

The Green Deal and the CAP: policy implications to adapt farming practices and to preserve the EU's natural resources



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The European Union (EU) Green Deal, notably the Farm to Fork strategy, the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, plus its climate component, could substantially affect European agriculture and food. Its objectives are materialized into quantitative targets related to climate, environment and health issues for agriculture.

Main observations

Current trends show that reaching Green Deal agricultural targets will not be an easy task.

The study

Provides an analysis of the potential consequences of the Green Deal and its associated strategies on agriculture as well as making recommendations aimed at strengthening the role and contribution of the future CAP to this matter.

EU agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were reducing up until the 2010s and have remained stable since. Significant changes in farming practices and systems are now required to achieve further substantial reductions.

Biodiversity erosion occurs due to increasingly specialised and simplified agricultural systems

and rural landscapes, using larger plots of land and the widespread application of chemical inputs. Soil degradation and nutrient flows in water and the atmosphere have reached alarming levels. With the possible exception of phosphorus and antibiotics, past trends show that it will be extremely difficult to achieve the climatic and environmental targets of the Green Deal without a substantial inflexion of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

In addition, a large proportion of the European population does not comply with dietary recommendations that are consistent with Green Deal nutrition and health objectives. Considerably more ambitious policies are needed in this area.



Coordinated actions needed

To achieve the Green Deal objectives, three sets of coordinated actions should be implemented.

First, it is imperative to reduce all current inefficiencies that lead to the excessive use of water, fertilizers, pesticides and antibiotics. Innovations and incentives in that domain would benefit both the environment and farm incomes.

A second set of technical and policy actions must favour the redesign of farming systems, to rely more on biological cycles and less on external chemical inputs.



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A third set of actions should target changes in dietary patterns for health, climate and environmental reasons. The food and retail industries should facilitate a shift towards emphasising different eating patterns. Public policies which increase consumers' awareness of the health, climatic and environmental impacts of food choices, as well as the modulation of consumption prices, are required in order for consumers to adopt healthier and more plant-based diets.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

To reverse these unfavourable current trends, there is an urgent need to significantly strengthen many technical provisions of the CAP; in particular, those related to conditionality requirements and ecoscheme measures, and those to improve the CAP governance, notably by making the attainment of targets legally binding and improving their enforcement, reporting and monitoring.

It is also crucial to complete CAP regulations by means of a global and consistent food policy, including interventions focusing on food diets.

The CAP budget provides a significant degree of leverage to stimulate changes. Over 30 years of painful reforms, farmers have well proven their adaptability. Technology is flexible, land is multi-functional, and there are outlets in the bio

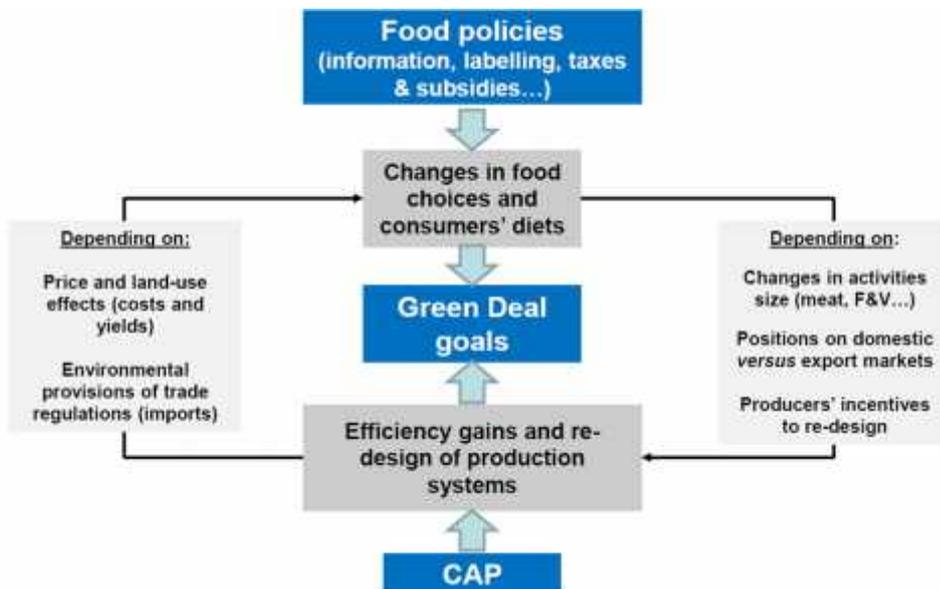
Key areas for EU action

1. The climatic and environmental dimension of the CAP must be strengthened.
2. The CAP must be extended in the framework of a more focused and global food policy.

economy as well as in payments for ecosystem services.

Circumventing the objectives of the Green Deal with a "business as usual" CAP could be seen as a short-term victory for the more traditional agricultural interests of some Member States. Yet, in the longer term, it is difficult to see why taxpayers would accept the financing of a policy that does not provide the public benefits expected by society and therefore calling into question what the European added value is. Making the CAP more coherent with the Green Deal is perhaps the best guarantee for its own sustainability.

How agricultural supply and food demand policies interact



Source: Own elaboration.

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