

# Rural Development and its use for biodiversity across the EU

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# The premise of recent CAP reform

INSIGHTS | PERSPECTIVES

## AGRICULTURE POLICY

### *EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity*

Extra steps by Member States are needed to protect farmed and grassland ecosystems

By G. Pe'er\*, L. V. Dicks, P. Visconti, R. Arlettaz, A. Báldi, T. G. Benton, S. Collins, M. Dieterich, R. D. Gregory, F. Hartig, K. Henle, P. R. Hobson, D. Kleijn, R. K. Neumann, T. Robijns, J. Schmidt, A. Schwartz, W. J. Sutherland, A. Turbé, F. Wulf, A. V. Scott

In December 2013, the European Union (EU) enacted the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for 2014–2020, allocating almost 40% of the EU's budget and influencing management of half of its terrestrial area. Many EU politicians are announcing the new CAP as “greener,” but the new environmental prescriptions are so diluted

declining species and provide important ecosystem services, yet have the worst conservation status among all ecosystems (2). Declines in species richness seem to have slowed for a few taxa in parts of north-western Europe (3), albeit at a biodiversity-impooverished status quo.

Expansion of the EU and its common market continue driving agricultural intensification in Europe (1, 3). Aided by CAP subsidies, the scale of agricultural operations is increasing throughout the EU [e.g., increasing holding size (see the chart)], with new MSs showing an increase in agrochemical inputs [e.g., fertilizers (see the chart)]. These processes, alongside peatland drainage and abandonment of seminatural grass-

systems with higher environmental impact than all other policies and directives [supplementary materials (SM) part A]. Recognizing the role of the CAP for biodiversity, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 sets Target 3A to “maximise areas [...] covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP” (8). The CAP reform does not fulfill this target.

**THE DILUTION OF AMBITION.** When the European Commission launched the latest CAP reform in 2010, it outlined three main challenges: food security, environment and climate change, and maintaining the territorial balance and diversity of rural areas (9). To help address the second challenge, 30% of direct payments to farmers (“Pillar 1”) were to become conditional on compliance with three “greening measures”: establishing Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) on 7% of farmed area, maintaining existing permanent grassland, and growing a minimum of three different crops on any farm with >3 ha of arable land. Yet after 3 years of negotiation (10), these measures now apply to roughly 50% of EU farmland, and most farmers are exempt from deploying them.

# The money - progressive part of CAP goes down

- RD budget has been slashed by 13,4 % compared to previous period
- 5 countries (HR, MT, PL, SK, HU) will transfer around 3 billion EUR from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> pillar



# Lifting the baseline with greening?

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- N fixing crops vs landscape elements
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## Crop diversification – stop monoculture?

- 1/4 of arable land exempted
- Monoculture deemed green (FR)

# RD - Good intentions & numbers

- MS asked to maintain the 2007-2013 level of efforts + spend 30% on envi & clima measures
- MS asked to increase targeting in AEM (ECA)
- RD spending allocated to priority 4 protection of ecosystems: 43%
- Agri-environment: 16.8.% of total public exp.
- Minimum spending requirement: 43%
- Total agricultural land under contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes: 19%



# RD – too often sad reality (1)

- Numbers do not say anything about quality and delivery for biodiversity
- The measures counted include
  - some well-designed AEM
  - a lot of broad and shallow measures with questionable environmental benefit (e.g. nutrient balance, no-tillage with high use of glyphosates,..)
  - potentially harmful spending
- Controllability demands support trend to “broad and shallow” schemes
- Lack of advisory undermines targeted scheme



# RD – too often sad reality (2)

- AEM budgets reduced and targeted biodiversity schemes missing or underfunded (e.g. FI, PL, SI, SK, DE, ...)
- Decades of conservation work at risk of being lost (e.g. Emilia Romagna - IT)



Picture credit see notes

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- AEM budgets reduced and targeted biodiversity schemes missing or underfunded (e.g. FI, PL, SI, SK, DE, ...)
- Decades of conservation work at risk of being lost (e.g. Emilia Romagna - IT)
- Money going to arable farming where grassland is the problem (e.g. LV, ES, ...)
- Positive exceptions exist (e.g. AU) - increased budget for targeted, good AEM

# RD – An example: Poland



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- 30,79% is allocated for objective 4 of RD
- BUT: highest proportion (16,3%) goes to support for Areas of Natural Constraint.
- ANC is characterized by unsustainable farming methods (industrial animal husbandry, high use of synthetic fertilizers, etc.) – NGO analysis
- Budget for targeted biodiversity schemes has been decreased



**Thank you**

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