

The Common Agriculture Policy reform

Title

Despite subsequent rounds of reform the CAP remains dysfunctional and wasteful. Most money is still channelled into forms of income support that have scant relation to the public goods delivered by farmers to the society.

Although most current CAP spending is untargeted and unfair, the CAP remains the EU's main tool for dealing with land use issues.

Land use is a key strategic concern whose importance will only increase in the coming years when scarce resources become even scarcer and the effects of climate change start to kick in. Therefore, there is a need for an EU-wide policy targeting sustainable land management, food production and rural development.

Fundamental reform is needed if the CAP is to contribute tackling the many challenges facing EU's lands (from massive biodiversity declines to degraded water and soil quality) and to ensure taxpayers' money is used efficiently and in the areas where it is most needed.

Sustainable use of natural resources, and maintaining healthy and well-functioning ecosystems is not just about protecting the environment for its own sake, it is also vital for long-term European competitiveness and food security. Member States must work together to ensure the right finances and policy structure is in place to facilitate a new era of sustainable European land management.

Why the CAP doesn't fit

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) over the past 50 years has encouraged intensive commercial production leading to a dramatic decline of farmland biodiversity and environmental health in general. While the 2003 CAP reform has mostly removed the artificial incentives to intensify by “decoupling” farm subsidies from production and the last reform round stuck a green label on some of the subsidies, the CAP still fails to address the many challenges agriculture and land management face in the 21st century: biodiversity decline,

water pollution and unsustainable abstraction, soil degradation, climate change and increasing demand for food and energy. Key explanatory elements:

- Public money spent does not deliver public goods
- Traditional farming (such as High Nature Value farming) does not receive enough support
- Funding for the environment and rural economy is limited
- There is weak control and weak compliance with current rules

[Landscapes Blog](#) interview with Trees Robijns, Senior EU Agriculture & Bioenergy Policy Officer for BirdLife Europe

CAP reform 2014-2020

High expectations were put on the 2014-2020 CAP reform as greening was very high on the political agenda. This policy should have been redesigned to support sustainable agriculture and rural communities in order to meet the EU's environmental and social goals and commitments and ensure at the same time Europe's long term food security.

Unfortunately, it seems more and more clear that we were in for a greenwash and not a fundamental greening of the policy. One main reason is the review of the EU budget happening in parallel of the CAP reform. The EU budget review was a unique opportunity to develop and shape a long-term vision for all EU Policy, notably to put the principle of "public money for public goods" at its heart. Accounting for more than 40% of the EU budget, the CAP's future was decisively at stake. The numbers were decided before the content and hence the politicians got the money before they needed to show results. Consequently, the environmental ambition of this reform round was low from the very beginning.

With the ink being almost dry on the EU regulations, all eyes are now on Member States and farmers and other stakeholders on the ground. Whether this policy will still bear any fruit or just be a wasted opportunity will mostly depend on how effective national and regional governments are implementing this reform and how many farmers (and hence farmland) will be able to take up effective measures.

CAP consultation 2017

In February 2017 the European Commission launched a public consultation on the future of the CAP. On 2nd May 2017 a clear and strong message reached the European Commission: the EU's agricultural policy needs to be radically changed. This is what 258,708 citizens and 600 civil society organisations and businesses told the Commission in the largest EU public consultation on agricultural policy. The BirdLife Europe's response to the public consultation can be found [here](#).

BirdLife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau commissioned a study to check whether the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is still fit for purpose and delivering on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals that the European Union holds up as its guiding principles.

Read more in the [BirdLife Europe & European Environmental Bureau Briefing - The CAP is no longer fit for purpose. We need the right ingredients and a recipe for a Living Land! \(May 2017\)](#). The link to the database with all the available studies so far can be found [here](#) and the powerpoint used on the day you can find [here](#).

On 11 May 2017 Birdlife Europe & European Environmental Bureau organized the event: Who will fix the broken CAP? A recipe for a Living Land - [see agenda here](#) and all the presentations you can find [here](#).

Agriculture section

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Publications

- [UNCAP the Truth - Spotlight on EU farm policy \(May 2016\)](#)
 - [A crisis in agriculture - a crisis in nature \(2013\)](#)
 - [EEB-BirdLife briefing on equivalence of Certification Schemes and environment measures with the Commission's greening proposals for the new CAP \(2013\)](#)
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Briefings and Position Papers

- [Letter to Commissioner Hogan on Cork 2.0: European Conference on Rural Development, 5-6 September \(September 2016\)](#)
- [Letter from 114 NGOs to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on CAP Fitness Check](#)

- (March 2016)
 - Letter to Director General of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (March 2016)
 - Joint NGO Open Letter: Civil Society alarmed by the prospect of regressive Common Agricultural Policy reform (French version; German version; 2013)
 - Joint NGO Proposal for a new EU Common Agricultural Policy (2010)
 - Proposals for the future CAP: a joint position BirdLife Europe - European Landowners' Organization (2010)
 - BirdLife Europe's response to the January 2011 Consultation for Impact Assessment on "CAP towards 2020" (January 2011).
 - Good natured? Cross-compliance as environmental baseline for Europe's farmed countryside (2008).
 - BirdLife's response to the CAP Health Check consultation (January 2008).
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