

FOOD SECURITY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to show how the term food security evolved in the political discourse of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and how it was interpreted by actors of the decision-making process to achieve the objectives pursued. For this purpose the critical discourse analysis is used. It can be concluded that soft skills, the ability to use words are increasingly important in politics. Politicians use specific types of organisations and institutions to make ideological beliefs and discourses – they need to achieve their objectives – come true. The message, which is read in a specific way to produce very specific reactions, is thus manipulated through the media and other ideological apparatuses. The evolution of theoretical concepts in the political discourse of the CAP presented in the article indicates a high dependence on path dependency. The neo-mercantilist approach to agriculture has been present from the beginning of its existence. The concepts of multifunctionality and neo-liberalism were promoted as a result of pressure from existing external and internal conditions, but they were always to legitimise maintaining high agricultural funding from the EU budget. The food crisis of 2007–2008 and food security became a fundamental elements of the political agenda, which allowed for the return of neo-productivism, in order to defend agricultural subsidies and continue the role of the state in their maintenance.

Key words: food security, political discourse, agricultural policy

INTRODUCTION

Every now and then, the media frighten us with hunger as a threat to the further development of humanity in the years to come. According to the FAO, there are 795 million undernourished people today. However, information that their number is decreasing (down 167 million over the last decade and 216 million less than in 1990–1992) is rarely brought to light. The decline is more evident in developing countries, despite significant population growth [FAO 2015]. During the food crisis of 2008, FAO Director-General J. Diouf spread an imperative that food production must double by 2050 so that the world could feed the population of 9 billion [Address 2008]. It is puzzling why this statement has cemented itself so firmly into the public consciousness and politicians often use it to justify their actions, despite the fact that, according to Tomlinson [2011], it was based on incorrect methodological assumptions. It appears that ensuring global security has become – at least verbally – a political obsession which is reflected in the popularity of words such as food security, biosecurity, energy security, human security, border security and homeland security [Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015].

The term food security is currently experiencing its renaissance also in the European Union (EU), despite the fact that there has been food overproduction for many years. It can be assumed that food security was used

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in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for 2014–2020 as one of its main priorities in order to legitimise agricultural production growth and the need to maintain support for the agricultural sector at the current level.

Alongside cohesion policy, agricultural policy still covers an essential part of EU budget expenditures. Although further reforms of the CAP are implemented, be it under the pressure of external factors (e.g. the World Trade Organisation) or internal factors (e.g. further EU enlargements). Nevertheless, only instruments change, while objectives have remained the same since the Treaties of Rome of 1957. Despite the fact that new actors were included in the decision-making process, a still-strong agricultural lobby has a decisive influence on the decisions made. Therefore, historically conditioned support for large capitalised and restructured agricultural holdings is further continued (a historical direct payment model). A regional model, which has been postulated for years by the European Commission, has been largely resented, as it would contribute to a significant redistribution of funds from large to medium and small agricultural holdings. The CAP's redistributive nature inhibits actual changes and the creation of more effective policy.

The aim of the article is to show how the term food security evolved in the political discourse of the Common Agricultural Policy and how it was interpreted by actors of the decision-making process to achieve the objectives pursued. The paper tries to fill the research gap in understanding mechanisms that privilege specific language in order to justify the maintenance of the CAP's finances at the present level.

For this purpose the critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used as a useful method for identifying different discourses/ideologies in political texts/speeches as well as for diagnosing how the spread of certain terms and arguments legitimises political intervention measures and instruments [Fairclough 2013]. At the same time, it takes into account a comparison of different discourses between political actors of the decision-making process during which ideas are formed and promoted as well as alter dominant paradigms. The use of the CDA may thus help to understand the process of CAP changes which, at a specific time, prefer certain discourses in order to justify decisions taken as part of EU agricultural policy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Actors of the decision-making process increasingly use the language of politics not as a means of communication, but as a tool to compete and achieve specific objectives. Politics becomes such an area of social activity which consists mainly of words, while the language of participants of the communication process is an important factor contributing to their image and voters' support [Balczyńska-Kosman 2013]. T. Van Dijk [1993] believes that "management of minds" of others is what a politician's text or speech is primarily about.

In accordance with the CDA's precursor, i.e. N. Fairclough [Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000], the discourse is becoming an increasingly important element of social life and can have a constructive impact on it. The CDA's critical approach results from, on the one hand, the "critical theory" related to the French school and J. Habermas and, on the other hand, works by M. Foucault. The discourse in Habermas's concept is more an assumption than a real social fact relating to the way a specific society functions. In accordance with Foucault, however, the discourse is construed as using language to transfer ideas and influence people, being strongly conditioned by the social location of senders and recipients, objectives and needs, the level of knowledge, a set and hierarchy of values as well as the social context of communication and the specificity of communication through the mass media [Lisowska-Magdziarz 2006].

Critical discourse analysis assumptions are often associated with A. Gramsci's concept of hegemony according to which groups that rule in society must, despite applied violence and ideological deception, obtain consent of those they rule. It is therefore necessary to make the rulers respected by and legitimate to society as well as to develop a new "collective will" through various types of relations between the rulers and the ruled. The consent is given primarily by "civil society" which consists of private associations and institutions

(schools, churches, family etc.). They are counterbalanced by a narrowly defined “political society”, i.e. the state [Warzecha 2014].

This approach is complemented by L. Althusser’s concept which distinguishes between “repressive apparatuses” and “ideological apparatuses of the state”, corresponding to Gramsci’s categories. While repressive apparatuses (army, police, legal system) follow the rule of violence, ideological apparatuses (schools, religious institutions, family, media, associations) follow the rule of ideology. These are precisely specific types of organisations and institutions which make ideological beliefs and discourses come true. In this context, it is pertinent to mention Althusser’s concept of subjectivity, which refers to J. Lacan’s thesis, according to which an individual is constituted as an entity through identification with the reflection in the mirror (ideologies, constituting an external overall image in which individuals recognise themselves, become the source of their identity) [Althusser 2006].

All communications of political content usually have a strong emotional colouring and are addressed to a mass audience with a predominant function to persuade. A contemporary political discourse scholar, i.e. T. Van Dijk, believes that the CDA originates from the Greek tradition of rhetoric which is based on the art of persuasion. A persuasive action is one that is aimed at gaining a recipient’s acceptance or at least favour as to content presented by a sender. The language of politics often uses multidimensional terms – having more than one meaning. These terms make communication much more difficult due to their vagueness [Shively 2001].

The language of the political discourse is shaped largely by the media that frame ways of presenting political topics. Like other media content, language and political communications are subject to priming and framing phenomena. As regards priming, i.e. communication positioning, certain topics are exposed in the media by their frequent repetition or reference to authoritative speeches. In turn, framing is about providing facts with consensus frames through their selection, amplification (highlighting or skipping features) and articulation which is construed as the way events are described [Balczyńska-Kosman 2013].

FOOD SECURITY IN THE CAP DISCOURSES

Food security is a good example of a multidimensional vague term with different meanings. The most frequently quoted definition is that formulated by the FAO [2015] according to which food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. However, the complexity of the definition – which was repeatedly modified – allows for understanding it in different ways and for seeking radically different solutions. This is due to the specificity of the term which can be categorised as wicked problems. The term was first introduced to social sciences by Rittel and Webber [1973]. The scholars stressed that it is difficult to adopt a scientific and rational approach to such problems due to lack of an explicit definition and different points of view of stakeholders when formulating and solving a problem. A broader approach was proposed by Conklin [2006] who characterised wicked problems as follows:

- you don’t understand the problem until you have developed a solution;
- every wicked problem is essentially unique and novel;
- wicked problems have no definitive solution and stopping rule, i.e. no decision is made as to whether continue or end the problem, taking into account the current position or facts of the past;
- solutions to wicked problems are not right or wrong;
- every solution to a wicked problem is a “one-shot operation”.

Given the specificity of the term “food security”, Mooney and Hunt [2009] attempted to categorise its different interpretations and identified three basic consensus frames. Each of them has specific keywords that characterise it and generate a specific type of actions taken by stakeholders: (a) hunger-related interpretation – food security perceived in terms of world hunger; (b) society-related interpretation – food security regarded as an important element in the development of society; (c) risk-related interpretation – food security as minimising

risks with respect to a food system's vulnerability to both "normal accidents" (e.g. diseases) and "intentional accidents" (e.g. agriterrorism). The categorisation referred to above is derived from the aforesaid term framing and its use in political marketing as conscious shaping and application of consensus frames to well-known social events [Pluwak 2009].

The consensus frames of food security vary between and within political discourse contexts. As a matter of fact, actors of the decision-making process have their own interests and are related to different political orientations/positions. Therefore, they ascribe different meanings to food security [Candel et al. 2014].

A clear demonstration of this is the Common Agricultural Policy which has been shaped for years by actions of the strong agricultural lobby. Therefore, the political discourse was and still is dominated by productivism whose definition may be the following statement of S. Coveney, the Irish Minister of Agriculture: "It is the EU's responsibility to produce more food – shortages have seen commodity prices rocker. The disarming of food output is a nonsense" [Agra Europe 2011]. In other words, the primary role of agriculture is food production, while the CAP should promote the stimulation of agricultural production and productivity growth in the agricultural sector. The CAP's neo-mercantilist tradition dates back to early years of the CAP, when the Community's preferences (import protection) and export subsidies were key elements of the policy of price support for agricultural products. The agricultural lobby takes the view that the transfer of public funds to farmers is fully justified by food production for society. They thus postulate protectionism and a state-assisted model according to which the state should support agriculture as a sector which is involved in the implementation of important national objectives. This approach was fully legitimised after World War II, when the stabilisation of agricultural markets and high supply of food at prices reasonable for consumers were crucial in ensuring food security in Europe. Consequently, these actions led to food overproduction and, at the same time, to the industrialisation of agriculture and environmental degradation in the 1980s.

The criticism of productivism contributed to dominating the political discourse in Europe after 1992 by two theoretical concepts, i.e. multifunctionality and neo-liberalism. Agriculture of EU turned towards post-productivism according to which agricultural activity should be based on more sustainable forms of functioning, which are economically and socially embedded in rural communities, rather than on intensive production. Agriculture came to be seen as a sector which not only provides food, but also the so-called public goods such as biodiversity, rural landscape and rural cultural heritage preservation. This argument became an important element of F. Fischler's reform of 2003. In turn, the growing importance of the neo-liberal discourse in EU institutions and Member States with highly capitalised and restructured agriculture was evident during internal (EU budget) and external (international trade) negotiations on further CAP reforms. As a result, a greater emphasis was placed on increasing the competitiveness of EU agriculture, policy instruments were liberalised and EU intervention in agricultural markets was reduced.

The concept of multifunctionality was a defence of the agricultural lobby against the neo-liberal course in Europe and the world. Proponents of neo-liberalism argued against the need for further support for agriculture, and argued for CAP liberalisation, while treating the policy as a significant cost to taxpayers and consumers, and an inefficient transfer of public funds to one sector of the economy. In turn, the traditional agricultural lobby supported maintaining a strong protection of agricultural markets and supporting agricultural families, while claiming that lower support could lead to an even greater industrialisation of agriculture together with negative consequences for rural communities and non-agricultural benefits currently received from this sector. It is also worth quoting arguments of an environmental lobby according to which support for agriculture should be continued, but the aid should be significantly redirected from the current system, in which farmers receive substantial public funds without apparent justification, to the system of payments for providing public goods to society [Midgley and Renwick 2012].

The last decade of this century is a clear return of the concept of productivism as the so-called neo-productivism. Almas and Campbell [2012] mention the following reasons: the food crisis of 2007–2008, a change

in food preferences of consumers, food waste, climate change, diminishing access to water, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, higher oil prices, designation of some part of food production for non-agricultural purposes (biofuels), a change in the functioning of the global food system. In accordance with Burton and Wilson [2012], neo-productivism is characterised by: (a) reduction of state intervention in markets, introduction of greater constraints on agriculture, ideological promotion of environmentally friendly agriculture; (b) reduction of agricultural intensification towards more environmentally sustainable agriculture, diversification of sources of agricultural income; c) promotion of environmental protection.

Neo-productivist agriculture quickly adapted to new conditions by adapting sustainable development principles. One oddity was promoting “sustainable intensification” of agriculture in recent years, i.e. agricultural production growth based on available agricultural land with minimal pressure on the environment [Future of Food 2016]. This, incidentally, right idea was used by the agricultural lobby and agri-chemical corporations to apply exactly the same model of intensive agriculture as before, but described with different words. Similarly, the food crisis of 2007–2008 became an important element of argumentation in the political discourse according to which financial support for agriculture should be continued due to its primary role which was and still is feeding the human population of the world.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN CAP DOCUMENTS AND SPEECHES

The concepts presented, which occur in the political discourse of the CAP, are evident in documents and speeches by actors of the decision-making process. According to Garzon [2006], the decision-making process takes the form of non-cooperative negotiations between multiple actors (EU institutions, Member States, international institutions, agricultural organisations, agri-food industry, non-governmental organisations), hence the discourse is not homogeneous. With reference to Fairclough [2013], it can be said that politics is an arena in which different interest groups seek to introduce a particular discourse as a means of achieving their political objectives.

Given the leading role of the European Commission in initiating CAP changes, its strategic documents and speeches by commissioners for agriculture seem to be the most valuable for CDA. The aim of content presented by the Commission is to get the general public ready for the implementation and justification of specific measures. Erjavec's and Erjavec's [2009] analysis performed based on speeches by M. Fischer Boel, the Commissioner for Agriculture, between the CAP reform of 2003 and the health check of 2008 reveals that the discourse is not uniform, but varies depending on recipients and needs. Boel stressed the concept of productivism at a meeting with French farmers (in June 2005, at the beginning of her mandate) by often using terms such as productive capacity, trade or production. In turn, she referred to the concept of multifunctionality in her speeches when she spoke to communities related to nature protection, safe food or rural area preservation. The discourse was also used as a tool for negotiating with the liberally-oriented World Trade Organisation. When promoting the multifunctionality-related European model of agriculture, Boel referred, on the international arena, to “historical relationship between people, food production and the countryside” and used the following words of the multifunctionality discourse: environment, diversification, quality of life in rural areas, agriculture is “our soul” and “unique tradition”. As a proponent of the concept of neo-liberalism, Commissioner Boel sought to introduce liberal solutions to the CAP by stressing that “farmers must be subjected to the market”, “must continuously pick out exactly what customers want”, EU agriculture should be “competitive on global market”. Competitiveness, market orientation and liberalisation are often repeated in the neo-liberal discourse. Politicians then stopped using terms, such as food security, preservation of farm income, as basic elements of CAP justification, but they remained in the agricultural lobby's argumentation.

Keywords used in speeches by representatives of the European Commission make it clear how specific argumentation was used in the political discourse. Its aim was to legitimise large CAP funding from the EU budget. At that time, the World Trade Organisation's pressure necessitated changing CAP instruments to make

them less distortive to international trade. On the other hand, the agricultural lobby's pressure, which advocated for maintaining support for agriculture at the same level, made it necessary to seek agricultural policy priorities other than agricultural production, hence support for multifunctionality. Elements of neo-liberalism in speeches by Boel served as preparation for the next debate on a CAP reform, i.e. health check, which started together with the Commission Communication of 20 November 2007 [European Commission 2007]. The Commission then proposed to simplify the system of direct payments, to further liberalise intervention in agricultural markets, to make rural development policy more important, taking into account challenges such as climate change, bio-energy or water management.

In response to growing criticism of the CAP and an increasing public interest in environmental protection and food quality, new reasons for maintaining large agricultural funds in 2014–2020 appeared in the political discourse. Food security regained its importance. In the European Commission's document which presents the concept of a new CAP reform, i.e. The CAP towards 2020 of 10 November 2010 [European Commission 2010], food security is regarded as one of the most important strategic objectives in order "to preserve the food production potential on a sustainable basis throughout the EU, so as to guarantee long-term food security for European citizens and to contribute to growing world food demand". This is a clear return to the concept of productivism which supports agricultural production. Interestingly, the need to meet food needs applies not only to the EU, but it has been extended globally. Europe becomes responsible for feeding the starving world. This should be seen as a deliberate action to influence social emotions, because analyses by the FAO [2015] reveal a negative impact of food imports from developed countries on developing countries' economies. This return to the rhetoric of post-World War II times may be puzzling. According to Erjavec's and Erjavec's [2015], it is an attempt of some countries (France, Spain, the Republic of Ireland) to preserve the CAP in its traditional form, including strong EU intervention in agricultural markets. The three strategic objectives referred to in the said document of the European Commission (food security, quality, value and diversity of food and creating local employment) perfectly fit into the concept of neo-productivism. At the same time, they draw upon the concept of multifunctionality – through keywords, such as environment, climate change, greening, and neo-liberalism – competitiveness, efficient use, simplification. The argumentation used is to justify further agricultural subsidies from the EU budget, because "any significant cut back in European farming activity would in turn generate losses in GDP and jobs in linked economic sectors".

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that soft skills, the ability to use words are increasingly important in politics. In accordance with L. Althusser's thesis, politicians use specific types of organisations and institutions to make ideological beliefs and discourses – they need to achieve their objectives – come true. The message, which is read in a specific way to produce very specific reactions, is thus manipulated through the media and other ideological apparatuses.

The evolution of theoretical concepts in the political discourse of the CAP, which is presented in the article, indicates a high dependence on path dependency – choices made in the past determine current choices of the shape and funding of EU agricultural policy. The neo-mercantilist approach to agriculture has been present from the beginning of its existence. The concept of multifunctionality (provision of public goods by farmers to society) and the concept of neo-liberalism (better market orientation of farmers), which are evident in the documents of the European Commission and speeches by its representatives, were promoted as a result of pressure from existing external and internal conditions, but they were always to legitimise maintaining high agricultural funding from the EU budget. The food crisis of 2007–2008 became a fundamental element of the political agenda, which allowed for the return of neo-productivism, in order to defend agricultural subsidies and continue the role of the state in their maintenance.

It is puzzling to what extent the trend will be present in the future CAP and what phenomena must occur in the increasingly unpredictable years to come in order to make it change. It might be said that the future of food production does not lie in its maximisation, even when taking into account elements of environmentally sustainable production, but in the ability to absorb sudden changes and shocks that will occur locally and globally.

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BEZPIECZEŃSTWO ŻYWNOŚCIOWE W DYSKURSIE POLITYCZNYM WSPÓLNEJ POLITYKI ROLNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, w jaki sposób pojęcie bezpieczeństwa żywnościowego ewoluowało w dyskursie politycznym wspólnej polityki rolnej (WPR) oraz jak było interpretowane przez aktorów procesu decyzyjnego dla osiągnięcia zamierzonych celów. W pracy wykorzystano metodę krytycznej analizy dyskursu. Stwierdzono, że coraz większego znaczenia nabierają w polityce kompetencje „miękkie”, umiejętność posługiwania się słowem. Politycy urzeczywistniają za pomocą konkretnych typów organizacji i instytucji przekonania ideologiczne oraz dyskursy potrzebne do realizacji ich celów. Dochodzi więc poprzez media i inne aparaty ideologiczne do manipulacji przekazem, który jest odczytywany w specyficzny sposób, a tym samym wywołuje ściśle określone reakcje. Przedstawiona w artykule ewolucja koncepcji teoretycznych stosowanych w dyskursie politycznym WPR wskazuje, że neomerkantylistyczne podejście do rolnictwa jest obecne od początków jej istnienia. Koncepcje wielofunkcyjności oraz neoliberalizmu były promowane w wyniku presji istniejących uwarunkowań zewnętrznych i wewnętrznych, lecz zawsze miały służyć legitymizacji utrzymania finansowania rolnictwa z budżetu unijnego na wysokim poziomie. Kryzys żywnościowy lat 2007–2008 oraz bezpieczeństwo żywnościowe stały się fundamentalnym elementem agendy politycznej, pozwalającym na powrót neoproduktywizmu w celu obrony rolniczych subsydiów i zachowania znaczącej roli państwa w ich utrzymaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo żywnościowe, dyskurs polityczny, polityka rolna