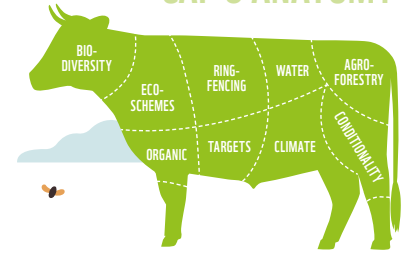




CAP'S ANATOMY



3. TARGETS: SEEKING REAL IMPACT ON THE GROUND

What's it all about?

The proposals for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2020 contained a major change in the governance of the EU's farming policy, in what has been presented as a shift from compliance to performance. Moving away from a prescriptive approach where most technical details had to be agreed in Brussels and then complied with, the "new delivery model" gives Member States substantial flexibility to design and implement their CAP interventions that are most appropriate in their national or regional context. In exchange, they are requested to prove the good performance of the policy through a battery of indicators.

This new performance framework, however, is terribly flawed. Member States are only obliged to set targets, measure progress and report on the implementation of CAP schemes, with no assessment of their true impact. Critics have proposed that targets should instead be set for the CAP "impact indicators", such as greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture or the farmland bird index.

Appropriate data collection and reporting of progress on impact indicators are equally crucial as otherwise, Member States tend to prioritise low-ambition and easy-to-implement CAP measures. Unfortunately, the data-collection and reporting provisions of the CAP regulation are also being challenged, with Member States negotiating for a maximum of flexibility with minimal requirements.

The European Green Deal weighs in

The Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies have announced a significant change in the desired direction of travel for EU agriculture. This is clearly stated by a series of 2030 targets set out in these strategies, which envision a large increase in organic farming and high diversity landscape features on farmland, as well as drastic reductions in pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics. Additionally, as part of a European Green Deal that aims for climate neutrality in 2050, agricultural greenhouse gas emissions will have to be significantly reduced and more carbon be sequestered in farmland soils and woody vegetation.

The European Commission has performed an analysis of the links between the CAP reform and the European Green Deal [1], establishing a direct link between each of these political targets and the relevant CAP impact indicators. In line with this, while developing their CAP strategic plans, Member States will be invited to set explicit national values for those same impact indicators, to better assess how they plan to contribute to the EU ambition. These positive developments, however, are not binding in any way for Member States, as the draft CAP regulations have not been amended accordingly.

It must be a legal requirement for Member States to establish national targets for the key CAP impact indicators and to collect all the data necessary for their calculation.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM EU AGRICULTURE HAVE INCREASED BY AN AVERAGE OF 1 MILLION TONS OF CO₂EQ PER YEAR SINCE 2010.²

25% OF EU FARMLAND SHOULD BE UNDER ORGANIC FARMING BY 2030, ACCORDING TO THE FARM TO FORK AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES.

¹ Analysis of links between CAP Reform and the European Green Deal, European Commission staff working document 2020

² European Commission CAP indicators board



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