

Challenges for (Agricultural) Land Reform in Austria

37th International Symposium
European Faculty of Land Use and Development
Stockholm, 28.08.2009

Balancing Public and Private Interests



“In order to establish and preserve an effective and environmentally sound agriculture the circumstances of land tenure and cultivation in rural areas can be improved by reallocating and establishing access to agricultural and forestry land (...) in the way of a land consolidation scheme **regarding up to date macroeconomic, microeconomic and ecological aspects.**”

(§ 1 Austrian Land Consolidation Act 2005)

Presentation Outline

- Introduction to Land Reform in Austria
- Directions of Land Reform in Austria
- Challenges
 - External land use interests
 - Structural Changes in Agriculture
- Future Prospects

Land Reform in Austria



In Austria the term land reform includes regulations concerning:

- Land consolidation / voluntary land exchange
- Management and division of common land
- Adjustment and removal of wood and grazing rights in forest land
- Legal basis of the agricultural road network
- Conservation and improvement of alpine pastures
- Relocation of farms

The legal concept of land reform refers to agricultural and forest land (in contrast to land management for building areas)

Land Reform in Austria

- Measures of land reform aim at:
 - Improvement of agricultural land use structures
 - Implementation of land related public development projects like traffic infrastructure, flood protection measures, conservation areas or tourism facilities

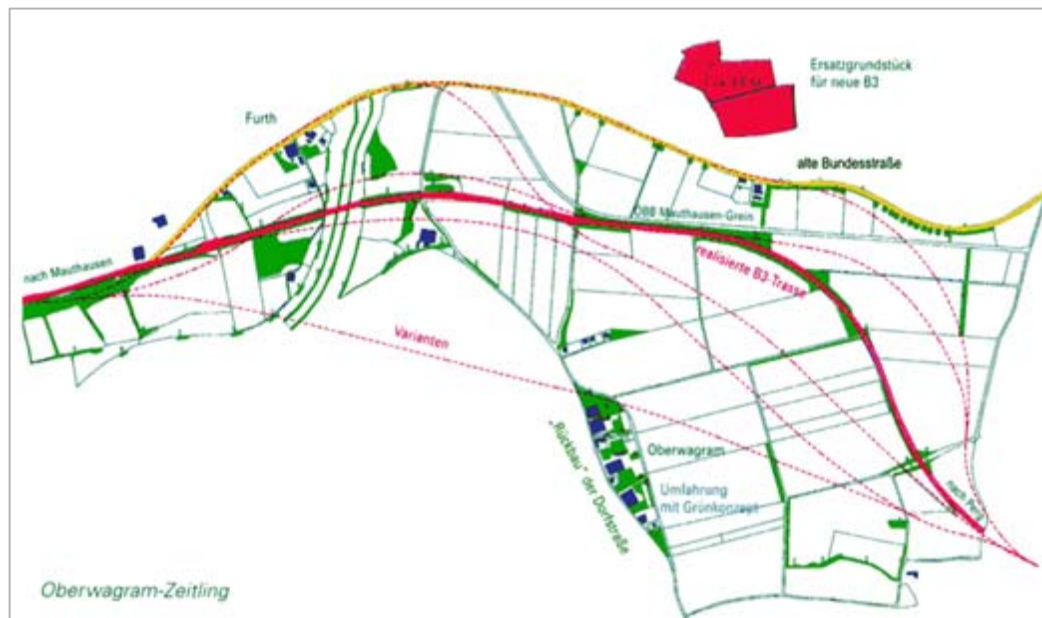


ABB für Oberösterreich, 2001

Land Reform - Organisation



- Legislation
 - Principle legislation: federal level
 - Executive legislation: province level
- Implementation is subject to “Land Reform Authorities” on province level (land reform authorities in 8 provinces)

Directions of Land Reform in Austria



- Three discursive formations (Foucault, 1981) in Austrian Land Reform:
 - The “creation of a 10th province”
 - The “greening” of land reform
 - The multifunctional land reform
- Variable strategies reflect the changing demands of society

The "Creation of a 10th Province"



Weinviertel Management, 2003

The “Creation of a 10th Province”



- Land improvement by land consolidation, construction of agricultural roads, stream corrections, irrigation and drainage works
- Ensuring self-sufficiency in food supply is the prevailing public goal of land reform
- Compensation measures for losses of farmland to housing, commercial and infrastructure development
- Great losses in biodiversity
- Public interests widely match landowners´ (farmers´) interests

The "Greening" of Land Reform



Kohler, 2009

The “Greening” of Land Reform



- Agricultural surplus production and growing awareness for environmental problems lead to public scepticism about land reform
- Adjustment of land reform activities to changing circumstances and preferences in society
- Structural changes in agriculture lead to an increasing availability of farm land for non-farming purposes (“green purposes”)
- Structural agricultural improvement considering sustainable farming practices, environmental protection and nature conservation
- Compensation measures for biodiversity losses
- Opening gap between public interests and farmers´ interests

The Multifunctional Land Reform



Pelikan, 2000



Merlin, 2009

The Multifunctional Land Reform

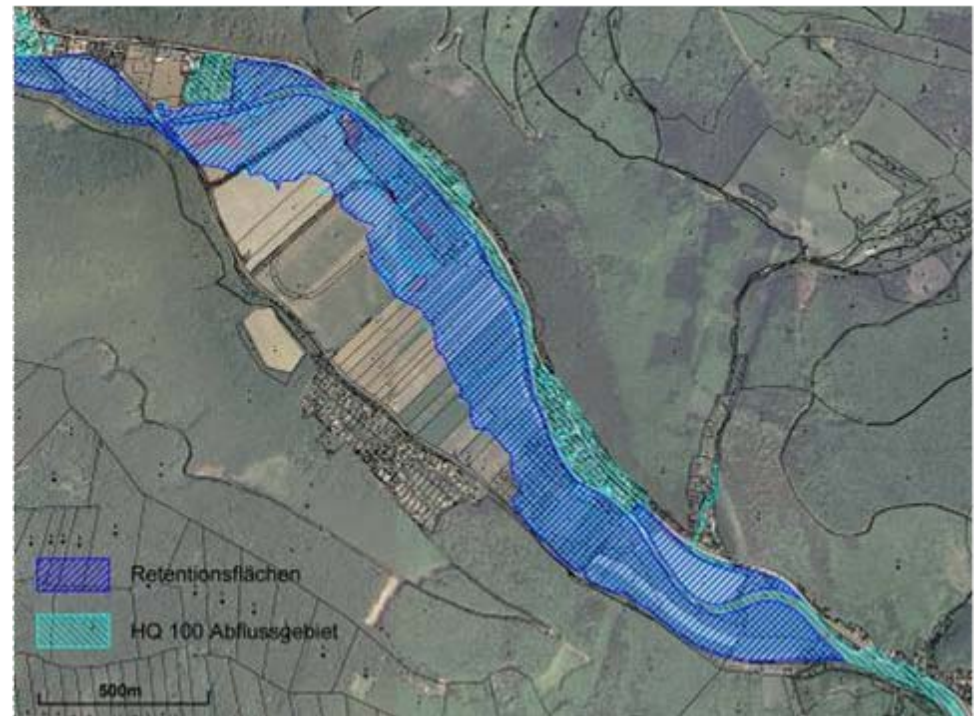


- Comprehensive land reform including implementation of land-related public development projects
- Multifunctional agriculture as a policy vision (“Austrian Rural Development Programme”)
- Multifunctional approach is important for justification of land reform against the background of an ongoing economic decline of agriculture
- Multifunctionality is a public concept, farmers are increasingly interested in reducing their cultivation costs by land reform measures
- “Ground for choices”
- Public interest on farmland

Flood Risk Management and Land Resources

"Whether it comes up to structural flood protection, to flood retention or to river restoration, the decisive question is about availability of land."

(A water engineer during a FloodRisk II project workshop)



Acquisition and Restoration of Floodplains



- Land consolidation facilitates floodplain acquisition (Seher and Beutl, 2004):
 - Increased mobility of land
 - Safeguarding contiguous floodplain areas
 - Higher acceptance of affected landowners
 - Concentration of competences in land consolidation procedures
 - Synergies concerning cadastral operations and land registration
 - Awareness raising for extensive cultivation of floodplains
- Essential requirement: land is **available** for floodplain restoration

Acquisition and Restoration of Floodplains



Floodplain restoration or



production of renewables?

Availability of Land for Public Projects



- Uncertain basis of multifunctional land reform because of available and affordable land resources lacking
- Increasing importance of individual farming interests as a result of:
 - Growing demands for renewable energies and resources
 - Trends to organic farming and regional food production
- “The comeback of land resources” (Sieferle, 2007)
- Land shortage not only in agglomerations but also in rural areas is considered a “relevant and very likely development” according to the “Scenarios of Spatial Development in Austria 2030” (OEROK, 2009)

Availability of Land for Public Projects



- Increasing competition in open space land use:
 - Intrasectoral (e.g. renewable resources – food production)
 - Intersectoral (e.g. farming – nature conservation)
- Restricted land availability mainly affects the implementation of conservation, water management and recreation projects by land reform measures.

Structural Changes in Agriculture



- Reduction of farms and farming workforce
- Concentration and specialisation of farming enterprises
- Dependency of farming activities on direct payments

- Structural changes in agriculture lead to an increasing emphasis on cultivation interests in land reform procedures by the landowners involved
- Uncertain future of direct payments directly and indirectly influences land reform projects

Public and Private Interests in Land Consolidation



NÖGIS, s.a.

- Land consolidation: more than a service oriented implementation planning for either public or private land use interests?
- Balancing public and private interests aiming at a sustainable development of agricultural areas

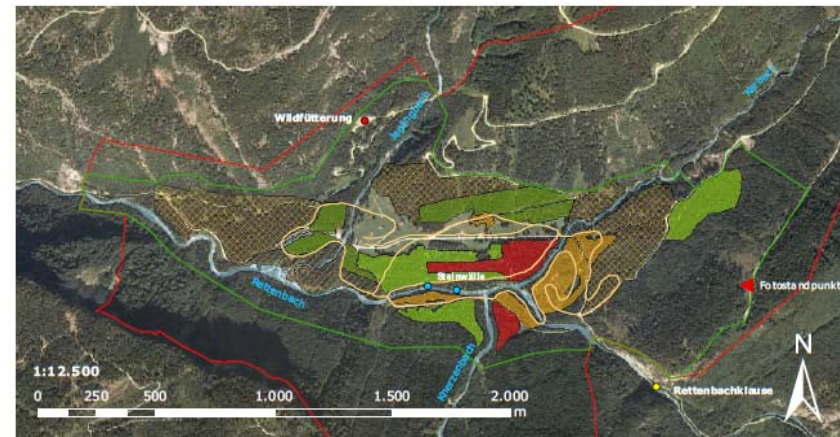
Structural Changes in Agriculture



- Development of alpine cultural landscapes
 - Developing cultivation plans for alpine pastures and forests
 - Impact assessment concerning construction of agricultural roads
 - Resolving land use conflicts induced by non-farming interests
 - Commons as a role model for managing alpine landscapes
- Diversifying interests in agricultural commons
 - Conflict management by governance mechanisms



Merlin, 2009

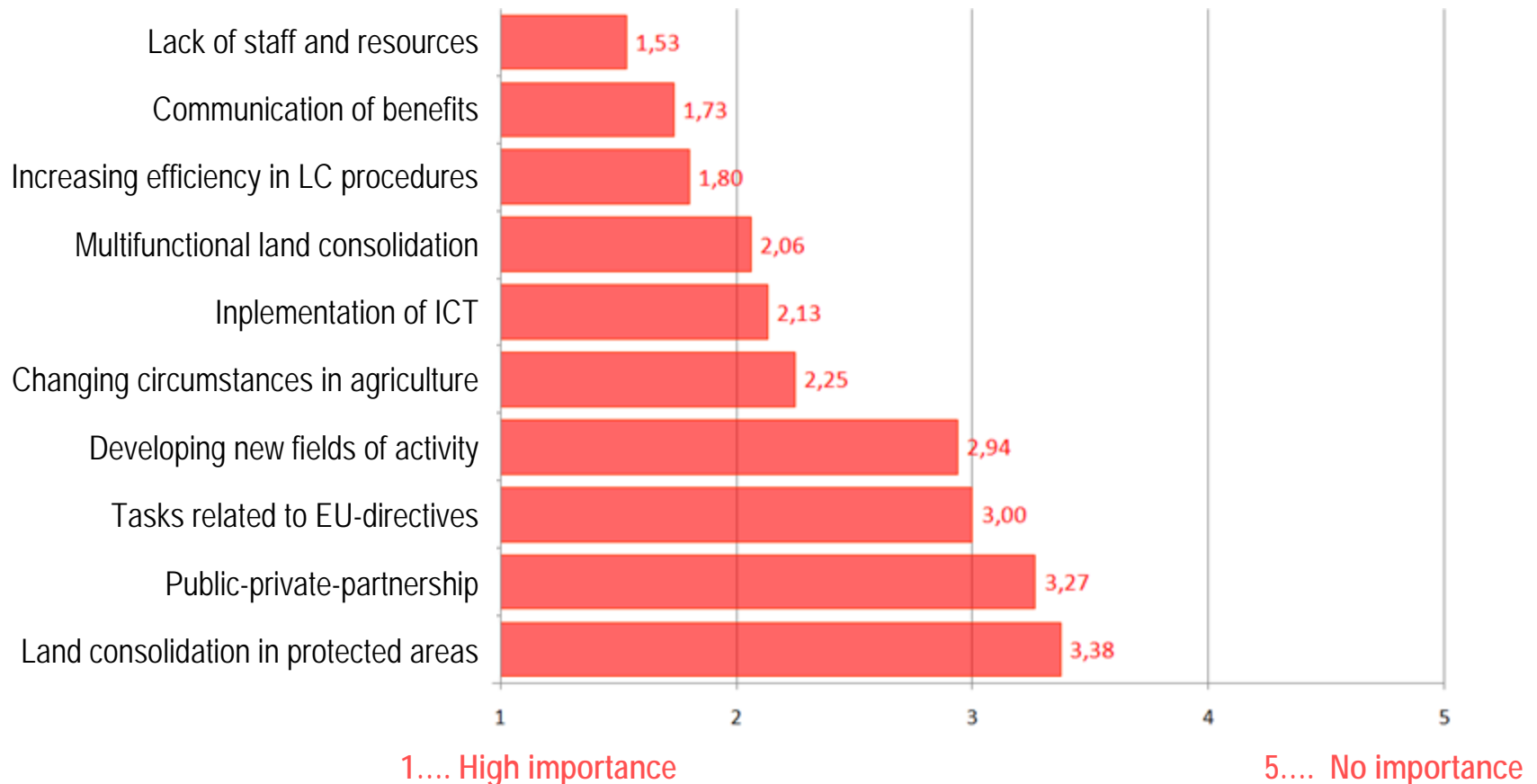


Weiss, 2007

The Viewpoint of Land Reform Authorities



according to "ICT in Austrian Land Reform Authorities" (Mansberger et al., 2009)



Future Prospects



- Concentration on farming interests (structural agricultural improvement) is no long-term option for land reform
- Multifunctional approaches in land reform demand adaptations in the legal background, a closer link to spatial planning and the enforcement of governance mechanisms to coordinate different land use interests.
- Intersectoral attempts to coordinate and optimise land use in open space areas (tourism, conservation, natural hazard management) are considered to be an important strategic challenge for spatial development (OEROK, 2009).
- Land reform can be a tool for integrated land management in agricultural areas balancing private and public interests.

Thank you for Attention!

Ass.Prof. DI Dr. Walter Seher

BOKU – University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna
Department of Spatial, Landscape and Infrastructure Sciences
Institute of Spatial Planning and Rural Development

Peter Jordan-Straße 82, A-1190 Vienna
Tel.: +43 1 47654-5360, Fax: +43 1 47654-5353
walter.seher@boku.ac.at
www.rali.boku.ac.at/irub.html