

Title At the beginning of September, Environmental NGOs and farmers condemned plans to greenwash the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as revealed in a leaked Commission document. The green groups say that unless the proposals are overhauled to provide real environmental commitments, the policy will remain devoid of any legitimacy. NGOs believe that while the Commission proposal superficially commits to greening the CAP and to rewarding farmers that deliver public goods, a close analysis shows that most of the commitments are fake, empty or seriously underwhelming. No additional support is envisaged for farmers maintaining protected natural habitats in the Natura 2000 network or managing extensive grasslands that are crucial for biodiversity and the climate. All farmers will continue to receive subsidies, even those that practice highly unsustainable farming methods, provoke soil erosion or pollute and over exploit water resources. The leaked draft also reveals funding for targeted and effective schemes to raise the environmental performance of farms could be decreased. Environmental NGOs and farmers are calling on the Commission to radically improve the proposal and put substance behind their green rhetoric. See below reactions from involved NGOs. "The current proposal is a smoke and mirror show", said Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe. "The environmental movement has been supporting a significant budget allocation for a reformed CAP but will not go along with a window dressing exercise that keeps pumping money into Europe's most environmentally harmful farms". "It is shocking to discover that under a headline of greening the CAP, the Commission is actually proposing measures that could be a step backwards. If adopted, this would not only mean that the same farmers will be paid to continue farming in the same damaging way, it would also fail to restore this current policy's lost legitimacy," commented Faustine Defossez, EEB Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer. Matthias Meissner, WWF Germany, Policy Officer International Agriculture added: "In these times of austerity, the European Commissioners must make it crystal clear what the effects of CAP money will be in the future. It would be outrageous for EU taxpayers' money to be spent on supporting farming practices which put at risk food supply for future generations, by destroying the ecological and economic basis of our agricultural system." "Progress in terms of sustainable development of rural economies and farms needs to see the designation of a significant part of the budget to agri-environment and organic farming; something lacking in the current proposals" adds Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU Group. "Multiple challenges cannot be met with business as usual, but need investments in comprehensively sustainable food systems."