

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

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* 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.

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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

Agriculture and the environment in EU

Introduction

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

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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**

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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 voluntarily 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 and EU environmental standards

The **PROVIDER GETS PRINCIPLE** support farmers that voluntarily provide environmental services going beyond legal requirements through agri-environmental payments.

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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.**

Agriculture and landscape

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.

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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.

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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.

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.

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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.

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Agriculture and soil protection

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.

Agriculture and the environment in EU

Agriculture and nitrates

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**.

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 the environment in EU

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.

Agriculture and pesticides

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.**

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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**

Agriculture and the environment in EU

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.

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Agri-environmental indicators

Agri-environmental indicator factsheets

Agri-environmental indicator factsheets	Data used in fact sheet (year)	Most recent data (year)	Responsible
1. Agri-environmental commitments	2017	-	DG AGRI
2. Agricultural areas under Natura 2000 (see CAP Context indicator 34: NATURA 2000 areas)	2016	2016	EEA
3. Farmers' training level and use of environmental farm advisory services	2013	2013	DG AGRI Eurostat
4. Area under organic farming (see Organic farming statistics)	2016	2016	Eurostat
5. Mineral fertiliser consumption	2014	2016	Eurostat
6. Consumption of pesticides	2014	2015	Eurostat
7. Irrigation	2013	2013	Eurostat
8. Energy use	2014	2015	Eurostat
9. Land use change	2000-2006	-	EEA

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Agri-environmental indicators

10.1 Cropping patterns	2013	2013	Eurostat
10.2 Livestock patterns	2013	2013	Eurostat
11.1 Soil cover	2010	2010	Eurostat
11.2 Tillage practices	2010	2010	Eurostat
11.3 Manure storage	2010	2010	Eurostat
12. Intensification/ extensification	2013	2013	DG AGRI
13. Specialisation	2013	2013	Eurostat
14. Risk of land abandonment	2006-2008	-	JRC
15. Gross nitrogen balance	2014	2014	Eurostat
16. Risk of pollution by phosphorus	2014	2014	Eurostat

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Agri-environmental indicators

17. Pesticide risk	no data	-	DG SANTE
18. Ammonia emissions	2015	2015	EEA
19. Greenhouse gases (see also Climate change - driving forces)	2014	2015	EEA
20. Water abstraction	2009	2014	EEA
21. Soil erosion	2010	2012	JRC
22. Genetic diversity	no data	-	EEA
23. High Nature Value farmland	no data	-	DG AGRI
24. Renewable energy production	2010	2014	DG AGRI Eurostat
25. Population trends of farmland birds (see Biodiversity statistics)	2014	2014	EEA
26. Soil quality	2006	-	JRC

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Agri-environmental indicators

27.1 [Water quality - Nitrate pollution](#)

2006

-

EEA

27.2 Water quality - Pesticide pollution

2011

-

EEA

28. Landscape - state and diversity

1966-205

-

JRC

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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

Agriculture and the environment in SEE

Methodology

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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