



WWF

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TIME IS RIPE FOR CHANGE: TOWARDS A COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

Agriculture and nature are inseparably linked. Agriculture relies on healthy nature and ecosystem services, which underpin farmers' livelihoods and people's wellbeing. At the same time, unsustainable farming practices are an important driver of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. A transition is needed towards truly sustainable food and farming systems that work for people and nature.

EU institutions and national governments should address today's environmental and societal challenges responsibly. They must deliver on national, European and international commitments such as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

The current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is not fit for this purpose. WWF therefore calls for the CAP to be re-designed in order to support the necessary transition in agricultural practices, and asks for:

- 1. Programmed and targeted schemes to become the core of this policy.*
- 2. Coherence with other EU and global policies and a widened governance structure.*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is part of the solution

Farmers' core business is to produce food, fibre and other essential products. These activities have largely shaped European nature and rural landscapes. Sustainable agriculture is the key to producing food within the capacity of the planet while maintaining the ecosystem services it depends upon, like healthy soils, available clean water and pollinating insects. These ecosystem services are essential for good quality and healthy food and underpin the development of strong rural economies and local communities. Nevertheless, currently most markets do not pay enough to ensure a viable income from sustainable production. Fair markets and supply chains together with a reformed agricultural policy are necessary to mainstream more sustainable farming practices, and offer an attractive and promising future for farmers.

A different CAP is needed to support the necessary change

A reformed CAP is essential for a transition to a sustainable European agriculture model, in which the EU fosters diversified, climate- and market-resilient farm businesses. These businesses can then provide healthy food, protect natural capital, address climate change and safeguard ecosystem services for future generations. The CAP should reward farmers and land managers that preserve water, soil and biodiversity, and contribute to building resilient rural landscapes. At the same time, it should guarantee that animal welfare is respected and avoid the negative impacts of our agriculture outside Europe. A fair, effective and efficient policy can ensure that sustainable farming gets adequate support and that existing negative market incentives are corrected. This requires the polluter pays principle to be reinforced, and using public money to pay for public goods.

The current CAP is not fit for purpose

The current CAP is largely a result of policy priorities and instruments developed for the challenges of the last century. It has strengthened resource intensive farming, increasing pressure on nature and depleting the natural resources that agriculture itself relies upon. At the same time, other farming systems that provide more public goods have been marginalised by policy. At present, approximately 80% of the money used for direct payments goes to 20% of the farmers in Europe. This CAP is not fit for today's societal and environmental challenges. A reform is necessary to meet the needs of farmers and citizens, preserve our planet and secure sustainable food production for the future.

WWF'S REQUESTS FOR THE CAP POST-2020

1. Programmed and targeted schemes at the core of the Common Agricultural Policy

Programmed and targeted schemes must become the core of a modernised CAP. It must be clear what any payment or policy measure is trying to achieve and results should be quantifiable and measurable against robust baselines. The objectives of these schemes should reflect the EU goals for nature and climate and the ecological and socio-economic needs of rural areas, while also taking into account the impacts of our food and farming system outside Europe.

Overall, the core of the policy should shift from the current subsidy entitlements towards fair contracts between farmers and society. Through careful national and regional programming of the schemes and a common monitoring of their implementation and results, the agreed EU priorities can be adapted for each territory appropriately. By including all schemes a farm is engaged in under a single multi-annual contract, effectiveness would increase, control would be simplified, and the internal coherence of CAP payments would improve. In the design and implementation of the schemes on the ground, locally-led and participatory approaches should be required, involving farmers and all relevant stakeholders (local authorities, NGOs, etc.) in all phases of the process.

The existing direct payment system needs to be replaced by a fair alternative system to reward public goods and support the transition to sustainable agriculture. An alternative scheme for farm sustainability could be based on simple agro-ecological principles that maintain and enhance key ecosystem services for agriculture, such as soil fertility, water availability and retention, pollination and natural pest management. This scheme should also seek to minimise the use of non-renewable natural resources and contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change. While most farmers should be able to access these basic sustainability payments, higher levels of ambition and sustainability must be better rewarded to provide the right incentives under a coherent framework. Such changes in direct payments constitute an important evolution in farming and policy, as pure agronomic productivity would no longer be the only indicator for success.

An appropriate policy framework involves not only paying to encourage certain farming practices, but also giving support to investments, training and advisory systems that will assist in the transition to sustainability. Support for High Nature Value and Natura 2000 farming must be ensured in the system, based on the ecological, social and environmental benefits they produce, such as protecting and enhancing specific biodiversity, or maintaining food production and livelihoods in remote rural areas. Specific result-based schemes will be needed to support farming that produces very high levels of public goods, like those targeting complex ecological outcomes.

2. Coherence with other EU and global policies and a widened governance structure

The CAP must be coherent with other European policies, and synergies with structural and cohesion funds must be increased to secure living rural areas. The CAP must contribute to the full implementation and enforcement of existing legislation on biodiversity, health and the environment, including the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive, the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive and National Emission Ceilings Directive. Such key environmental legislation must be better integrated into the CAP to prevent perverse subsidies. Farmers must be provided with the necessary support and advisory services to fully comply with existing legislation and, with adequate incentives, to take bigger steps towards sustainability.

A major objective of the CAP must be to contribute to international agreements signed by the EU. It must help meet the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, such as implementing resilient agricultural practices, the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, reducing water pollution and increasing water-use efficiency, halting land degradation and biodiversity loss. Taking urgent action on climate change, as pledged in the Paris Agreement, should also be among the primary objectives of a modernised CAP.

Due to the interrelation of agriculture with many other areas (nature and environment, water, food, health, climate, regional cohesion, international trade and development, etc.), the CAP should have a widened governance system which goes beyond the usual agricultural stakeholders. The CAP needs to be designed, agreed, implemented and monitored jointly with other relevant authorities and policy makers. Most notably, CAP funds should be managed closely with environment authorities, who should also have a greater responsibility in policy design. Furthermore, open and transparent public participation in the CAP decision-making process is needed, not only at the EU level, but also at national and regional levels.

Our commitment

WWF is determined to support the development of a new Common Agricultural Policy that helps to build sustainable food systems and safeguards the planet's natural environment and resources. A new CAP should serve sustainable farmers and rural communities, who are the prime caretakers of Europe's landscapes.

For further information:

Jabier Ruiz Mirazo

Senior Policy Officer, Agriculture & Food

WWF European Policy Office

Email: jruiz@wwf.eu

Mobile +32 470 66 81 91

