

The CAP Reform

What's at stake



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On 12 March 2013 the European Parliament will seal the fate of Europe's food and farming for the next seven years and beyond. The decision is about spending 50 billion Euros of taxpayers' money a year and cutting a path through a dense jungle of regulations.

The European Parliament will decide:

- ✓ Which forms of agriculture are viable for Europe's farmers?
- ✓ How many farms will survive until 2020? (one in four of all EU farms closed between 2007 and 2013)
- ✓ How further depopulation of rural areas can be prevented?
- ✓ How much pesticides and artificial fertilizers can be used?
- ✓ How much livestock is viable? How much animal welfare can be required? How much is to be exported?
- ✓ How many million hectares of soya need to be planted around the world so that the EU can import these for fodder?
- ✓ What chance small farmers in Africa and Asia will have against subsidised and industrial competition?
- ✓ How our landscapes will change? How many species will survive monocultures?
- ✓ What kinds of foods are available to us and at what price?

The agricultural division of the European Commission, whose task it is to draw up a framework of what needs to be reformed, proposed that the direct payments to farmers per hectare (€ 310/hectare in Germany, € 95/hectare in Lithuania) should only be paid if a minimum of environmental services are enforced. This is called *Greening* and it means that a minimum of 3 field crops should be cultivated per year, of which the biggest should not exceed 70%. Meadows and pastures should be kept intact and 7% of arable land is to be managed as an ecological focus area. It also proposed subsidy ceilings.

Environmental groups as well as organic and small farmers would have liked the Commission to be more ambitious. But at least these were steps in the right direction. Agribusiness and large farmers unions however, were up in arms.

As the CAP reform is decided by and negotiated between the EU Parliament and the EU Council of Agricultural ministers, the EU parliament committee for agriculture (COMAGRI) endorsed its CAP proposals via a vote on 23rd and 24th January 2013. Sadly, the agribusiness lobby and large farmers unions succeeded in watering down the Commission's *Greening* proposals and exploiting loopholes until what remained was unrecognisable. Indeed, the regulations endorsed by the COMAGRI could cause more environmental damage than the previous version.

Many had hoped that the involvement of the directly elected members of the European Parliament (MEPs) would make the high-stake poker game for billions in agricultural subsidies more transparent and democratic. However COMAGRI's vote paints a very different picture. It defends the interests of agribusiness with an even harder line than agriculture ministers tend to take.

On 12 March 2013 a European Parliament plenary session will vote in Strasbourg on the dangerous proposals endorsed by COMAGRI. From a practical point of view, this is the last chance to defend *Greening*. For this purpose, a majority of 754 deputies who are not dependent on the agricultural lobby but want to be re-elected in 2014, will need to reject what their agrarian colleagues are about to present as no less than a partisan compromise.

This is uncommon. MEPs generally follow committee and expert group recommendations. No one can be an expert on everything. But, following those who represent the interests of the afflicted economy is dangerous. Requests submitted by the EU Parliament's environmental and development committees were simply rejected out of hand by COMAGRI. It is European consumers who will be falling by the wayside.

Below a table comparing COMAGRI's proposals with our suggestions on how MEPs should vote on 12 March 2013:

This is what COMAGRI wants

This is what we want

Subsidy recipients and amounts remain secret.	Full transparency on all subsidy recipients and amounts received.
Greening measures are voluntary: anyone who waives 30% payments will be free to stick with their unsustainable status quo and still retain 70% of the direct payments (subsidies)	Greening is a requirement for receiving direct subsidies (COM*)
Farmers would be paid twice to do the same thing: "green by definition" allows payment for greening (pillar 1, direct payments) and easy agri-environmental measures (pillar 2, rural development).	No double payments for one and the same services (COM).
There are so many exemptions that greening would not be applied, with any improvement of agro-ecosystems / the rural environment.	Simple, clear, easy manageable and controllable standards for all farmers (COM).
Only 3% instead of 7% of arable land are to be made into ecological focus areas, increasing to 5% and <i>maybe</i> more after a review.	If not 10% then at least the 7% proposed by the Commission (COM).
Areas of pastures and meadows are to be maintained on a Member state/ federal state/ regional level, allowing for their ploughing on a farm level.	Keeping pastures and meadows intact at the farm level would be the farmers' responsibility (COM).
Taxpayers' money spent for rural development (Pillar 2) is to be invested in private insurance against price fluctuations, natural disasters and crop failures.	No taxpayers' money for private insurance that supports the financial industry.
Crop "diversification": above 10 hectares (ha), two crops; above 30 ha, three crops - monocultures remain available on 80% of the arable land.	Real crop rotation of at least 3 crops over 3 years for all farms, instead of annual "diversification" – this is only way to break up monocultures (Environment Committee).
Farmers don't have to comply with the EU Water Framework and Pesticides Directives to obtain full direct payments.	The Water framework directive and the Pesticides directive should be brought into cross compliance to improve environmental quality (COM).
Elimination of longstanding rules against soil erosion and groundwater pollution, along with bans on hormones in meat, animal identification and other actions to prevent spread of BSE.	Payments must be conditioned by compliance with all relevant EU laws on environment, public and animal health (COM).
Export refunds instrument is maintained; dumping the EU's surpluses can continue.	Delete the export refunds instrument (Development Committee).
No monitoring of the CAP's impact on food production and small farmers in developing countries.	Monitoring the CAP's impact on long term local food security in developing countries (Development Committee).

*"COM" simply means to keep the Commission's original proposal

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