

**Press briefing: The importance of the upcoming CAP vote for Europe’s farmers & environment**

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## The bigger picture: Europe's Farm to Fork strategy & the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Next week, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will vote on more than one thousand three hundred amendments, having a huge impact on the CAP and on farmers' lives for the next seven years.

### The EU's Farm to Fork strategy

In December 2019, the European Commission unveiled the [European Green Deal](#) that aims at making Europe the first carbon-neutral continent. One of the several strategies to realise the Green Deal is the [Farm to Fork strategy](#), published in May 2020. The Farm to Fork strategy "addresses the challenges of sustainable food systems in a comprehensive way, recognising the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet"<sup>1</sup>. It also recognizes that our food and farming systems are responsible for about 29% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The strategy explicitly states that "there is an urgent need to reduce dependency on pesticides and antimicrobials, reduce the use of fertilisers, increase organic farming, improve animal welfare, and reverse biodiversity loss"<sup>2</sup>.

### The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) & the Farm to Fork strategy

The CAP has played an important role in the development of organic farming in Europe. Support for maintenance and conversion to organic farming is available in almost all EU countries since the 1990's. But to be up to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation, this major EU policy needs an important reform.

The Farm to Fork strategy offers a huge opportunity for transforming European agriculture by putting organic at the heart of our future food and farming system. Among others, the strategy sets a target of 25% organic land in Europe in 2030 and identifies measures to boost the demand for organic products through promotion schemes and green public procurement.

However, the objectives stated in the strategy can only be reached considering the ongoing negotiations on Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform. The strategy's objectives need to be integrated into the CAP reform proposal to raise the level of ambition and make the CAP an effective tool to incentivize and help farmers to transition to agroecological and more sustainable practices. It is crucial that the new CAP moves away from untargeted direct payments to reward farmers for their additional environmental performance.

Achieving 25% organic land in Europe by 2030 is ambitious but achievable with the right policies in place to increase both production and demand for organic products, and research and innovation for agroecology. [Have a look at our infographic.](#)

### IFOAM Organics Europe's work on the CAP

To build a sustainable future and resilient societies, the Green Deal must be at the heart of the recovery plan and all public policies. **The organic movement fully supports the objectives of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies to reduce pesticide, fertilisers, and antibiotic use in agriculture and to reach 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming by 2030.** The CAP is a crucial public policy to reach these targets, which should be reflected in the CAP Strategic Plans Regulation (e.g. in articles 6, 92, 97 and Annex XI). The organic movement's vision is that the CAP should enshrine the principle of "public money for public goods"

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>2</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

and that farmers should be remunerated on the basis of their contribution to the protection of ecosystems services and natural resources, rather than on the size of their land.

**An ambitious ringfencing of minimum 30% of Pillar 1 budget for Eco-schemes** – with a gradual increase to 50% over the next CAP programming period – is key to incentivize and help all farmers to transition to more sustainable practices, and to increase the provision of public goods that benefit the environment and European citizens. But having a budget for environmental action in Pillar I of the CAP should not come at the expense of a reduced budget for agri-environmental schemes in Pillar II on Rural Development. In particular it is crucial that Areas with Natural Constraints (ANCs) are excluded from the environmental ringfencing of Pillar 2, (articles 28, 86, 65) like initially proposed by the European Commission.

**Conversion and maintenance payments play a crucial role to make this organic system approach competitive for the farmers.** Therefore, we recommend mentioning in the CAP Strategic Plans Regulation that future payments towards organic conversion and maintenance (through eco-schemes or through rural development measures) shall exceed the total payments made before 2021, calculated as a yearly average and using constant prices, as proposed in the European Parliament's ENVI committee's opinion voted in February 2019 (article 92).

Whereas in theory Member States will have the possibility to support organic conversion and maintenance either through rural development measures in article 65 or through Eco-schemes in article 28-or through a combination of both-organic farmers are concerned that the flexibility given to Member States in the current draft regulation will lead to a decreased level of ambition. To ensure coherent policy support throughout Europe, **all Member States should be obligated to include in their CAP Strategic Plans an analysis of the organic sector's needs** and potential for further development through policy support (e.g. ENVI article 13 a New), and a national target to increase the share of agricultural land under organic management. The level of this target should be decided at the national level.

Organic farming methods are knowledge intensive, rather than input intensive. Member States also need to build strong knowledge networks for organic farming. As part of the CAP Strategic Plans (articles 13 and 72), Member States should support or set up advisory services supporting conventional farmers willing to convert to organic farming and new entrants willing to start organic farming.

## **IFOAM Organics Europe's opinion on the compromise amendments**

IFOAM Organics Europe is disappointed by the compromise amendments agreed between the EPP, Renew and S&D political groups in the European Parliament. **The organic movement is in favour of ringfencing at least 30% of CAP first pillar budget for Eco-schemes, but this should not come at the price of drastically reducing the budget for agri-environmental measures in the second pillar.** Integrating 40% of the payments for areas of natural constraints (ANCs) into the 30% ringfencing for environment in pillar 2, as proposed by Compromise Amendment 8 (on article 86) is therefore not acceptable for organic farmers (despite the limited increase from 30% to 35% of this ringfencing included in the amendment). In effect this is less ambitious than the Commission's proposal regarding Rural Development measures (Pillar 2).

The 12 Compromise amendments on the table only touch a limited number of aspects and will bring little added value to the Commission's proposal (except AM 3 on Article 13 on farm advisory services, and the 30% ringfencing for Eco-schemes in Pillar 1 provided it is voted separately from the introduction of ANCs in the ringfencing in Pillar 2).

But other amendments tabled by political groups are very important to improve the CAP Strategic Plans regulation.

**MEPs should in priority vote in favour of integrating the Farm to Fork targets in the CAP objectives (e.g. amendments 730, 881, 1143, 1191, 1310).**



Furthermore, several amendments seek to ensure that **CAP strategic plans should include an analysis of the organic sector's potential for further development and a national target for organic land**. It is also mentioned that payments towards organic conversion and maintenance in CAP Strategic Plans under Articles 28 and 65 shall exceed the total payments made before 2021 under Rural Development to organic farmers, with a view to achieving the objective of 25% of UAA under organic farming by 2030 (e.g. amendments 811, 962).

## About organic

### Organic in the EU and Europe<sup>i</sup>

A set of policy action will be needed to enable both organic production and demand to rise in a balanced way (push-pull approach), and CAP measures to support organic production should go hand in hand with policy measures such as green public procurement (e.g. to increase the share of organic in public canteens), and measures to raise consumers awareness on the benefits of organic farming for the environment and animal welfare.

#### Production

- **Organic land** increased by 1.25 million hectares in Europe (8.7%) and by one million hectares in the EU (7.6%) between 2017 and 2018. France reported over 290,000 hectares more and Spain over 160,000 hectares more
- **Organic farmland** in Europe constituted 3.1% of the total agricultural land and 7.7% in the EU in 2018. In Europe (and globally), Liechtenstein had the highest organic share of all farmland (38.5%) followed by Austria, the country in the EU with the highest organic share (24.7%)
- There were almost 420,000 **organic producers** in Europe and almost 330,000 in the EU in 2018, with the largest numbers in Turkey (almost 80,000) and Italy (more than 69,000). The number of producers grew by 5.4% in Europe and 7.2% in the EU in 2018

#### Consumption

- The European organic market recorded a growth rate of 7.8% between 2017 and 2018. France recorded the highest growth with 15.4%
- In the decade 2009-2018, the value of the European and EU markets has more than doubled
- **Retail sales** in Europe were valued at €40.7 billion and €37.4 billion in the EU in 2018. The largest market was Germany (€10.9 billion). The EU represents the second largest single market for organic products in the world after the United States (€40.6 billion)
- **Annual per capita consumption** of organic food was €50 in Europe and €76 in the EU in 2018. Per capita consumer spending on organic food has doubled in the last decade
- European countries had the highest share of organic food compared to the entire food market in 2018. Denmark had the highest share (11.5%), individual products and product groups hold even higher shares
- There were almost 76,000 **organic processors** in Europe and almost 71,000 in the EU in 2018. Almost 5,800 **organic importers** were counted in Europe and more than 5,000 in the EU. The country with the largest number of processors was Italy (more than 20,000), while Germany had the most importers (more than 1,700)

More information is available in [Willer, H. & Lernoud J. eds. \(2020\)](#) and our [organic interactive infographic](#).

### How organic delivers

The organic system approach delivers the ecosystem services needed for reaching EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity targets. Moreover, organic agriculture is a well-known and EU-regulated food production system. Member States and stakeholders can make full use of such a well-established and dynamic movement to make this transition to sustainable food systems a reality. But an appropriate remuneration for their delivery of



public goods is crucial, as it is evident that the market for public goods is not functional and cannot be paid only by organic consumers. The Strategic Plans must underpin these goals and help to transition to organic and agroecological farming through both CAP pillars.

Organic farming is a system that has many benefits. Its main are:

- 50% more abundant wildlife, with up to 34% more species on average on and around the farm, including almost 50% more pollinator species and 75% more plant species<sup>ii</sup> as well as more resilient systems
- Organic uses no synthetic pesticides, many of which are harmful to flora and fauna, including pollinators<sup>iii</sup>
- Organically managed soils show a greater abundance of soil microorganisms, along with more carbon and nitrogen transformation activities than in conventionally managed soils. Also, soil organic carbon sequestration is higher in organic than conventional agriculture on average. Living soils, in turn, provide a good basis for coping with climate uncertainties, such as heavy rains or droughts, while the good soil structure of organically managed soils reduces the risk of water logging and soil erosion<sup>iv</sup>
- **Organic farming is a viable option to reduce agricultural intensity while at the same time fulfilling biodiversity protection goals.** Farmland biodiversity also provides many ecosystem services that in turn are important for agricultural production itself, such as pollination, pest control and nutrient cycling

## Resources

- [The benefits of organic agriculture](#) (infographics)
- [How organic contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (infographics) and [EOSTA's full report](#)
- [Organic market and production data](#) (interactive infographic)
- For full publications, visit [IFOAM Organics Europe's library](#)

## About IFOAM Organics Europe

### IFOAM Organics Europe's President, Jan Plagge

Jan Plagge is a German national who studied Horticultural Sciences at TUM Weihenstephan. From 1997 to 2004 he was a consultant for ecological agriculture and horticulture in Germany and overseas. He has been President of Bioland, the leading association for organic farming in Germany and South Tirol, since 2011, and was also on the board of the German Association of Organic Farmers, Food Processors and Traders (Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft, BÖLW) until 2018.

In spring 2016 he was elected as vice-president of IFOAM Organics Europe, in May 2018 as president and he was re-elected in July 2020. Before he was President, he established IFOAM Organics Europe's Interest Group of Organic Farmers together with other organic farmers and was their Chairman between 2012 and 2016. He is also currently the chairman for the DG Agri's Civil Dialogue Group on CAP.

### IFOAM Organics Europe

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. We represent organic in European policymaking and advocate for a transformation of food and farming. Our work is based on the principles of organic agriculture – health, ecology, fairness and care. With more than 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders, and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.



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Or visit <https://www.organicseurope.bio/what-we-do/common-agricultural-policy-cap-post-2020/>

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> [Willer, H. & Lernoud J. eds. \(2020\)](#). Do note that the available data in this publication is from 2018.
- <sup>ii</sup> [Tuck et al., 2014](#), [Bengtsson et al., 2005](#)
- <sup>iii</sup> [Müller et al., 2016](#); [UN, 2017](#)
- <sup>iv</sup> [Müller et al., 2016](#)