

## Collaboration turn: towards understanding stakeholder empowerment for agrarian policy making

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**Abstract.** *In the wake of Brexit, the change scenarios discussed by the EU speak of a higher decision independence in member states. Therefore, Lithuania faces a task to essentially review the practice of policy of agriculture. Also, the changes in balance of the power of stakeholders have become mandatory in consideration of global market, changing consumers' needs and technological progress. Thus, a current tradition where interest groups represent the stakeholders' rather than participate in protecting joint interests, should be changed. With respect to the relevance, the goal of the article is to propose the conceptual model of balanced stakeholder power in the processes of decision making when forming agrarian policy. Theoretical approach of collaborative governance was invoked along with meta-analysis of publications on stakeholder participation, collaboration and empowerment.*

**Keywords:** *Collaborative governance; Balanced stakeholder power; Policy of agriculture.*

**Raktažodžiai:** *valdysena bendradarbiaujant; suinteresuotųjų galios pusiausvyra; agrarinė politika.*

### Introduction

The relevance of associated interest power is most strongly substantiated by passionate debate about protectionism in World Trade Organization (WTO) and between the EU policy makers. Meanwhile, in a context of scientific research, the partition of interest groups into promotional and sectional shows best how important the interest groups are in times of globalization (Halpin, 2017).

Speaking of the stakeholders' influence on policy, the agrarian sector became extraordinary after the Second World War. Due to the social and economic importance of the sector, i.e. providing food for the society, modern western countries began to closely collaborate with farming interest groups. Thus, the so-called "agricultural exceptionalism" emerged (Halpin, 2017). Specific agreements defined the financial support for farmers, and these agreements were implemented into national policy and programs. Governments expected the State support to help increase the efficiency of the agriculture. In turn, the agriculture was provided with the power of influence on governmental and later on international political decisions. Because of this influence, scientific and expert research as well as adequate information supply for the agrarian policy makers became very important both on a local and international level.

Due to the importance of stakeholders in politics, their involvement in various fields of politics is institutionalized and legally define. EU rural development policy (e.g. Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005) requires Member States to strengthen the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of rural development programmes. Legislative processes at EU level provide the opportunity for lobby and accredited stakeholder groups to represent interests and comment on drafts of regulations at European Economics and Social Committee. Unfortunately, it is observed that these and other means do not always work effectively. The main reasons for this are: i) vagueness of content of stakeholder involvement, and ii) a lack of stakeholder capacity to collaborate when voicing interests and forming associated interest groups for policy making (Prager, Freese, 2009). The primary reason is the lack of (self-) empowerment of some particular stakeholders. In the context of Lithuanian agrarian policy, those are the small landowners who lack involvement and collaboration in forming the agrarian policy on a local level. The shortage of power of influence can manifest differently: through lack of authority, resources, discursive legitimacy etc. (Purdy, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the problem and form assumptions for all associated interest groups to be involved and adequately collaborate in forming and implementing the decisions of agrarian policy.

The mentioned practical assignment cannot be completed without solving conceptual task. Despite the fact of the vagueness of stakeholders' involvement content can be misunderstood as a theoretical problem, it influences practice more than imaginable. Scientists who carried out research are more and more doubtful whether stakeholder participation in politics is generally enough for ensuring appropriate satisfaction of all stakeholders' interests and in turn creating a sustainable society. Different interactive methods to reach this goal are discussed (e.g. Neef, Neubert, 2011). There is thought to be an expedient turn from participation to inter-sectoral collaboration (e.g. Basco-Carrera, 2017). Some scientists claim that conceptions of inter-sectoral collaboration and collaborative leadership are more effective when seeking the empowerment of stakeholders and balancing different interests (e.g. Huxham, 2000; Prager, Freese, 2009; Krom, 2017), including scientists whose main research field is agrarian sector (e.g. Halpin, 2017; Prager, 2015).

Based on the discussed relevance and problems, the goal of the article is formed: to propose the conceptual model of balanced stakeholder power in the processes of decision making when forming agrarian policy. This model allows to better understand the critical aspects of stakeholder empowerment. In that way, the article contributes to solving the beforementioned problem of vagueness of stakeholder participation content and forms theoretical assumptions for the associated interest groups to get involved and more adequately interact in making agrarian policy decisions.

In the article, theoretical approach of *collaborative governance* was invoked along with meta-analysis of publications on collaboration, stakeholder participation and interest groups' empowerment in the context of agriculture.

### **The context of problem of stakeholders' power in forming agrarian policy**

A balanced representation of agriculture interests and participation of associated interest groups in forming and implementing agrarian policy is a constantly relevant challenge.

At the time of new EU community budget forming period coming near, different scenarios of reorganizing implementation and funding of various common policy fields are being discussed. Due to the exit of UK, which was a donor member state of the EU, reorganization is inevitable. In this context, changes in common agriculture policy implementation mechanisms are one of the most important fields of change for Lithuania as the agricultural sector is allocated with the most EU funds. It is important to emphasize that all change scenarios discussed by the EU speak of higher autonomy of all states in their decision making and the necessity for fields that are funded only from the common EU budget to be eliminated. This means that Lithuania is faced with a task to form a new agriculture sector financing model which in turn requires to essentially review the practice of agrarian policy formation.

The problem of balancing empowerment of associated interest groups is relevant not only in Lithuania. Due to a part of economic restraints for agricultural activity being revoked and at the same time, strong multi-level international government structures emerging, countries have to adapt to two-level system of policy and public administration: on one hand, support international priorities, on the other hand, to meet the needs of society and its groups through the systems of internal policy and public administration in the country (Halpin, 2017). Speaking of agrarian sector, countries and their unions also have to coordinate on a third – international horizontal level based on the agreements like General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the World Trade organization etc. Changes in power balance in the circumstances of global market, changing customer needs and technological progress became mandatory due to practice used today being insufficient when associated interest groups represent the interests more than defend them (Fraussen, Halpin, 2017). It is agreed that the power and influence of international agrarian sector organizations, such as the Committee of Agricultural Organizations in

the EU, International Federation of Agricultural Producers and others on international policy is insufficient due to high fragmentation and inability to collaborate both internally and externally (Halpin, 2017). Low competence of agrarian sector stakeholders' participation in making decisions is discussed in a wide range of scientific publications (e. g., Prager, Freese, 2009; Prager, 2015; Neef, Neubert, 2011; Basco-Carrera et al., 2017).

To discuss the problem, it should be returned to the origins that cause specific ratio of the interested and policy makers. Agrarian policy is an atypical field of policy where the so-called "agricultural exceptionalism" in policy system was formed. This was based on the arguments of agriculture vulnerability and economic importance (Halpin, 2017). Later, after the creation of international unions, this practice was moved to an international level.

Speaking of the EU, the significance of agrarian sector interests did not diminish. Stakeholder participation is institutionalized and legally defined. European Union's rural development policy (Council Regulation No. 1698) requires Member States to strengthen the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of rural development programmes. Legislative processes at EU level provide the opportunity for lobby and accredited stakeholder groups to represent interests and comment on drafts of regulations at European Economics and Social Committee. Nevertheless, the stakeholders face with a difficult challenge – to effectively adapt to the changed realities of the nowadays. As Halpin (2017) notes, the agriculture interest groups have to: i) learn to work on two political levels: to carry out national priorities in the systems of internal policy and to effectively function in international dependencies on agreements General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Trade Organization etc., ii) adapt to conditions of national migration when the concentration of property decreases along with the number of farms but them also increasing in size in the country, iii) redistribute activity, focusing attention more to common market and less to the country level. All three challenges have a common denominator, i. e. the necessity for transformation in interest groups and their relations with one another both on a national and international level. Hence, changes must include not only organizational and interorganizational relationships but firstly the governance and social sector itself, consolidating the attitude of participative and collaborative governance in its functioning.

### **Key issues of concepts of collaborative government and participative governance and its implementation into practice**

In the practice as well as in scientific literature plenty of words exist that are used to describe governance structures and decision-making processes with partnership, alliance, multi-party working, participatory or collaborative management, interactive policy making, stakeholder governance between others, and concepts of participative and collaborative governance have much in common.

Collaborative governance is defined as structure and process of public policy decision making that involve various stakeholders to carry out a public purpose. Meanwhile, participatory governance is addressed to involvement of public, private for profit and NGO actors who are not normally concerned with decision making (Emerson, Nabatchi, 2015; Newig et al., 2017). If participatory governance speaks more about government consulting with stakeholders and other actions that are not related to common activities, collaborative governance emphasizes the process of working together. No essential difference between the terms is caused by the fact that “participative government” is more often used by European politicians and scientists while “collaborative government” is more frequent in North American context (Newig et al., 2017). Both terms speak about participation / collaboration in making political decisions and also in the assessment of their social impact. However, we do not agree with this explanation of the terms and take on a semantic attitude which constitutes clear limits between the following terms: [stakeholder] inclusiveness, [interest] representation, [stakeholder] participation and [stakeholder] collaboration.

A vocal example of the differences in terms is a referendum. The citizens participate in the referendum while the government makes a political decision based on the voting results even though there is no display of collaboration. Thus, although the terms participative governance and collaborative governance could be used interchangeably, notion of collaboration, in its content, isn't identic to participation. As Huxham (2000, p. 340) emphasizes, „collaboration carries ideological connotations associated with participation and empowerment. [...] Participation generally means inclusion of stakeholders in the decision making processes that affect them.” This means empowering stakeholders to take a central role.

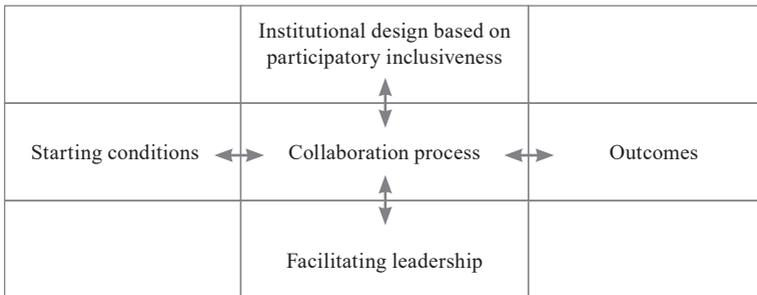
In the process of governmental decision making, both collaboration and participation can be more or less intensive, manifest only in some or all stages of decision making process. As Scott and Craig (2017) note, collaboration and participation is not a necessity but rather a strategic choice which allows to better reach specific policy goals. Therefore, it is more important to understand, what circumstances and mechanisms allow to act more effectively than to try to prove which term is more general. It is important to determine the motives and rationales for public participation and stakeholders' collaboration in order to reveal a coherent causal connection system and to identify the key success factors of stakeholder empowerment (Newig, 2017; Ansell, Gash, 2008). Huxham (2000) opposes this attitude and claims that in the context of the contemporary time, no organization can act alone, thus making their collaboration inevitable.

Both the concept of collaborative governance and the concept of participative governance were developed in practice as an alternative when governance fails due to high cost and politization of regulation (Ansell, Gash, 2007). A new conception was required which would allow to eliminate these drawbacks and to attribute them to the inappropriate strategy of political governance decision chosen earlier. It was expected that having the stakeholders included into the processes of decision making, the social

economic efficiency of politics would increase. However, the content of collaborative/participative governance is seen as ambiguous in scientific discussion. The aspect that is most disagreed on is what “government” means in the concept of *collaborative governance*. In general, governance is comprehended as a system of legal acts, decrees and juridical decisions that serves for publicly supported goods and services (Lynn et al., 2001, p. 7). Meanwhile, government’s inter-sectoral *collaboration* includes the associated representatives of private and non-governmental sector in decision making which blurs the sector power and influence limits (Stoker, 1998). To eliminate this objection, Ansell and Gash (2007, p. 545) describe collaborative governance as „a type of governance in which public and private actors work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes, to establish laws and rules for the provision of public goods”.

To implement collaborative governance conception in practice, the most important is the public interest and overcoming common societal problems. it is complicated because interest groups usually compete with one another for winning and on a higher, i.e. political level, it is difficult for them to give up the attitude of adversarialism and corporatism just like for the government to give up managerialism. The issues are more widely discussed by Futrel (2003), Fung, Wright (2001) and others.

Concluding the concept of collaborative/participative governance, it is mandatory to focus attention not only on goals which the government allows to reach more easily, but on the context of collaboration and process organization as well, which is quite complex in itself. Figure 1 presents a simplified model of collaborative governance, as illustrated by Ansell and Gash (2007).



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Collaborative Governance.**

Source: adapted from Ansell, Gash, 2007.

Discussing the implementation of collaborative governance model, Ansell and Gash (2007) claim that starting conditions are a critical factor. The initial amount of resources and quality, the stakeholders’ incentives to collaborate and the history of interaction between stakeholders determines, what the process of collaboration will be and what results can be expected.

In addition, the model states that collaboration requires specific – facilitative or servant leadership which focus on productive group dynamic and promotion of active participation.

Furthermore, successful collaboration depends on inclusion of key stakeholders because weak inclusion of stakeholders undermines the legitimacy of collaborative outcomes. The authors state that exclusion of stakeholders can lead to a situation when an alternative forum will be formed.

If all components are appropriately taken care of, a higher success of social and/or economic collective initiatives could be expected, cause by the implementation of collaborative governance conception. Nevertheless, by words of Huxham (2000), collaboration is neither participatory nor empowering, while moral imperative of collaborative governance is to tackle major social issues. Therefore, it is important to find a way to ensure a balanced stakeholder participation in policy making.

### **The involvement and participation of interest groups into political decision-making**

The importance of interest groups derives from the importance of public interest. The interest is described as a necessity to meet a personal need. This need is a basis for the interest due to particular benefit which meets personal needs of a person being obtained by realizing one's interests. Having found the means to meet the needs when personal needs are satisfied, and the environmental benefit or value is attained, it is stated that the public interest is accomplished (Trumpulis, 2010).

Recently, a liberal conception of public interest was proposed: the public interest (with taking into account this conception being appropriate for agricultural sector in the managemental perspective) is described as an all-inclusive, normative, conservative and equally applied instrument which by abstract norms ensures better conditions for everyone to reach for one's needs by using the available knowledge and skills (Korsakaitė, 2006). Beliūnienė et al. (2015) notes that it is not simple to come to a universal conception; its choice depends on political views, attitude to economic processes, role of the country and other factors. Public interest could be described as a set of results which have the biggest influence on a long-term survival and well-being of society. As Mackonis (2012) states, public interest describes only issues that are important in the society internally. Public interest is invoked to evaluate the inter-relations between the members or groups of society and not the relations with other societies. In this case, public interest has to be separated from national interest which includes the issues important to the society that emerge due to external circumstances of this society. The societal nature of the interest allows to state that societal relations become an objective condition for interest existence (Trumpulis, 2010).

Speaking about public interest, Krivka (2009) states that the subject of public interest can not only be the society but also large social groups. In this case, the mass of those subjects who express interest is important. According to the author, the country

should be separated from governmental institutions which could present their own interests as societal. Therefore, it is emphasized that governmental institutions *are not* the subjects of public interest but merely its representatives. The representatives of public interest are also non-governmental organizations and other physical and juridical subjects who defend public interest.

In conclusion, it should be said that public interest is comprehended as an interaction between the members of the society who help each other to satisfy their interests while the importance of interest groups is defined by the concentration of the interests (in other words, their mass). Following this logic, we can state that the participation of interest groups in making political decisions is of high importance, because in that way – through interest groups – the society can directly influence public policy which better or worse satisfy the needs of society members and their groups.

The ways and forms of society, involvement and participation in making public decisions can be evaluated on three main criteria: i) the volume or participation, ii) process of participation and iii) results of participation, where the first one usually affects the last two. Speaking of the participation volume, several main participant groups are distinguished (Lindblom, Woodhouse, 1999). These are voters, politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups. Interest groups represent or express the will of concrete stakeholders. Interest groups can have and does have influence on the policy formation, observes the work of governmental institutions, represent the interests of their members, collaborate with representatives of bureaucracy and attempt to attract the politicians' attention to their relevant and sore problems.

In agrarian sector, historically a situation emerged when the collaboration between the government and interest groups is based on traditions. Due to public interest being satisfied to the maximum only in the case of all decision-making process participants being bestowed with enough influential power and due to the imbalance of this power distribution, a part of interests may remain only one of the elements of public sector rhetoric (Šilinskytė, 2015). Purdy (2012, p. 410) notes that stakeholders with lesser influential power may be co-opted by more dominant parties. Thus, stakeholder involvement should be purposefully reviewed; tradition is insufficient. As well Fung (2006) notes that the level of democracy in collaboration process is defined by who is invited to participate. It is a very serious remark for those societies or sectors where processes regulated by the country do not bring the sought result in satisfying the public interest.

### **Turn from interest groups' participation to stakeholder collaboration: the conceptual model of balanced stakeholder power in agrarian policy making**

In terms of interest group influence in particular and stakeholder participation and collaboration in making agrarian policy decisions, it should be noted that principal

differences from the examples of intersectoral interaction of other sectors, are mostly due to the unique government's attention to agriculture through history (Halpin, 2017). In all European countries, associations have frequent contacts with relevant ministry departments, and the involvement of agricultural interest groups is informal and non-regulated. In legal acts, balancing of interests is limited to general statements such as „relevant stakeholder groups shall be involved”, thus the actual involvement of interest groups is based on the influence of the association, personal characteristics of the group's representative and the decision of ministry staff (Prager, Freese, 2009, p. 1158). Roness (2010) defines such participation as corporatist participation. The legal projects prepared by the government can be commented on by associated interest groups and other stakeholders, but in fact, they are approved unilaterally and become changes to laws, legal acts and decrees and if the proposals are international, they are submitted for the European Commission to consider where after the set procedures, they are approved to be implemented. In the EU, agriculture is basically regulated by the Common Agricultural Policy. Its flaws can be spoken out by farmer associations on a local level. However, it does not change the fact that policy is executed in a top-down principle and even though at first sight it is formed from the bottom, the process does not take into consideration the distortion of agriculture interest representation.

Due to all these various reasons, attention to the problem of stakeholder participation in agrarian policy making does not diminish. Here, two approaches can be distinguished: i) attitude of participation as panacea which states that participation can solve all problems in agrarian sector, thus drawbacks in participation concept should be searched for and eliminated (e. g. Pretty, 1995), and ii) attitude of “success isles” (e. g. Woodhill et al., 2012) which claims that evidence obtained by analyzing concrete interinstitutional agriculture projects and other case studies are more often an exception rather than a rule which proves the value of participation. An extreme attitude to stakeholder participation exists. The supporters of this attitude call the practice of stakeholder involvement a “tyranny of participation” and claim that only idealists or naïve people can believe in (e. g. Cooke, Kothary, 2004). However, a part of authors that hold these views think that participation should be transformed to other forms of interaction which would allow to break free of the “tyranny” of participation if only the entirety of interaction and dynamics and criteria of participatory practice could be comprehended (Hickey, Mohan, 2004). Some researchers of agriculture promote to give up the usual questions of who, when and in what way should participate in policy making and firstly ask if the participation of interest groups is necessary at all (Prager, Freese, 2009). Obviously, the extreme attitude is not accepted widely but its value is expressed through the renewal of attitude to intersectoral interaction.

The two main problems of participatory practice that are solved when shaping agrarian policy in collaborative governance mode are: i) how to include and empower all interest groups in policy formation activities, including those that are small and have weak influential power and ii) how to increase the commitment of interest groups on a wider scale, i.e. to look through a multidimensional prism (e.g. combining de-

isions on sustainable agriculture, food security and natural resource management), rather than protecting narrow interests (Neef, Neubert, 2011). It is also relevant in case of Lithuania. A research carried out by Civil Society Institute shows that civil servants lack interest in intersectoral collaboration while not all interest groups possess enough information in order to participate productively while state laws do not provide enough opportunities (Petronytė et al., 2015).

As said before, historically formed interest group participation is not enough anymore, and it is required to reinvent the situation and turn from participation to collaboration. This form of interaction requires a tighter interaction between the actors and is dedicated to the creation of a joint result while sharing the risks and benefits of the activity (Raišienė, 2008). It is required to form assumptions and institutionalize opportunities allowing all interest groups to get involved and adequately participate in agrarian policy making. In other words, it is mandatory to ensure the main principle of participative politics and implementation of collaborative governance because the current system of public administration does not function well enough in terms of the context of contemporary era.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that there are few models that create assumptions to ensure a balanced stakeholder participation and collaboration in making agrarian policy decisions. Moreover, there is a general lack of researches that discuss the possibilities of institutionalizing associated interest groups considering the specificity of agrarian sector. The question of associated stakeholder representation, involvement, participation and multilateral (intersectoral) collaboration remains essentially unsolved even when policy makers face challenges which require a good understanding of interests and needs of all stakeholders. It would seem that proportional representation of stakeholders or associated interest groups is what would help solve the problem. However, in practice, even after institutionalizing or in other ways defining the obligation of government to proportionally include representatives of all stakeholders, it would be difficult to implement due to particular characteristics and possibilities of stakeholders and associated groups themselves. Good examples would be such constraints as lack of motivation and skills, financial constraints and specifics of work in agriculture due to which smaller farmers and representatives of their interest groups cannot always participate in government sessions in which they are invited to speak out their needs. With this in consideration and summarizing the insights which are presupposed by the theoretical analysis of the article, *the conceptual model of balanced stakeholder power in agrarian policy making* can be proposed.

According to this model, the attention is turning from proportional representation of interests and involvement of stakeholders to policy making processes to encouraging stakeholders' engagement and balancing the power of interest groups in policy making activities where stakeholders attend. In other words, the model suggests switching from outer perspective to inner perspective and from regulation to self-regulation. In order to implement the model, institutionalization is required not

for the self-empowerment process but the principle in which the influential power of all interest groups is balanced *ad hoc*.

Following this model, no matter what part of large, medium and small farmers participate in policy formation and decision-making processes on a governmental level, every group is considered an equally significant part of the whole. This way, two essential problems in practice are solved:

- 1) despite the disproportion of the participants representing stakeholders, it is evened when voting on one or another decision, i.e. when a consensus cannot be reached;
- 2) the promoted common incentives would not exclude but rather infuse and include the stakeholders that used to have little influential power due to reasons mentioned before (e.g. financial constraints that prevent them to regularly travel long distances thus making it impossible to participate in common events, government sittings etc.).

Furthermore, one of the main factors that complicate decision making process is eliminated. That is the competition for influential power or in some cases, its brute demonstration in multilateral meetings organized on a governmental level.

Of course, this model requires elaboration and modelling for implementation in practice. In addition, it cannot be applied in all cases but only in those where homogenous questions that are relevant to all participants are solved. In other words, the influential power should not be equal when solving a concrete question relevant to a wide interest group related to satisfying the essential needs of that interest group which are required for them to function properly. An analogue to the current situation when the influential power is in the hands of large players could be confronting the society as a wide interest group on one side and people with disabilities who cannot walk as another interest group on the other side. Applying the current practice of decision making in forming agrarian policy, due to the group of people with motion disability being lesser and economically less beneficial to the society, its needs would be poorly represented or not represented at all. This example demonstrates that public interest cannot be measured purely through economic benefit which is extremely often done in agrarian policy, devaluating its wide social effect.

In this article, we produce the logic of the model. In this model, interest groups are distributed by their functional layer and segment in every layer. Since it is not a novelty to distribute interest groups into types, the stakeholders can easily attribute themselves and other stakeholders or associated interest groups to a concrete segment. Following this model, debates are transferred to a lower level because in governmental level meetings, the representatives of interest groups must be prepared to express a unified position of a particular segment on their needs and requirements. The fact that each segment as a whole must speak with one voice allows the participants to work more constructively and, in some cases, the influential power of more and less powerful interest groups is balanced through elimination of the vote count factor.

Practical application of this model is similar to decision making model applied in communities of joint property owners. Following this model, the owners of every registered property, no matter how many owners of the property there are, have only one vote in making decisions on the whole joint property. Therefore, when a property belongs to more than one owner, they are required to come to agreement on the position before the common meeting because during the meeting, not only the opportunity to express different positions is provided, but also the opportunity to vote separately because one unit of property gets only one vote.

Thus, when voting in meetings of stakeholders organized on a governmental level, the number of interest groups in a segment loses value. Only the number of functional layers the representatives of which participate in the meeting is of value. To give an example, if five representatives of large farmers participate in a meeting, their influential power as a whole is considered equal to the influential power of two small farmer association representatives. Also, evaluating in the perspective of supply chain, the influential power of the growers becomes equal to that of farmers, producers or any other associated stakeholder interest group.

## Conclusions

1. The main insight is that the challenges and context of the era requires to review the practice of associated interest groups in agrarian policy formation in order to balance out the stakeholders' influential power. Traditionally executed interest group participation in policy formation process is inefficient and does not fully satisfy the public interest. Therefore, it is proposed to turn from participation to collaboration, i.e. a form of interaction which requires constructive and equate involvement of all participants.
2. Our investigation shows that standing models of inclusion, representation and participation are insufficient in agriculture policy decision-making. Hence, *Model of balanced stakeholder power in agrarian policy* which proposes to turn from outer perspective to inner perspective and from regulation to self-regulation could be exactly what would allow to ensure a balance of interest groups' power. According to this model, the attention from proportional representation of interests and involvement of stakeholders to policy making processes is turning to encouraging stakeholders' engagement and balancing interest groups' power in policy making activities where stakeholders attend.
3. It may be difficult to accept that the wide variety of models on group participation in policy cannot offer an appropriate one for solving the discussed problem of balancing interests. As a restriction, the traditional attitude to the influence and importance of agriculture interest groups can complicate the ability to consider the conceptual *model of balanced stakeholder power* in agrarian policy making with no prejudice. Therefore, in a future it would

be valuable to mathematically illustrate, schematically visualize and empirically examine how the disproportion of interest groups participating in decision making processes manifests in the agrarian policy formation in Lithuania.

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## **Bendradarbiavimo link: suinteresuotųjų įgalinimas formuojant agrarinę politiką**

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Anotacija

Suinteresuotųjų dalyvavimas formuojant ir įgyvendinant agrarinę politiką tapo itin aktualus iššūkis Lietuvai. ES svarstomi naujo laikotarpio politikos pokyčių scenarijai kalba apie didesnę sprendimų savarankiškumą šalyse narėse. Dėl to Lietuvai kyla uždavinys iš esmės peržiūrėti agrarinės politikos įgyvendinimo principus. Suinteresuotųjų galios balanso pokyčiai globalios rinkos, kintančių vartotojų poreikių ir technologinės pažangos sąlygomis tapo būtini dar ir dėl to, kad nebepakanka ligšiolinės tradicijos, kai asocijuotos interesų grupės daugiau reprezentuoja, nei gina atstovaujamus interesus. Šios problematikos pagrindu formuluojamas straipsnio tikslas – pateikti koncepcinį agrarinio sektoriaus suinteresuotųjų galios pusiausvyros modelį. Tikslui pasiekti pasitelkta valdysenos bendradarbiaujant teorinė prieiga ir mokslinių publikacijų meta-analizė.

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