

CONFLICTS AND COOPERATION BETWEEN NATIONAL PARKS AND FARMERS – A CASE STUDY FROM KISKUNSÁG NATIONAL PARK

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National parks and other forms of protection ensure the natural values in Hungary. However, a significant part of protected areas is under agricultural cultivation which forces cooperation between the two sectors. In our work, we identify the policy, institutional and sectoral changes, examine their effects, and the conflicts that accompany them by exploring the area of Kiskunság National Park (KNP). Based on document analysis, in-depth interviews, and GIS processing, we present the main reasons for the counter-interest between the sectors. We found that agricultural subsidies have an essential influence on nature conservation in Hungary because the lobbying capacity of producers has been strengthened and they maintain agricultural production in areas with the worst agricultural suitability and high natural value. As a result, experts believe that conservation's "playing field" has been reduced in recent years, and agriculture became determinative of what is happening in the landscape. Of course, the subsidy system has positive effects too such as the stabilization of land use in protected and Natura 2000 sites. But our results also draw attention to the fact that processes in the vicinity of protected areas have a significant impact on them. Therefore, comprehensive policy coordination and complex spatial planning are needed to achieve sustainable land use in our protected areas. From an institutional viewpoint, the KNP has less and less influence on the landscape management of protected areas so the cooperation between the two sectors needs to be improved and they should be treated as equals and independent of each other.