We were promised a space for nature in French farmland, but...

One third of farmland in France will not be required to include ecological focus areas that protect biodiversity, such as buffer strips between fields, trees, hedges and ponds. This will make it even more difficult for animals like birds, insects, butterflies, bees and small mammals to survive in farmland areas. Less space for nature has further negative impacts on water and soil quality, as well as on the control of pests.

We were promised a step towards more sustainable agriculture, but...

in the case of Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) we risk a step backwards. Farmland used for energy crops, even those receiving pesticides, could be classified as EFAs.

We were promised better water quality, but...

the CAP cross compliance system will not include any measures to improve water quality.

It needs to be remembered that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) will not be included in the CAP cross compliance system. Therefore, the new CAP reform will fail to deliver on water quality protection. Water pollution caused by farming practices (mostly due to pesticide and fertilizer use) costs citizens between €0.6 to €1.1 billion in annual water bills. On average around 10% goes to water clean-up; the equivalence of €494 per household in the most polluted areas.¹

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In exchange for the billions of euros paid annually in taxes, Europeans were promised a green and more sustainable CAP reform.

The transition towards a greener and more sustainable farming is unlikely to take form because greening has been weakened and exemptions from green measures have become the rule rather than the exception.

But it is not over yet.
Now all efforts have to focus on getting the most out of the implementation of the reform. The French Government has the ability to make this happen.

Decision makers are urged to take this final opportunity and:

1. Ensure that the potential of the Ecological Focus Areas is maximized and thereby strictly limit the share of crops to 1%.

2. Ensure that weighting factors are not undermining the coverage of EFAs.

3. Ensure that the Water Framework Directive and Sustainable Use of Pesticide Directives are well covered by the Farm Advisory Service and that these directives are included as soon as possible in the CAP cross compliance systems.

4. Use the greening equivalence mechanism only when it provides a better impact on the environment. Refrain from watering down further the environmental delivery of direct payments and from creating new exemptions.

5. Increase the budget of the Rural Development Pillar by using flexibility while also raising the budget for environmental and climate measures.

6. Ensure that the Rural Development Programmes only contain truly sustainable measures that go significantly beyond the greening requirements under direct payments:
   - Ensure an increase of funding for high quality environmental measures, such as agri-environment-climate, forest-environment and Natura 2000 measures in the 30% mandatory minimum spending and avoid any decline of overall funding.
   - Reject all environmentally harmful measures under Rural Development.
   - Create special funding for high environmental value farming.

Only if this is achieved can we see a Common Agriculture Policy that contributes to nature protection, maximizes opportunities for French farmers and delivers on its promise for a greener Europe.

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