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Draft

Title: **Transitioning to sustainable and resilient farming systems in Europe**

Tabled by: Miljöpartiet de gröna

OVERVIEW AMENDMENTS

- **AS ADOPTED - Transitioning to sustainable and resilient farming systems in Europe**
- For CAS 9 - Consolidated text - R6 Transitioning to sustainable and resilient farming systems in Europe (7 December 23:59)
- Final PDF updated spreadsheets amendments Farming (7 December 23:59)
- for CAS 4 - PDF updated spreadsheet amendments Farming (5 December PM)
- Post CAS 2 - PDF updated spreadsheet amendments Farming (4 December)
- for CAS 2 - PDF updated spreadsheet amendments Farming (3 December)
- PDF spreadsheet amendments Farming (27 November)

Draft text

European farmers are under increasing pressure. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, input dependencies and low profitability constitute critical growing threats to farmers and European food production. Decades of ecologically and economically unsustainable agricultural policy in the EU have not only failed to build resilience to shocks but have also exacerbated the threats from ecosystem degradation and failed to address the decline in farmers' economic resilience, resulting from high input dependencies and large power asymmetries in food value chains.

Europe has seen a steep decline in its number of farms and farmers. Between 2005 and 2020, it lost 37%, corresponding to 5.3 million farms. The largest subsidy scheme, the area-based direct payments, continues to favour the largest farms, with 20% of beneficiaries receiving 80% of the payments. These untargeted payments contribute to locking farmers into a size rationalisation that both promotes and forces the unsustainable expansion of production and specialisation in order to achieve profitability. This often involves large investments and the risk of sunken costs making it difficult to change direction. Farms of all sizes should be able to live off their produce without having to repeatedly expand or make expensive investments.

A substantial reduction in meat and dairy consumption is necessary for both public health and for food systems to function within the planetary boundaries. Despite this, EU policy has failed to rebalance European agriculture and diets to become more plant based. Although 70% of arable land in the EU is dedicated to feed production for animals, this still only covers 30% of the feed required for current
levels of meat production. The remaining feed is imported, making meat consumption and production also subject to vulnerable world markets. Comparing sectors, 82% of subsidies from the CAP are directed towards animal-based products (including subsidies for feed production). EU policy has also failed animals and citizens' calls for higher welfare in animal farming with, among others, outdated legislation for transport, slaughter and the confinement of animals, especially by continuing to permit animals to be kept in cages.

Eco-schemes introduced in the EU Common Agricultural Policy reform 2023 to incentivise sustainable farming practices were far from sufficient in both design and implementation across the Member States. Similarly, the European

Court of Auditors recently raised concern about significant weaknesses in the EU's strategy to support organic farming (ECA 2024), which has a high risk of failing to reach the target of 25% of agricultural land to be under organic production by 2030. Organic farming needs to be strengthened by supporting its development across the entire sector, including downstream actors and incentives for increased consumption. The agricultural sector must be part of the circular economy, in all aspects of food production.

Synthetic pesticides continue to contaminate air, water and soil while driving the decline in biodiversity. Yet binding targets to reduce the use and risk of synthetic pesticides at Member State level are still absent. Extensive investment, including funding and advisory services, in the uptake of already existing alternatives to synthetic pesticides is necessary for the future of European food production, as well as investment in further research into integrated pest management.

Not investing fully in the transition to sustainable farming and food systems will be very costly, already in the near future. Europe is the fastest warming continent and agriculture is one of the most vulnerable sectors. Heatwaves, droughts and excessive rainfall are already posing a substantial risk to food production across Europe and are a critical risk in southern Europe (EEA, ECRA - crop production). While 95% of the food we eat depends on soil ecosystems, 60-70% of EU soils are considered unhealthy, posing the risk of amplifying impacts from climate change, such as floods, desertification and water shortages. Such risks will probably accelerate with further global warming. Globally, temperatures in 2023 and 2024 have been in the order of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial temperatures. Moreover, lower soil fertility is increasing the need for fertilizer inputs, creating a vicious circle that must be broken.

Yet, agriculture has significant potential for adaptation with multiple beneficial resilience effects for entire communities and society as a whole, by transitioning to low-input sustainable agricultural practices which regeneratively use rather than deplete natural resources. For instance, increasing and managing soil fertility and biodiversity reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers and pressure from pests and diseases. Diversifying farming and cropping systems increases both ecological and in-farm economic resilience. Improving animal welfare and reducing intensive animal farming contribute to climate change mitigation and less pollution as well as reducing risks of zoonoses. Reducing the number of animals is necessary although, when sustainably

managed, livestock in farming systems can be an integral part of maintaining biodiversity as well as providing organic fertilizers.

The upcoming EU Common Agricultural Policy must move from risk management that focuses solely on coping to a CAP that focuses on prevention.

In our vision, the following measures are key if EU agricultural policy is to support a transition to sustainable and resilient farming systems:

End untargeted subsidies and use public money for public goods. Phase out the area-based direct payments in exchange for a significant increase in funding for result-based incentives for sustainable practices which reward farmers for environmental goods rather than simply covering costs. Farmers should be paid for strengthening ecosystem services. Ensure subsidies are resource efficient, regional specific and contribute to long-term resilience. Public money should not, for instance, support the continued production of water-intensive crops in water-stressed areas.

Investing in the transition to *make agro-ecological and regenerative* farming the norm, including through extensive and independent advisory services. Conduct a robust assessment of the farm types most affected by phasing out direct payments and set up a just transition mechanism for those farms most affected, entailing financial and advisory support for the establishment of long-term transformation plans.

Ensure fair and decent incomes for farmers by ensuring that farmers are not paid less than production costs by adding 'selling under production costs' to the blacklist in the Unfair trading practices Directive. It is crucial to combat power imbalances in the food value chain by, among others, supporting primary producer organisations and the infrastructure of shorter supply chains to increase local production and consumption, for instance by supporting alternative food networks and revising the Public procurement Directive. Promote generational renewal and a variety of farm sizes by targeted support to young farmers and small-scale farms.

Introduce a robust set of quantitative binding EU and national targets and impact indicators. In particular, introduce a target to reduce agricultural emissions by 2040 by at least 30% compared to 2015 and binding targets to decrease the use of chemical pesticides. The impact indicators should be in line

with international commitments and should at least cover emissions, the use and risk of pesticides, the use of synthetic fertilizers and nutrient leakage, the use of antimicrobials, farmland biodiversity, soil health, water use, and water quality.

Genuine practice of the precautionary principle regarding GMOs/NGTs, including the effects resulting from market power/relations and consumer transparency.

Ensure effective implementation and accountability through efficient monitoring which makes use of (or investigates the potential use of) information and communication technologies to simplify administrative management, such as satellite data. Enforce a robust accountability mechanism ensuring that Member States are held accountable to targets.

Ensure stronger links and better coherence between the upcoming CAP and EU environmental and market regulation policy. All legislation concerning agriculture and food needs to work towards the same objectives and targets. Subsidies provided in the CAP, for instance, must be consistent with the legislation and objectives concerning nature restoration, water resilience, climate change adaptation, soil health, pesticides and unfair trading practices.

Effectively rebalance diets and food production to more plant-based foods by strengthening the production of local and varied protein crops for human consumption. Investigate economic incentives for reduced meat consumption at an EU-level.

Ensuring ethical animal farming by making animal welfare a standalone objective in the CAP. Allocate sufficient financial and advisory resources to farmers who transition from intensive to extensive animal farming. Ensure sufficient financial support for farmers for the protection of livestock damage from large carnivores to promote coexistence. Rapidly update outdated animal welfare legislation.

Background

Text written by our MEP Pär Holmgren's team

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