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CONTINUATION OF THE FARM VERSUS
“GROWING OR DISAPPEARING”
– PART-TIME FARMING IN GERMANY

Abstract

This paper begins with a short historical overview of the interpretations why many farms which cannot continue as full-time farms are not given up but continue as part-time farms. These interpretations are then confronted with the results of a survey combining quantitative and qualitative aspects. Special attention was given to a comparison between part-time farmers in Eastern and Western Germany. Important results were the significance of agricultural family tradition and independent working in free nature especially when part-time farmers work in dependent positions outside agriculture. The main problems of part-time farming are time shortage and financial problems. Labour cooperation is the most important problem solution.

Keywords: Part-time farming, motivations, extra-agricultural activities, problems and solutions.

INTRODUCTION

As in many other European countries, part-time now has greater quantitative importance than full-time farming including farming as a main activity combined with some extra-agricultural activities. In 2001 approximately 58 % of farms in Germany were part-time farms.¹ The absolute number of part-time farms has been decreasing historically but the percentage is increasing.

There are important differences between the Länder as to the percentage of part-time farming ranging from 43.0% in Schleswig-Holstein to 70.2%² in Thüringen which formerly pertained to the German Democratic Republic. The areas

¹ Ernährungs- und agrarpolitischer Bericht der Bundesregierung 2003.

² Agrarbericht der Bundesregierung 1999.

cultivated by part-time farmers are also very different ranging from 9.9 ha in Baden-Württemberg and 10.0 ha in Rheinland-Pfalz to 29.3 ha in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and 25.6 ha in Sachsen-Anhalt. These are the current data; in the past, both part-time and full-time farms were clearly smaller.

THE DOMINANT INTERPRETATIONS OF PART-TIME FARMING

The interpretation and evaluation of part-time farming, especially in politics, has changed over time. After the Second World War with the hunger crisis in Germany, part-time farming was evaluated as a positive contribution to feeding the population. People who came from eastern parts of Germany which were annexed to Poland or Russia received small pieces of land for part-time farming. But after the stabilisation of the situation between the fifties and seventies, part-time farming was seen as a transitional state between full-time farming and the termination of farming. Corresponding to this interpretation, the policy was that financial promotion of part-time farming such as the promotion of full-time farming would not be justified; part-time farming was, therefore, excluded from financial support at national, European Economic Community and Länder level. The continuation of farming part-time after the end of full-time farming was interpreted as driven by the economic motive to maintain the capital of land, farm buildings, machines etc. However, research at the beginning of the eighties³ showed that part-time farmers themselves conceived their activity as long-term rather than transitory. Many part-time farms are handed over from generation to generation within the family which cannot be explained in economic terms. From the economic point of view, it would be more rational to give up the enterprise which is no longer competitive and to concentrate the labour force on extra-agricultural activities. From this economic point of view, the only reason for part-time farmers continuing to farm could be to do so as a hobby; otherwise the farm would be a relict. This interpretation can also help to understand why public support for part-time farming was also low in the eighties. However, since then, the ecological aspect of part-time farming that part-time farmers cultivate land which would otherwise go wild, entered the public consciousness.

It was recognised that the combination of agricultural and extra-agricultural activities are a contribution to multi-functionality and regional development.

Part-time agriculture can be a measure against the "dying" of regions with very few economic activities. With the recognition of the contribution of part-time farming to objectives of ecology and multi-functionality, the discrimination of part-time farming with respect to public support diminished but did not disap-

³ E. Mröhs, *Landwirte in der Gesellschaft*, Forschungsgesellschaft für Agrarpolitik und Agrarsoziologie, Bonn 1983.

pear. So, in the nineties, the European Union included part-time farming in the following programmes:

- promotion of agriculture in deprived areas
- promotion of closures of fields and other environmental programmes,
- investment help for young agriculturists. In the Agenda 2000, it was decided to finish the discrimination of part-time farmers in the promotion.

QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, the economic alternative to running a part-time farm for some time until its abolition or to continue it as a hobby is not the perspective. Instead, the **degree** of interest of part-time farmers to continue running the farm, the **motives**, the **problems** associated with continuation, the **solutions** to realising this continuation and finally the future perspectives are at the centre of this study. So, the idea is that part-time farms persist and that the economically motivated slogan “grow or disappear” (*Wachsen oder Weichen* in German) is not considered as an exclusive alternative without being a pure hobby. The economic aspect is not neglected, but is considered as a constraint for the actions of part-time farmers. The fundamental perspective is that part-time farmers are **active subjects** acting in an environment including economic aspects.

In the interests of continuity, there is emphasis on individual and on family biography. However, there are important differences with respect to the biography and the family:

- part-time farming for the second or even third generation: the father, the grandfather or the great grandfather were also part-time farmers;
- the farm became a part-time farm when it was passed down from father to son;
- the son took over a full-time farm from his father, but could not or would not continue running it as a full-time farm, so he began to run extra-agricultural activities, and the former full-time farm became a part-time farm; so, this change from full-time to part-time farming no longer takes place in the generation change but during the farmer’s active work period. In the current crisis situation in agriculture in Europe, this possibility is gaining importance;
- finally, there are many cases where new farms are run as part-time farms. Most of these cases can be found in the East German Länder where, after de-collectivisation, those who received land from their fathers or grandfathers, used it for the foundation of part-time farms. However, there are also cases in the Western Länder where new part-time farms are founded on a true hobby motivation.

Due to these biographical differences, continuity which is at the centre of this study has different significance and an important aspect in evaluating the results is the comparison of different variables between these four groups.

In order to give answers to the research theme mentioned above, a questionnaire was constructed (see next chapter), including the following questions:

- Why was the farm not given up but continued?
- What were the main reasons for changing to part-time farming?
- Which alternatives were considered?
- How secure do you estimate your part-time farming?
- What do you think about the idea of transforming your part-time farm into a full-time one?
- What do you wish and expect from your children with respect to the part-time farm?

There were also questions on extra-agricultural activity, its estimated security and how it is experienced in comparison with agricultural activities.

Other questions regarded changes in land acreage, the age of machinery and investment as well as questions concerning plants and livestock produced.

There were questions on the problems of running part-time farms.

As to the solutions, the social aspect, such as labour cooperation and circles in which future developments were discussed was emphasised.

Naturally, the "objective" aspects of the enterprise such as acreage and labour hours of people on the part-time farm were asked without forgetting the age and profession of different family members. There were also questions on the perception of public attitude towards part-time farming and public support received and expected.

Since the resistance of part-time farmers to the alternative "growing or disappearing" was at the centre of the study, they were not seen as passive objects of economic pressure but as **active subjects** trying to resist this pressure and find their own solutions. Therefore, a mode of interviewing is indicated where the people interviewed can also express their subjective view. So ideally, qualitative or semi-structured interview techniques would be indicated as the best techniques. However, the realisation of these techniques would create problems. Firstly, as explained below, the research was not concentrated on a small area where face-to-face interviews are carried out; instead, most interviewees had to answer a questionnaire in writing.

Secondly, in the qualitative methodology, only a very limited number of people are interviewed following the philosophy of studying few people with respect to many variables. So, the application of the qualitative methodology to greater numbers of interviews would create problems. As a compromise, the technique of open questions was used where the interviewees can act as subjects forming the answers themselves and not only marking pre-set answers with a cross.

However, apart from the written interviews, 16 interviews in the Land Brandenburg pertaining to the former German Democratic Republic were carried out face-to-face and realised as semi-structured interviews.

The objective of this research was not to find representative data. As the heterogeneity of part-time farming – based on differences in the biographical context, of land dimension and other aspects of the farm enterprise and extra-agricultural activities – is extreme, average values say little on the concrete situation and conceal differences.

Certainly, it makes sense that most studies on part-time farming only study small regions where the heterogeneity is smaller than on the national scale. However, many particularities are more in relation with the family and individual biography and less with the region; the regional determination must also be seen in the historical perspective in the sense that, in former times, it was stronger than nowadays.

So, average values are not considered as the only objective of this study; instead, there is also much interest in **differences** and individual particularities.

With the exception of half of the 16 interviewees from Brandenburg, all of them were members of a special organisation of part-time farms in Germany – the “Deutscher Bundesverband der Landwirte im Nebenberuf” (German Federation of Part-time Farmers). This organisation has approximately 2,000 members and was founded in 1972 on the initiative of a part-time organisation in the Saar where part-time farming as a secondary activity of mine workers has a long tradition.

This organisation is far from being the largest part-time farmers’ organisation: most part-time farmers who are organised are members of the general organisation of peasants in Germany, the “Deutscher Bauernverband” (German Peasant Association) which is dominated by full-time farmers but says that it represents both full-time and part-time farmers. Critical analyses came to the conclusion that in reality this organisation mainly defends the interests of large farms. Its main objective is not to combat the alternative “grow or disappear”. So, the members of the special organisation of part-time farmers are not representative for all part-time farmers. However, it is interesting for a research project concerning part-time farmers who do not obey the imperative “grow or disappear” to study exactly the members of this organisation.

Questionnaires were sent to the members of the “Deutscher Bundesverband der Landwirte im Nebenberuf” in the Land Rheinland-Pfalz on the frontier of France and Luxembourg in order to make a comparison between part-time farms in Brandenburg which were newly created after decollectivisation; 29 questionnaires were answered and returned. Then, the questionnaire was annexed to the journal of the part-time farmers’ organisation in April 2001. Despite the recommendation of the author of the questionnaire, the chairman of the organisation and the editor of this journal, only 59 questionnaires were completed and returned. So it is probable that the results are not representative for the members of this organisation. A low return was also found in other studies where questionnaires were sent to part-time farmers. A plausible reason for the low return seems to be the labour-overload of these people. In all, 104 part-time farmers’ interviews were evaluated.

THE RESULTS

The Biographical Context

Of the 104 part-time farmers who responded to the questionnaire in written or oral form 25 continued to run farms which had been **run as part-time farms by their fathers or earlier generations** and 27 ran farms which became part-time farms in the generation transition. In 34 cases, the part-time farm was founded by the current farm owner. The majority of this group lived in the New Bundesländer where the land of the former private farms which were grouped into agricultural cooperatives at the end of the fifties was returned to the descendants of these former landowners. Generally, this area was too small to run full-time farms nowadays. There was, therefore, the alternative of selling or renting this land, becoming a member of the transformed agricultural cooperative or running a part-time farm. But it is astonishing that 13 cases where the farm was established by the current farm owner as a part-time farm were founded in the Old Bundesländer in the West of Germany. Finally, in 16 cases, the farm changed from being a full-time to a part-time farm during the active working life of the current farm owner.

On average, these farms existed for 15.5 years but those which became part-time farms in the change of generations existed for 19.2 years on average. This difference shows that the classical situation of change from full to part-time farming in the generation transition is losing importance; the agricultural crisis creates a situation that the full-time farm cannot be run until the time when the owner of the full-time farm retires.

As to the professional formation, differences between these groups were also found. The current part-time farms often have a long family tradition, in one case since 1600; other respondents who could not determine this time described it as being "since eternal times" "since always" or "for generations". So, the economists' command "grow or disappear" must be seen against this background of family history with its importance for the identity of the current farmer.

The Founding of the Part-time Farm:
Motivations, Discussions and Future Perspectives

The reasons why full-time farms could not be continued as such were in most cases economic: the full-time farm was too small, income from it was too low, further land could not be rented etc., so growing was necessary but not possible. On the contrary, the motivations to continue the farm on a part-time basis were in

most cases non-economic. In the following table, the frequencies of the motivations with the highest frequencies are mentioned:

Table 1
Motivations to continue farming

Motive	Number of answers*
Maintenance of family tradition	22
Enjoyment	15
To maintain the property	8
To produce own healthy food	8
Economic security	6
Closeness to nature	6
The land was returned	5
In order to be independent	5
Easing of the stress of non-agricultural work	5

* Multiple answers are allowed

The motive to maintain agriculture with the highest frequency was not economic, to maintain the family-capital such as land, buildings, machinery etc., but social, to continue family tradition. One respondent interviewed in the Bundesland of Brandenburg mentioned the following motive for the continuation of agriculture: "I promised my mother on her deathbed that I would continue agriculture". The importance of family tradition also shows the wrongs of the interpretation of part-time farming as a hobby because a hobby is an individual motivation whereas family tradition puts emphasis on the descent group. The motive "maintenance of the family tradition" also expresses opposition against the position that only large and growing enterprises could persist. This motive which is an important motive for retaining land was also found in other studies⁴. The motive "enjoyment"⁵ is not only a non-economic motive, but also anti-economic. This motive expresses the inclination to do what they want even if economic pressures go in the opposite direction. Farming has the significance of making **sense of the work and of self-fulfilment.**

⁴ J. Ritz, *Pratiques productives et alliances sociales des ouvriers paysans du Sundgau*, [in:] *Association des Ruralistes Français, La pluriactivité des familles agricoles*, Paris 1984, p. 329-333

⁵ This result is not specific for the actual situation, but it was also found in research on the situation in the seventies and eighties, see: H. Priebe, *Funktionswandel der Mehrfachbeschäftigung in ländlichen Regionen*, [in:] *Arkleton Research Rural Change in Europe. Research programme on*

The motive "to produce one's own healthy food" is reminiscent of classical part-time farming which was largely subsistence-oriented is now assuming ecological significance.

Typically, people mentioned more than one motive, and only economic motives were rarely mentioned. When this was the case, it occurred in the Eastern Bundesländer with their high rate of unemployment and their insecure economic situation: in this case, the utilisation of returned land and returned farmsteads for the founding of a part-time farm was motivated by the wish to have a secure economic basis, a secondary income source ("second support leg") and to maintain and use this capital. But most of them also had an agricultural background in their biography in the sense that they had agricultural training, that they had worked during the German Democratic Republic in agricultural cooperatives, and that their forefathers from whom they had inherited the land in the context of decollectivisation were also peasants.⁶

As to the social situation of the transition to part-time farming, most of the respondents said that they did not discuss the transition to part-time farming with other peasants or with the chamber of agriculture, but only **within the family**. When such discussions with other peasants were mentioned, they were only friends. So, these decisions were only taken within close personal networks. This tendency is especially important in the Eastern Bundesländer, so that we can speak of a tearing of social networks which existed in the past. In these Eastern Bundesländer mistrust of chambers of agriculture and banks are stressed because they are seen as favouring the transformed agricultural cooperatives or enterprises. In the Western Bundesländer, where Chambers of Agriculture now offer more courses, the interest in consultation by chambers of Agriculture is more pronounced. The main interest is now how to fill out the schedules for financial promotion and technical issues.

In order to deepen the research on the motivation to continue farm work as part-time farmers, the interviewees were also confronted with the following questions:

"What pleases you in agricultural work and what does not please you?"

"When comparing extra-agricultural and agricultural work, how do you experience this extra-agricultural work?"

Results showed that work in nature and contact with animals were frequently mentioned. Another essential result was that agricultural work was experienced in exactly the opposite way to extra-agricultural work. Most of the respondents

farm structures and pluriactivity. Second review meeting Waldkirchen, 18–21 September 1988. Institut für Ländliche Strukturforchung an der Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt a.M.

⁶ This mixture of family tradition, previous agricultural professional activities and economic reasons were also found in another study as the main motivations for part-time farming in Eastern Germany, see: D. Czech, A. Hildwein-Scheele, und M. Nienhaus, Wiedereinrichtung landwirtschaftlicher Betrieb in den neuen Bundesländern, Göttingen 1994 (ASG- Materialiensammlung, No. 190).

worked in a dependent position and they experienced this negatively as lack of freedom; these persons mentioned mainly "working freely", "being their own boss", "free decisions", "creativity" as the essential characteristics of agricultural work.

Respondents in an independent position often characterised their extra-agricultural work as stressful and meaningless and in contrast agricultural work which is creative, meaningful and fulfilling. So, agricultural work has a much **deeper** function than a hobby (which was mentioned only twice and is only a completion to the principal activity). Negative aspects of agricultural work were mainly bad payment in relation to extra-agricultural work and bureaucratic aspects, e.g. in filling out schedules for financial promotion. The negative aspects of agriculture which were mentioned were the relatively bad financial returns, the great importance of bureaucratic procedures and the lack of days without work.

As to the question of future prospects, it is interesting to know whether farms had recently made investments. Following the stereotype that part-time farms are in a transitional state between full-time farming and giving up their farms it should be expected that investments should be avoided as much as possible. This is not the case. Naturally, the group of part-time farms which were created involved high investment. Especially in the New Bundesländer high investment was necessary, particularly in buildings which often had dilapidated roofs etc.

But also in other groups, generally less than half had made no recent investments. The general philosophy is that investments are made without making debts. Most of the interviewees also had wishes with respect to investments. Asked if interviewees would be interested in developing their part-time into a full-time farm, many respondents said that they would like to do this but it would be impossible because the income is so small and further land is unavailable.⁷ Those who recently reduced their farm size were also in the minority.

Characteristics of the Farm Enterprises

As to land dimensions, the result of these statistics which show greater acreage of part-time farms in Eastern than Western Germany was also found in this study. So the average acreage in the Eastern Bundesland of Brandenburg was 51.3 ha more than the acreage of western Bundesland of Rheinland-Pfalz which was 21 ha. It was also confirmed that this difference is partly due to the fact that in the Eastern Bundesländer more land is rented.

⁷ In another study it was found that 30% of part-time farmers of the New Bundesland Mecklenburg-Vorpommern were interested in changing to full-time farming when land would be available, see: P. Badoux et al. *Nebenerwerbslandwirtschaft in den alten und neuen Bundesländern, ein empirischer Vergleich*. Neubrandenburg, Schriftenreihe der Fachhochschule Neubrandenburg, Reihe a, 1997.

So, it was found that, on average, 24 ha were rented in Brandenburg whereas only 7.3 ha were rented in Rheinland-Pfalz. However, these mean values conceal enormous differences. So, in Brandenburg the acreage differed between 7 and 280 ha and in Rheinland-Pfalz between 5 and 80 ha.

In the perspective of this study the temporal process of acreage development is interesting.

Areas are not diminishing on all farms. Besides the farms which are given up and become smaller there are also farms which maintain their area and even those which extend it – in this study for 28 years after the transition from full-time to part-time farming; generally, younger farm successors are people who extend the farms which they take over from their fathers.

Over half the part-time farmers do produce plants and keep animals. So, in contrast to large full-time farms which are more and more specialised, they continue integrated farming which was characteristic for small family farms. Typically the animals are mother-cows with calves and breeding bulls; due to the time-consuming process of milking, they are preferred to milkers.

Other animals such as sheep, chickens, roe-deer etc. are also widespread. The plants which are cultivated are also diversified: besides the grazing land which can be found on the majority of part-time farms, normally different sorts of cereals are cultivated. Probably in order to achieve a better time distribution, summer and winter cereals are often combined. It is not rare that part-time farmers also have small potato fields, probably for self-consumption. Finally, approximately 10% have areas of uncultivated land. In summary, part-time farms are clearly more characterised by **diversity** than specialisation.⁸

Some agricultural machines are almost 40 years old. Farmers who only have meadows do not often use machines. Those who cultivate cereals, often have **both** old and new machines.

Only a minority – with great spatial differences – carries out para-agricultural activities, especially direct-marketing.

The proportion of income from agricultural activities is generally not very high. The average percentage of income from agricultural activities in relation to the total income was calculated as 17.3%; reported values ranged from 37.5% to 0% and two respondents reported negative values; 19.4% reported values of one third of the income and higher. So, it can be said that there are some cases where income from agricultural activities is important for the household income, – especially in the Eastern Länder of Germany – but in the majority of cases, there is no relationship between the great amounts of labour invested in agriculture and the financial outcome; this can be interpreted as a hint that economic motives for part-time farming are not the dominant motives.

⁸ This result was also found in other studies, e.g. Ritz (1984).

Problems and Solutions

The problems of part-time farming were raised by the question: "Each enterprise has its problems. In which area would you see the main problems of your enterprise?" The responses can be classified into two groups: those which were mentioned with a certain frequency in both regions and those which were specific for certain areas, e.g. the New Bundesländer.

The answers pertaining to the first group and with the highest frequency (18) can be classified as "financial problems". Essentially, there is a discrepancy between the income from the sale of agricultural products which is very low and the expenses for input, investments, and employees carrying out certain works. A second problem is the well-known time-problem (13) coming from the fact that part-time farmers have two professional activities on the same day if they are not yet retired or jobless.⁹ The third problem mentioned 8 times was the state and age of buildings and machinery.

The buildings returned to the former owners after decollectivisation were often in a very bad state, but also in the Western Länder the state and age of buildings and machinery were problematic. The fourth problem with the same frequency (8 answers) were problems with bureaucratic procedures in order to gain a financial promotion to be allowed to construct a new open stable or cowshed etc. Certainly, full-time farmers also have problems with bureaucracy but exactly because part-time farmers seek nature and freedom in their work, bureaucratic procedures are a hindrance. Other problems are shared with full-time farmers such as agricultural policy and the problem of farm succession which were both mentioned five times. However, there is still a regional specificity in this problem because the East-German part-time farmers are afraid that their children will go to Western Germany where they receive better payment. Further examples are the following problems of the New Bundesländer:

- conflicts with the successor of the former agricultural cooperatives;
- not enough enterprises carrying out certain works which the part-time farmer cannot do himself due to the lack of machines for mowing;
- in the Eastern Bundesländer, there are often not many rural merchants so that due to the lack of competition the products are sold at very high prices. However, also in the Western Länder, part-time farmers complain that they pay much more for these inputs than full time farmers purchasing high quantities.

⁹ Knickel und Schmidt found a close relationship between labour load and the development dynamics of the part-time farm: the labour times of farms oriented towards growing i.e. realising investment especially of young families were higher than those of farms with the perspective of giving up agriculture, especially of retired people without farm succession, see: K. Knickel & F. Schmidt, *Arbeitsbedingungen in klein- und mittelbäuerlichen Betrieben. Berichte über Landwirtschaft* (72,1) 1994, pp. 195-211.

In order to solve the problems connected with old machinery, the respondents cooperate with other enterprises (only 24% of the respondents said that they do not cooperate).

The partners of this cooperation are as follows:

other part-time farmers,	(30),
farmers with agriculture as principal activity,	(38),
machine circles,	(8),
machine enterprises,	(8),
enterprises offering machines conducted by labourers	(20).

(Multiple responses were allowed)

These figures show the importance of cooperation with other farmers, especially the main farmers who normally have more and more modern machines. It is interesting that this percentage is as high even in the special association of part-time farmers, and it can be assumed that it is even higher among members of the general German Peasant Association. But it is also interesting that there is a high percentage of cooperation with other part-time farmers indicating that a specialisation of part-time farmers seems to be developing. The cases where groups of farmers themselves own the machines in the form of machine circles is much rarer than those where they are owned by enterprises which was also reported by some respondents.

In order to see if labour cooperation is also of great importance, the interviewers were asked to indicate who worked how many hours on the farm. This question was differentiated as to times with high and low labour demand; here, only the results of the former situation are presented. From the 84 cases where the respondents gave quantified answers, it resulted that the farm owners work at times with the largest labour demands on an average of 4.77 h per day (with a variation from 1 to 16 h). In 1/4 of the cases, they work alone. It is more frequent that the wives of part-time farmers participate in farming; this is done in half of the cases. On average, the wife works 4.14 h per day. The parents of the farmers, in some cases also the father-in-law, also have an important role in labour attribution: they participate in the labour in 1/4 of the cases.¹⁰

The answers concerning the wishes on future labour cooperation were also different. The answer with the highest frequency was "To continue as now". Others wished for a better cooperation between part-time farmers. It was also proposed that the farm chiefs should help each other more without calculating working times. Another farmer proposed regular meetings with exchange of experience between part-time farmers and a coordination of purchases and sales; this prob-

¹⁰ F. Streiffeler, *The social situation of the transition to part-time farming in Germany*. Contribution to the 18th Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology in Lund, 1999.

lem comes from the fact that small farmers have a weaker market position than large farmers, and that they pay more for the inputs and receive less for sales.

In general, there is a strong emphasis on cooperation as a solution of the problems of part-time farmers. As to labour **cooperation**, the solution is found almost exclusively within the family. As to machine cooperation, there are no limitations to cooperating with other groups than part-time farmers, but there are problems in adapting the machines to small farms.

Part-time Farming in Society

In order to clarify the self-perception of part-time farmers in the social and political context, three questions were raised:

1) How do you judge the defence of the interests of part-time farmers in public?

2) Where do you see the most important achievement of part-time farming for society?

3) Do you think that the achievements of part-time farming are recognised by society and politics?

As to the answers to the first question, only 10 of the answers were positive. The majority of the answers were negative going from "extremely bad" to "it could be better". Especially in the New Bundesländer, the respondents said that part-time farming is unknown to the public.

In the responses to the second question there was a clearly central tendency: About 2/3 of the 85 persons who responded to this question mentioned the maintenance of the cultivated area as the main achievement of part-time farmers for society. Many respondents spoke of landscape conservation and "maintaining the landscape open" and "maintaining the landscape proper". Some emphasised that this is done even on soils with marginal profits. The achievement with the next highest frequency was the ecological one. Here hints to the more extensive cultivation techniques¹¹, to the good quality of the product and to the diversity which is maintained and which is in opposition to "gigantic monocultures" were mentioned.

The tragedy is, in the view of part-time farmers, that these accomplishments of part-time farming are not recognised by society and politics as it resorts from the answers to the third question which were almost all negative.

Most of the respondents (35) mentioned one of the different ecological pro-

¹¹ It is also the result of other scientific studies that part-time farms cultivate more extensively than full-time farms. Also, only a minority (22.6 % use pesticides), see: Verband der Landwirte im Nebenberuf, Saar: Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben "Nutzung der Nebenerwerbslandwirtschaft zur Landschaftspflege am Beispiel des Saarlandes", Saarbrücken 1996 (not published).

grammes of the Bundesländer. Many part-time farmers benefit from state subsidies. The promotion of keeping mother-cows was mentioned (21). It is interesting that those who indicated that they do not receive a promotion had the second highest frequency (22). Twelve part-time farmers participated in the Programme "Cultivated landscape" (KULAP). Many other programmes with smaller frequencies also had relations to ecological aspects such as the programme for the promotion of disadvantaged areas. In summary, the ecological aspect is also very important in the promotion of part-time farming.

Expectations Regarding Childrens

As to the following generation it was asked: "What do you expect concerning the behaviour of your children with regard to the farm of the parents?" And "What do you wish in this regard?"

At first, it must be stated that these questions had the lowest answer frequencies; evidently, they have a far horizon not affecting the actual consciousness; it seems, that the respondents did not have crystallised attitudes.

The answers showed that current part-time farms give their children free choice and that it is **no longer a social norm** that children take farms over from their parents.

The comparison between the four biographical groups shows that those who still run a part-time farm in the second or third generation have the highest share of wishes that their children take over the farm. The group where the part-time farmer changed from full-time agriculture to extra-agricultural activities as a main activity is in second place, and those who changed in the generations change in the third one (18,5%). Those who founded a new farm part-time without pre-existing farms in the family or with an interruption of the family tradition by collectivisation had the lowest share. In the New Bundesländer, parents often expressed the wish that their children should find a working place. Other responses which occurred with a certain frequency were vague; so, in a certain number of cases the respondents said that they wished their children could develop more interest in agriculture and that they enjoy farming.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm the general awareness that economic reasons determine the abandoning of full-time farming. But, generally, this does not mean the end of agriculture. "Growing or disappearing" are not the only possibilities; there is still space for possibilities that agriculture is carried out as a cause

in itself. Then, nature is not an economic production factor; nature is autonomous and experienced for itself. Partly, agricultural labour is psychologically used as compensation for stress, and free labour in agriculture is used as compensation for working outside agriculture. Part-time farmers see their contribution for society in the fact that they save nature for society in the form of a cultural landscape. In maintaining nature and agriculture which is not economically used, part-time farmers are opposed to monocultures and industrialised agriculture where this is the case. However, there are variations as to the role of economic motivations doing part-time farming. Part-time farmers who had longer phases of unemployment in their biography and who have an insecure extra-agricultural employment which is often the case with part-time farmers of the New Bundesländer, the non-economic motivation for part-time farming also exists, but it is in interaction with the economic motive to secure the livelihood.

Those who grew up on a full-time farm are deeply socialised into agriculture; "I'm a peasant in body and soul" and "I'm profoundly bound with agriculture" respondents said. So, this closeness to agriculture generally **remains** even after the transition to an extra-agricultural profession as a main activity. Even those who were socialised on a part-time farm maintain a certain degree of this closeness to agriculture.

Most part-time farmers are more interested in shortening the daily work time of the extra-agricultural activity than of the agricultural one. There is not a continuous cut-back of farm acreage; generally, after the transition from full-time to part-time farming, the cultivated area is diminished, but then there is a stabilisation in those which persist. Then, even a growth of the cultivated area can be remarked – certainly at the cost of enterprises which are given up.

Further research on the motivations for part-time farming should be carried out by comparing part-time and full-time farms which are directly given up. Research should also be carried out to explain why certain farms are continued and others not.

In summary, part-time farmers do not follow the alternative "to grow or to disappear" but they continue farming largely for non-economic reasons; they have many problems, but they also have solutions for these problems.