ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY (AEP) IN SEE COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES

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Assessment of the application of the Agri-Environmental Policy (AEP) in SEE Countries/Territories in order to improve understanding of the current state in application of agri-environmental policies: institutional set-up, policies in place, measures, indicators, recommendations

Experts from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (soil & water expert, Livestock production expert and Crop production expert)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
Agriculture and the environment in EU

THE AIM OF THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENT IN EU IS:

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS INTO THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AIMS TO HEAD OFF THE RISKS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRO-ECOSYSTEMS.
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Introduction

Around half the EU's land is farmed. Farming is important for the EU's natural environment. Farming and nature influence each other:

- Farming has contributed over the centuries to creating and maintaining a unique countryside. Agricultural land management has been a positive force for the development of the rich variety of landscapes and habitats, including a mosaic of woodlands, wetlands, and extensive tracts of an open countryside.

- The ecological integrity and the scenic value of landscapes make rural areas attractive for the establishment of enterprises, for places to live, and for the tourist and recreation businesses.
Inappropriate agricultural practices and land use can also have an adverse impact on natural resources, like:

- pollution of soil, water and air
- fragmentation of habitats
- loss of wildlife
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Introduction

The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** has identified three priority areas for action to protect and enhance the EU's rural heritage:

- **biodiversity** and the preservation and development of 'natural' farming and forestry systems, and traditional **agricultural landscapes**
- **water** management and use
- **dealing with climate change**
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Introduction

The CAP ensures that its rules are compatible with environmental requirements and that CAP measures promote the development of agricultural practices preserving the environment and safeguarding the countryside.

Farmers are encouraged to continue playing a positive role in the maintenance of the countryside and the environment.

This is achieved by:

• targeting aid at rural development measures promoting environmentally sustainable farming practices

• enhancing compliance with environmental laws by sanctioning the non-respect for these laws by farmers through a reduction in support payments from the CAP
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Integration

The major objective in EU is integrating environmental concerns into the CAP.

The Common Agricultural Policy has evolved over time and has been increasingly adapted for integrating environmental concerns.

The integration of environmental concerns into the Common Agricultural Policy is based on a distinction between:

• ensuring a sustainable way of farming by avoiding environmentally harmful agricultural activity (farmers must respect common rules and standards for preserving the environment – POLUTERS PAY PRINCIPLE)

• providing incentives for environmentally beneficial public goods and services (compulsory legislation is not enough for achieving higher environmental goals and farmers may voluntary contribute to enhance environment beyond mandatory requirements and to be remunerated for that PROVIDER GETS PRINCIPLE)
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Principles

The **POLUTERS PAY PRINCIPLE** help to avoid environmental damage, and farmers have to ensure compliance with mandatory national end EU environmental standards.

The **PROVIDER GETS PRINCIPLE** support farmers that voluntarily provide environmental services going beyond legal requirements through agri-environmental payments.
Agriculture and the environment in EU CAP mechanisms

CAP reflects polluter pays and provider gets principles for integrating environmental concerns into the policy by two mechanisms:

• Linking selected statutory requirements (Cross compliance) to most CAP payments and sanctioning non-compliance by payment reduction

• Paying for provision of environmental public goods and services going beyond mandatory requirements (Agri-environmental measures)
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Agri-environmental measures and cross compliance

Agri-environment measures (AEM) are a key element for the integration of environmental concerns into the Common Agricultural Policy.

AEM are designed to encourage farmers to protect and enhance the environment on their farmland by paying them for the provision of environmental services.

Farmers commit themselves, to adopt environmentally-friendly farming techniques that go **beyond** legal obligations

Legal obligations are set by **compulsory cross-compliance**:

**Statutory Management Requirements** - legislative standards in the field of the environment, food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare and

**Good agricultural and environmental condition** - standards related to soil protection, maintenance of soil organic matter and structure, avoiding the deterioration of habitats, and water management..)
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Agri-environmental measures

Farmers that voluntary commit to AEM receive payments that provide compensation for additional costs and income foregone resulting from applying those environmentally friendly farming practices.

Agri-environment measures may be designed at the national, regional, or local level so that they can be adapted to particular farming systems and specific environmental conditions.

Agri-environment measures are co-financed by Member States.

EU expenditure on agri-environment measures amounts for 2007 - 2013 to nearly 20 billion EUR or 22 % of the expenditure for rural development.
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Agriculture and landscape

Agriculture is the main land user and the resulting high visibility leads to a widespread perception that "rural" matches with "farming".

Across the EU, agricultural land management has created a rich landscape diversity, including a mosaic of woodlands, wetlands, and extensive tracts of an open countryside.

Often the farming activities that helped generating those features have lost their competitiveness.

The CAP stresses the importance of preserving the farmed landscape as:

- Traditional agricultural landscapes form part of the cultural and natural heritage,
- The ecological integrity and the scenic value of landscapes make rural areas attractive for the establishment of enterprises, for places to live, for tourism, and recreation businesses.
The ecological integrity of a landscape is an important element of its attractiveness and perceived value. The fairly recently established concept of High Nature Value Farming recognises the causality between certain types of farming activity and natural values, such as high levels of biodiversity or the presence of species and habitats of conservation concern.

Typically farming practices preserving and enhancing biodiversity are associated with low intensity grazing or mowing practices on semi-natural vegetation.

Some more intensive agricultural landscapes can be beneficial with respect to biodiversity as certain farmland features can provide for nesting and breeding sites, food sources and migratory corridors.

There are also examples of entirely intensively managed farming areas that sustain large populations of species important for nature conservation.
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Agriculture and biodiversity

By managing a large part of the European Union's territory, agriculture preserves farm-genetic resources, bio-diversity, and a wide range of valuable habitats.

‘Biodiversity' refers to the variety of life and its processes. The concept is closely associated with 'ecosystems' and 'habitats'.

Agricultural biodiversity includes:

All components of biological diversity of relevance for food and agriculture, and

All components of biological diversity that constitutes the agro-ecosystem.
Agriculture and biodiversity

Two major changes have contributed to upsetting the delicate balance between agriculture and biodiversity:

• Specialisation and intensification of certain production methods (such as the use of more chemicals and heavy machinery),

• Marginalisation or abandonment of traditional land management being a key factor in preserving certain habitats and site-specific bio-diversity.

In some EU Member States, land abandonment and the withdrawal of traditional management may become a threat to biodiversity on farmland. Therefore, preventing these processes is a key action for halting the loss of biodiversity.
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Agriculture and water

Agriculture can impact in different ways on the good chemical and good quantitative status of groundwater and surface waters.

Water quality may be negatively affected by the presence of pesticide residues, nutrients from fertilisers, or sediments from soil erosion.

In terms of QUANTITY, on average, 44 % of total water abstraction in Europe is used for agriculture.

Southern European countries use the largest percentages of abstracted water for agriculture. This generally accounts for more than two-thirds of total abstraction.

Northern Member States, use much less water in agriculture, irrigation is less important but still accounting for more than 30 % in some areas.

The amount of water used for irrigation depends on factors such as: climate, crop type, soil characteristics, water quality, cultivation practices...
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Agriculture and water

Irrigation helps improve crop productivity and reduce risks due to dry periods, making it possible to grow more profitable crops. However, irrigation is also the source of a number of environmental concerns, such as the excessive depletion of water from subterranean aquifers, irrigation-driven erosion and increased soil salinity.

On the other hand, traditional irrigation systems create diverse and intricate landscapes, which support a variety of wildlife and have important cultural and historic value.

Protecting water quality is a key issue of the CAP. The central aim is to avoid water pollution through agricultural activity, mainly through a sustainable use of pesticides and fertilisers for avoiding water pollution.
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Agriculture and water

The main CAP instruments promoting sustainable water management are the following:

• Certain rural development measures support investments for improving the state of irrigation infrastructures or irrigation techniques that use less water, as well as actions to improve water quality.

• The cross-compliance framework includes statutory requirements related to water protection and management arising from the implementation of the groundwater directive and nitrates directive, as well as GAEC standards.

• At EU level, the Water Framework Directive plays a vital role in protecting water quality and quantity, establish river basin management plans, and water pricing that influence users to use water resources efficiently.

• Payments under Article 38 of the Rural Development Regulation will contribute to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.
Agriculture and soil protection

Processes like desertification, erosion, the decline in organic matter in soil, soil contamination (e.g. by heavy metals), soil compaction and salinity can reduce the ecological state and, thereby, the productive capacity of soil.

Such degradation can result from inappropriate farming practices such as unbalanced fertilisation, the excessive use of groundwater for irrigation, improper use of pesticides, use of heavy machinery, or overgrazing.

Other causes of soil degradation include the abandonment of certain farming practices. (for example greater specialisation towards arable farming has frequently meant an end of traditional crop rotation systems and fertilisation with green legumes, practices that helped restore the organic matter content of soil)
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Agriculture and soil protection

The Common Agricultural Policy contributes to preventing and mitigating soil degradation processes. In particular, agri-environment offer opportunities for:

- favouring the build-up of soil organic matter,
- the enhancement of soil biodiversity,
- the reduction of soil erosion, contamination and compaction.
The provisions of cross-compliance, with respect to the obligation to **keeping agricultural land in good agricultural and environmental condition**, can play an important role for soil protection.

The European Commission adopted in 2006 a soil protection thematic strategy, including a proposal for a Soil Framework Directive, that aimed at:

- the preservation of soil functions,
- the prevention of soil degradation,
- the restoration of degraded soils.
Intensification and higher productivity was accompanied by a significant increase in the use of both inorganic nitrogen and phosphorous fertilisers. This led to excessive amounts of nitrates and phosphates in waters and to eutrophication of these waters.

The CAP can help to reduce the pollution of waters by nitrates, through:

- **Rural Development measures** (in particular, agri-environment measures, support for investments in storage of manure, and training)
- **Cross-compliance** (including the Nitrates Directive, establishment of buffer strips along water courses), and
- **The operational programmes for fruit and vegetables.**
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Agriculture and nitrates

The Nitrate directive (included into the list of statutory management requirements subject to cross-compliance) is managed by Member States and involves:

• Monitoring water quality in relation to agriculture.

• Designation of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones.

• Establishment of (voluntary) codes of good agricultural practice and of (obligatory) measures to be implemented in action programmes for nitrate vulnerable zones.

For Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, the directive sets 170 kilos as the maximum annual limit of nitrogen from livestock manure that can be applied per hectare.

Codes of good agricultural practice cover such activities as: application periods, fertiliser use near watercourses and on slopes, manure storage methods, spreading methods and crop rotation and other land management measures.
Agriculture and pesticides

Farmers might use pesticides to protect their plants or plant products against pests, with the aim of ensuring that quality products are available to consumers at a reasonable price.

At the European Union level, the principle aim is to ensure that pesticides are used correctly to minimise health or environmental risks.

Organic farmers are subject to even stricter rules regarding pesticides.

The EU does not just control the use of pesticides in agriculture. It has also set requirements on placing plant production products on the market and on biocidal products, as well as fixing maximum residue levels in food.
Improper use of pesticides might involve risks to health and environment. This is why the common agricultural policy promotes the sustainable use of plant protection products in a variety of ways:

- most **direct payments** to farmers are **no longer linked to production**, reducing the incentive to produce more than is needed and to intensify the use of pesticides
- ‘**green**’ direct payments are given to farmers for agricultural practices that are beneficial for the climate and the environment
- Under the **cross-compliance rules**, farmers can lose part of their payments if they do not respect the requirements of EU law related to environment, climate change, the good agricultural condition of land, human, animal & plant health standards and **animal welfare**. This includes the conditions for use of pesticides.
Agriculture and the environment in EU

Agriculture and pesticides

• in the specific case of fruits and vegetables, at least 10% of spending in the operational programmes must be on environmental actions that go beyond mandatory environmental standards

• agri-environmental measures are designed to reduce the risks of environmental degradation and enhance the sustainability of agro-ecosystems

• farm advisory systems have to inform farmers about conditions under cross-compliance, green direct payments, issues related to the water framework directive and the sustainable use of pesticides directive, etc.
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Agri-environmental indicators

Agri-environmental indicators are a useful tool for analysing the relationship between agriculture and the environment and identifying trends in this evolving interaction.

A set of agri-environmental indicators is developed to serve the following purposes:

• provide information on the state of the environment in agriculture
• understand and monitor the linkages between agricultural practices and their effects on environment
• provide contextual information, particularly concerning the diversity of the EU’s agri-ecosystems
• assess the extent to which agricultural and rural development policies promote environment friendly farming activities and sustainable agriculture
• inform the global assessment process of agricultural sustainability
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Agri-environmental indicators

Agri-environmental indicators have to cover positive and negative effects of agriculture
Should be able to capture regional differences in environmental conditions.

Agri-environmental indicators can make a valuable contribution to policy evaluation, but they have to be supplemented, on a case-by-case basis, by additional policy-relevant information. With the help of agri-environmental indicators it is possible to show developments over time and to provide quantitative information.
# Agriculture and the environment in EU

## Agri-environmental indicators

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#### Agri-environmental indicators

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#### Agri-environmental indicators

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Agriculture and the environment in SEE

Methodology

Desk research

• Assessment of available national policy through analysis of the:
  • National programming and strategic documents,
  • national reports to various convention (UNFCCC, UNLDD, UNBD),
  • research papers,
  • reports, studies etc. from public authorities, from academia and from international donors and organisations
  • Relevant databases
Interview(s):

• representative(s) of the Ministry of Agriculture,
• representative(s) of the Ministry of Environment
• other relevant Governmental body/bodies;
• other identified resource person(s)
Thank You

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