

Block 'Trojan Horse' at the gates!" – call from BirdLife & the European Environmental Bureau to MEPs over Omnibus proposal to reverse the 'greening' of the CAP

The [Omnibus proposal](#) (a review process of the EU budget including almost all policies including the CAP) was originally intended to be a simplification exercise of the Commission of all pieces of legislation with budgetary effects. Even if the official lead of the proposal lies with the Budget Committee in the Parliament; the agricultural committee have a say on the elements related to the CAP (the Common Agricultural Policy still carries over 35% of the EU budget). Members of the AGRI committee of the Parliament have exploited this technical simplification exercise to quietly water down environmental standards of an already weak greening of the CAP even further. This had not been the purpose of the European Commission who had only put in elements on active farmer, young farmer, voluntary coupled support and the likes in their proposal.

BirdLife Europe and the EEB therefore call on MEPs to reject the proposals by COMAGRI to undermine further the remaining parts of the CAP 'greening' and the attempt to jeopardize the process of a sound CAP reform based on an inclusive consultation process and facts for the CAP post 2020.

On the 13th March, the AGRI Committee supported [the opinion](#) lead by MEPs De Castro (S&D, Italy) and Dess (EPP, Germany), on the Omnibus proposal. The opinion, contains hundreds of amendments, several of which have worrying environmental consequences.

The main consequence is to exempt more farmers from greening requirements whilst still allowing them to qualify for the greening payment. increasing the thresholds under which farms don't need to comply with greening requirements but still get the payments, exempting land that was leased out and rice fields from some of the greening requirements, allowing requirements at higher levels or later dates. The consequence of this is that it will move away further from the prospects of a budget targeted at results, biodiversity will continue to drastically decline across Europe, putting at risk our very farm production capacity, taxpayers will receive less value for money from European policy, and eventually the whole legitimacy of this policy will be further undermined.

An overview of the proposed changes

- to allow new crops such as miscanthus, wild grasses, white mustard, hemp, etc. in the ecological focus areas – further watering down the need to have real ecological elements in these EFAs – meant in the first place for increasing biodiversity
- to take away the power from the Commission to draw up delegated acts on the weighing factors and to set these weighting factors themselves at higher levels – by increasing these weighting factors, it is ensuring the farmers can just declare crops in areas that are meant for biodiversity (where fallow land or landscape elements in general deliver more) and can bother even less with the real ecological elements in the EFAs
- to change the definition of grassland. It has been prolonged from 5 to 7 years, so that a grassland is now only called 'permanent' if it is 7 and not 5 years under grass
- to exempt leased land from some of the greening requirements (such as permanent grassland)

No Assessment

The original commission's proposals have been assessed for their impact yet no official assessments of the individual or cumulative impacts of these changes proposed by the AGRI committee have been made, which have little relevance to simplifying the financial aspect of the policy. From what BirdLife and EEB can observe; these proposals do not improve the policy, deliver value for money or allow the CAP to make greater contributions to protect European biodiversity and are everything but simplification in the sense of a more efficient attainment of the policy goals.

A mini-reform

The amendments made to the Omnibus proposal by AGRI committee, amount to a 'mini-reform' of the CAP. Given that there is an existing process for CAP reform post 2020, with proper institutional timeline, proper consultation process and necessary impact assessments being made, these changes should not be accepted as it derails an existing process for developing the new CAP in 2020. If more changes are made now, whilst farmers already contending with changes, it will be increasingly complex, costly and difficult to implement another round of changes in time for the next policy¹.

A Living Land

Whilst, the AGRI committee have proposed retrograde amendments, over 250,000 Europeans have called on the EU Commission to radically reform EU agriculture.

In what was the largest public consultation on Agriculture ever to take place in Europe, a clear and strong message reached the European Commission: the EU's **agricultural policy needs to be radically changed**. In total **258,708 citizens and over 600 civil society organisations and businesses** made the demand as part of the European Commission's consultation on the future of the CAP, which closed on 2 May. The large mobilisation was generated by [living land](#), the online campaign launched by WWF, BirdLife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, calling for an EU agricultural policy that protects our climate and environment, is fair for farmers and consumers, and contributes to healthy and sustainable food production. **258,708 people and 600 organisations and businesses** representing consumers, the food sector, drinking water providers, and those promoting environmental protection, development, health, and animal welfare joined Living Land.

What is the process?

The European Commission has proposed a revision of a package of different pieces of legislation that have financial implications through a so-called omnibus proposal (proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and amending Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002, Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, EU No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013, (EU) No 1307/2013, (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU)

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/consultations/cap-modernising/qa-cap-modernising_en.pdf

No 283/2014, (EU) No 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Decision No 541/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council).

The Budget Committee and Budgetary Control Committee jointly lead on this proposal but several committees (e.g. REGI and AGRI) have received associated status according to rule 54 while others (eg. DEVE or PECH) have regular opinions only. In the AGRI committee, it was both MEP De Castro (S&D, IT) and MEP Dess (EPP, DE) that were the rapporteurs and the report was voted and adopted on 3 May. Now this report is being voted in BUDG on 30.5.2017 and later by the whole of plenary in June.

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