

European Parliament vote falls short of real CAP reform

Title

On 13 March the European Parliament voted on two of this year's key policy issues; the EU Budget for the next seven years and the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), which eats up 40% of it. Although Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) showed courage by rejecting the European Council's deal on the budget, it seems that they lost their guts when it was time to vote for a green reform of the CAP. Wednesday 13 March was the first time ever that all MEPs had a chance to vote on the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). In the morning the MEPs voted a resolution on the EU Budget and their position was fair, coherent and clear. In the contrary the outcome of the CAP vote in the afternoon was characterized by confusion, incoherence and a fundamental lack of support for more sustainable farming. In fact, the vote on the CAP reform could have turned out even worse as the day before the Parliament's Agriculture Committee (Comagri) held an **extraordinary meeting to decide which amendments would be put forward for the vote in the plenary**. Fortunately, Comagri decided to generously allow the democratic process to take its course and allow the full European Parliament to vote. **Although this round of reform has a few positive aspects:** the European Parliament finally recognized that double funding (farmers paid twice for the same environmental measure) was illegal, re-included cross compliance (remove sanctions from farmers who break EU law and allows them to continue receiving CAP subsidies) and rejected some of the worst examples of greenwashing proposed by Comagri. **? the list of negative elements is long:** the European Parliament made the greening voluntary and refused to support the most valuable and vulnerable farming systems in Europe (**High Nature Value farming system**). Moreover, on cross compliance several crucial elements of existing law were rejected, such as on wetlands and carbon rich soils; elements that would have made the CAP contribute to climate action. *?The European Parliament has defused some of the worst counter reform proposals that came out of the Agriculture Committee, but has managed only partial damage control.? Stated Trees Robijns, BirdLife Europe Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer. ?The text coming out of the Parliament today would still leave us with a dysfunctional CAP that does not address the urgent crisis in the countryside and does not justify 40% of the EU budget being spent on CAP. ?*

