

Italy CAP strategic plan

Transition to sustainability or (bad) business as usual?

What is at stake

Data shows that Italian agriculture is increasingly unsustainable (e.g. -30% Farmland Bird Index, 77.3% of water containing pesticide residues), and establishing a very distant model from small farms rooted in the territory producing in harmony with the environment and the landscape. While in the past the intensive model has been prevalent in the Plains and in the Po Valley, it is now expanding across the peninsula, with greater intensification as well as land abandonment. While containing some useful interventions in the second pillar and providing a budget for organic farming, the Italian CSP is not strong or ambitious enough to overturn the status quo. This is evidenced by the fact that Italy essentially uses eco-schemes as a tool to compensate for economic losses due to internal convergence and makes extensive use of coupled support.

What is wrong with the Italian CSP

- Massive support to livestock sector: 41,5% of funds for eco-schemes and 40% of coupled support go to livestock sector without any commitment for reducing livestock intensity and for sustainable grazing. This will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions and will result in more and more ultra-exploited and abandoned areas further threatening habitats and birds feeding and nesting there.
- Eco-schemes without environmental delivery: 17% of the eco-scheme budget reserved for olive groves contain no real climate and biodiversity commitments and are in fact comparable to coupled support. This means no benefit to wildlife, which needs year-round grassed areas, dry stone walls and margins with native shrubs.
- Eco-schemes failing to support biodiversity: Proposed eco-schemes poorly benefit biodiversity, and reward pesticide users. This threatens the achievement of the European targets and, in particular, the 10% space for nature. The eco-schemes dedicated to pollinators actually forget about wild pollinators and birds, becoming a possible ecological trap for these species and a spreader of non-native (flower) species.
- Unattractive agri-environment premiums and unambitious area targets. This will mean that the measures envisaged in the CSP will not be applied on the ground, making the CAP as ineffective in tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis as it has been so far.
- Fake agri-environment schemes: Precision farming and integrated agriculture are considered AECM. This takes the budget away from really useful climate and biodiversity interventions as the funds dedicated to them contribute to the ring-fencing percentage for climate and environment.

This is how the Italian CSP can help the transition to sustainability

- Putting in place an eco-scheme supporting the maintenance of natural areas beyond cross-compliance, in order to reach the 10% target of areas for nature and reverse the trend of farmland bird decline.
- Increasing the budget dedicated to the pollinator eco-scheme and setting higher ambition of the commitments required therein, so that this ecosystem is also useful for wild birds and pollinators and not just by honeybees.
- Putting in place a strong baseline for all CAP payments: GAEC4 commitments must be applied to all waterways, GAEC2 (protection of wetlands and peatlands) must be applied without any delay, and GAEC8 must be applied also to permanent crops.
- Not granting the redistributive payment to all farms for the first 14 hectares but only to farms below that size, in order to help small businesses working inland contribute to a diversified landscape that is more beneficial to biodiversity.
- Putting in place an AECM dedicated to the nature and climate management of pastures and meadows with a balanced livestock load, use of fencing for rotational grazing, undisturbed areas until autumn, in order to conserve bird species as well as specific habitats, some of which are priorities under the Habitats Directive. These practices are also useful in mitigating the climate impact of livestock farming.