

CAP disappoints on green hopes

Title

BirdLife is deeply disappointed with the CAP reform proposals that have emerged from the Commission on the 12 October. Despite their repeated promises of a green reform which would see the CAP rewarding farmers who deliver public goods, what has been published mostly fails to live up to the promise. While the proposals include a few timid steps forward, on other issues it risks going backwards on the progress made in previous reforms. As they stand, the legislative proposals will fail to address the challenges facing Europe's natural resources of water, soil, biodiversity and the climate. Not only will the EU set itself up to fail the 2020 target to halt biodiversity decline, it will erode citizens' quality of life and will harm the very resources upon which farming itself depends. While the proposal includes a few glimmers of light such as protection of grasslands and introduction of farm level environmental focus areas these are overshadowed by continuation of production subsidies for harmful production, and the possibility for Member States to shift money away from targeted environmental spending toward blunt income support says Ariel Brunner, Head of EU policy at BirdLife Europe.

Among the most problematic aspects of the proposal are ([click here to see the BirdLife CAP test](#)): 1. Reverse modulation: a large group of countries would have the ability to move money from Pillar 2 to Pillar 1. This goes against all previous reforms and moves money away from targeted and effective spending towards blunt income support. 2. Coupled support to many different products without clear Commission control on the reasons for the re-coupling. 3. Higher support rates in rural development for all measures apart from environmental ones. Among the improvements being suggested are ([click here to see the BirdLife CAP test](#)): 1. Environmental focus areas set at 7%; 2. Stricter grassland protection; 3. Commitments about the introduction of Water Framework Directive in cross compliance, although questions remain about when it would be actually introduced.

Now it is up to Member States and the European Parliament to work out the details of this reform and it is vital that decision-makers take into account wider societal expectations from agriculture. BirdLife is deeply disappointed with recent statements from the chairman of the Agricultural committee in the Parliament the CAP should 'first serve the interests of farmers and not just those of civil society.' As the way our farmland is managed is critical for food production, natural resource protection and biodiversity conservation the CAP must reflect all these issues and BirdLife looks forward to working with members of the European Parliament who recognise this fundamental principle. BirdLife believes that at a time of savage austerity where most of society is facing very hard economic times, the CAP, which represents 40% of

the EU budget, must be spent effectively and with clear and positive objectives in mind. This will benefit both the farming community and wider society.

BirdLife along with a very wide civil society coalition have demanded that the CAP must start showing a real delivery for the environment. This means a strong and meaningful 'greening' of both CAP pillars including strong greening measures in the first pillar and enough funding going to environmental measures such as agri-environment in the second pillar. Reforming the CAP so that it truly protects and enhances the environment is not a 'nice to have' - it is vital to ensure the natural resources which are needed to guarantee farming and food production into the future. Civil society is asking for CAP reform that will serve the interests of farmers, citizens and the environment - for the benefit of all.

Member States and Parliamentarians should find the courage to stand up to the vested interests for the good of society at large. The Commission has proposed once again to dedicate the lion's share of the EU budget to farm subsidies. The justification has been the benefits that the CAP can bring to the environment, climate and health. Sadly the actual proposal is very weak. It does not send a clear message on the need for a radical change in our farming systems and it might even fail to stop subsidizing the most harmful practices. If the CAP of the future was to be the one proposed by the Commission today (Tuesday 12 October), people might be excused for wondering whether the product is worth the price tag? adds Ariel Brunner.
