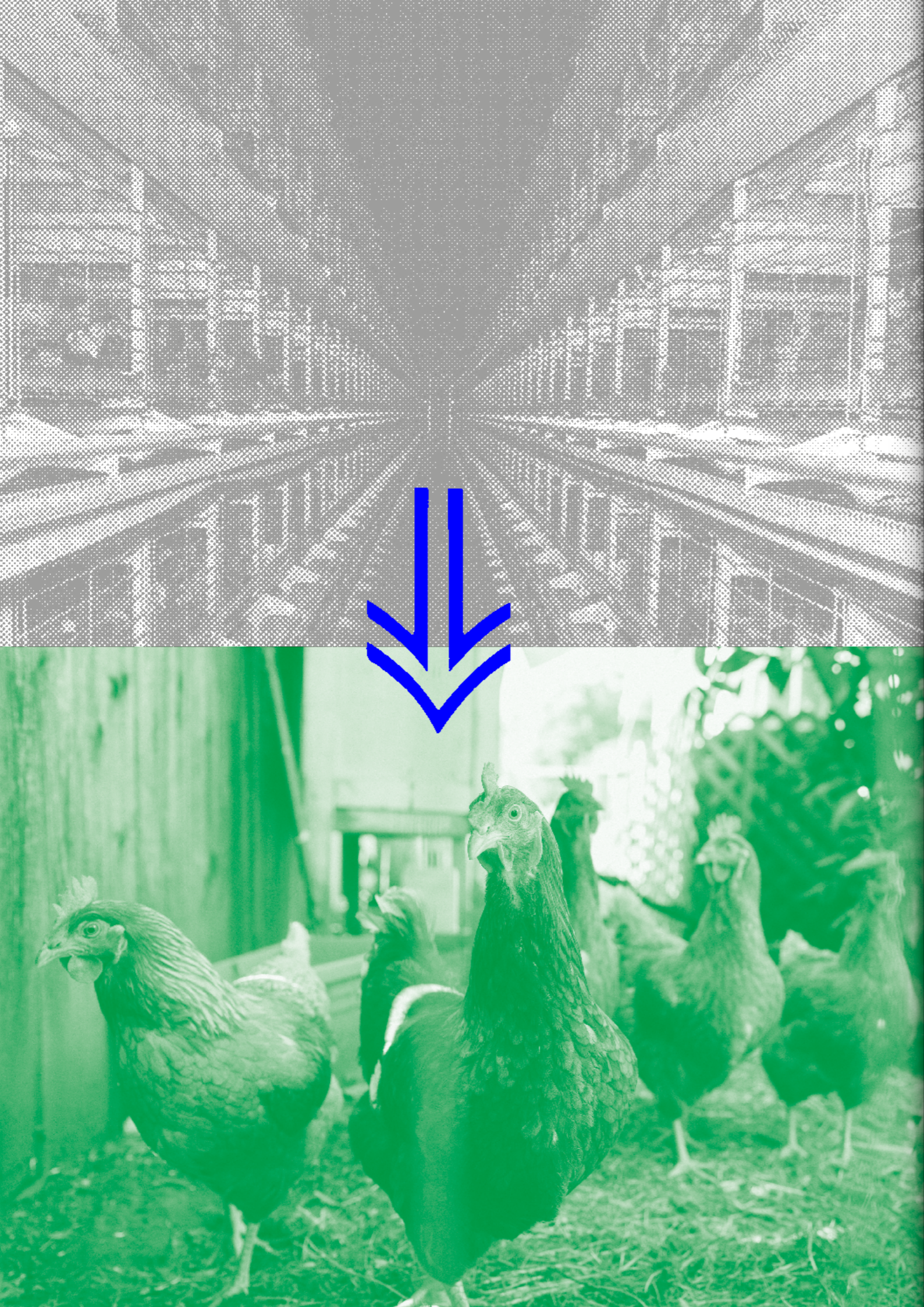


# ⇒ Towards a just, resilient ← ⇒ and future- fit EU

Joint proposals  
of national agrifood  
coalitions for the  
CAP post-2027



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This paper consolidates the demands of national agrifood coalitions for the post-2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform. It outlines a vision for a CAP that responds to national priorities while advancing a just agroecological transition for the EU. The proposals reflect cross-border consensus and call on EU institutions to take account of widespread public concern.

It is based on the positions of the following agrifood coalitions: [Agroecology in Action](#) (Belgium), [Food Transition Coalition](#) (Netherlands), [Environmental Pillar](#) (Ireland), [Living Earth Coalition](#) (Poland), [Platform Aarde Boer Consument](#) (The Netherlands), [Platform of Associations on the CAP](#) (Germany), [Por Otra PAC](#) (Spain), [Voedsel Anders NL](#) (The Netherlands), [Voedsel Anders Vlaanderen](#) (Belgium)

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# Introduction

<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2024). *Direct payments to agricultural producers*.

The CAP remains the cornerstone of European agricultural policy, yet its current design is unsustainable. Until now, the CAP has failed to adequately support small- and medium-sized farms, while currently, 80% of CAP funds go to just 20% of farms.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it does not do enough to protect the climate, environment, biodiversity and rural communities. Key issues include its unqualified area-based payment system and continuous deregulation, exposing farmers to volatile prices and unfair competition. These structural shortcomings within the CAP undermine the necessary social and environmental measures to build a resilient agricultural sector.

While previous CAP reforms have failed to correct structural inequalities or deliver on climate and biodiversity goals, the next reform cycle must be different. A fair and green CAP is essential to secure a future for Europe’s nature, farmers and citizens. With the upcoming MFF negotiations, coalitions across the EU are concerned about the uncertainty around the possible reallocation of EU funding into a single fund. This risks shifting more power to individual member states, weakening EU cohesion with fragmented agricultural policies, creating a race to the bottom and allowing agriculture to compete for funding with other priorities like defense. Without clear EU-wide guidelines and earmarked funding for agriculture, sustainable practices may be deprioritized and left to the changing political will of national governments, undermining stability for farmers and the EU’s commitment to sustainability. The future of agriculture and food must remain a priority in long-term budget discussions. As EU institutions reassess agricultural priorities in the wake of the Strategic Dialogue and the newly released European Commission’s Vision for Agriculture and Food, this paper offers both ambitious reforms and pragmatic steps for the CAP post-27. The paper outlines a vision for a reformed CAP that integrates robust market regulation, reorients subsidy allocation towards public goods and sustainable practices, fosters generational renewal and advances gender, social, and environmental justice.

# Market Regulation

Prioritising low-cost production for competitiveness in global markets has undermined sustainability by driving down food and farming standards and squeezing farm incomes. Real sustainability requires that EU farmers are paid fair prices that cover the true costs of meeting high environmental, animal welfare, and social standards. Therefore, competitiveness should no longer take precedence over the CAP's nine social and environmental policy objectives. Instead of supporting competition in global markets, competitiveness must be understood as strengthening regional, young, new, diverse, disadvantaged, and mixed farms. In the next CAP, food sovereignty should become an overarching goal, enabling the EU to produce food as sustainably as possible, through its own farmers and for its own population.

Aligning with WTO rules, CAP reforms since 1992 have deregulated agricultural markets, leading to price volatility and creating subsidy dependence that disadvantages small and medium-scale farmers while rewarding industrial, large-scale agriculture. The EU's involvement with free-trade agreements has exposed farmers to unfair global competition while allowing cheap imports that do not meet the same environmental and social standards. The result is an agricultural system where production is dictated by the economic interests of multinational corporations rather than the needs of farmers and society.

## Therefore, the EU must:

- Reintroduce **efficient market regulation** – within and beyond the CAP – to restore balance in agricultural markets and ensure fair and stable prices. In this way, public funds can be directed toward supporting public goods rather than serving as compensation for excessively low prices.
- Readjust or **introduce regulatory measures under the Common Market Organization (CMO)**. These measures must be used as tools for resilient farming and long-term sustainability<sup>2</sup>:
  - ✗ A **minimum price should cover all production costs**, including the labour of farmers and a risk premium.
  - ✗ **Flexible supply management should align the EU food supply with domestic demand**, following the successful model of Canada's dairy and poultry sectors.
  - ✗ **Publicly managed strategic buffer stocks** in arable and live-stock sectors to help stabilise prices, secure farmers' incomes, and keep food affordable, especially during crises or poor harvests.
  - ✗ **Mandatory supply contracts** between purchasers and farmers in all Member States, covering price, volume, quality, and duration, including for cooperatives.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid the negative impacts of potentially higher food prices, Member States should strengthen social safety nets and expand or introduce food assistance programs that enable vulnerable populations to purchase healthy food. These mechanisms must not serve as an excuse to support industrial production models that exceed the capacity of markets and generate negative societal, economic and environmental impacts. Additionally, a transparent pricing system could be established across the EU to monitor how much of the retail price goes to producers, intermediaries, and retailers.

<sup>3</sup> To avoid adverse impacts on farmers in the Global South, safeguards and accompanying systems that support a just transition in third countries must also be strengthened.

- ✗ An **early warning system for market crises** for all sectors of agricultural production, as well as crisis instruments, including temporary, binding volume restrictions.
- ✗ Expand Article 210a to **enable producers to jointly establish minimum prices or premiums** for products that meet higher sustainability standards in environmental protection, climate action, animal welfare, and social responsibility.
- **Expand cost transparency** via independent observatories to counter market asymmetries.

## Trade policy

As the worldwide farmers' movement La Via Campesina proposes, there is a need to develop new multilateral trade rules for agriculture. Additionally, agriculture must be excluded from existing free-trade agreements, and deals like EU-Mercosur should be halted. To ensure more EU self-sufficiency and promote food sovereignty, the EU should impose higher import taxes and allow regions in the Global South to do the same. This approach would protect European farmers against unfair competition and safeguard farmers in the Global South from dumping of highly subsidised food commodities. By increasing EU import taxes on soy and palm oil, the EU would reduce its extractivist usage of land and water resources in the Global South for commodities like animal feed and biofuels. These measures could help to give farmers and Indigenous Peoples in the Global South their natural resources back for their food production.<sup>3</sup>

At least, as a transitional step, CAP measures must be complemented by protections against unfair competition from imported products that do not meet EU standards. The EU should uphold its commitment to end double standards in production by introducing mirror measures across relevant legislation, such as on pesticides, animal welfare, and environmental protection, ensuring that imports are held to the same requirements as European products, with special and differentiated treatment for low-income countries.

**Market regulation is a precondition for the acceptance and functioning of environmental, animal welfare, generational, and gender-based measures.** By ensuring fair and stable prices, it reduces economic insecurity, enabling farmers to earn a fair income from selling their products and to plan long term. Fair markets further support the adoption of higher environmental and animal welfare standards, helping farmers transition to more sustainable livestock systems and see farming as a viable livelihood, especially for underrepresented groups.

# CAP Funding System

In preparation for the Agreement on Agriculture in the WTO, the CAP shifted from market price support to income support, beginning with coupled payments that only partially offset farmers' losses from reductions in guaranteed prices. These reforms were rolled out in 1992 for cereals and beef, in 2003 for milk, and in 2004 for sugar. The impact was negative in three ways: farmers saw their incomes decline as they were forced to sell products below the cost of production; agribusinesses profited by sourcing raw materials at artificially low prices; and public funds inflated the CAP budget while being distributed increasingly unfairly, without delivering meaningful rural or environmental benefits.<sup>4</sup> Over time, payments were gradually decoupled from production, culminating in a hectare-based direct payment system by 2014. While cross-compliance introduced some conditions tying subsidies to environmental and social standards, the policy's main structural flaw remains: land area is still the primary basis for support. By primarily rewarding land ownership, the CAP has fuelled farm consolidation and the erosion of rural vitality, local economies, and ecosystems. As conditionality is further weakened under the current CAP simplification processes by the Commission, the EU is risking its ability to protect the environment and ensure long-term food security, raising urgent questions for the CAP post-2027.

The CAP funding system is also problematic in several other areas, including animal welfare, gender justice, and generational renewal. Area-based subsidies encourage land consolidation, making it difficult for young farmers, especially new entrants, to access land and establish businesses. As larger, more established farms receive the majority of support, new entrants find it harder to compete, undermining opportunities for renewal within agriculture. The current untargeted funding structure also reinforces social and gender inequality, limiting access to agricultural funding. Further, the current system fails to sufficiently differentiate between intensive and extensive livestock in the subsidy system, thereby neglecting funding support for the public goods provided by more sustainable, extensive farming.

## Therefore, the EU must:

- **Phase out decoupled, unqualified area-based payments** and implement ambitious structural CAP reforms, while ensuring viable farm incomes and resilience across all regions. The EU must, in turn, **redirect CAP funds to support the provision of public goods and services**, bolster rural vitality, and protect biodiverse agricultural landscapes.

- Prioritise **small** and **mixed** farms, **new entrants**, **gender minorities**, and the **transition** to **agroecological** and **organic** farming.

- Prescribe a **significantly increased minimum budget for eco-schemes and agri-environment-climate measures (AECMs)**, which increases steadily throughout the funding period.

4 Council of the European Union. *Timeline: History of the Common Agricultural Policy*. More extensive historical analysis: Geurts, G. (2025). *A just and green CAP and trade policy in and beyond the EU*.

5 Building on this, long-term contracts and landscape-scale approaches should be supported across both pillars. This includes promoting collective action among farmers to deliver on large-scale biodiversity and climate targets, and integrating long-term commitments alongside annual ones to enhance stability and effectiveness.

6 A hybrid approach combining both measure- and results-based payments will incentivise innovation and deliver measurable outcomes, while remaining accessible to farmers of different scales. This will also allow farmers to choose pathways that suit their regional, climatic, and structural contexts.

7 Matthews, K. B., Buchan, K., Miller, D. G., & Towers, W. (2013). *Reforming the CAP—With area-based payments, who wins and who loses?*

8 An example of this prioritisation would be for CAP payments to support native breeds. This tool should be scaled up as part of a broader effort to promote extensive, pasture-based livestock systems that enhance biodiversity, climate resilience, and animal welfare. Member States should be encouraged to voluntarily earmark a share of livestock-related CAP funding for these systems, with flexibility to reflect national conditions, while ensuring the funds deliver clear environmental and social benefits.

- Better **coordinate eco-schemes under Pillar 1 and and AECMs under Pillar 2** to maximise their collective effectiveness, simplify access for farmers, and ensure that environmental ambition is rewarded consistently across funding streams.<sup>5</sup>

- Ensure that **agri-structural, socio-economic and location-specific aspects** are considered when calculating premiums for eco-schemes and AECM.

- Adopt a **tiered payment structure** within the CAP, with higher levels of support linked to more advanced and effective sustainable practices, incentivizing farmers to transition towards agroecological models and produce within the planetary boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

- Integrating **degressivity mechanisms** in the CAP, as they ensure that participation in the CAP is particularly worthwhile for those farms most in need of support and that agricultural funding is thus used effectively.

- Introduce **compulsory capping of all direct payments for member states and expand the redistribution mechanisms**, especially for the period of phasing out the unqualified area-based income support payments.

- Intervene on the first and second pillars, including economic support, to **encourage the cultivation of environmentally beneficial crops** such as legumes (e.g. beans or peas), flax, and hemp, which contribute to soil health and reduce reliance on synthetic inputs.

- ✕ Agroforestry and mixed farming systems should likewise be maintained and strengthened in both pillars as climate-smart, multifunctional land use options.

- Restructure the CAP funding system to **prioritise and incentivise sustainable extensive livestock systems**, including through eco-schemes, agri-environmental measures, and rural development investments.<sup>7+8</sup>

**This transformation requires better alignment between market regulation and CAP funding.** Market regulation is central to securing farmer livelihoods and enabling resilient farming. CAP funding should complement this effort by supporting a just transition, directly enabling farmers to deliver environmental public goods and adopt animal welfare-friendly practices. Only through this integrated and fair approach can the CAP truly deliver on its objectives.

# Environmental & Climate Measures

To ensure long-term agricultural resilience and food security, the CAP must actively support farming systems that regenerate rather than deplete natural ecosystems. Policy must drive systemic transformation by enabling farmers to produce within planetary boundaries, contributing to biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation, and ecosystem restoration.

## Therefore, the EU must:

- **Maintain environmental baseline requirements** as a precondition for accessing public funding, with a focus on essential environmental protections.

- ✕ They should be streamlined and limited to those currently not covered EU-wide by regulatory law, ensuring that all farms meet high ecological standards while safeguarding the means of production and agricultural productivity.

- Support the **implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Law** and national restoration plans in the CAP, particularly in agroecosystems.

- Build on and mainstream **best practice examples of agri-environmental schemes across Member States'** CAP Strategic Plans.

- ✕ Ireland's Locally Led Result-Based Approach, first tested through the Burren Programme, provides a compelling model of how farmers can be fairly rewarded for delivering environmental outcomes tailored to their local landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

- Establish **clear benchmarks** and a strong, **independent farm advisory system**, earmarked for ecological practices.

- ✕ Farmers need accessible advisory services and peer-learning opportunities to help them adopt and benefit from more agroecological practices.

- Continuously **monitor and openly report progress**, setting clear, **quantifiable targets in line with the Green Deal**, to ensure coherence and accountability.

Take a **whole value chain approach** to increase diversity at all levels, from farm to landscape features.

Farmer support, transparency and monitoring must go hand in hand. With coherent policy design and robust accountability mechanisms, the CAP can become a cornerstone of Europe's transition to future-fit agri-food systems.

9 O'Rourke & Finn (2020) *Farming for Nature – The role of Results Based Payments*

# Livestock Farming

10 It is confirmed by data from Spain that "the increase in ground-water pollution by nitrates during 2016–2019 has been higher in the regions with the highest livestock census" Greenpeace España. (2021). *Macrogranjas: El modelo industrial que está devorando el medio rural*.

11 European Economic and Social Committee. (2024). *Benefits of extensive livestock farming and organic fertilizers in the context of the European Green Deal*.

12 National Economic and Social Council. (2023). *Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use*.

13 National Economic and Social Council. (2023). *Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use*.

When discussing livestock farming, it is essential to distinguish between extensive and intensive livestock farming. Intensive livestock farming poses an increasing threat through habitat contamination,<sup>10</sup> environmental degradation and endangering wildlife. In contrast, extensive livestock farming, when well-managed, can offer social, economic, environmental and animal welfare benefits—yet it remains under-supported by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Practices such as grazing at sustainable stocking densities, with careful management of rest periods for pastures, exemplify extensive systems that optimize the use of local forage resources, reduce reliance on external feed, and create rural employment.<sup>11</sup> These systems also help prevent wildfires, sequester carbon, and conserve biodiversity, contributing to climate and ecological resilience. Importantly, farmers need a just transition that ensures the benefits and burdens of change are equitably shared with society, and that those most affected are supported and empowered to shape the process and outcome.<sup>12</sup>

## Therefore, the EU must:

- Deliver strong regulation to address the negative impacts of both intensive farming and mismanaged extensive systems (e.g., overgrazing or overstocking).

- Enforce ecological thresholds for livestock emissions and stocking densities, tailored to national and regional conditions.

- Provide farmers a **just transition** that ensures the benefits and burdens of change are equitably shared with society, and that those most affected are supported and empowered to shape the process and outcome.<sup>13</sup>

- Support a broader dietary transition, encouraging reduced consumption of products from intensive livestock systems. This can be achieved through fair pricing for extensive farming products and demand-side measures beyond the CAP.

The CAP must become a lever for transformation, enabling sustainable livestock systems with high animal welfare standards, regulating harmful ones, and supporting dietary shifts that align with public and planetary health.

# Generational Renewal

The future of farming in Europe is at stake. Today, only 12% of farmers in the EU are under 40<sup>14</sup> and the climate, nature and society will provide increasingly challenging conditions for producing food in the future. More generally, new entrants face enormous barriers, from unaffordable land prices and land concentration to disproportionately low incomes and inadequate financial support. Women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those without access to inherited land are particularly affected, as structural and cultural inequalities—including lower likelihood of inheriting land, reduced access to education and financial support, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and the tendency for women to enter farming at an older age than men—further exacerbate the barriers to entering and remaining in the sector.

Despite these challenges, current CAP measures remain insufficient, and there has been no budget increase for young farmers compared to previous periods.<sup>15</sup> Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers only represents 1,8% of all the direct payments for the CAP 2023–2027 in the first pillar and the intervention of the setting-up of young and new farmers accounts for 5,3% of all the rural development interventions in the second pillar. The current CAP payments do not sufficiently support young farmers with the challenges they have to cope with. To secure generational renewal and a socially & environmentally just transition to agroecology, the CAP must be reoriented to actively support young and new farmers who engage in agroecological farming, based on a clear plan. The CAP measures must additionally be supported by legislation outside of the CAP, such as stronger regulations of land markets.

## Therefore, the EU must:

- Introduce **new support schemes for agroecological new entrants** within the CAP, establishing viable support for agroecological farming from day one.
- Focus on a **start-up premium that is concept-based** and not related to area, mandatorily applied across all EU Member States as part of the agroecological transition.
  - ✕ This could offer targeted support during the critical early phase of farm establishment and/or transitioning. Member States already applying this measure should serve as models for its EU-wide implementation.
- Provide **economic and administrative support to farmers to transition** to agroecological farming. This involves strengthening **independent advisory systems** to ensure that new entrants can establish their farms in ways that promote long-term sustainability and profitability.

14 EU CAP Network. (2025). *Generational renewal in the agricultural sector and young farmers*.

15 Münch, A., Badouix, M., Gorny, H., Messinger, I., Schuh, B., Beck, M., et al. (2023). *Comparative analysis of the CAP Strategic Plans and their effective contribution to the achievement of the EU objectives*.

16 Access to Land Network. (2025). *EU Observatory on Agricultural Land: Policy Brief*.

- **End speculative land markets and prioritise land access** for agroecological and small-scale farmers, whose role is key to building resilient rural areas and climate-friendly farming systems.

- Provide **stronger regulation and transparency in land markets** to prevent further land concentration and speculation.

- ✕ The Commission's Vision to create an EU Observatory of Farmland would help better monitor land dynamics, improve transparency, and inform policy-making that facilitates access to land for new entrants and agroecological farmers. A Farmland Observatory is a transitional stepping stone to prevent land concentration and better prioritize land access to agroecological and small-scale farmers. Building on that, the member states should provide a land access strategy to ensure that the next generation of farms reflects the realities of the future.<sup>16</sup>

# Gender & Social Justice

The agricultural sector has many acute social issues to deal with. It is faced with drastically lower income per worker than the average wage across the EU economy (60% of the average wage in 2023),<sup>17</sup> despite being a profession with a higher risk of injury than all other professions.<sup>18</sup> In the EU, female farmers earn on average one-third less than male farmers.<sup>19</sup> The situation is even more challenging for seasonal workers, as many of them are not employed under the Seasonal Workers Directive and therefore are not entitled to its rights and social protections.

Currently, there is insufficient support and prioritization within the CAP to tackle the gendered imbalances and promote female participation in farming.<sup>20</sup> Despite being a recommendation, member states are not obliged to include gender-focused measures in their strategic plans, with only four EU countries having introduced specific CAP measures to financially support gender minorities becoming farmers for the 2023–2027 CAP period.<sup>21</sup>

## Therefore, the EU must:

- Make **gender equality its own CAP objective**, systematically collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on CAP beneficiaries, and account for structural inequalities undermining access to subsidies (i.e., farm-size, education and access to land).
- Always **consult marginalised gender identities** about their specific needs and realities in farming.
- Provide **installation aids, top-ups and support services** for marginalised gender identities and groups.
- Uphold and expand the principle of **social conditionality** to encompass provisions for minimum wages and regulation of working hours, accompanied by stricter labour inspections.

To address the gender and social injustices related to farming, the next CAP must integrate strong social, rural and gender equity measures to ensure inclusive and just agricultural systems.

17 European Commission. (2025). *A vision for agriculture and food: Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations.*

18 European Committee of the Regions. (2024). *Opinion on the Common Agricultural Policy reform: Towards a fairer, greener, and more resilient agriculture in Europe.*

19 European Commission. (2023). *Explore farm incomes in the EU: Farm economics overview based on 2021 FADN data.*

20 In Spain, women represent 37.4% of the recipients of direct CAP payments but receive only 27% of the total funds because, on average, women's farms are smaller and payments are calculated based on land area.

21 European Commission. (2023). *Approved 28 CAP Strategic Plans (2023–2027): Summary overview for 27 Member States.*

# Rural Development & Regional Food Strategies

Between 2007 and 2022, nearly 2 million small-scale commercial farms disappeared – a 44% reduction – largely driven by the CAP payment structure that disproportionately supports larger farms.<sup>22</sup> This shift has weakened regional food infrastructure and eroded the social and economic fabric that sustains vibrant, resilient rural communities. Diverse production systems and local services are essential for future-fit food systems.

22 Greenpeace European Unit. (2024). *Go Big or Go Bust: How the EU's farmers are pushed to produce more to stay in business.*

23 Madre, Y., & Guala, G. (2022). *EU school food procurement schemes: A more inclusive, educative, and ambitious project.*

24 Caimi, V., & Sansonetti, S. (2023). *The social impact of public procurement: Can the EU do more?*

## Therefore, the EU must:

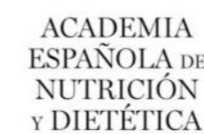
- Provide a **well-funded second pillar of the CAP** to revitalise rural areas and foster more resilient regional food systems.
- Use **rural development funding to re-establish local food infrastructure**, including small-scale processing, distribution, retail facilities, and services such as bakeries, butchers, and markets. These elements are crucial to maintaining farm viability and fostering vibrant rural economies.
- Prioritise **short supply chains and diverse food production models** that strengthen the link between producers and consumers.
- Invest in **local and regional food strategies**, tailored to specific territorial and cultural contexts, to reduce environmental impacts, foster social cohesion, and improve access to fresh, nutritious food in both rural and urban areas.

## Public Procurement

Public food procurement accounts for 5.2% of all food purchases in the EU and influences the diets of 67 million children through school canteens alone.<sup>23</sup> It holds major potential for promoting healthy, sustainable diets and supporting local producers. However, under current EU legislation (Directive 2014/24), environmental and social criteria in public tenders are optional, and contracts are often awarded based solely on price.<sup>24</sup>

To shift this dynamic, **EU rules must move away from the lowest-price logic and ensure public contracts favour suppliers who meet strong sustainability standards**, such as organic production, local sourcing, and socially responsible practices. The CAP post-2027 should support Member States in aligning public procurement policies with these goals, as a lever for sustainable farming, public health, and resilient rural economies.

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