

# SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

## MARMARA UNIVERSITY

### ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

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## **The European Union Accession and the Environmental Aspects of Agriculture: The Experience of the Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic had to meet new environmental obligations after joining the European Union. The transformation of the Czech agriculture was not without difficulties. Initially, the Czech agricultural sector resisted the idea that agricultural subsidies should be tied up to environmental performance. Today, the farming sector got mostly adapted to the new conditions. The two principal environmental initiatives of the EU in the area of agriculture are the “agri-environmental programs” and the “cross-compliance” obligations. The so called “agri-environmental” program is a set of subsidies related to environmental performance of the farm. It represents a relatively large part of total agricultural subsidies. All EU member countries are obliged to have agri-environmental programs, however, the individual subsidy titles may be shaped according to the needs of individual countries. Maintenance of grasslands, biobelts for birds and insects, and organic agriculture are some of the agri-environmental subsidy titles. This subsidy program is voluntary. However, farmers may lose substantial additional income, if not participating.

Another part of EU environmental policy in agriculture is the so called “cross-compliance” approach. “Cross-compliance” has the aim to enforce certain parts of legislation of the European Union. Basically it means that farmers that infringe on particular parts of EU legislation may lose subsidies. Among these parts of legislation are for example the Natura 2000 Directives, the Nitrate Directive and the Animal Welfare Directive. A part of the cross-compliance approach are the so called “GAEC” (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions) standards. The GAEC are new environmental standards in agriculture. These are often related to soil erosion prevention. The last GAEC standard instituted in the Czech Republic was the ban on agricultural fertilizers in the distance of 3 m from water streams. Also this standard reflected the requirements of the EU legislation. Currently, the agri-environmental program subsidies are a widely-used source of additional financing for agriculture. Also the cross compliance rules became an accepted part of everyday reality. Due to higher subsidies, among them also agri-environmental subsidies, the economic situation of the Czech farms mostly improved after the EU entry. However, it seems that the current system favours large agriculture enterprises, while small family farms are often struggling to keep in business. The awareness of environmental obligations has been raised. However, an independent thorough evaluation of environmental effectiveness of the new rules and subsidies is still missing. In any case, the EU environmental policy in agriculture is an important step towards better quality of life.

**Thursday, May 30, 2013 • 14:00-15:00**

**Engineering Building - B, Conference Room #MB144**

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