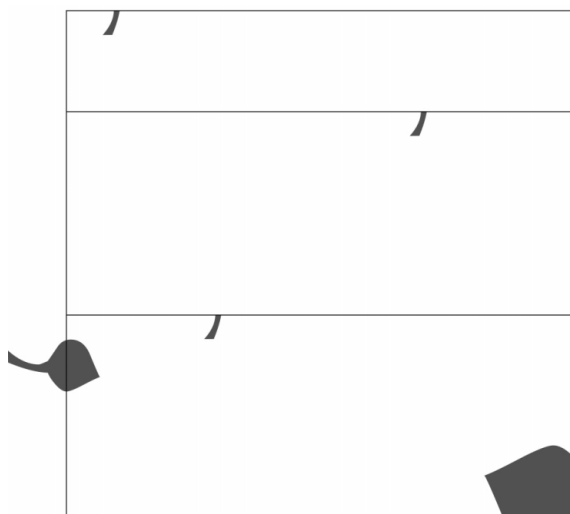


*Emotions and Agrarian Protest in Spain:
Discursive Responses to Environmental Policy
(2006-2025)*



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Emotions and Agrarian Protest in Spain: Discursive Responses to Environmental Policy (2006-2025)

Highlights:

1. Media discourse analysis of agrarian emotional framing in Spain (2006-2025).
2. Emotional narratives intensify during the 2024-2025 wave of agrarian protests.
3. Media emotional framing is used to contest agrarian structural asymmetries.
4. Emotional framing accompanies resistance and outlines discontent.

Abstract: The eco-regulatory shift within the European Union has generated intense socio-environmental conflict, wherein the emotional dimension of the agricultural sector represents a critical component of public debate. This article conducts a media discourse analysis of 342 news articles (2006-2025) to examine how the Spanish press construct media representations of the emotional responses attributed to agrarian actors facing the EU's sustainability transitions. The analysis identifies anxiety, dissatisfaction, anger and suffering as core emotional states that recur systematically across the studied period, with a marked intensification during the 2024-2025 wave of protests. These emotional states are not represented in isolation; rather, they are embedded in media narratives that contest the material dependencies and structural asymmetries affecting the agrarian sector. By focusing on the discursive function of affect, this study highlights how emotional framing serves to articulate collective resistance and define the boundaries of legitimate discontent in times of socio-environmental friction.

Keywords: Agrarian movements, Climate governance, Socio-environmental conflicts, Farmers, Media discourse analysis, Sustainability transition, Spain.

Emociones y protesta agraria en España: respuestas discursivas a la política ambiental (2006-2025)

Ideas clave:

1. Análisis de discurso mediático del marco emocional agrario en España (2006-2025).
2. Las narrativas emocionales se intensifican durante las protestas agrarias de 2024-2025.
3. El marco emocional mediático se utiliza para disputar asimetrías estructurales.
4. El marco emocional acompaña la resistencia y delimita el descontento.

Resumen: El giro eco-regulatorio en el seno de la Unión Europea ha generado un intenso conflicto socioambiental, en el que la dimensión emocional del sector agrario representa un componente crítico del debate público. Este artículo realiza un análisis del discurso mediático de 342 noticias publicadas entre 2006 y 2025, con el objetivo de examinar cómo la prensa en España construye el paisaje emocional de los actores agrarios ante las transiciones hacia la sostenibilidad impulsadas por la Unión Europea. El análisis identifica la ansiedad, la insatisfacción, la ira y el sufrimiento como estados emocionales centrales que aparecen de forma recurrente a lo largo del periodo estudiado, alcanzando una notable intensificación discursiva durante la oleada de protestas de 2024-2025. Estos estados emocionales no operan en el vacío; funcionan como elementos centrales dentro de las narrativas mediáticas orientadas a cuestionar las dependencias materiales y las asimetrías estructurales del sector agrario. Al centrarse en la función discursiva de los afectos, este estudio muestra cómo el encuadre emocional sirve para articular la resistencia colectiva y definir los límites del descontento legítimo en tiempos de fricción socioambiental.

Palabras clave: Movimientos agrarios, Gobernanza climática, Conflictos socioambientales, Análisis del discurso mediático, Transición hacia la sostenibilidad, España.

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1. Introduction

Agriculture is a primary interface between society and nature (Viana et al., 2022), yet it faces complex sustainability challenges across environmental, economic, and social dimensions (El Bilali & Allahyari, 2018). While traditional practices have prioritised production volume, the environmental impacts of industrial modes of production now require a shift towards sustainability (Duru et al., 2015). Achieving this transition entails a long-term and multidimensional shift aligned with sustainable modes of production and consumption (Markard et al., 2012). As a complex process involving multiple actors, it requires tolerance of uncertainty and critical reflection on public policy (Köhler et al., 2017). Furthermore, divergent perceptions and power imbalances often generate conflict during this transition (O'Brien, 2012; Patterson et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2019).

In response to growing climate concerns, governments have introduced sustainability-oriented regulations targeting agriculture as part of broader transition efforts. In Europe, however, these measures have generated tensions and conflict, as increasingly comprehensive environmental legislation has been met with protests and mobilisations (Sánchez-Navarro et al., 2024). Crucially,

emotions play a central role in these dynamics. They are understood as a social phenomenon (Scheff, 1990), whereby shared emotional responses reinforce internal cohesion and sustain conflict by shaping a collective emotional climate (Bodtker & Katz Jameson, 2001; Stevens et al., 2020). From this perspective, Jasper (1998) highlights emotions as a key component of social action, emphasising the role of perceived injustice as a motivational force. He shows that emotions are closely intertwined with beliefs, cognitive frameworks, and moral values, constituting culturally embedded phenomena that underpin collective identity and structure frames of justice.

Consequently, the success of this socio-ecological shift depends not only on technical and institutional factors, but also on how agrarian actors perceive and emotionally respond to the policies driving such change. In this sense, many of these actors perceive climate and environmental policies (CEPs) as unjust in both their design and implementation. These perceptions are associated in public and media discourse with emotional narratives linked to waves of protest across several countries—a dynamic where deep-seated emotional responses (Scheff, 1990; Rosenwein, 2006) actively reshape contemporary policy frameworks (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017; Stevens et al., 2020).

Although psychological research has increasingly addressed climate-related perceptions and emotions (e.g., Brosch, 2021; Van Valkengoed et al., 2021), the emotional dimension of agrarian conflict and protest remains significantly underexplored. The literature on this topic is still limited, with a few notable exceptions such as the works of Stevens et al. (2020) and Mazzocchi et al. (2024). This narrow scholarly focus reveals a critical gap in understanding how emotions and discourse shape responses in the agricultural sector to sustainable transitions in Europe. Addressing this gap is imperative given the ongoing unrest and challenges within the sector, with recent news reports highlighting the multiple pressures it currently faces (Ciordia, 2025).

To contribute to this debate, this article addresses the identified gap by examining how media discourses construct the emotional responses of agrarian actors to CEPs, their perceptions of injustice within their socio-political context, and the resulting protest movements. Specifically, it poses a

two-pronged research question: How does the press construct the emotional responses of agrarian actors facing the sustainability transition in Europe, and how are the emotions discursively linked to collective mobilisation and sociopolitical dynamics? This question is examined through a discourse analysis of Spanish media coverage of the agricultural sector, offering a critical case study of a nation highly impacted by European regulations. As Hutchison and Bleiker (2017) argue, discourse is a key medium through which emotions are expressed, shaped, and understood in political contexts. The interaction between discourse and emotion influences collective behaviour and provides a lens for examining the emotional dynamics underlying social and political processes. By analysing how Spanish newspapers represent agricultural protests, environmental regulations, and the voices of key actors, this article examines how emotional responses attributed to agrarian actors are portrayed in the media and how these representations are associated with narratives of conflict, resistance, and change in the context of the transition towards sustainable agrarian systems.

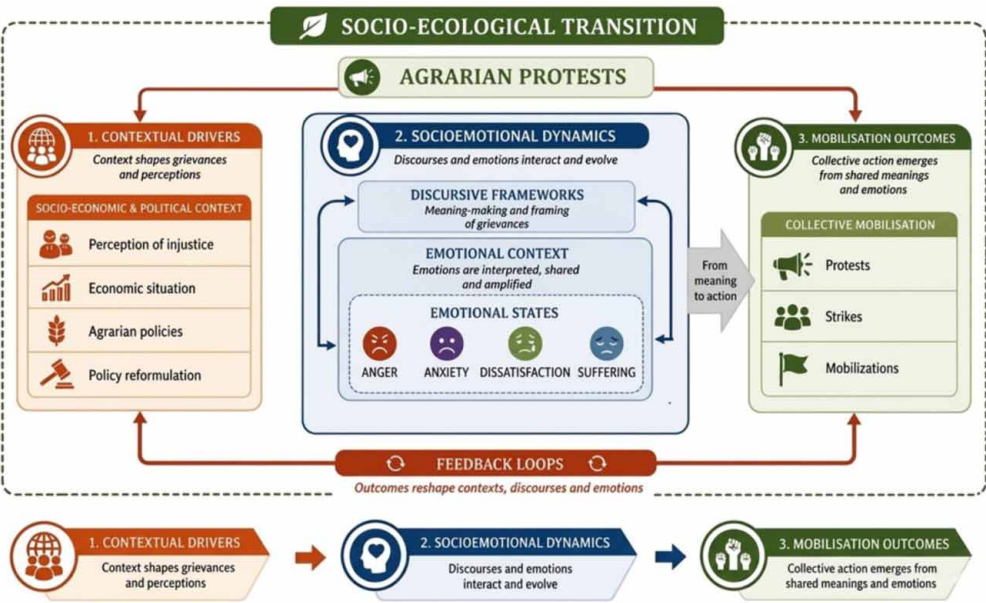
The work is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the analytical framework, addressing three conceptual strands and the contextual factors underpinning conflict. Section 3 details the research methodology. Section 4 presents the main findings of the study. Section 5 discusses the implications for sustainability and proposes future policy recommendations, and Section 6 concludes the study.

2. Analytical framework: theory and context

The analysis of socio-ecological transitions requires a multidimensional approach that accounts for the contextual factors shaping these processes and their implications for the livelihoods and practices of agrarian actors. In particular, attention must be paid to the socioeconomic and political context of the agrarian sector.

Currently, the emotional dimension of these transformations warrants consideration. Such structural conditions generate affective responses that vary according to actors' perceptions and lived experiences. These emotions are articulated through collective discursive frames that enable mobilisation and protest and may, in turn, influence policy reformulation (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017; Stevens et al., 2020). The interaction between context, emotions, and discourse is therefore central to understanding processes of change in agrarian governance.

Figure 1.
The socioemotional analytical framework of agrarian protest



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 1 presents the socioemotional analytical framework of this study, which conceptualises an integrated pathway that unfolds across three distinct yet interrelated dimensions: (1) Contextual drivers, where socioeconomic and

policy-related factors shape collective grievances and perceptions, acting as foundational conditions; (2) these drivers fuel socioemotional dynamics, a process where discursive frameworks and media representations interact, integrating emotional contexts, and the portrayal of deep-seated emotional states like anger, anxiety, and dissatisfaction, all grounded in a broader sense of suffering; (3) these dynamics are discursively linked to action through a discursive "meaning-making" process, resulting in mobilisation outcomes such as collective protest, strikes, and other forms of mobilisation. Significantly, the model accounts for feedback loops, whereby these mobilisation outcomes actively reshape the original contextual drivers, discourses, and emotional states, creating a dynamic of continuous interaction. This iterative sequence constitutes the core analytical model guiding the empirical analysis.

Rather than a linear process, this framework is operationalised as a dynamic feedback loop in which contextual conditions are represented as giving rise to emotional responses that are crystallised in discourse. This perspective highlights the importance of emotional dynamics in the analysis of socio-ecological transitions, particularly when these processes generate resistance and claims for justice.

This section combines the analytical framework with a contextual discussion necessary to empirically situate these interacting dimensions. Section 2.1 provides background on the socioeconomic and policy context, while Section 2.2 develops the theoretical mechanisms mapping emotions, discourse, protest, and policy change.

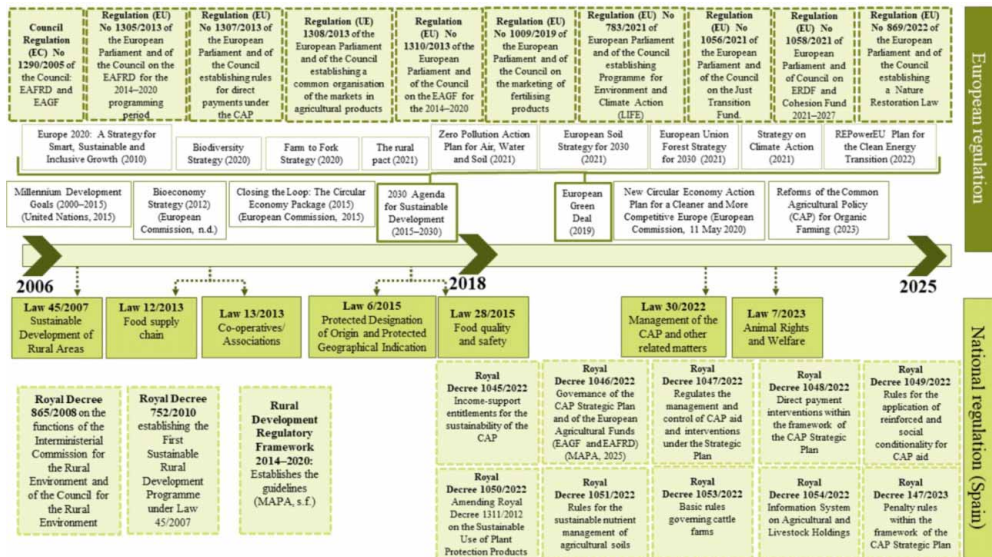
2.1. Contextual frameworks contributing to the conflict: socioeconomic and policy context

Awareness of the socioeconomic impacts of socio-ecological transitions—particularly within the agrarian sector—has increased in recent years (Just Transition Observatory, 2025). While farm incomes indicate sectoral viability, persistent volatility generates uncertainty that undermines the well-being of agrarian actors (Cerroni, 2020; Finger & El Benni, 2021). These

transitions are often perceived as threatening due to rising costs, non-EU competition, and imbalanced value distribution (Finger & El Benni, 2021; Mazzocchi et al., 2024). A key grievance concerns structural asymmetry in CAP subsidy allocation, whereby large agri-industrial enterprises benefit disproportionately compared to family farms (Pierangeli et al., 2024). These economic pressures and structural imbalances represent core contextual drivers that directly shape agrarian actors' grievances and perceptions.

At the same time, growing concern over climate change has prompted governments to introduce increasingly ambitious regulatory frameworks aimed at promoting agrarian sustainability. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) and, within the European Union, the European Green Deal (2019), marked a decisive shift in agricultural policymaking (Castillo-Díaz et al., 2025). These initiatives established concrete targets, including a 50 % reduction in pesticide use and a 20 % reduction in fertiliser consumption (European Commission, 2020), which subsequently informed reforms of the CAP for the 2023-2027 programming period, embedding environmental sustainability and rural development more firmly within its objectives (European Commission, 2023; Castillo-Díaz et al., 2025). Within our analytical framework, this dense regulatory landscape constitutes the primary policy context underpinning contemporary agrarian conflict.

Figure 2.
Evolution of European and Spanish environmental legislation and regulatory framework (2006–2025)



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Díaz et al. (2021); Cifuentes-Faura (2022); Del Giudice (2024).

Figure 2 presents a timeline of European and Spanish environmental legislation between 2006 and 2025, illustrating the increasing complexity of the legal and administrative framework. These regulatory frameworks place environmental sustainability, food security, and animal welfare at the core of agrarian governance (Agovino et al., 2019; European Commission, 2020). By tracing this chronological accumulation of demands, the timeline illustrates how the changing policy context has intensified over two decades, operating as a sustained contextual driver that underpins contemporary agrarian discontent.

Beyond technical design, policy effectiveness depends on political leadership, inclusive governance, and citizen participation (Lipari et al., 2024). Social acceptance and behavioural adaptation are also crucial, as they are shaped by perceptions of effectiveness, distributive justice, and self-interest

(Dechezleprêtre et al., 2025). These perceptions are socially constructed within reference groups that filter policy information (Lipari et al., 2024). Interaction predominantly with like-minded peers limits deliberation and increases polarisation (Currarini et al., 2009), fostering perceptions of injustice that exacerbate social conflict.

Given these perceptions of policy injustice, social justice provides a useful theoretical framework for analysing conflict within the agrarian sector. It offers a multidimensional lens through which to examine how equity, recognition and participation—or their absence—shape responses to structural change, including socio-ecological transitions. Social justice is commonly conceptualised as comprising three interrelated dimensions—distributive (fair allocation of resources), recognition-based (respect for cultural and social identities) and participatory (meaningful involvement in decision-making processes) (Fraser, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2016). Conversely, perceptions of injustice arise when lived experiences diverge from expectations of fairness, triggering emotional responses such as anger and fostering collective mobilisation, given the strong influence of justice perceptions on behaviour in social and political contexts (Gamson, 1992; Tyler & Smith, 1995; Opatow, 2011). Within our analytical framework, these multi-layered contextual conditions act as the primary drivers shaping the shared grievances and socioemotional dynamics that underpin contemporary agrarian unrest, which are analysed in detail in the following section.

2.2. Emotional states and discursive frameworks in agrarian protest

This section conceptualises emotions not merely as static variables, but as dynamic processes that, through discursive frameworks, translate contextual pressures into protest and political change. While psychological traditions often define emotions as involuntary processes triggered by internal or external catalysts—generating cognitive, physiological, and behavioural responses (Reeve, 2011)—sociological perspectives emphasise cognitive appraisal (Lazarus, 1991a, 1991b). From this standpoint, emotional responses emerge from the complex

interaction of biological, cognitive, and socio-cultural processes, heavily influenced by socialisation and cultural contexts (Reeve, 2011).

Within our analytical framework, CEPs, perceptions of injustice, and the broader sociopolitical context act as primary contextual drivers that elicit profound affective responses among actors in the agrarian sector. These drivers trigger cognitive evaluations (e.g., negative thoughts regarding exclusion from policy design) and subsequent behavioural responses, such as mobilisation. Emotions thus perform key functions: adaptive, by protecting occupational interests (Izard, 2007); social, by fostering group solidarity (Reeve, 2011); and motivational, by driving political change (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990; Rosenwein, 2006). This underscores their central role in social movements (Jasper, 1998) and conflict dynamics.

The distinction between fleeting emotional responses and more enduring emotional states draws on interdisciplinary perspectives. While Ekman (1992) defines basic emotions as short-lived responses to specific events, Scherer (2005) describes emotions as multicomponent processes, and Russell (2003) distinguishes between emotional episodes and more diffuse affective states. Building on this, Hochschild (1979) emphasises that enduring emotional states—such as anxiety, dissatisfaction and suffering—are shaped by cultural norms and function as affective climates that may shape collective behaviour in contexts of protest and policy resistance. These states are closely linked to the emergence, development, and outcomes of social movements (Olson et al., 2025). Among them, anger is particularly prominent, as it motivates protest and demands for change, especially in situations perceived as unjust (Jasper, 1998; Holmes, 2004). Conversely, anxiety and fear may also shape social movements depending on their intensity. Jasper (1998) argues that intense anxiety tends to increase fear, thereby discouraging participation by framing situations as excessively risky. However, low-to-moderate anxiety can play a decisive role in socio-political action, fostering mobilisation by encouraging information-seeking and engagement in protest participation.

Crucially, these socioemotional dynamics are articulated through discourse. Discourse plays a central role in shaping thought and action, providing a key

framework for understanding emotions in political contexts (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017). It contributes to the construction of meaning, the establishment of relationships, and the definition of reality by signalling which forms of knowledge are considered legitimate (Sanz-Hernández, 2024). Emotions are not only expressed through discourse but are also discursively constructed, shaping specific ways of perceiving and feeling (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017)

In this sense, discourse carries intrinsic emotional content rooted in perception (Elster, 1999). Language and communication thus constitute sites where emotions are produced, concealed, and transmitted (Scheff, 1990). Rather than merely reflecting political dynamics, emotions actively shape them by influencing perceptions of legitimacy and responsibility, operating as key mechanisms through which structural conditions are translated into political agency and contestation (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990; Rosenwein, 2006).

Building on this interplay between emotional states and discursive frames, the conflict between the agrarian sector and policymakers can be understood as a confrontation between competing interpretative frames and associated power relations (Redpath et al., 2013; Pound, 2015; Young et al., 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2019). As Dewulf et al. (2009) argue, such contrasting framings shape perceptions of legitimacy and influence both the duration and intensity of conflict. These interpretative divergences have fuelled widespread protest movements across Europe, reflecting sectoral discontent arising from the intersection of environmental regulation with broader socio-economic and political concerns (Bujdei-Tebeica, 2024; Mazzocchi et al., 2024). In this context, participation in protest emerges as a form of political action aimed at contesting CEPs perceived as unjust or exclusionary (Rochon & Mazmanian, 1993; Lipari et al., 2024).

3. *Methodology*

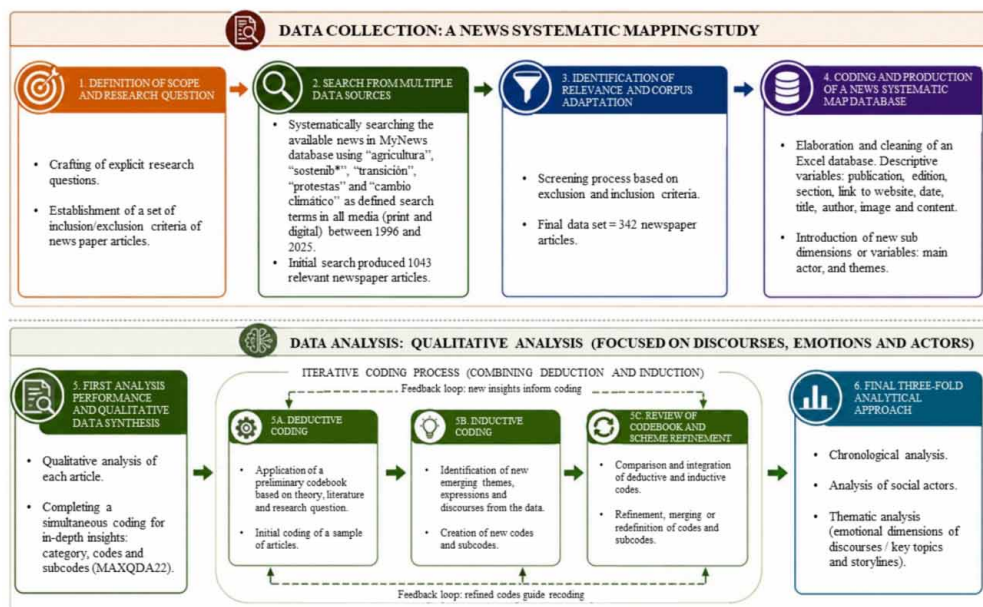
This research adopts a qualitative approach, which is particularly suited to exploring complex, dynamic, and context-dependent phenomena such as the

emotional and discursive dimensions of socio-environmental conflict. Qualitative methods are well suited to analysing processes of meaning-making, narrative construction, and collective perception, especially in media representations and social mobilisations in politically sensitive contexts (Evans & Phelan, 2016; Dryzek, 2022).

The methodological design is based on a systematic mapping of discourses in Spanish national news sources and, to a lesser extent, international outlets. The analysis draws on Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA), developed by Hajer & Versteeg (2005), which focuses on meaning construction through argumentative structures and narrative coherence (see Figure 3). This approach has proven effective in analysing media discourse in the context of sustainability transitions, as demonstrated by previous research on energy transitions (e.g., Cotton et al., 2014; Sanz-Hernández, 2024). This study analyses the agrarian sector's discourses regarding the transition towards sustainable agriculture and associated protest movements, using this approach to identify the emotions they convey. The design examines both narrative patterns and emotional nuances present in media coverage, identifying dominant storylines, emotional framings, and conflict dynamics across different sources, thereby providing insight into the public construction and articulation of these actors' grievances.

The analysis followed a six-stage methodological framework for systematically mapping newspaper articles, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of media discourse (Figure 3).

Figure 3.
Methodological design



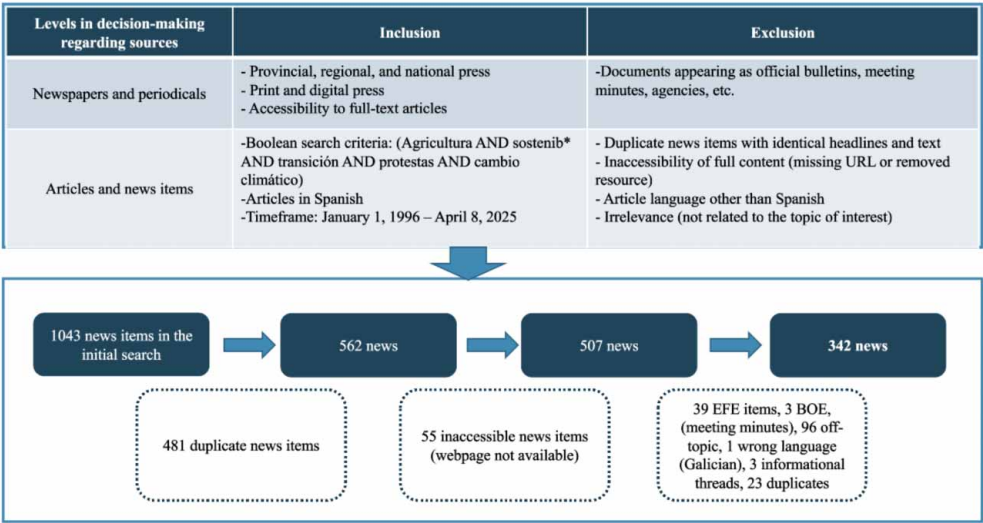
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Sanz-Hernández (2024).

The research process began with the definition of the study's scope, the formulation of the research question, and the establishment of analytical parameters grounded in the theoretical framework. Based on this foundation, an exhaustive search was conducted in the *MyNews* database to identify articles related to agricultural protests and CEPs. To ensure thematic coherence and relevance of the corpus, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (Figure 4). The initial search retrieved 1,043 Spanish-language news articles published between January 1, 1996, and April 8, 2025. However, the oldest article meeting the selection criteria was from 2006, as earlier publications were not thematically relevant reflecting an initial latency phase in media attention.

The screening process was conducted independently by two researchers, who assessed whether the articles met the predefined inclusion criteria. Any

discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Following this process, the final sample comprised 342 articles (see Figure 4). It is important to note that the *MyNews* archive is predominantly composed of Spanish sources; therefore, the analysed materials primarily reflect the Spanish and broader European contexts concerning environmental and agricultural sustainability.

Figure 4.
Screening and selection process: inclusion and exclusion criteria and final sample



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The selected articles were organised into a structured Excel database, from which information was systematically extracted using variables defined a priori (Table 1). The 'primary actor' variable was used as an open code to identify the individual, group, or institution playing a central role in each news item. However, when specifically analysing the actors driving the protests—such as farmers, livestock producers, agricultural associations, and

cooperatives—these were grouped under the conceptual category of the 'agrarian actors' which serves as an umbrella term encompassing all these groups, ensuring theoretical consistency with the analytical framework.

Subsequently, the qualitative analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 22, through which a comprehensive coding scheme comprising codes, subcodes, and analytical categories—encompassing main environmental themes, discursive frames, and specific emotional states—was developed (Appendix 1). This coding scheme was constructed through an iterative process carried out by the same researchers involved in the previous stage, based on discussion during the in-depth examination of the news articles, while adding new codes throughout the analytical process. This procedure facilitated the identification of emerging topics and narrative trends, establishing the foundation for a thematic, chronological, and actor-centred analysis. It combined deductive coding, grounded in the theoretical framework and previous literature, with inductive coding derived from recurrent patterns identified in the analysed news corpus.

The process enabled the identification of the different discursive frames present in the sample. Likewise, emotions were identified through explicit emotional expressions found in the texts and subsequently grouped into broader analytical categories. Finally, the relationships between actors, themes, and emotional states were examined through an interpretative comparison of the codes and discursive patterns identified throughout the corpus.

Table 1.

Descriptive variables analysed in the narrative review

Variable Code	Typology	Description	Codes
Title	Continuous text variable	Full headline	Open
Publication year	Continuous textvariable	Publication date	Open
Newspaper	Continuous textvariable	Newspaper which publishes the article	Open
Media coverage	Discrete variable	Media coverage: the news media coverage, used to identify the level (local, regional, national, or international) at which the information . was reported	Local Regional National International
Country	Discrete variable	Geographical context of the news, used to identify the regions where the majority of media coverage on the topic has occurred	Selection across European countries Other countries
Type of media	Discrete variable	Type of media in which the news item was published	DigitalPrint
Primary actor	Continuous text variable	Individual or group of individuals who play a central role in the news item	Open
Secondary actor	Continuous textvariable	Individual or group of individuals who participate in the news item in a secondary or supporting role, without playing a central part in the development of the event	Open

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Although the study adopts a predominantly qualitative approach, MAXQDA also enabled the analysis to be complemented by counting the frequency of occurrence of specific codes. These frequencies were used in an exploratory and descriptive manner, solely as support for the qualitative discourse analysis, and should not be interpreted as inferential quantitative results.

The nature of the analysed material constitutes an important methodological consideration as the dataset includes both direct quotations from actors—such as farmers, unions and policymakers—and paraphrased statements or interpretations formulated by the journalists themselves. In addressing this, it was considered that: (1) journalist-authored statements, are analytically significant insofar as they shape public perception and reflect the

discursive framing of actors and events; and (2) verbatim quotations, typically indicated through quotation marks, provide more direct access to actors' perspectives. This required a critical and reflexive analytical stance, recognising the editorial role of the media in determining which perspectives and arguments gain visibility and public legitimacy (Sanz-Hernández, 2024). The final stage involved a more interpretive synthesis of the findings, focusing on the intersection of discourses, emotional expressions, and the broader socio-political implications of sustainable agricultural transitions. Each phase followed systematic methodological procedures, ensuring analytical reliability, depth, and coherence throughout the study.

4. Results

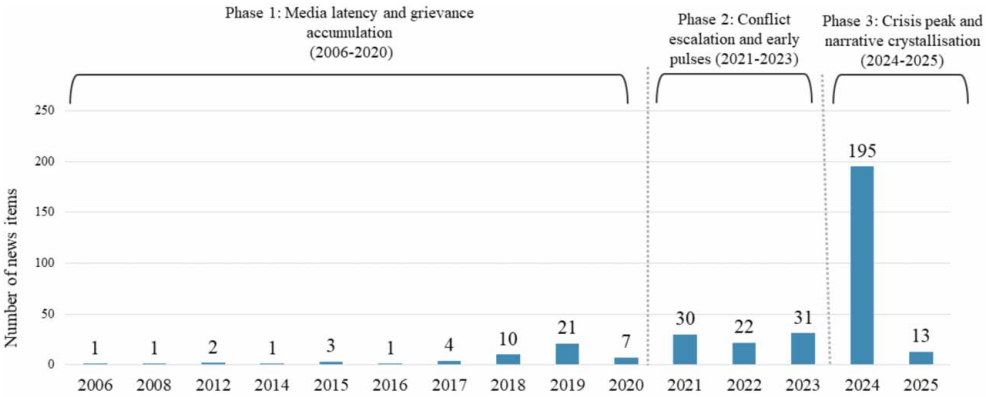
This section presents the main findings, examining the temporal and media patterns of discourse on sustainable agricultural transitions, the key actors and their public arguments, and the emotional framings that shape social perception and its relationship to mobilisation in agrarian protests.

4.1. Trends over time and media outlets in the coverage of agrarian protest in agricultural transitions

Although the systematic review of media coverage spans the period from 1996 to April 2025, the earliest article in the corpus addressing sustainable agricultural transitions dates from 2006. This suggests that the topic did not gain visibility in the Spanish media until that year. To provide a robust analytical framework for this temporal distribution, the evolution of media coverage can be conceptually divided into three distinct phases: (1) Phase 1: media latency and grievance accumulation (2006-2020), characterised by minimal and sporadic reporting; (2) phase 2: conflict escalation and early pulses (2021-2023), marking the conflict's sustained entry into the public

agenda; and (3) phase 3: crisis peak and narrative crystallisation (2024-2025), where the explosion of media attention consolidated the dominant discursive frames. Figure 5 illustrates these three phases alongside the evolution of media coverage specifically focused on protests and mobilisations related to sustainable transitions in agriculture—mainly in the European and Spanish contexts—as represented in the Spanish media between 2006 and 2025.

Figure 5.
Evolution of news coverage on sustainable agricultural transitions and protests in the Spanish media



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Although sustainability had already begun to gain public attention, the figure highlights the point at which social unrest and resistance within the agrarian sector started to emerge in media coverage. Rather than reflecting general environmental reporting, the focus is on conflict and opposition to CEPs, showing how protest narratives evolved alongside political and agricultural developments (e.g., the policy milestones outlined in Figure 2).

From 2006 to 2016, media attention remained minimal, with a maximum of three articles published per year. A slight increase occurred in 2017-2018 (four and 10 articles). Coverage maintained a steady, moderate presence

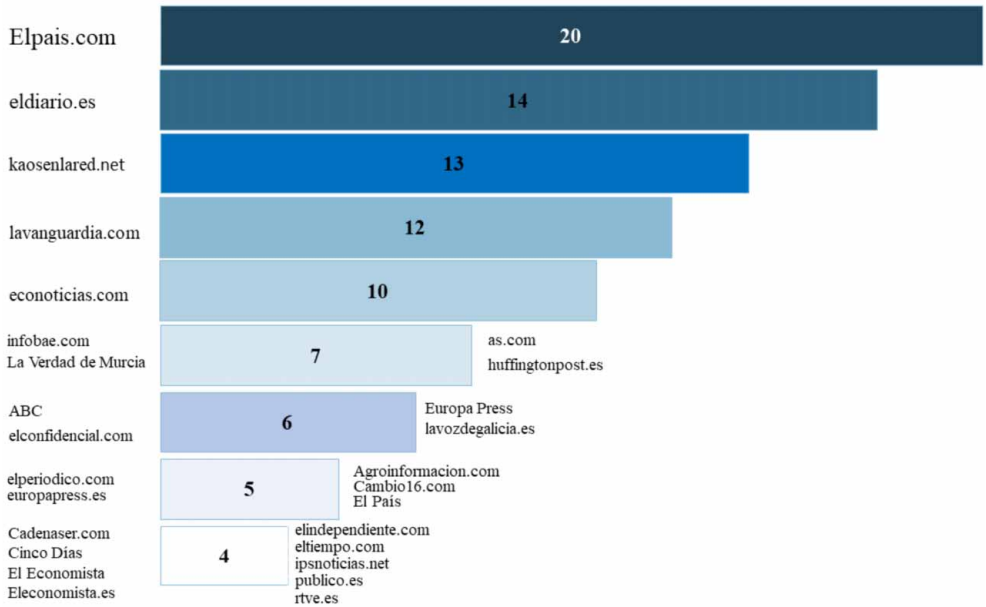
during 2019 and 2020, before experiencing a more pronounced rise in 2021 (30 articles). Following a temporary dip in 2022, the upward trend resumed in 2023 (31 articles), culminating in a sharp surge in 2024 with 195 articles, an unprecedented peak in media coverage. This surge reflected widespread protests within the agrarian sector across Europe, including Spain, bringing their response to CEPs into public debate. However, this exponential growth must also be contextualised within the broader digitalisation of the media landscape; the proliferation of digital-only outlets and the overall increase in contemporary online news production inherently amplify the volume of recent publications compared to earlier decades.

Data for 2025 are incomplete, as the dataset ends in April, which explains the lower count. Overall, the trend shows growing media focus not only on CEPs but on the social unrest they generate. The unprecedented 2024 coverage suggests that resistance within the agrarian sector became a central narrative. Notably, even when accounting for the structural effects of digitalisation, the high concentration of articles in recent years indicates that the period from 2006 to 2023 functioned primarily as a phase of media latency, reflecting a gradual accumulation of sectoral grievances. Consequently, this means that the subsequent qualitative analysis of discursive and emotional frames inherently reflects the narrative crystallised during this specific peak of the crisis, rather than a uniform evolutionary process over two decades.

The comparison between Figures 2 and 5 reveals a clear temporal correspondence between political developments and media attention. The increase in articles from 2018–2019 onwards coincides with the launch of the European Green Deal, suggesting greater institutional visibility of environmental reform. However, the sharp peak in 2024 corresponds to the height of that year's protest wave, which media coverage linked to growing discontent within the agrarian sector regarding the perceived economic impact of environmental regulations. This increase in media attention reflects not only a shift in narrative focus, but also a broader socio-political rupture, as the sector's concerns over profitability and viability moved to the forefront of public debate on sustainability.

The 342 selected articles were published across 136 media outlets, Figure 6 presents the outlets with the highest number of publications, reflecting a broad range of geographical and editorial perspectives.

Figure 6.
Principal media outlets and corresponding news counts within the study



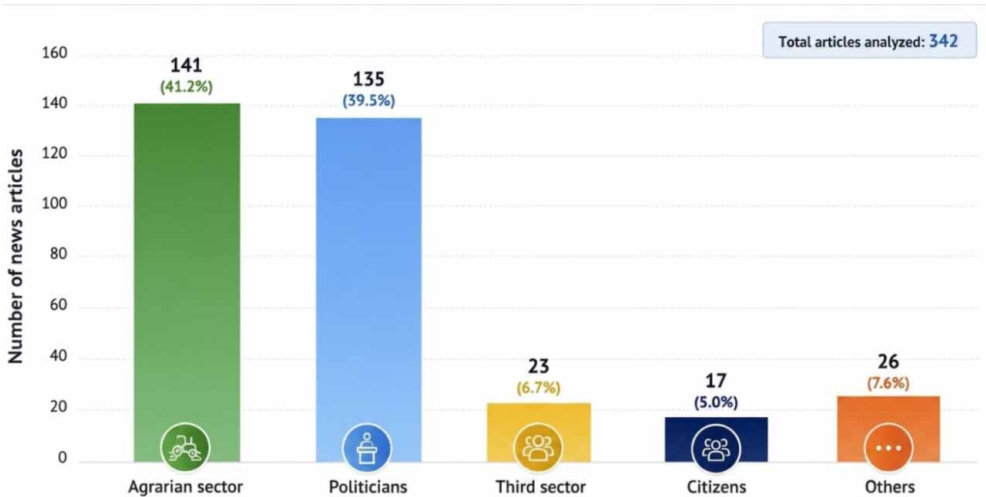
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

4.2.Discourse participants and their arguments: identifying actors and

The predominant actors in the analysed corpus are members of the agrarian sector, who feature as the main subjects or direct voices in 141 of the selected articles. This group includes farmers, livestock producers, agricultural associations, unions, organisations and cooperatives. Political actors also occupy a prominent position, appearing as main subjects in 135 articles

through either direct statements or explicit policy actions. Additionally, third-sector entities—such as NGOs, civil society associations, and advocacy platforms—are identified as key actors in 23 articles (Figure 7).

Figure 7.
Key actors in news articles



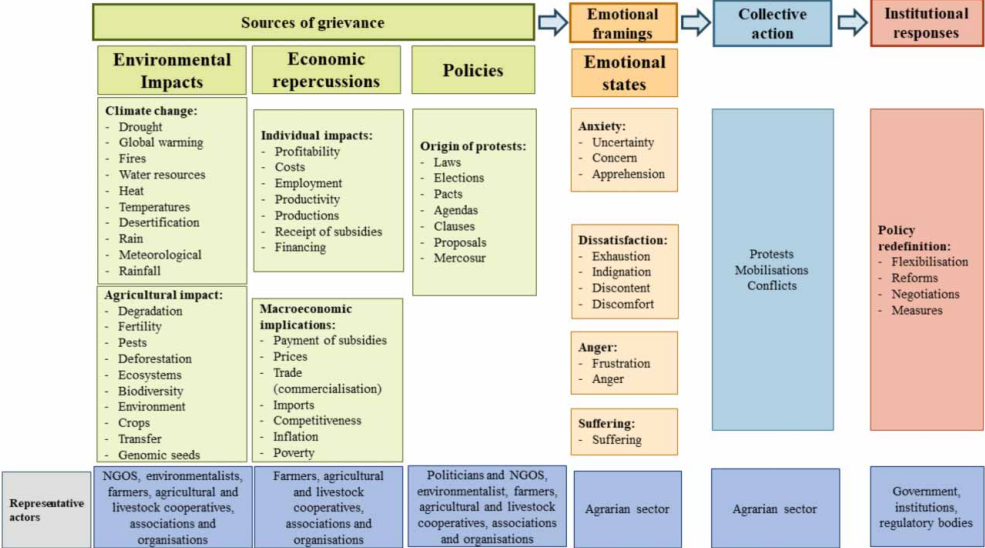
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Of particular interest is the limited presence of other social actors in the media debates analysed. Few articles incorporate perspectives from citizens outside the primary, political, or third sectors. Beyond these groups, there are very few references to other social groups or to their position regarding agricultural protests. This absence points to a partial media framing of the conflict, which excludes the voices of other relevant actors.

The arguments advanced by the actors identified in the corpus are organised around four broad thematic dimensions (Figure 8). The first concerns environmental impacts, particularly those linked to climate change (e.g., droughts and rising temperatures) and their implications for agricultural practices (e.g., the need for water transfers). The second relates to the

economic consequences of the CAP, ranging from reduced farm profitability at the microeconomic level to a loss of competitiveness compared to non-EU countries at the macroeconomic level. The third focuses on the political dimension, encompassing both the origins of protests (e.g., trade agreements such as Mercosur) and proposed policy adjustments (e.g., proposals to ease CAP regulations). The fourth dimension concerns socioemotional dynamics. The articles convey a range of emotional states—suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and anger—associated with perceptions of injustice, power relations, and policies. These emotionally framed narratives are reported in the media alongside descriptions of collective actions typical of social movements, including protests, mobilisations, and conflict. Such actions are represented in the press as collective reactions against agricultural policies and perceived injustices considered threatening, as well as efforts to influence the trajectory of sustainable transitions in the agrarian sector.

Figure 8.
Discursive analysis and categorisation of article storylines



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Members of the agrarian sector are among the most visible actors in the media, particularly in coverage of protests against CEPs. Through the amplification of their direct discourse in the press, numerous articles report these actors as expressing dissatisfaction with bureaucracy, difficulties in accessing subsidies, and the burdens associated with the new CAP framework, as well as perceived shortcomings in the Food Chain Law (AA¹, Elperiòdic.com, 2021) and the recent approval of the Nature Restoration Law, which is described by some actors as “highly detrimental to farmers, livestock breeders, and rural communities in general” (AA, “Las Opas de...”, 2024).

1• The cites relating to the narratives identified in the media coverage will be coded according to a standardised criterion. Each cite will indicate, first, the actor making the statement and, subsequently, the media outlet reporting it. Actors will be classified into the following categories: AA (agrarian actor), PA (political actor), TA (third-sector actor), and J (journalist).

Media coverage also reflects diverse positions regarding public policies. Some actors are portrayed as openly rejecting the CAP, criticising subsidy allocation, rising production costs, the inadequacy of agricultural insurance schemes, and the lack of dialogue in the design of new strategies (J, Rekondo, 2024). Similarly, several agrarian associations are described as advocating for a Family Farming Law (J, M.H., 2024), arguing that the sector has been excluded from key decision-making processes (AA, "Las Opas de...", 2024). Conversely, other actors are represented in media narratives as supporting the European Green Deal and the 2030 Agenda, while expressing discontent with the recent weakening of environmental measures and attributing the sector's challenges primarily to climate change rather than CEPs themselves: "We are not against these policies to protect the environment, but against how they are being applied. A proper transition must consider three aspects: we cannot accept 2030 as a deadline—it is politicised and far too imminent; it should be set at least for 2050; farmers should not be financing the green transition through CAP funds—this constitutes a strategic mistake" (AA, Ruiz, 2024). These actors are also reported as defending sustainable agricultural practices grounded in an environmental ethic: "I like to have clean fields, without herbicides or pollution. I do not want to poison the water or the crops I sell—that is not my way of life," and "CAP environmental measures should not be weakened—they are already insufficient" (AA, Sánchez & Castro, 2024).

Although agrarian voices represented in media coverage acknowledge the effects of climate change on production, they are also reported as calling for greater institutional support and sufficient time for adaptation. The coverage further portrays overlapping crises, affecting the sector, such as prolonged droughts, rising production costs, and unfair competition from imports with lower environmental standards (J, Esteban Poveda, 2023). These conditions are frequently described in the press as contributing to the sector's vulnerability and are associated with episodes of mobilisation (AA, SPC, 2024). As stated by the Union of Small Farmers and Livestock Breeders: "We are not climate change deniers; [...] we are among the first affected by the climate crisis" (AA, M.H., 2024).

Political actors also play a central role in the media discourse, particularly given that the study period includes several national and European elections. During this period, journalistic narratives portray political actors as engaging with and responding to expressions of discontent within the primary sector in ways that align with their respective political agendas: left-wing parties supported environmental reforms such as the Nature Restoration Law, whereas right-wing and far-right factions opposed the Green Deal and its associated trade agreements (PA, Sanz, 2024; PA, Parada & Fernández Molina, 2024).

Rising concern about climate change has been associated with increased public and political attention to demands for a just transition that addresses social inequalities, reflected in growing social mobilisation for climate action (J, Cerrillo & Farreras, 2019). In this context, civil society organisations and NGOs—such as WWF and Greenpeace—appear in the media as advocates of climate and agricultural reforms. They are reported as warning of the risks associated with weakening the environmental objectives embedded in the CAP and the Green Deal (TA, Redacción, 2024) and as criticising trade agreements such as EU-Mercosur for their potential impacts on ecosystems and climate targets (J, "2024: El año en el...", 2024).

4.3. The emotional dimension of discourses

Media coverage refers to ten distinct emotional states, which are grouped into four analytical categories (Figure 8). Uncertainty, concern, and apprehension are classified as forms of anxiety (Gu et al., 2020). Exhaustion, indignation, discontent and discomfort are grouped under the category of dissatisfaction (Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2020). In line with previous research (e.g., Deater-Deckard et al., 2007), anger and frustration are analysed jointly due to their close conceptual and functional relationship within a broader set of negative emotional responses. Finally, suffering is conceptualised as an emotional state emerging from other emotions (Carnevale, 2009).

From a longitudinal perspective, Table 2 illustrates the evolution of emotional expressions identified in the newspaper corpus between 2006 and

2025, with 2024 emerging as a turning point in the emotional intensity. That year recorded notable peaks in anxiety (50 instances), suffering (17), dissatisfaction (43), and anger (29). This pattern suggests increased visibility of emotional narratives in media in the context of widespread protests and mobilisations across Europe and Spain. These emotional expressions reported in the press are associated with narratives of uncertainty, injustice, and frustration regarding the implementation of CEPs and perception of institutional neglect (AA, SPC, 2024). Rising levels of anxiety and dissatisfaction are linked in media discourse to economic and political pressures affecting the sector, while references to anger are also associated with more contentious forms of collective action. Overall, this emotional trajectory is consistent with the increasingly contentious and polarised nature of public discourse on sustainable agricultural transformation, particularly during the heightened tensions and conflicts of 2024.

Table 2.
Trend over time of emotional states in media discourse

	2006–2011*	2012	2013–2018*	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Suffering				1		6	1	4	17	
Anxiety		1		2	1	9	1	5	50	3
Dissatisfaction						2	1	3	43	2
Anger					1	2			29	

* The periods indicated in columns 1 and 3 have been merged due to the absence of emotional content in the corresponding newspaper articles and discourses during these timeframes.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

This emotional discourse in media coverage is primarily associated with the primary sector, which accounts for approximately 84 % of the identified emotional expressions. This suggests that media predominantly link specific emotional narratives to agrarian actors, both in relation to the social movement under study and within the broader public debate. A correspondence is also observed between these emotional states and the narratives associated with

political actors, who frequently acknowledge and refer to the suffering attributed to the agrarian sector. The remaining 9 % of identified emotions are associated with policymakers—reflecting engagement with sectoral concerns and efforts to address social discontent—and environmental organisations, where fatigue in response to climate inaction and concern for the environment predominate. The remaining percentage corresponds to actors involved in the fight against climate change (citizens and environmentalists), as well as to a range of issues related to the sustainable transition.

Given the prominence of agrarian voices within the corpus, the emotional narratives associated with this group are examined in greater detail in Table 3, which presents the dominant emotion-discourse framework surrounding the agrarian sector. The table outlines the emotional states attributed to these actors in media representations of agricultural discourses on sustainable transitions, categorised according to the four emotional categories mentioned above.

Table 3.
Emotional connections and discourses of the agrarian sector in the media narrative

Emotional	Subcategory	Media narrative*	Source States
Anxiety	Apprehension	Many farmers [...] who are apprehensive about losing their crops to fires, droughts, [...] are undergoing a transition toward more sustainable practices .	(J, Hancock & Bounds, 2024)
	Uncertainty	"The level of uncertainty is more dangerous now than it was a few weeks ago, due to the conflict in Ukraine."	(AA, Buitrago, 2022)
	Concern	Another major source of concern [...] is their position within the food supply chain.	(J, «Flexibilización de la PAC», 2024)
Dissatisfaction	Exhaustion	The exhaustion expressed by farmers [...] is also directed at the so-called European Green Deal [...].	(J, García, 2024)
	Indignation	[...] expressed his indignation [...] regarding policies that discourage meat consumption, warning about their impact on the sustainability of agriculture.	(J, SPC, 2024)
	Discontent	Discontent revolves around the ecological transition and, specifically, the environmental policies promoted by the EU in recent years.	(J, Coiduras, 2024)
	Discomfort	"There is widespread discomfort because [...] nor is our work being appreciated [...] is essential to feeding everyone."	(AA, Pacheco Conejero, 2024)
Anger	Anger	"There is also considerable anger over the negative image of the sector promoted by certain social, political, and institutional spheres."	(AA, Ares Heres, 2024)
	Frustration	European farmers' discomfort is fueled by frustration with European Union policies	(J, Pachano, 2024)
Suffering	Suffering	"We have to be sustainable, but we also need to incorporate productive, social, and economic criteria, which have been completely abandoned under this CAP, leaving us exposed to all the shocks we are currently suffering: production costs, imports from third countries, [...]".	(AA, Soler, 2024)

*Translation by the authors of the original Spanish text into English. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 4 summarises the arguments and topics associated with each emotional state. Anxiety is the most frequently identified category appearing in media representations primarily in the form of concern, apprehension and uncertainty. These expressions are reported across a wide range of issues, with

particular visibility in relation to European CEPs. In this regard, media coverage links references to anxiety both to general environmental legislation and to specific policy measures, such as the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law and rigid CAP implementation timelines. Uncertainty is predominantly associated in the press with the future of the sector, particularly in relation to the potential consequences of the war in Ukraine. Apprehensions appear in media narratives in connection with debates over the use of CAP funds for CEPs and to discussions about potential regulatory changes affecting food security. It is also linked to environmental challenges, particularly those associated with climate change and its anticipated impacts, which are described in the press in terms of vulnerability.

Dissatisfaction is the second most frequently identified category, encompassing discontent, exhaustion, indignation, and discomfort in relation to CEPs. Discontent is frequently linked in media coverage to perceptions of administrative burden and bureaucracy complexity within the CAP. Exhaustion is associated with references to the cumulative effects of the Green Deal and CAP implementation on production processes and administrative requirements, which are described in the press as affecting the viability of farming and livestock production, particularly in contexts where technical and financial support is perceived as insufficient. Discomfort is also frequently reported, often in relation to perceived inadequate government support and unmet sectoral demands. Indignation appears less frequently and is mainly reported in connection with debates on dietary policy initiatives.

Anger, including frustration, ranks third. It is associated with economic issues such as rising prices, inflation, and energy costs, as well as with European regulatory frameworks perceived as insufficiently consultative in media discourse.

Finally, suffering is represented in media coverage as emerging from the accumulation of negative experiences in the primary sector, particularly in relation to environmental pressures such as water scarcity and the climate crisis, and their reported impacts on agricultural production. Overall, media representations of emotional expressions related to agrarian actors tend to

focus primarily on environmental and economic sustainability, with limited attention to social dimensions beyond occasional references to rural development.

Table 4.
Mapping of emotional states and topics of debate in the agricultural sector

		Increase in prices	Rural develop- ment	European policies	Trade agree- ments	Environ- men	Value chain	Ren- wable	Sector situation and image	Transition and sustai- nability	Total
Anxiety	Apprehension	1	1	2		1					5
	Uncertainty								3		3
	Concern	4	3	17	6	1	5	2	4	3	45
Dissatisfaction	Discontent	7		11	2		1			0	21
	Exhaustion			5					1		6
	Discomfort	1		10	2	1		1	2		17
	Indignation			1		0					1
Anger	Frustration			4		1			2		7
	Anger	6		6	2	3		1	2		20
Suffering	Suffering	4		10	3	11			1		29
	Total	23	4	66	15	18	6	4	15	3	154

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

In media coverage, mobilisations and protests are framed through emotional categories such as concern and discomfort. In this context, political actors are reported as responding by engaging in the redefinition of various policy frameworks (PA, Acereda, 2024; Newsroom Infobae, 2025; J, Maestre Martín de Almagro, 2024).

Media discourse presents certain political changes as responses to demands attributed to the primary sector, including measures aimed at simplifying CAP compliance, reducing administrative burdens (J, González Mateos, 2024), and exempting farmers from certain mandatory digital reporting requirements. Reforms also affected the Food Chain Law and unfair

trading practices (J, La Estrategia Nacional..., 2025). Likewise, Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) standards were adjusted to better align with farming realities (J, Herrera, 2024). Notably, the European Commission withdrew its proposal to reduce pesticide use by 50 % by 2030, a decision widely represented in media coverage as a concession to sector demands (J, Caballero, 2024).

However, these policy responses have sparked debate. Some voices among agricultural actors are reported in media coverage as interpreting these regulatory changes as a consequence of protests and mobilisations, while others argue the reforms are framed as politically motivated concessions aimed more at securing electoral support than at addressing the sector's structural needs (TS, Newsroom Infobae, 2024).

Meanwhile, some media and political groups interpret these policy adjustments not as retreats but as opportunities to enhance sectoral flexibility within the broader sustainable transition. These adjustments are framed as potentially facilitating adaptation by allowing agricultural practices to respond more effectively to environmental, political, and market pressures, contributing, within media discourse, to narratives of a more resilient and inclusive approach to climate action.

5. Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the emotional and discursive dynamics surrounding conflict over sustainable transition policies in the agrarian sector, particularly within the Spanish and European contexts. One of the main findings is the prominent presence of emotions in public discourse and their association with narratives of mobilisation and political change, especially anxiety, dissatisfaction, anger, and suffering. This aligns with Scheff (1990), who argues that emotions are not merely individual or psychological phenomena, but socially embedded constructs associated with collective and

political processes. Similarly, Rosenwein (2006) and Lutz & Abu-Lughod (1990) emphasise that emotions may be associated with processes of social transformation and with political perceptions and actions, as reflected in journalistic articles such as González Mateos (2024).

These emotionally framed narratives not only reflect representations of individual distress but also structure normative evaluations of the transition process. In this regard, emotional discourses associated in media coverage with agrarian actors' perceptions reveal a close relationship with multiple dimensions of justice—recognitional, distributive, and participatory (Fraser, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2016)—which underpin the claims attributed to the sector, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9.
Perceptions of injustice related to emotional states

	DISTRIBUTIVE INJUSTICE	PROCEDURAL INJUSTICE	RECOGNITION INJUSTICE
ANGER	Frustration and anger over rising production costs, inflation, trade agreements, and the increasing bureaucracy and regulatory demands.	Frustration over EU regulations imposed without consultation with the sector.	Frustration over the negative image portrayed of the sector.
DISSATISFACTION	Discontent over inequalities, production costs, international competition, economic challenges, price volatility, and low wages. Exhaustion with environmental policies.	Discontent over marginalisation in the European Green Deal.	Discontent with the lack of compliance with the Food Chain Act, and the social undervaluation of the sector's work, demanding support, respect, and recognition. Exhaustion at the continual mistreatment of the sector.
ANXIETY	Concerns related to competitiveness, regulatory burden, and production costs. Apprehension in the context of broader deregulation, concerning the future of the sector, food security, and climate vulnerability.	Concerns regarding the insufficiency of government support. Perception of neglect of sectoral demands.	Concerns regarding their position in the food supply chain.
SUFFERING	Suffering due to production costs and imports from third countries.		Suffering due to non-compliance with the Food Chain Law

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Media representations of agrarian actors' perceptions of negatively evaluated events are frequently associated with narratives of negative emotions, according to the findings of this study. In turn, these emotionally framed narratives may influence interpretations of environmental conditions and events, leading similar situations to be perceived as more threatening or unfavourable (Zadra & Clore, 2011). This suggests a bidirectional cycle between perception and emotion, in which negative framed experiences intensify emotional narratives and reinforce adverse interpretations of context (Zadra & Clore, 2011). This feedback process is particularly relevant in the context of agrarian sector protests, where media representations may reinforce both the perception of injustice and the intensity of emotional framing.

The study also reveals a close alignment between the emotional framing of the agrarian sector in media coverage and political narratives surrounding its demands. An analysis of Spanish press coverage, alongside statements from political actors, indicates that the perceptions attributed to agrarian actors and policymakers regarding environmental regulations are embedded in emotional narratives linked to mobilisation and policy debates, which are reflected in public policy discussions. The implementation of the new CAP in 2023 triggered one of the largest agricultural mobilisations in Europe in recent years. This has been interpreted in the literature as a process in which perceived threats to livelihoods were represented in media discourses as associated with emotions such as concern and discontent, themselves linked to collective action (Rabanillo, 2024; Maestre Martín de Almagro, 2024). These mobilisations were followed by policy adjustments, including exemptions from mandatory digital registration, reductions in administrative burdens, and revisions of food chain regulations (Finger et al., 2024). According to the Minister of Agriculture, Luis Planas, the 43 measures adopted in less than ten weeks in response to these mobilisations directly addressed the sector's demands (Marcos, 2024), highlighting the prominence of emotionally framed public debates within institutional responses.

Taken together, these findings suggest a relationship between perception, emotion, and politics in media and political discourses. The collective emotional

narratives associated with these mobilisations are not only linked to processes of mobilisation, but also situated in broader debates on the pace and scope of agricultural sustainability transitions in Europe. This suggests that 2024 represented a turning point in the emotional and discursive framing of the debate, underscoring the role of emotions as elements associated with social processes of collective action and political change (Scheff, 1990). Nevertheless, this interaction reflects a deeper structural conflict between the agrarian sector and CEPs (Stevens et al., 2020): while regulations seek to promote long-term sustainability, they often clash with an economic system oriented towards profitability and production costs, historically shaped by the paradigms that are currently being challenged (Chantre & Cardona, 2014). In this respect, discursive representations of the agrarian sector tend to emphasise profitability and production costs, whereas those of policymakers focus primarily on environmental protection. This narrow economic framing contrasts with recent studies (e.g., Mazzocchi et al., 2024), which identify broader sectoral concerns, including institutional trust and social cohesion, revealing a discursive misalignment that perpetuates conflict.

Finally, although protests focused on economic and environmental issues, they made limited reference to social risks such as agricultural workers' health, exposure to hazardous inputs, or long-term soil degradation. This aligns with Sanz-Hernández et al. (2019), who note that social dimensions are often marginalised in sustainability transitions in favour of economic and environmental considerations. The limited presence of these issues in media representations raises questions about collective awareness of the risks associated with conventional farming methods. A better understanding of the emotional framing of resistance may contribute to a better understanding of how the transition is perceived as either opportunities or threats.

Building on these findings and considering that agri-environmental policies may function as transformative instruments subject to renegotiation over time (Huttunen & Peltomaa, 2016), it is essential to construct a shared vision of the debate. This involves narrowing the distance between the agrarian sector and policymakers, promoting mutual understanding, and redesigning policies

through participatory mechanisms. Recognising the diverse interpretative frameworks through which actors make sense of the conflict (Dewulf et al., 2009) and strengthening citizen participation in environmental governance (Lipari et al., 2024) are crucial steps to ensure not only a just but also socially legitimate transition (Fraser, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2016).

From a methodological perspective, this study presents certain limitations. First, reliance on press articles provides rich discursive material but is inherently filtered through journalistic selection, potentially generating data biases and overrepresenting certain interpretative frames. Second, the specific Boolean search string may have restricted the inclusion of other social actors expressing views independently of these terms. Third, the volumetric peak detected in 2024 should be interpreted with caution; it reflects not only socio-political conflict dynamics but also the rapid content replication of the digital media ecosystem and indexation density variations within the *MyNews* database over the analysed period. Fourth, the manual coding process involves an inherent degree of interpretative subjectivity, as it was not complemented by formal inter-coder reliability tests (e.g., Cohen's Kappa). Finally, from a conceptual standpoint, while this analysis focuses on the media framing of agrarian actors' emotions, these representations act as discursively mediated symptoms of deeper structural asymmetries and economic dependencies within the agri-food value chain. A comprehensive mapping of these material roots exceeds the hemerographic scope of this paper, representing an essential avenue for future research.

In addition to mapping these structural roots, further studies should also examine the underexplored social dimension of emotions in agricultural narratives as represented in public and media discourse. Exploring why issues such as health risks or rural community resilience are marginally framed in emotional terms could provide valuable insights for building broader alliances in support of sustainable agriculture. Likewise, analysing how emotional framings are associated with policy debates and public opinion would enhance understanding of the relationship between discourse, emotion, and institutional responses within sustainability transitions. Although this analysis

suggests that emotions are associated with protests in media representations, further research incorporating interviews and surveys is recommended to verify this hypothesis, which the present study posits as highly plausible. Ultimately, these findings should be complemented with primary data to validate and deepen emotional inferences based on media analysis. This would enable a more direct understanding of perceptions, experiences, and emotions of affected actors, particularly in vulnerable territories, in line with recent research on territorial discontent and the green transition (e.g., Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2024).

6. *Conclusions*

Given the strategic importance of the agricultural sector in advancing sustainability and shaping food systems—and, by extension, society—this study aimed to identify the emotional underpinnings present in the media corpus associated with agrarian actors in relation to CEPs within the context of the protests and public debates generated by these measures have generated. Through a discourse analysis of media coverage, the research identified four core emotional states in the representation of the conflict and recent policy developments: first, anxiety; second, dissatisfaction, rooted in discontent; third, anger; and fourth, suffering, as the ultimate emotional outcome. Moreover, the findings suggest that emotions, as collective discursive expressions, are also associated with processes of social mobilisation and with the reconfiguration of policy frameworks in this context.

This study contributes to the academic literature in several key ways. While previous research has emphasised institutional trust (Mazzocchi et al., 2024), economic rationality (Stevens et al., 2020) and sovereignty discourses (Bujdei-Tebeica, 2024) in agrarian protests, this analysis positions emotions as indicators of deeper structural tensions and as relevant analytical elements for understanding how political change is discursively constructed. In line with

Scheff (1990) and Rosenwein (2006), the findings suggest that emotions, rather than marginal or irrational aspects of political life, are essential to understanding how social groups interpret and respond to structural transformations. The study therefore offers both a conceptual and empirical contribution by mapping the emotional structure of agrarian discontent and relating it to patterns of institutional discourse and responsiveness.

In practical terms, the 2024 protests, associated in media coverage with economic concerns, are linked in public debate to processes of revision or adjustment of agro-environmental regulation. This reveals a paradox: while current CEPs have contributed to shaping the dominant agricultural model, they have also become the primary target of resistance and protest. The study shows that emotional expressions attributed to agrarian actors are presented in media and political discourse as reflecting social grievances and as being associated with mobilisation and institutional adjustment in media and political discourse, which may reinforce the perception of protest as an effective strategy. Overall, the study concludes that analysing emotions is relevant to understanding the conflict and may help identify potential pathways towards its resolution.

In this context, strengthening dialogue and collaboration between political actors and the agrarian sector emerges as a priority to ensure justice across its three dimensions: redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser, 2008). It is necessary to reconceptualise and transform how agricultural systems are designed, organised, and governed, as well as the relationships among the various actors involved. Conflicts such as those emerging between agrarian actors and governmental authorities should not be viewed solely as impediments, but also as spaces of institutional reconfiguration. A nuanced understanding and effective management of such conflicts can enable a redistribution of power and foster processes of collective learning. In this regard, adopting a conflict transformation approach becomes essential, as it aims not only to address immediate disputes but also to challenge and transform the structural conditions that underpin and perpetuate these tensions (Skrimizea et al., 2020).

Among the policy recommendations derived from this study is the development of citizen participation programmes that involve agrarian actors, take into account the different framings through which the debate is constructed, and recognise both the actors' perceptions and emotions. This would enhance the legitimacy and durability of environmental regulation.

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Authors' contribution

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Conceptualization	35 %	30 %	35 %
Data curation	0 %	0 %	0 %
Formal analysis	40 %	40 %	20 %
Funding acquisition	0 %	0 %	0 %
Investigation	40 %	40 %	20 %
Methodology	31 %	33 %	36 %
Project administration	33 %	33 %	34 %
Resources	34 %	33 %	33 %
Software	0 %	0 %	0 %
Supervision	28 %	28 %	44 %
Validation	35 %	25 %	40 %
Visualization	34 %	34 %	32 %
Writing – original draft	34 %	34 %	32 %
Writing – review & editing	38 %	30 %	32 %

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