A Strong Rural Development Policy: The key to unlocking the CAP’s green potential

A joint declaration from EU BirdLife partners

We, the undersigned BirdLife national partner organisations, champion a central role for Rural Development Policy as part of a smart and green Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). If the CAP is to play its part in creating a more sustainable future, it must:

1) Substantially increase funding for Rural Development Policy;
2) Substantially increase, and ring-fence, funding for targeted and well implemented environmental schemes;
3) Ensure payments across both Pillars of the CAP reflect the ‘public money for public goods’ principle and raise the environmental baseline.

Well-designed and adequately funded Rural Development measures deliver clear benefits to society and represent a genuine return for the public’s investment in agriculture. Such measures not only provide the most effective means of conserving biodiversity in farmland habitats that are under threat, they also contribute to wider economic and social delivery, including support to maintain viable farming and rural communities.

Here are just a few examples of the many inspiring cases found throughout the EU:

- In the UK, targeted agri-environment measures are helping to protect rare bird species on the brink of collapse, such as black grouse;
- In Romania, support for High Nature Value farming systems is providing a vital lifeline for culturally distinctive and environmentally valuable approaches to land management;
- In Germany, a successful approach to grassland management in protected Natura 2000 areas helps to stop the decline of the endangered black-tailed godwit.

Despite clear benefits for the environment and wider society, Rural Development receives just 25% of the CAP’s €54bn per year budget. New demands are being placed on Rural Development at a time when we have still not addressed existing ones. Therefore, Rural Development’s share of the CAP budget must increase if we are to have any hope of securing a countryside that is healthy, resilient and viable for people and the environment.

Within Rural Development Policy, targeted and objective-led environmental schemes have proven their worth, not only for biodiversity but also for resource protection, climate change and farm business viability.

Such schemes are the embodiment of a ‘public money for public goods’ approach and it is vital that they play a stronger role within the CAP.
Targeted environmental schemes, such as agri-environment and Natura 2000 payments, should therefore receive a minimum of 50% of each Member State’s Rural Development expenditure, ring-fenced to underline their value and importance. As it is estimated that some €43bn per year is needed to support good environmental management of Europe’s agricultural and forested land\(^1\), even this ask is not sufficient to the scale of need. However it would represent a key step in the right direction for the CAP.

BirdLife Europe and its Partners fully support proposals to ‘green’ Pillar I of the CAP in order to ensure a minimum level of environmental delivery across the farmed landscape and to provide a solid basis on which rural development measures can build. However, the contribution of more ambitious and targeted agri-environment and other rural development measures remains essential if the EU is to meet its targets for biodiversity and climate change.

To this end, we believe that linking 30% of Pillar I funding to meaningful environmental delivery should go hand in hand with a significant budgetary rebalancing of the CAP in favour of Pillar II, including allocation of funds to provide much-needed support for High Nature Value farming systems.

In order to truly unlock the CAP’s environmental potential, both Pillars must be ‘greened’ and they must work together.

In a time of economic austerity, it makes no sense to spend public money without ensuring the delivery of public goods in return.

We call on the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission to heed this declaration and to ensure that this reform of the CAP enables Europe to protect and enhance its natural assets for the long-term benefit of society, the environment and farming.

---

BirdLife Signatories

Gerald Pfiffinger
Chief Executive, BirdLife Austria

Chris Steenwegen
Chief Executive, Natuurpunt
(BirdLife in Belgium)

Philippe Funcken
Directeur Général, Natagora
(BirdLife in Belgium)

Nada Tosheva
Executive Director, BSPB
(BirdLife in Bulgaria)

Dr Clairie Papazoglou
Executive Director, BirdLife Cyprus

Zdeněk Vermouzek
Director, CSO
(BirdLife in the Czech Republic)

Egon Østergaard
Chairman, DOF
(BirdLife in Denmark)

Jaanus Elts
Director, EOS
(BirdLife in Estonia)

Aki Arkiomaa
Director-General, BirdLife Finland

Allain Bougrain-Dubourg
Chief Executive, LPO
(BirdLife in France)

Leif Miller
Chief Executive, NABU
(BirdLife in Germany)

Anastasia Tsoufaki
Director, HOS
(BirdLife in Greece)

Gergő Halmos
Director, MME
(BirdLife in Hungary)

Alan Lauder
Chief Executive, BirdWatch Ireland
(BirdLife in Ireland)
Fulvio Mamone Capria
President, LIPU
(BirdLife in Italy)

Viesturs Kerus
Chief Executive Officer, LOB
(BirdLife in Latvia)

Liutauras Raudonikis
Director, LOD
(BirdLife in Lithuania)

Tom Conzemius
President of LNVL
BirdLife in Luxembourg

Joseph Mangion
President, BirdLife Malta

Fred Wouters
Directeur/CEO, VBN
(BirdLife in the Netherlands)

Dariusz Bukaciński
President, OTOP
(BirdLife in Poland)

Luis Costa
Chief Executive Officer, SPEA
(BirdLife in Portugal)

Dan Hulea
Executive Director, SOR
(BirdLife in Romania)

Miro Demko
Director, SOS
(BirdLife in Slovakia)

Damijan Denac
Director, DOPPS
(BirdLife in Slovenia)

Asunción Ruiz
Director, SEO
(BirdLife in Spain)

Dennis Kraft
Chairman, SOF
(BirdLife in Sweden)

Mike Clarke
Chief Executive, RSPB
(BirdLife in the UK)

Angelo Caserta
Regional Director of BirdLife Europe