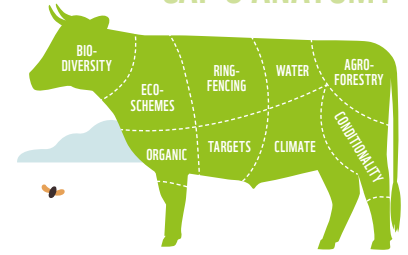




CAP'S ANATOMY



1. CONDITIONALITY THE CORNERSTONE OF A GREENER COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

What's it all about?

All farmers receiving subsidies from the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have to respect a basic set of standards known as the “conditionality of the CAP”. The principle is that farmers violating EU law or other EU standards on environmental, public and animal health, animal welfare or land management will have their CAP support reduced.

Conditionality works mostly as a set of do-no-harm requirements, but the scientific evidence shows that this is clearly not enough to avoid the impacts of agriculture on nature and climate. Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are on the rise, pollinators and farmland birds continue in freefall, while freshwater ecosystems are overexploited for irrigation and polluted with agrochemicals^{1,2,3}.

As part of the ongoing reform of the CAP, the European Commission has proposed to enhance conditionality by adding a few additional standards and improving many deficiencies of the “greening requirements” of the previous CAP from 2014-2020. The new system of conditionality, comprising 26 standards, was presented as one of the main changes to increase the environmental ambition of the farming policy.

However, some amendments to the future CAP regulations discussed to date by the Council and the Parliament are putting these basic rules at risk. Certain conditionality standards are being severely undermined, while others are being deleted entirely.

The European Green Deal weighs in

The recently proposed EU Farm to Fork and 2030 Biodiversity Strategies have given a clear orientation that agriculture must transition away from its high dependence on agricultural chemicals and towards more nature-friendly farming. These aspirations will be impossible to reach if the bar of the CAP conditionality is lowered.

For instance, in order to reduce the use of pesticides in the EU, the Farm to Fork Strategy proposes to reinforce and extend the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which allows healthy crops to grow with substantially less pesticides. A central element of IPM is crop rotation, a basic farming practice that prevents the build up of pathogens by shifting regularly to crops that are not susceptible to the pathogen. Crop rotation is one of the new CAP conditionality standards proposed by the Commission which is unfortunately under serious threat of being removed.

Another example comes from the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, which has set a target of at least 10% of agricultural land to be dedicated to features such as trees, ponds, stone walls or hedges, which host and help preserve wildlife on farmland. A minimum amount of such features is one of the new CAP conditionality requirements, but current discussions could lead to this basic standard being completely diluted.

The EU Council and Parliament must not water down environmental conditions attached to CAP subsidies!

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BASIC FARMING STANDARDS ARE PROPOSED IN THE CONDITIONALITY OF THE FUTURE CAP.

84%

OF THE EU'S FARMLAND IS SUBJECT TO CAP CONDITIONALITY, COVERING FIVE TIMES MORE LAND THAN AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES.⁴

¹ Alliance Environment report: Impact of the CAP on habitats, landscapes, biodiversity (2020)

² Alliance Environment report: Evaluation of the Impact of the CAP on Water (2020)

³ Alliance Environment report: Evaluation of the CAP on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions (2019)

⁴ European Commission, CAP indicators dashboard



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