

Wildlife friendly farmers take their fight to Brussels

Title

On Monday 19 March, a group of farmers from across Europe travelled to Brussels to call for greater support for wildlife conservation in the European countryside through Rural Development measures.

Farmers, coming from England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Portugal, and Latvia, met their MEPs to share their concerns on the proposals of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform currently on the table. These proposals have the potential to make a huge difference for wildlife friendly farming in Europe if well designed. However, currently the plans fail to give a positive incentive to farmers to farm with the environment in mind, and risk leading to cuts to agri-environment schemes. For example, the texts do not introduce a vital lifeline for 'High Nature Value' farming systems whereas they provide a range of vital services for society, including maintaining some of Europe's most threatened habitats and species, contributing to soil carbon storage and the protection of water resources.

Such systems are economically fragile and many farmers face a stark choice between intensifying production and abandoning farming altogether. Without serious attention for these systems, they will disappear, and together with them the people in the countryside and the high nature value areas they manage. Gethin Owen, one of the farmers that travelled to Brussels and whose farm is in Abergele, North Wales said: *“As a farmer I have a duty to care for the countryside, and that means making sure that wildlife can thrive. The measures I have put in place on my land made a real difference and this winter my land has been teeming with birds as a result.”* *“But modern farming is a business like any other and in order to continue providing these measures we farmers must be supported. Visiting Brussels to take this message direct to decision makers is a great way for farmers who care about wildlife to make our voice heard.”* *“I just hope they listen to what we are telling them and push for a new Common Agricultural Policy that supports farmers, wildlife and the wider environment.”*

BirdLife Europe calls on the European Parliament and Council to come out with necessary improvements on the Commission proposals, including a strong Pillar 2, to create a sustainable agriculture system that will support the best agriculture practices and deliver for nature and human well-being. For more information, please contact [Trees Robijns](#), EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe
