

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **New study: EU Nature policies reduce but don't reverse decline of farmland birds**

**New research, published in Conservation Letters, by a team of conservation researchers, including BirdLife Europe and its partners <sup>[1]</sup>, shows that EU nature legislation and EU agriculture-environment schemes can help to preserve farmland birds, however their impact is weakened by the devastating impact of agriculture intensification.**

The study “*Tracking Progress Towards EU Biodiversity Strategy Targets: EU Policy Effects in Preserving its Common Farmland Birds*”<sup>[2]</sup> was published in Conservation Letters today, looks into whether agri-environmental schemes (AES) within EU common agricultural policy (CAP), special protected areas for birds (SPAs) and Annex I designation within EU Birds Directive have had an effect on bird population changes.

The researchers used monitoring data from 39 farmland bird species from 1981 to 2012 at EU scale and came to the conclusion that agricultural intensification has had negative effects on farmland birds. The study confirms that EU nature policies in general can reduce the declines of farmland bird populations, but it will not reverse them unless EU agricultural policies are completely revamped to protect biodiversity. It found that both the EU system of protected areas “Natura2000” and EU funded agri-environmental schemes have a positive impact on the trends of farmland birds but this impact is not sufficient to overcome the effect of intensive farming.

**Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia said:** “*The new study reconfirms the results of the recent Commission Fitness check of the Birds and Habitats Directives <sup>[3]</sup>: EU conservation policy works, when implemented, but cannot reverse the collapse of biodiversity as long as it is undermined by perverse policies such as the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).*”

This study is another clear sign that the European Commission needs to evaluate whether the CAP is actually fulfilling its objectives and if it is delivering for the environment. It confirms what more than 100 NGOs have been calling for; an urgent “Fitness Check”<sup>[4]</sup> of the CAP. **ENDS**

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Notes:**

[1] BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

<http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/birdlife-europe-press-releases>

[2] Study: Tracking Progress Towards EU Biodiversity Strategy Targets: EU Policy Effects in Preserving its Common Farmland Birds

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/conl.12292/abstract?campaign=wolacceptedarticle>

[3] Evaluation Study to support the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/study\\_evaluation\\_to\\_support\\_fitness\\_check\\_of\\_nature\\_directives\\_final.pdf#overlay-context=news/region/europe-and-central-asia](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/study_evaluation_to_support_fitness_check_of_nature_directives_final.pdf#overlay-context=news/region/europe-and-central-asia)

[4] Press release: NGOs demand “Fitness check” of the Common Agricultural Policy

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife\\_europe\\_press\\_release\\_cap\\_fitness\\_check\\_21\\_03\\_2016.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birdlife_europe_press_release_cap_fitness_check_21_03_2016.pdf)