



Media Release

Green shoots for CAP reform? Commission signals green CAP reform is on the table

Brussels, 18 November 2010 –The European Commission’s CAP reform proposal is an important first step towards greening the policy. The inclusion in the proposal of a pure ‘public money for public goods’ option is a good way forward for the future of the CAP as this option could deliver for the environment and ensure maximum value for taxpayers’ money. However, the document makes clear that the Commission’s preference is for a less ambitious middle option which, whilst containing some positive aspects, would still allow significant waste on outdated and untargeted subsidies.

“The Commission’s proposals are an encouraging sign that the EU might be taking seriously its recent commitment at the Nagoya biodiversity summit to achieve sustainable farming by 2020” says Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe.[1] “It is now time for our decision makers to show real leadership and transform a policy that has been historically a source of embarrassment of the EU into a green flagship”.

One of the clear improvements suggested for the direct payment system is to link basic income support to farmers with meaningful environmental commitments such as environmental set-aside and crop rotation. But the lack of detail and emphasis on this green payment means the document still falls short of providing clear justification for the significant budget attached to the policy or insuring that green intentions are not turned into green wash.

Further concerns regarding the proposals of the first pillar relate to the lack of environmental conditionality attached to three of the five payments proposed. At a time of fiscal constraint and environmental crisis any payment that does not secure broader societal benefits cannot be defended.

For the proposed changes to Pillar two, BirdLife strongly welcomes the specific reference to High Nature Value farming and the Natura 2000 network. These systems and sites provide outstanding environmental public goods and yet are almost entirely overlooked by the current CAP support framework. Much clearer

and more focused commitment would be expected given the relevance of both issues and the EU's legal commitments [2].

Finally, it is disappointing that no explicit mention is made about agri-environmental schemes. Such schemes are critically important as they reward farmers for environmental delivery and they play a key role in contributing to the EU's biodiversity target.

BirdLife expects the EU now to do a proper assessment of all the options it proposes. It is time for Europe to prioritize environmental protection as the basis for the long term future of not only biodiversity but the farming sector and food security.

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Notes for the editor

[1] BirdLife International is a global Partnership of nature conservation organisations working in more than 100 countries and territories. BirdLife is the leading authority on the status of birds, their habitats and the problems affecting them, and is working on a wide range of environmental issues. BirdLife Europe has 42 Partners in Europe, and is represented in all 27 Member States.

For more information about the work of BirdLife Europe:

<http://europe.birdlife.org>

[2] The Natura 2000 network, created under the Birds and Habitats Directives, is the cornerstone of European biodiversity conservation policy. The EU has a clear legal obligation to support the co-funding for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network.