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Social aspects of regenerative agriculture.

Changing perception of farming, farmers and
food in contemporary societies.

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Economy and culture

- The impact of culture on the economy is still being underrated and even depreciated, but at least underestimated
- Why is so?
- „Economy you fool!” (Clinton). Modern policy – progress indicators predominantly economic, rather than social
- Postmodernity is an **era of aberration**: on one hand we are being ruled by MBA holders, on the other hand they keep asking social scientists how to sell products in **the economy of overproduction**
- Postmodernity is the time when we understand the economy is submerged deeply in social values and norms
- **Agriculture is also aberrated**: industrial (based upon profit motive) vs social (profit and common goods).

Agriculture – between economy, culture and society

- Agriculture is production
- Since very beginning is related with the nature and then – the economy (input – output, costs, profits)
- It is also deeply rooted in society and culture
- Food is not just a commodity anymore. It's a part of lifestyle, status manifestation. Value added by stories (origin, recipe, farmers' story, eco-footprint etc.)
- Regenerative agriculture is an example of strong relationship between economic rationale and culture

Farmers' choice.

Farmers' choice. Regenerative agriculture – bottom-up shift in farming

- Regenerative agriculture (Reg.Ag.) is a paradigm shift in food production, which is led by farmers, and it is based on the fundamental assumption **to respect and work with the environment rather than downgrading it.**



Reg.Ag. as rational choice in food production

- When we realise, that food security could not be ensured on a long term basis by more and more **intensive agriculture**, then the only way **is to promote rational use of natural resources in order to achieve regeneration effect.**
- As such TO FARMERS Reg.Ag. IS **rational strategy to achieve farm's durability through long-term accessibility of natural resources**, such as fertile soil, water, biodiversity and so on.
- THIS IS ESPECIALLY VALID FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMS

Reg.Ag. as a result of moral shift in farming

- Reg.Ag. is the product of cultural change among farmers
- This includes **changes of values and norms** of growing number of farmers into the system of **more sustainable farm practices**.
- Post industrial model of farming: from organic farming to other sustainable practices
- Post – peasant practices: return to the traditional, natural techniques.
- Werner Pevetz: peasant economy was almost 100% circular and technologically local-based and congruent (harmonical).
- Some farmers present attitudes, that tradition is a treasury of ready-to-use sustainable practices

Regeneration calculated

- *‘The recovery of biodiversity affects us all. We want to do more to address it and to offer solutions,’ – Dutch Farmers’ Union - Biodiversity **comes with a price tag**. That needs to be prominently visible in our food supply chain.’*
- It should be honestly admitted, that it is a form of **„contract”** between humans and the nature.
- **Sometimes (Often?) „Contract”** demands reward for being organic, agri-environmental, regenerative.
- **Expectation for subsidies. Expectation for added value in product price.**

The picture of ideal farmer – farmers' identities (PL, CZ, DE)

Ideal type	Characteristic
Businessman	Good manager, good employer, efficient, modern, productivist identity
Balanced	“actually we need to have a balanced agricultural world, where there’s some that’s really commercial and some that’s less commercial.” „Feet on business ground, but the head is still in peasant’s clouds”
Smart	Game change in response to new attitudes in society. Adoption of green schemes without adoption of green values. „The farmers adopting organic practices or participating in an AgriEnvironmental Schemes revealed themselves to be the ones creatively responding to the policy, economic and social landscape that is increasingly favouring the delivery of more diverse farming objectives”
Past keeper	Status quo is good. Farming with accordance to traditional rules. „Keep developing, but also remember and respect the way they did it in the past”
Future keeper	Farming as the mission of saving the environment / community / world.

Society's perspective

Changing view of agriculture in general

„Changed expectations that society is placing on agriculture—from something that **provides one good** (food) to something that **supplies many goods** (food, access to green spaces, healthy rural environment, flood resilience, reduced greenhouse gas emissions)

George Cusworth, Jennifer Dodsworth

Consumers enter the game

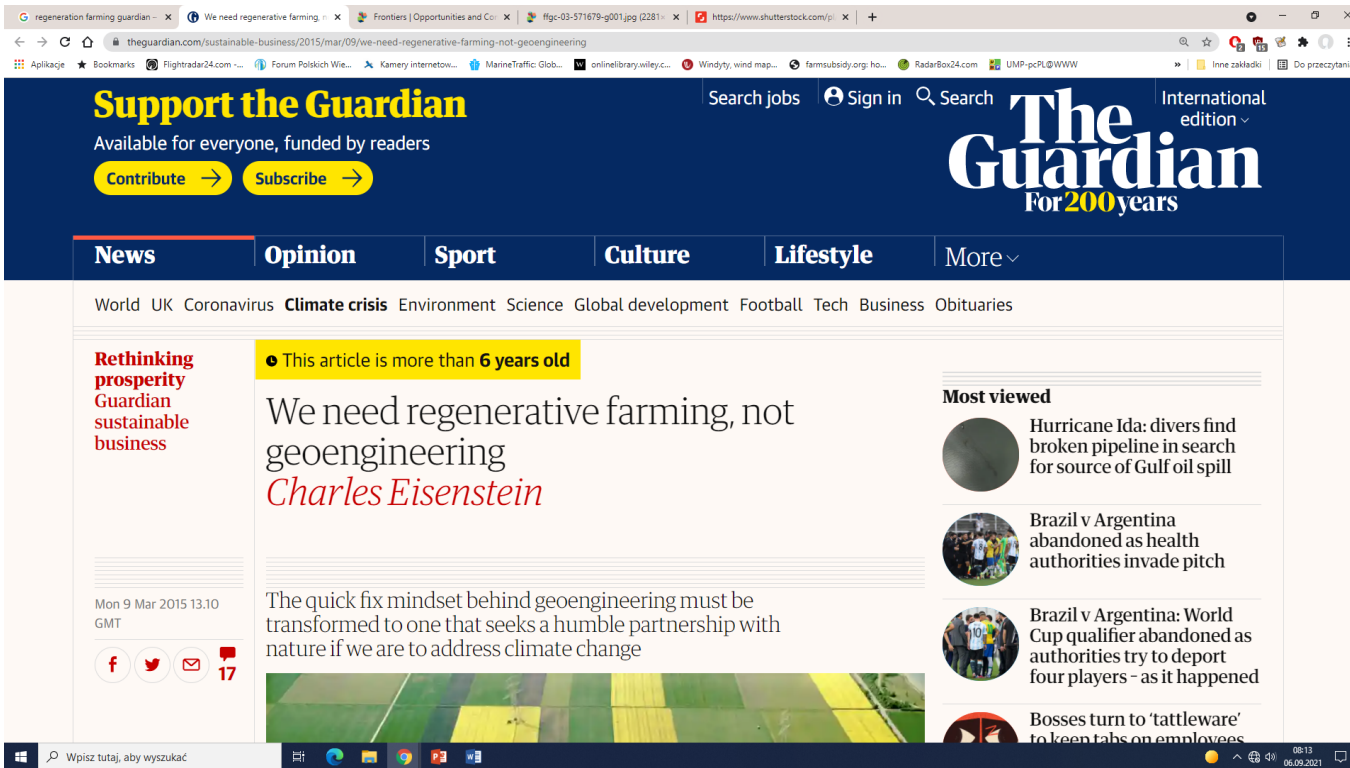
- Consumers became active and powerful influencers in food production.
- Community Supported Agriculture, food cooperatives etc.
- Widespread of **sustainable lifestyles** among food consumers **generates different forms of pressure on farmers** to dismiss industrial ideology of farming and introduce more holistic, long-term strategies that promise e.g. rapid carbon sequestration at global scale – for good of society.

Social construction of knowledge – the media

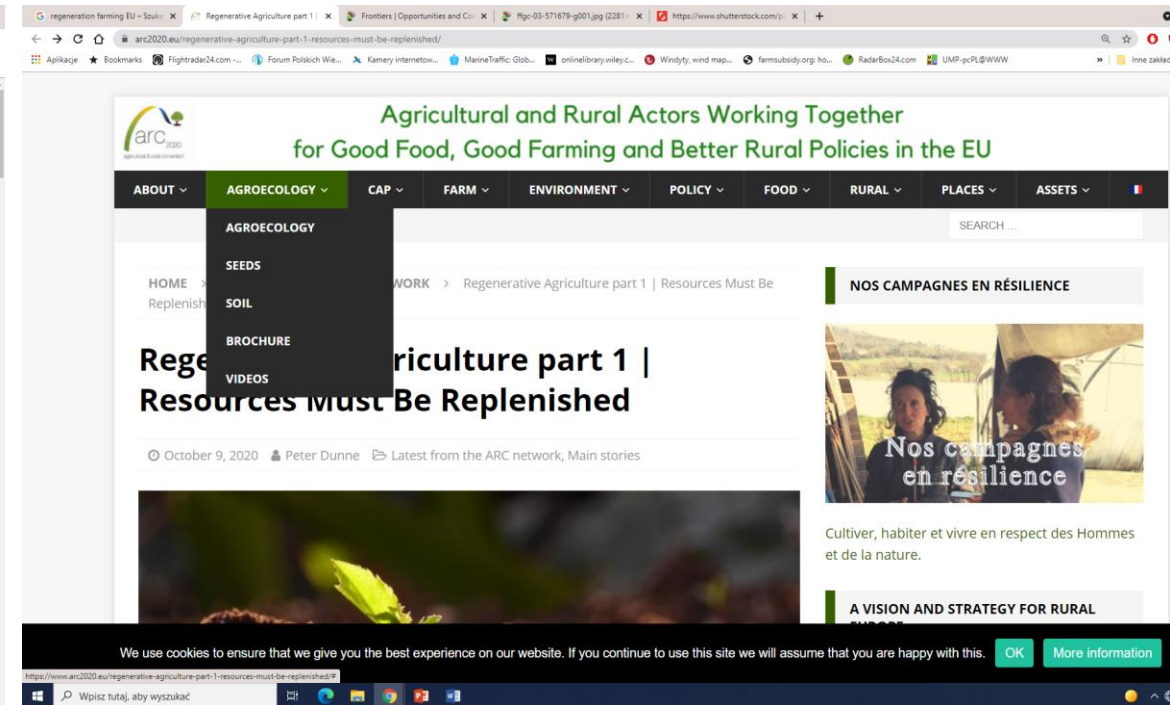
- Regenerative agriculture **has received significant attention** from producers, retailers, researchers, and consumers, as well as **politicians and the mainstream media**. As such it is a part of the debate on the future of farming in general.

2015

2020, ARC 2020



A screenshot of the Guardian website from 2015. The page features a dark blue header with the Guardian logo and navigation links. The main content area displays an article titled "We need regenerative farming, not geoengineering" by Charles Eisenstein, dated March 9, 2015. A yellow banner above the article indicates it is "more than 6 years old". The article's sub-headline reads: "The quick fix mindset behind geoengineering must be transformed to one that seeks a humble partnership with nature if we are to address climate change". A sidebar on the right lists "Most viewed" articles, including "Hurricane Ida: divers find broken pipeline in search for source of Gulf oil spill" and "Brazil v Argentina abandoned as health authorities invade pitch".



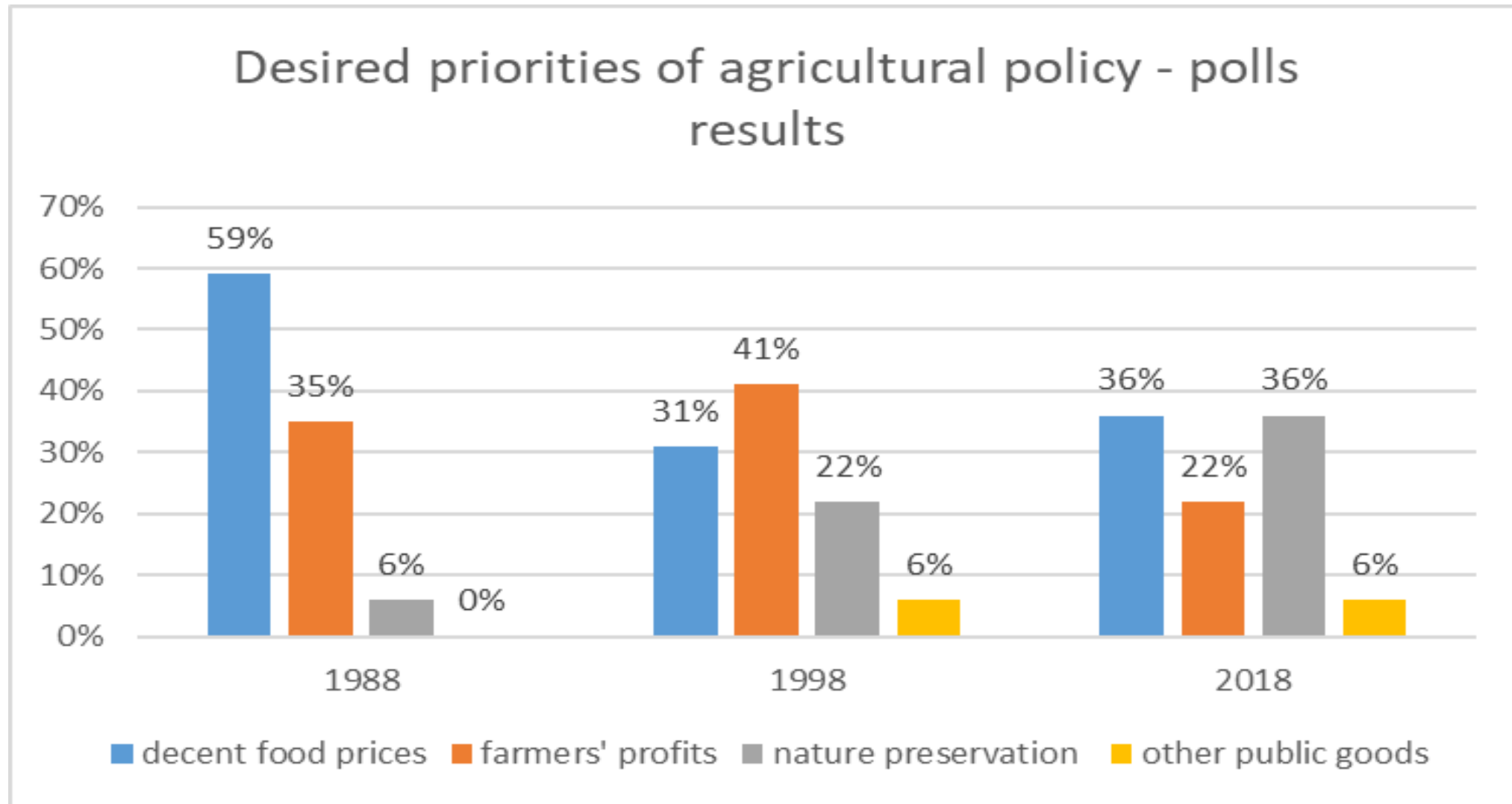
A screenshot of the ARC (Agricultural and Rural Communities) website from 2020. The page features a green and white header with the ARC logo and navigation links. The main content area displays a resource titled "Regenerative Agriculture part 1 | Resources Must Be Replenished", dated October 9, 2020, by Peter Dunne. The page includes a search bar, a navigation menu, and a sidebar with a section titled "NOS CAMPAGNES EN RÉSILIENCE" featuring a photo of two women in a field. A footer banner contains a cookie consent message.

Farmers – from „bad guys”

- Reg.Ag. should also be analysed as **normative shift** in perceiving farmers as ‘bad guys’: those responsible for reducing biodiversity, degrading soil by erosion and excess fertilisers, over-using water catchments and lowering water quality, destroying traditional rural landscape etc.

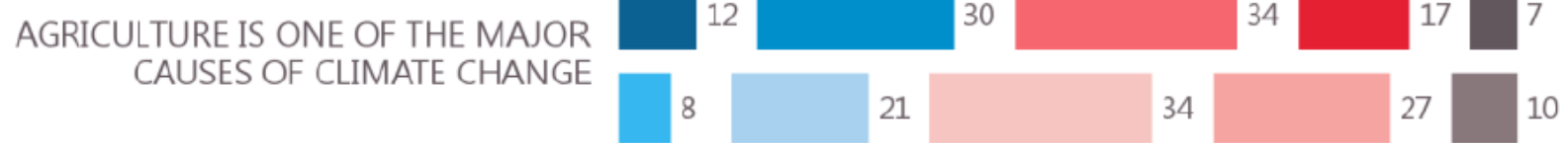
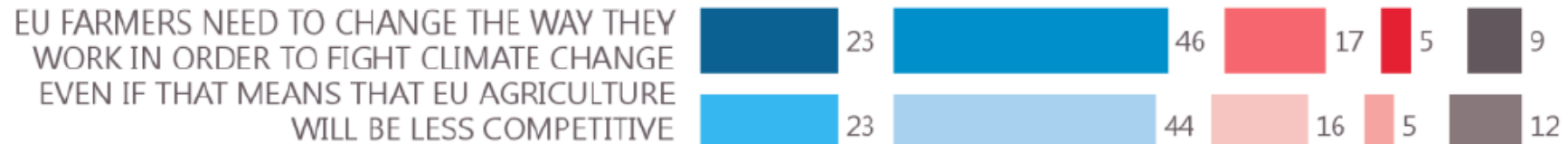


...to „friends of the nature”



QA22 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about agriculture and climate change?

(% - EU27)



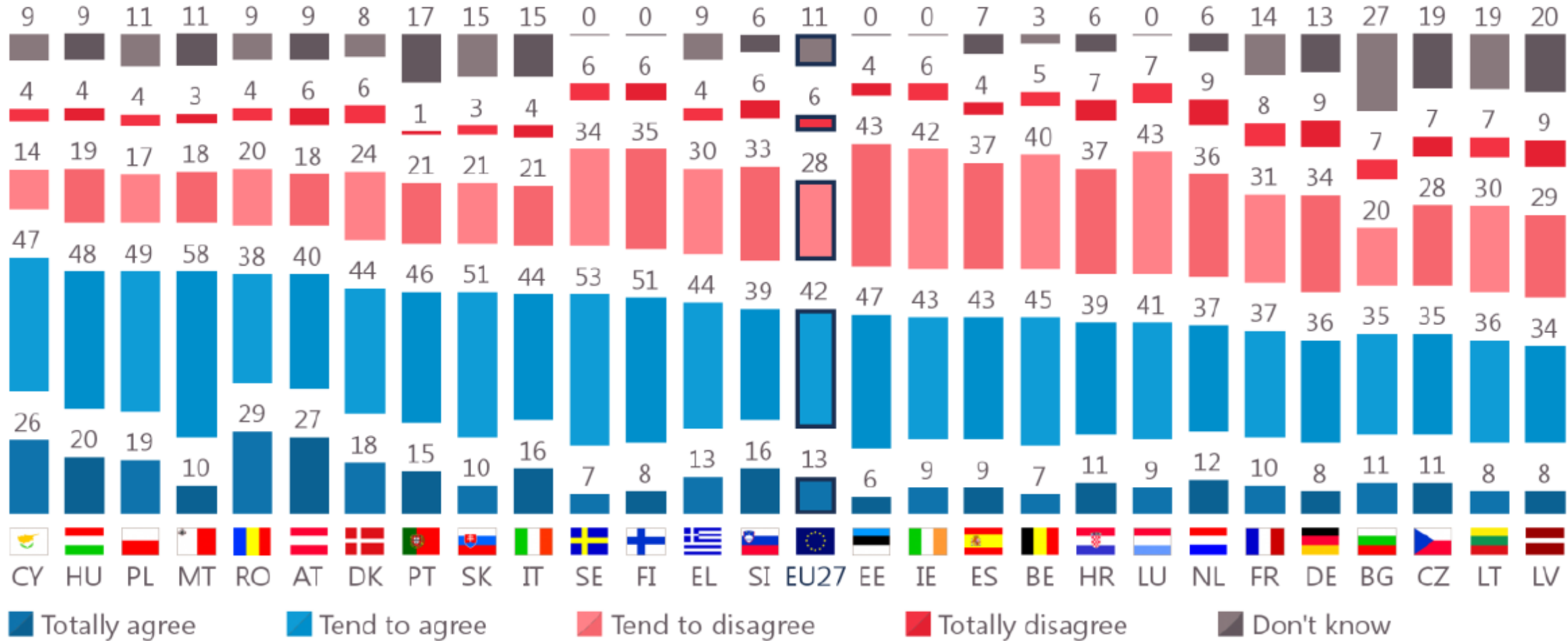
Aug.-Sep. 2020

Nov.-Dec. 2009



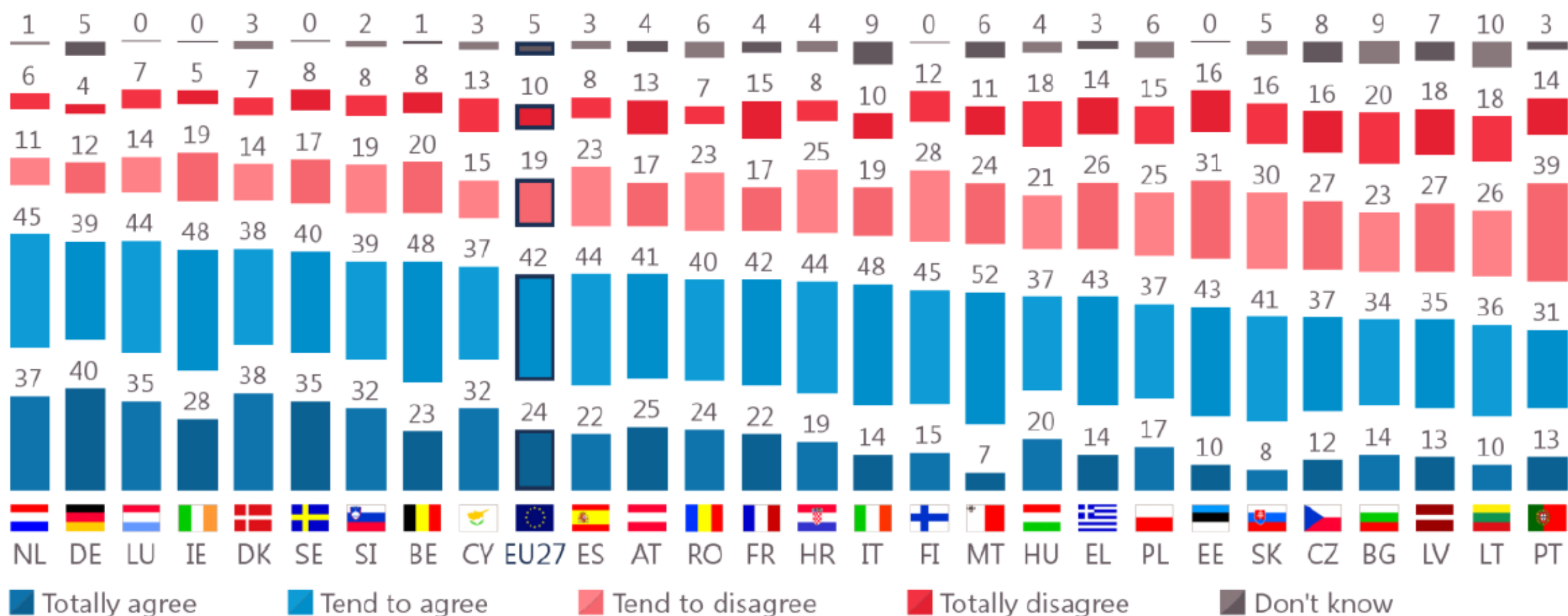
QA22.3 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about agriculture and climate change?

Agriculture has already made a major contribution in fighting climate change (%)



QA22.4 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about agriculture and climate change?

You are prepared to pay 10% more for agricultural products that are produced in a way that limits their carbon footprint (%)



Perception of farming/farmers by society

WAYS OF PERCEPTION	CHARACTERISTICS
INDUSTRIAL	Farming as regular, industrial business, profit-oriented, capitalistic rationality (maximum profit – low cost), business first. Productivity and intensification.
FARMER-TYPE	Farming is something different than regular business, but still is market oriented. Farmers as hard-workers, farms are „different“, farmers surrounded by grants and bureaucracy,
PEASANT	Farming as activity deeply submerged in the past. Ancient techniques, not modern, conservative, but society-friendly. Special rationality: profit is of second importance, keeping tradition is the first value.
IDYLLIC	Farming is nearly transcendental. Farmers as keepers of the faith, keepers of nature.
ECO	Farming as public goods delivery.

Eco-organisations and farmers – turning point

- Ecologists used to be inclined to point an accusing finger at farmers when biodiversity came under threat
- Criticism of agri-environmental financial schemes

A lot of money and bureaucracy delivered little or no additional biodiversity (...) because the money went everywhere, even to places where there was no chance of success.

*For most farmers, these were rules **imposed from above**. If they just obeyed them, they would get paid. But people had lost sight of what those rules were for and what good it all did. Whereas **it is commitment you need the most: you have to work at it.***

- Significant shift: growing number of eco-organisations recognize sustainable agriculture and the role of regeneration practices among farmers

Conclusions – social foundation of regenerative agriculture

- Regenerative agriculture - from **farmers' perspective** is:
 - rational strategy in farming
 - effect of moral change among farmers
 - calculation of farmers on the basis of contract between farmers and society (state)
- Regenerative agriculture comes and it is supported **in general society** by:
 - change in perception of farming and farmers (from bad guys to good guys)
 - changing expectations of citizens towards the role of farming (from food security to climate change)
 - pressure of society on farming sector by the state (cross compliance), the Third Sector and consumers

Conclusions

- Regenerative agriculture, apart of being production and market strategy, is a reproduction of interesting phenomena in social structures
- It is located **within broader paradigm of lifestyles change– towards sustainable living**, together with green economy, slow life, veganism, slow food, organic kitchen, fair trade, etc. etc.
- It comes with **fundamental redefinition of the future** we want for the third generation: green economy, social and economic justice, equality, plurality, trust and cooperation etc. (replacing the spirit of competitiveness, individualism, „healthy egoism“, mass economy)
- 40 years ago **it was „alternative“, now is being dominant.**
- Future is a social construct. Dominant lifestyles **could be contested** in unpredictable moment and upon surprising reasons.