Open letter: Debate on the future of the CAP at the AGRIFISH Council

Dear Minister,

We are writing ahead of the upcoming AGRIFISH Council taking place on 15-16 October. Farm ministers seem set to squander this last chance to reform the broken Common Agricultural Policy and we feel compelled to express our deep concern.

We deplore the lack of transparency related to the technical discussions in the Council preparatory bodies, following the publication of the Commission’s CAP legislative proposals. Furthermore, instead of efforts to strengthen the common framework that would ensure badly needed high environmental ambition across the EU, we witness worrisome attempts to roll back, even further, a proposal that already fails to appropriately address the environmental damage caused by intensive farming.

A CAP that continues to fund and promote a model of intensive agriculture – driving biodiversity loss, water and air pollution, over-extraction of water and contributes to climate change – simply cannot be justified at a time where the EU is facing-off multiple challenges. Public acceptance of a policy which funnels the majority of payments to intensive farming (and wealthy landowners) is fast diminishing. The next CAP needs to support farmers in transitioning to sustainability and not push them further down the dead-end track of intensification.

It needs to protect natural resources which are the very basis of the farming sector and a precondition for a healthy society.

To this end, together with other NGOs, we call for a CAP that:

1. **Delivers at least €15bn per year of targeted funding for effective biodiversity measures**, to come out of a 50% ring-fenced fund across the entire CAP for the environment and climate (excluding support for Areas with Natural Constraints). This should include a mandatory eco-scheme under Pillar 1 that allows for the creation of real space for nature on all farms by setting a minimum percentage of unsprayed natural vegetation (top-up beyond 10% set in mandatory conditionality) and effective and targeted schemes under Pillar 2.

2. **Eliminates all perverse subsidies.** In particular, the subsidies for factory farming and intensive agriculture, including coupled support, investment aid, and risk management that collectively drive intensification, increase moral hazard, prevent adaptation to climate change, or incentivise other forms of behaviour that are harmful to society.

3. **Delivers the promised enhanced conditionality**, by including all relevant environmental laws and articles in its baseline, together with real law enforcement, which is essential in order to avoid a renationalisation of the CAP.
4. **Ensures an improved governance and the performance framework**, by including credible and strong accountability mechanisms. This should also involve strong and effective involvement of environmental authorities, scientists and NGOs in the design and implementation of the CAP. This is essential to ensure that national CAP plans contribute to meaningful common policy objectives and guarantee a level playing field, especially within the green architecture of the CAP.

The AGRIFISH Council’s current course appears to be steered by the few who currently benefit from the policy at the expense of the many, including citizens and farmers. Such a course cannot justify the almost half a trillion allocated to the CAP. Another CAP reform that fails to put agriculture on the right path will not only do a disservice to current generations – including a majority of farmers who have asked for the CAP to do more for the environment – but will also jeopardize the very survival of our society (including farmers) in the very near future, by depriving them of valuable biodiversity and a healthy environment, but also the resources needed to produce food.

Yours sincerely,

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