), but they recognized that they needed to change their rhetoric toward a green growth argument in order to remain relevant in the changed policymaking climate, which attached greater importance to public goods and greening (Industry 5). A key strategy was not trying to change member states' positions, but to reframe the language to allow sufficient flexibility for them to interpret the negotiation outcome in a way favorable to the agricultural industry:

The best way of approaching . . . [member states] is actually to adopt the wording the opposition is using in a way that can be accommodated. I mean, a good example is on something like decoupled support payments, where we fundamentally would oppose the decoupled support payments, whereas a lot of the member states really like them, they want to keep them, and I think by process of negotiation, you arrive at the recognition that to some extent some flexibility is allowed, but within the language, you try to promote the positives around a decoupled support system as well and ultimately you accommodate both our interest and their interest. It's not quite negotiation because you know, actually trading concessions [with] each other, you just actually adapt to the language in a way that can accommodate different interests. (Industry 7)

Yet there was no evidence pointing toward a change in the agriculture industries' beliefs. In consequence, farmers' associations and member states in the status quo coalition adapted their political negotiation position to the overall framing of agriculture brought about by shifts in the sociopolitical landscape, but it was not possible to determine whether they engaged in constructivist learning, as they had to represent their employer's official position. It can be concluded, however, that none of the individual learning experiences was sufficiently strong to enable or even motivate individuals to diverge from their employer's position in the research interviews or to report on their

attempt to change their employer's official position. Therefore, it remains difficult to pinpoint learning in the case of the status quo coalition. Changes to the organization's positions were predominantly rhetoric and could be classified as lip service (Koch and Lindenthal, 2011). An additional reason is that the individuals representing lobbying groups or member states lacked the political power within their own organizations to bring about a detectable change in the organizations' official negotiation position, even if they had engaged in constructivist learning.

Any changes that occurred in the rhetoric of farm organizations served to protect the unchanged deeper beliefs of maintaining the status quo and related political objectives. Their primary motivation was to remain "at the negotiation table" (Industry 5) and not drift into opposition. They aimed to avoid being marginalized, recognizing that "if you take a view where you don't care about it or you give the impression you don't care about the environment, then you're going to be out of the debate" (Industry 5). The agricultural industry maintained their deeper and policy design beliefs within the new framing of the CAP as a public goods model. Even the policy detail beliefs regarding technicalities such as instrument design did not change, as they were still trying to maintain the status quo as far as possible or even to reverse previous greening achievements (ENGO 3; ENGO 9; EP 3; EP 8).

Overall, however, there were indications that DG Agri and a high number of individuals within DG Agri in particular changed their perspective on greening based on an increased exposure to debates on greening measures:

DG Agri, when I started, they were totally in favor of farm interests and not green at all; now it's a more mixed picture, and some see it as a way to protect their budget. Quite a lot of them are seeing it instrumentally. But some of them are also asking for more green arguments to support their positions. So yes, there is really a two-way trust relationship. It's about trust; this is where relationships are incredibly important, if you don't trust that person, you don't share that information. (ENGO 5)

Links between Learning on the Individual and Organizational Levels

The key forum for learning to be transmitted from the individual level to the organizational level are committee meetings and other opportunities for exchanging views, forming common positions, and attempting to convince the other side of one's proposal. In the Fischler CAP reforms, there are several areas where learning on the organizational level occurred. It included forming a common point of view among individuals working

within one unit or directorate within DG Agri or between the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development and the DG. It furthermore refers to potential changes in knowledge, experience, and beliefs resulting from the interaction between representatives of the European Commission and the Council, as well as nonnational stakeholder groups such as the ENGOs or lobbying organizations of the agricultural industry.

Factual (and especially experiential) learning can be transferred from the individual to the organization and result in changed goals when the previous goal is judged to be inadequate. Constructivist learning on the organizational level would be evidenced by changes in the negotiation position of a governmental or NGO as the result of a change in beliefs, particularly normative beliefs related to an overall policy objective or the design of a specific policy instrument. The prerequisite is that the organization reflected on new input; for example, "those colleagues [of the European Commission] who are working on relevant aspects prepare and sometimes participate in the Council working groups. . . . It results in a constant reflection process in which we reconsider whether the proposal is realistic" (EC 22).

Learning on the Organizational Level

A key aspect of learning on the organizational level is whether policymakers in the European Commission reflected on the information that a sociopolitical consensus has been formed in favor of CAP reform toward a public-goods model, given that integrating environmental considerations was "an insight that occurred and succeeded globally, whether you take the Agenda 2000 or the Rio Process. This is a global reflection process that of course developed here as well" (EC 21).

A number of external factors in the sociopolitical landscape prompted key actors at the Cabinet Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission, including Fischler and his team, to reflect on the best course of action in response to the external pressures and the implications should the EU fail to reform the CAP. They were very sensitive to the importance public opinion and multiple pressures:

It is several factors. . . . There were many activities of environmental interest groups around the Rio and Kyoto [climate change summits]. . . . These environmental groups increased their pressure. . . . I came to realize that you can't make policies against public opinion, not too long. I mean, you don't need to make policy according to the public opinion, but you can't go against existing trends that are getting stronger for too long. You have to justify yourself. (EC 22)

This threat of overwhelming political pressure based on the potential ability of the Scrap the CAP coalitions to convince the public of the CAP's unacceptability resulted in a change of policy detail beliefs among key decision-makers in the European Commission and some EU member states. They realized that it would be necessary to reform the CAP before the political pressure to abandon it became too strong (EC 24).

Policy design beliefs point toward the overall architecture of a wider policy program and are represented by opinions of how a policy program should look like. In the example of agricultural policy, this would be the CAP overall as a common policy among all the EU member states. Policy detail beliefs concern the question of whether the CAP should have a multiannual budget and the policy direction of continuous reforms over the past decades to adapt the policy to changing demands in the economic, social, and environmental framework conditions. Further policy detail beliefs concern major structural decisions, such as the impact model of price support and maintaining high levels of food production as opposed to a public goods model that emphasizes public value for subsidies such as the protection of the environment and social cohesion by supporting rural development. In the CAP, such policy detail beliefs are represented by the introduction of the second pillar to rural development and the overall shift toward a public goods model.

Policymakers at the European Commission acknowledged the outside pressures by the coalition in favor of scrapping the CAP (Nedergaard 2008; Pirzio-Biroli 2008). They reflected on this information—that is, that continuing with business as usual was not an option, and that in order to maintain their objectives of an agricultural policy that is carried by all the member states and based on public support for farmers, they would need to adjust the policy to reflect the changed policy design beliefs of society. This can be regarded as factual learning by the involved policymakers, especially in the European Commission on the organizational level but also in some member states. During the 1990s, these policymakers came to adjust their policy design beliefs to reflect the changes in the sociopolitical landscape: the CAP needed to change to reflect the changing realities of environmental degradation and food safety, or it would lose its public support (Moehler 2008; Swinnen 2008b):

At the DG for Agriculture, several of us concluded that if we wanted to preserve the CAP, we needed to change it; if we wanted to succeed in changing it substantially, we needed to just about guarantee the historical support levels to European farmers and avoid a negative impact on their revenues. Yet, a reform package leaving the CAP budget unaffected (except for enlargement) had no chance of acceptance in the College of Commissioners unless we adopted a new approach, and took it by surprise. (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 103)

This group of like-minded policymakers is the “moderate reform camp,” which formed its own coalition besides the “status quo camp” of the farm associations and most member states such as France, Spain, Germany, and Italy; and the Scrap the CAP coalition of market liberals in the EU member states and environmental groups (Nedergaard 2008). Most policymakers changed their policy design belief that the CAP needed to adapt in order to be preserved in the 1990s. Since then, this has become a stable, shared underlying belief among the members of the moderate CAP reform coalition. This shared belief was emphasized by all the interviewees at the European Commission, who were involved with CAP reform as the key motivation for the continuing reform process (e.g., EC 21; EC 22; EC 23; EC 24; EC 25; EC 14; EC 19; EC 20; Moehler 2008; Pirzio-Biroli 2008; Syrrakos 2008).

The European Commission was not a neutral actor; rather, it actively tried to transform its policy design belief of adapting the CAP to socio-political realities in order to save it into a specific policy outcome. This is reflected in the policy proposals for CAP reform and the Commission’s strategies during the negotiations in the Council. Although the Commission is formally reduced to a facilitating and observing role (Craig 2010). The process of drafting a policy proposal, negotiating a compromise within the European Commission between the various directorate generals, and convincing the Council to adopt it with as few changes as possible remained unchanged. Some actors among the status quo coalition consisting of farmers’ associations and several EU member-states (Nedergaard 2008) adjusted their rhetoric to reflect the sociopolitical consensus of the 1990s–2000s in favor of the public goods model. This move, however, could be regarded as a tactical move to ensure their political survival and protect them from having to change their deeper or policy design beliefs.

There was less constructivist learning among the status quo coalition in terms of changes in underlying beliefs than could be expected at first glance. The coalition of the Scrap the CAP camp, rather, served as a source of external pressure on the policymakers within the European institutions, who predominantly belonged to the Save the CAP coalition but drew their motivation and argumentation from the more radical demands. Thereby, they actively influenced public opinion as a tactical move to gain political support and momentum. This was the case for the Fischler reforms in 2002, as indicated by Fischler’s head of cabinet, Pirzio-Biroli, and confirmed by a member of the small team that prepared the proposal:

CAP opponents seemed at times ready to scrap the CAP, which means throwing out the baby with the bath water. Scrapping the CAP is not an option. European treasuries that may still dream of it should think twice before opting for short-term gimmicks. Their simplistic and narrow budgetary view was fought by Fischler’s

more systemic approach seeking internal compromises among, and corresponding mentality changes by, the various stakeholders. Fischler sought to find new allies in support of both the conservation and renewal of the countryside. . . . [Fischler's] compromise approach was expected to make the policy more acceptable internally as well as internationally, in particular to farmers (through simplification and by reestablishing a certain confidence in their future), rural people and society at large. Nevertheless, Fischler advocated a tectonic shift in CAP support over time. (Pirzio-Biroli 2008, 104)

The Impact of Learning on the Policy Outcome

In particular, the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development acted as a policy entrepreneur (Mintrom 2013) and actively gathered public support, tried to convince political decision-makers, and very strategically orchestrated the political negotiation and bargaining process to push his policy proposals through the Council. Constructivist learning on the organizational level occurred within the European Commission by forming the policy detail belief that the CAP must adapt to sociopolitical changes to safeguard its continued political support, and thereby its existence.

Interview data suggests that the policymaking machinery perpetuated and reinforced changes that may have been a result of learning. In the case of Fischler, there is little doubt that his deeper beliefs, which also included rural development and environmental protection, were formed at some point in time before his active involvement as the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. While in this role, he followed his “green” beliefs and used the window of opportunity that was also referred to as “the perfect storm” (Swinnen 2008a) to realize the greening aspects in the 2003 *Mid-Term Review*. At this moment, the CAP achieved a new level of path dependency, which set strengthening the greening aspects of the CAP on any future reform agenda. This explanation is capable of accounting for the references of individuals involved in CAP reform who stress that it was an institutional machinery following a self-perpetuating process (EC 20; EC 21; EC 24). A very relevant aspect is that the European Commission was able to take a longer-term view that goes beyond the time span of headlines in the press and the next election, which enables these policymakers “to do the right thing” (EC 24). Due to this longer time horizon, it was easier to reflect on policy proposals, take scientific inputs into account, and translate the overall public consensus in favor of greening and climate action into a policy proposal.

There was also a certain degree of experiential learning that penetrated the institutional machinery of DG Agri. While deeper green beliefs already existed among key individual actors and did not change or demonstrably

diffuse to other actors during the policymaking process, they were instrumentalized on the organizational level to protect the deeper belief of DG for Agriculture (and the wider moderate reform camp) that the CAP must be maintained, which was also shared by the individuals acting on its behalf. This reflection on societal value change in the form of the public money for public goods debate resulted in the key conclusion that greening the CAP is an appropriate step to maintain sufficient public and political support.

This instrumentalization of greening protected the overall status quo of the CAP as Europe's largest public finance instrument and allowed for continuing on an incremental reform track in line with overall changes in the sociopolitical landscape. The policy entrepreneurs consequently did not convince the rest of their governmental organization of the importance of greening in its own right, but only of its relevance for achieving the already existing organizational objective of maintaining the CAP while allowing incremental changes to its policy design and policy details.

There was a link between the individual level of the policymaker, which already holds beliefs in line with the policy outcome of greening the CAP, and the organizational level, which accepts an instrumentalization of greening in order to continue to achieve its organizational objective (i.e., belief) of maintaining the CAP within a reform process. In consequence, the deeper beliefs of neither the policy entrepreneur on the individual level nor DG Agri/the European Commission nor the member states on the organizational level changed. The policy design beliefs brought about the idea that agriculture needs to contribute to the public good of environmental protection, which mirrored long-term changes in the sociopolitical landscape.

Overall Learning in the Early Common Agricultural Policy Reforms

Individuals who act as policy entrepreneurs based on their underlying beliefs are crucial agents of change to arrive at a policy outcome. Changes predominantly occurred in the form of policymakers recognizing shifting preferences in the sociopolitical landscape and within individuals in the form of increasing knowledge and gaining work experience with CAP reform. The greening aspects of the CAP are built on developments dating to the 1980s via greening the CAP through the MacSharry (1992) and Fischler (2000–2003) reforms to increase the legitimacy of the subsidies paid to farmers (Feindt 2010). It was reframed as public money for public goods narrative, of which environmental protection is a key element. Table 5.1 summarizes the findings on learning in the 1985–2003 CAP reforms.

Which type of learning on the individual and organizational levels occurred depended on several factors. The key issues were the interplay of

Table 5.1
Learning in the 1985–2003 CAP

	Factual Learning	Experiential Learning	Constructivist Learning
Individual level	Yes, but limited: Incremental as experts at Cabinet/DG Agri reflect on new scientific input	Yes: Reflection on experiences with Agenda 2000 and subsequent change in negotiation tactics by Fischler and his team for 2003 <i>Mid-Term Review</i>	Deeper beliefs No change: Actors at the European Commission, agricultural industry, and EU member states maintain the deeper belief that the CAP must be maintained, existing green beliefs among several individuals in EC and ENGOs Yes: Change in 1990s within moderate reform coalition; acceptance that environmental protection matters to public; the CAP needs to adapt to maintain public acceptability Yes: Change in line with policy design beliefs (e.g., support for decoupling and conditionality of payments)
Organizational level	Yes: Reflection on emerging scientific consensus on negative environmental impacts of the CAP	Yes: Iterative process (policy reform)	Deeper beliefs Policy design beliefs No change: Remained stable for member states, agricultural industry, EC, ENGO Yes: In 1990s within moderate reform coalition; acceptance that environmental protection matters to public; the CAP needs to adapt to maintain public acceptability Yes: Change in line with policy design beliefs; support in the Commission for greening measures

long-term learning in the form of shifting beliefs among the wider society that set the political framework parameters. It also depended on whether individuals found the time to reflect on new input and were subsequently able to convince their organization of its importance and the resulting necessity to change the organization's negotiation position. The key drivers for a successful policy outcome were policy entrepreneurs in key positions who had the opportunity, knowledge, personal drive, and conviction to steer the political process into their desired direction using predominantly conventional negotiation tactics to dominate the other coalitions. Experts involved in developing a policy proposal did reflect on information presented to them by external experts and stakeholders, but they were already familiar with the information in many cases.

