The Food Policy Coalition calls for a budget which invests in farmers' resilience: the EU must ringfence a significant share of the Common Agricultural Policy budget for agri-environmental and climate actions

As the discussions on the future of the EU budget, including on the future CAP, are advancing rapidly in Brussels and in Member States, the undersigned organisations, representing civil society, water suppliers' association, beekeepers' and farmers' organisations as well as national coalitions, advocate for EU funds to be invested for public goods. **We are calling for a minimum of 35% of the overall CAP budget to be ringfenced for agri-environmental and climate actions (AECAs) and animal welfare.**

In the European Commission's proposal, environmental and climate spending no longer benefits from a dedicated budget allocation within the CAP as is currently the case, leaving its level of funding entirely at the discretion of Member States. This is highly concerning for several reasons.

First, recent droughts, floods, heatwaves and water shortages have demonstrated the growing exposure of European agriculture to climate-related risks. The European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA)[1] confirms that risks to food production, water resources and ecosystems are already severe and are expected to intensify in the coming decades. Agri-environmental and Climate Actions (AECAs) are among the CAP's most effective tools for strengthening the long-term resilience of European agriculture by supporting healthy soils, water retention, biodiversity and other ecosystem services on which agricultural productivity ultimately depends. They are enablers of competitiveness, risk mitigation and an investment in future farming resilience. Experiences from this summer's droughts have shown that farms with stronger ecological infrastructures and ecological agronomic practices, notably agroecological and organic farms, are better equipped to absorb and recover from these impacts than more input-dependent systems. **Investing in these measures is therefore not simply an environmental objective; it is a strategic investment in the resilience, competitiveness and long-term economic viability of European farming. It is also the fiscally prudent choice, helping to reduce future expenditure on crisis management and disaster relief.**

Second, without a dedicated financial allocation, there is a significant risk of backsliding. Many farmers have responded to CAP incentives by adopting more sustainable practices and making long-term investments in their farms. The approach proposed in recent years was to focus on more incentives rather than additional regulation. Agri-environmental and Climate Actions are exactly the type of support that should be strengthened, not weakened. Cutting funding for these measures would undermine confidence in the CAP and jeopardise progress already achieved. **The next CAP should instead reward early movers, build on what works, and bring more farmers into the transition towards sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture. AECAs should be easily accessible to small-scale farmers and new entrants.**

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[1] https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment

Finally, the absence of ringfencing risks creating an uneven playing field across the Union. In the context of a tighter CAP budget, Member States facing competing spending priorities may choose to scale back environmental investments, leading to wide disparities in ambition and undermining the common objectives that the CAP is intended to deliver. This would leave farmers increasingly reliant on ad hoc national crisis support, the availability of which depends on national fiscal capacity rather than a common European framework. **A dedicated minimum allocation for AECAs is therefore essential to guarantee a predictable level of investment in environmental public goods across all Member States and ensure that shared environmental and climate challenges are addressed at the necessary scale.**

While the Council of the European Union, in its negotiation box presented on 10 October, did not propose ring-fencing for agri-environmental and climate actions in the CAP, the European Parliament Co-Rapporteurs have, on their side, introduced ring-fencing for these actions in their draft Report on the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP) Regulation. However, the level proposed, 35% of only the second Pillar, is insufficient to properly address the climate and environmental crisis, and support farmers who have to face more and more frequent extreme climatic events. It represents a clear back-tracking from today's CAP, which allocates at least 28% of the total CAP budget to ecoschemes and Agro-Environment and Climate Commitments (AECCs). All of this without taking into account the reduction in the total CAP budget.

In a time of constrained public budgets and multiple overlapping crises, agri-environmental actions are essential to ensure farmers' resilience. While AECAs represent one piece to ensure the resilience of the EU agri-food systems, AECAs are essential for the future of the EU agricultural systems and should come with an adequate budget.

To secure sufficient funding, three further changes are needed: allow 100% EU financing for environmental actions, remove the mandatory €130/ha minimum DABIS payment to free up resources, and redirect savings from capping and degressivity towards environmental incentives for farmers.

Beyond this step, the undersigned organisations want to remind that it is an utmost priority that the future CAP is used to ensure fair income support and adequate economic conditions for the agroecological transition. The partial general approach agreed by the AGRIFISH Council in October presents a very worrying step back on the social standards and environmental ambitions of the EU, by removing social conditionality of the CAP, decreasing the requirements of farm stewardship, going back on animal welfare ambitions and objectives of pesticide reduction, and leaving support for organic and small-scale farmers optional for Member States. This direction is threatening the common vision of the EU and the legitimacy of the CAP for the future. Furthermore, the weak approach being taken on Degressive Area Based Income Support capping and degressivity is worrying, beyond being crucial for the fairness of the CAP they are also key instruments to avoid the cooptation of AECAs by big industrial farms. Heads of State and Members of the European Parliament should ensure that both measures remain mandatory and are implemented through meaningful thresholds. This would notably generate sufficient savings to further support AECAs without the need for co-financing.

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[2] https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/cap-strategic-plans_en#documents

Signatories

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8. BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination
9. BioForum
10. Bioland e.V.
11. BirdLife Austria
12. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
13. Bodensee-Stiftung
14. Bond Beter Leefmilieu
15. BUND e.V.
16. Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (BÖLW)
17. Bündnis für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft e.V.
18. Canopea
19. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
20. Citizens for Ecological Learning and Living (CELL)
21. CIWF
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23. Collectif Nourrir
24. Corporate Europe Observatory
25. Czech Society for Ornithology
26. Demeter e.V.
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32. ECOLISE
33. European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)
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35. European Environmental Bureau
36. Eurogroup for Animals
37. Fern
38. FIAN Deutschland e.V.
39. Foodrise

40. FOUR PAWS
41. Friends of the Earth Malta
42. Friends of the Irish Environment
43. Humundi
44. IFOAM Organics Europe
45. International Association of Waterworks in the Rhine basin (IAWR)
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47. LandschappenNL
48. Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux
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50. Living Earth Coalition
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61. NaturFreunde Deutschlands
62. Neuer Imkerbund e.V.
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65. Por Otra PAC
66. PROVIEH e.V.
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68. SAFE
69. SEO/BirdLife
70. Slow Food
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72. SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
73. The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
74. ToxicFree Suisse
75. Umanotera
76. Via Pontica Foundation
77. Vogelbescherming Nederland
78. WWF European Policy Office
79. Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft


Agroecology
Europe


ANIMAL ADVOCACY
& FOOD TRANSITION


BirdLife
EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA


BeeLife
European Beekeeping Coordination


COMPASSION
in world farming


EEB
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Environmental
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ECOLISE


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MAKING THE EU WORK
FOR PEOPLE & FORESTS


EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS


IFOAM
ORGANICS EUROPE


ARCHE NOAH


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demeter


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Lebensmittelwirtschaft


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otop
BirdLife
Polska


Bündnis für
eine enkeltaugliche
Landwirtschaft


koalicja żywa ziemia


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BioForum
SECTORORGANISATIE
BIOLANDBOUW
EN -VOEDING


LIPU


SOR
SOCIETATEA ORNITOLOGICĂ ROMÂNĂ


NATURE &
PROGRÈS
BELGIQUE


ecologistas
en acción


GLS Treuhand
Zukunftsstiftung
Landwirtschaft


NaturFreunde
DEUTSCHLANDS


AbL
Arbeitsgemeinschaft
bäuerliche Landwirtschaft e.V.


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OTRA
PAC


Via
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für Natur und Umwelt


BirdLife
ÖSTERREICH


UMANOTERA
Že 30 let soustvarjamo trajnostno družbo.


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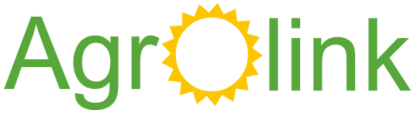
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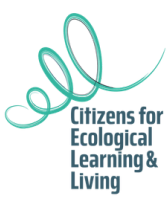
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