

THE HIDDEN TRUTH

Environmental Impact of New EU Rural Development Programmes



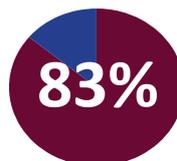
BACKGROUND

One of the overarching aims of CAP reform was to make it deliver more for the environment. To find out what Austrian Rural Development spending means for the environment, specifically for biodiversity, this factsheet analyses how public money will really be spent and what hides behind the official numbers. Despite the alarming state of the environment, Austria is not using its Rural Development spending in the most optimal way.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



DECREASE IN FARMLAND BIRDS SINCE 1998



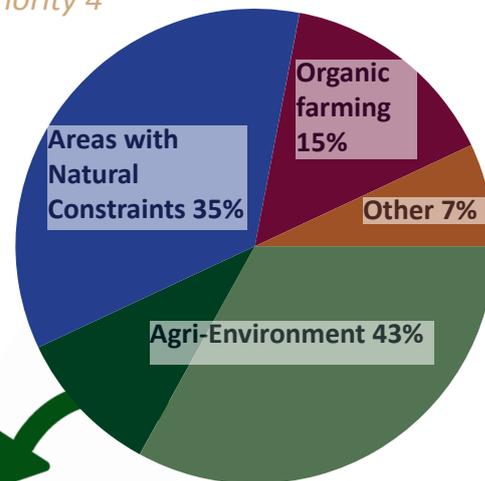
OF PROTECTED EXTENSIVE GRASSLANDS IN NATURA 2000 SITES IN UNFAVOURABLE CONDITION

PAPER VS. PRACTICE

Each Rural Development programme needs to respect certain EU priorities, including the protection of ecosystems. While 66% of total public budget in Austria has been allocated to measures that should directly benefit biodiversity, water and soil (priority 4), the reality is that not all measures for which this money has been earmarked have high environmental value.

In Austria, **35%** of this budget will go to payments for farmers in Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC). Although no environmental conditions are attached to this measure, one positive aspect is that the funding can help ensure the preservation of high nature value meadows in alpine ecosystems.

Ecosystems budget 2014-2020 Priority 4

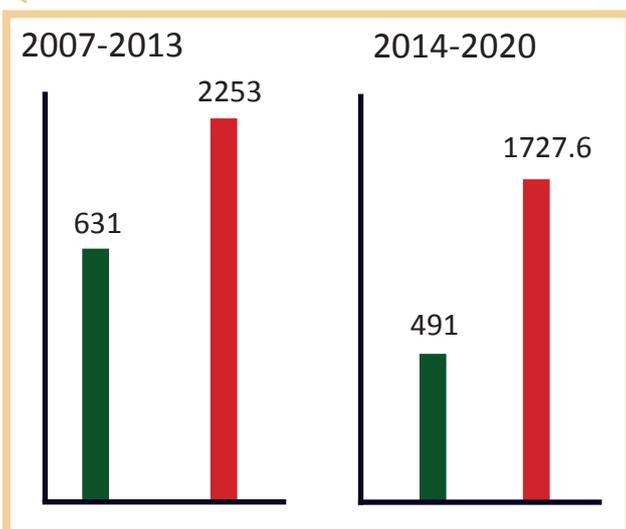


Just **22%** of the 2014-2020 Agri-Environment budget for Austria will be spent on 'dark green' measures.

What are 'dark green' agri-environment measures?

There is no common definition of light or dark green measures. Our analysis uses the following principle: the scheme has been considered dark green if it targets specific species (groups of species), habitats or a specific biodiversity problem (e.g. pollinator strips).

HOW DOES TOTAL AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SPENDING COMPARE WITH THE LAST FUNDING PERIOD?



There will be a **23% cut** in total Agri-Environment spending for the 2014-2020 period in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period.

- Dark green agri-environmental measures
- Other measures

Figures in millions of euros. 2007-2013 figures don't include organic measures.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

AUSTRIA must

- ✓ Increase the budget for *Alpine herding and pasturage* and *Mowing of alpine meadows and steep terrain* as these are schemes which can help reduce the speed of biodiversity loss in the Alps.
- ✓ Make the *Nature conservation* measure more attractive in the high-yield areas of the lowlands, particularly in Natura 2000 areas.
- ✓ Give more financial benefits and reduce administrative burden for farmers to improve the attractiveness of 'dark green' measures. Improving biodiversity-related farm advisory systems will also help take-up.
- ✓ Carry out a sound evaluation of the actual biodiversity benefits provided by agri-environment measures, particularly the horizontal measure '*UBB – environmentally sound and biodiversity supportive management*'.

EUROPE must

- ✓ Ensure that a well-designed greening and reinforced cross compliance represent a firm baseline for Pillar 2 environmental measures. This could help free up money for more efficient and targeted measures that benefit the environment and biodiversity.
- ✓ Ensure the CAP is designed in a way which helps reach the EU Biodiversity Strategy goals by 2020. So far evidence shows that the agriculture target is the most problematic.
- ✓ Have a genuine system for tracking environmental spending. Only measures with clear environmental objectives and delivery can be included. Areas of Natural Constraints (ANCs) must not be counted as environmentally-beneficial measures as there are no environmental obligations or management requirements attached to the payments.
- ✓ Ensure proper monitoring of the Rural Development schemes' delivery.

Europe needs to take a proper look at the whole of its agricultural policy to see whether it is working for or against environmental commitments and priorities. Even if Rural Development can be a large part of the answer and has the potential to play a positive role in many parts of Europe, the figures unfortunately show adjustments are necessary for this policy to truly deliver on its objectives. It is now clear that this reformed CAP still has a long way to go before it can be called green.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The data in this factsheet is based on the first version of the Rural Development Programme.