

€U Are What You Eat! It's high time for a nature-friendly food & farming system!

Today the European Commission launched its long-awaited public consultation on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is calling for a sustainable food and farming system.

Currently around 35% of the entire EU budget goes to the CAP. The current CAP is undermining the environment, public health and sustainable development while failing to halt the collapse in the number of EU farmers. A reformed CAP must work coherently with all other policies, especially environmental ones, to ensure a viable future for farmers, citizens and nature.

The CAP remains an environmentally damaging policy that contributes to climate change, biodiversity loss, soil erosion and water pollution. Farmland birds are now the most threatened bird group in Europe having declined by almost 50% in the last 30 years. Previous attempt at “greening” the CAP are failing both the environment and biodiversity ^[1].

The consultation ^[2] is a welcome start to a new debate ^[2] on the future CAP. It's lamentable that there is no mention of Sustainable Development Goals as being a priority for the next CAP, which was set out as part of the Commission's work plan for 2017 ^[3]. We will be calling to ensure these are at the centre of any new policy.

Trees Robijns, Senior EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia said: *“Today's launch of reform of the CAP is an opportunity to put in place a farming system that incentivises farming that serves the needs of people and the planet. Commissioner Hogan can lead in transforming what is a policy dinosaur and create a system fit for the times we live in.”*

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of EU Policy, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia said: *“Commissioner Hogan's remarks as he launches the consultation are encouraging. From his clear reference to sustainable development to his broad and encompassing view on the need to deal holistically with the problems of rural areas, including his frequent references to the environment, we look forward to words becoming deeds. He can count on us to help him keep him his word. Commissioner Hogan mentioned that in the past the European Parliament and the Council have blocked progressive CAP reform. From today, this will only be avoided through wide mobilization of citizens and stakeholders throughout member states which we will be encouraging over the coming three months.”*

To follow our upcoming campaign on the CAP reform watch [this space](#) and follow #LivingLand.**ENDS**

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Notes:

[1]

Greening measure to protect nature on farms will be environmentally ineffective, new study shows – 28 November 2016

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife_europe_eeb_press_release_28_11_2016.pdf

New study explores possibilities for a better CAP – 7 November 2016

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife_europe_press_release_07_11_2016.pdf

Green direct payments: implementation choices of nine Member States and their environmental implications – September 2015

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/greening_implementation_report_ieep.pdf

The Hidden Truth – Environmental Impact of New EU Rural Development Programmes

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/the_hidden_truth_factsheets_-_eu.pdf

[2]

Whilst it is welcome that this consultation can provide debate about the next CAP, particularly with open questions, Birdlife notes some shortcomings with the consultation format. Alongside the omission of SDGs, the consultation asks the citizens whether they agree with statements such as ‘EU farm income is significantly lower than the average EU income’. Such factual questions deserve proper statistical research and policy decisions should not be based on the perceptions of people about facts. Further, having optional closed questions on the Environment, where a participant must select between prioritizing soil quality, air quality, biodiversity and water quality present a false choice for the participant and the decision maker. There should be no choice between those objectives, the question should be about how to best pursue them.

[3]

In the Commission consultation on the future of the CAP, questions have focused on 6 of the ‘Juncker priorities’, and no mention of the sustainable development goals is being a priority for the next CAP. In December, Commissioner Hogan stated “I am, therefore, especially pleased that President Juncker has this morning confirmed that the Commission will move on the *“modernisation and simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy to maximise its contribution to the Commission’s political priorities and the Sustainable Development*

Goals." His confirmation of a Commission Communication next year reflects the commitment in the Work Programme for 2017 "to take forward work and consult widely" to achieve this overarching goal."

*BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is a [partnership of 48 national conservation organisations](#) and a **leader in bird conservation**. Our **unique local to global approach** enables us to deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of **nature and people**. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is one of the six regional secretariats that compose BirdLife International. Based in Brussels, it supports the European and Central Asian Partnership and is present in **47 countries** including **all EU Member States**. With more than **4100 staff** in Europe, **two million members** and tens of thousands of skilled volunteers, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, together with its national partners, owns or manages more than **6000 nature sites** totalling 320,000 hectares.*