



Plenary sitting

B9-0220/2024

17.4.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 111(3) of the Rules of Procedure

on Commission Delegated Regulation of 12 March 2024 amending Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/126 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the rules on the ratio for the good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC) standard 1 (C(2024)01488 – 2024/2663(DEA))

Martin Häusling, Benoît Biteau, Lydie Massard

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Manon Aubry, Anja Hazekamp, Leila Chaibi, Marina Measure, Younous Omarjee

on behalf of The Left Group

Christophe Clergeau, Marc Angel, Maria Arena, Theresa Bielowski, Delara Burkhardt, Pascal Durand, Matthias Ecke, Raphaël Glucksmann, Sylvie Guillaume, Hannes Heide, Aurore Lalucq, Pierre Larrouturou, Karsten Lucke, Nora Mebarek, Jozef Mihál, Maria Noichl, René Repasi, Andreas Schieder, Günther Sidl, Tiemo Wölken

European Parliament resolution on Commission Delegated Regulation of 12 March 2024 amending Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/126 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the rules on the ratio for the good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC) standard 1 (C(2024)01488 – 2024/2663(DEA))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to having regard to the Commission delegated regulation (C(2024)01488),
 - having regard to Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013¹, and in particular Article 13(3) and Article 152(6) thereof,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2018/841 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry in the 2030 climate and energy framework, and amending Regulation (EU) No 525/2013 and Decision No 529/2013/EU,
 - having regard to Rule 111(3) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the delegated regulation, adopted on 12 March 2024, was communicated to the members of the European Parliament’s Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development on 14 March 2024, at which date it was announced a vote on an early non-objection would take place on 19 March 2024, shortening to one week the usual two-month period for the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety to request an objection, even though the environmental conditionality of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is a shared competence between the two committees and the maintenance of permanent grasslands is a major issue for the Union’s climate policy;
- B. whereas a delegated act is intended to clarify the application of a Regulation and should not contradict the political orientation of the basic act or amend pre-existing delegated acts in a manner that differs from the objectives;
- C. whereas the objectives of the CAP, outlined in articles 5 and 6 of Regulation 2021/2115, include in particular the following objectives: supporting viable farm income and resilience of the agricultural sector across the Union in order to enhance long-term food security and agricultural diversity (Article 6(1), point (a)); climate

¹ OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1.

change mitigation and adaptation, including greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon sequestration enhancement (Article 6(1), point (d)); fostering sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources (Article 6(1), point (e)); and halting and reversing biodiversity loss, preserving habitats and landscapes (Article 6(1), point (f));

- D. whereas the justification for the delegated regulation cites a ‘structural change’ of reduced herd sizes in a number of Member States resulting from market reorientation, while the Commission carried out no impact assessment to quantify or justify this, so that there was also no assessment on the consequences of free trade agreements, nor evaluation of the shortcomings of CAP National Strategic Plans to address challenges faced by extensive livestock farms; whereas alternative approaches such as optimising coupled direct payments or targeting area-specific constraint payments have not been considered;
- E. whereas a recent EUROSTAT report² shows that the significant drop in EU livestock is mainly due to markedly downward trends in pork production. However, if only ruminants are considered, being able to sustain themselves on pasturelands, then we see that marked decline across a few outlier Member States skews the overall picture, overshadowing the fact that the rates of herd size decrease within Member States remain in line with the 5 %-loss ratio in place for the maintenance of permanent grassland rule under GAEC 1;
- F. whereas the delegated regulation represents a culmination of decades of insufficient support for extensive livestock farms that otherwise offer significant environmental benefits, and an additional step towards the ongoing industrialisation of livestock farming that breaks the link between ruminants and pastures, a trajectory that should be reversed; whereas, while environmental conditionality including maintaining pasturelands has been promoted as the main way to protect these important ecosystems since the CAP reform of 2003, it shows that the withdrawal of supportive tools such as the milk quota regime or grassland area coupled payments was an ill-fated decision;
- G. whereas the delegated regulation risks the relative increase of cereal crop production and the rise of imports of soybean, as opposed to relying more on pasture-based grazing, meaning that the Commission seems suddenly willing to amplify the Union’s current vegetable protein deficit and import dependency. However, if we wish to become more self-sufficient and resilient, moving towards more resource-smart, climate-mitigating and climate-adaptive extensive production systems, we should keep the pasturelands we have: whereas several profitable and productive agroecological practices show that the Commission would do better to promote e.g. rotational grazing, which allows for smaller herds to be reared on grazing alone, for pasture to rests for longer periods, for more biodiversity and deeper roots, for better water cycling and carbon sinking, as well as for reduced production costs by reducing dependency on imported soya feed;
- H. whereas although a decrease in grassland areas due to urbanisation or afforestation might justify adjustments to GAEC 1, the option to update the year of reference appears disproportionately excessive; whereas, ensuring some flexibility for the maintenance of

² <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20230322-1>.

grassland areas at farm level is needed, but the proposed update largely diverges from the intended objective of providing flexibility while ensuring GAEC 1 can achieve its main goal of safeguarding against conversion to other agricultural uses to maintain carbon stock, as cited in the annex III of SPR 2021/2115;

- I. whereas Member States failing to enforce the 5 %-loss ratio compared to the 2018 situation are mandated to replace the pasture lost beyond this threshold. Allowing a change of the reference year in the delegated regulation would introduce a distortion between those Member States and those that have made provisions to incentivise farmers to maintain pasture areas; whereas, in the recent CAP reform, Parliament advocated in favour of environmental conditionality as GAECs represent a common rule across all Member States designed to avoid a race to the bottom in terms of environmental ambition; whereas putting GAECs into question would signal a move towards renationalising the CAP, potentially misusing the subsidiarity principle;
- J. whereas farmers have already made production decisions for the current year and CAP declarations are due shortly, altering environmental conditionality rules would create confusion and additional burden for both farmers and administrations in charge of the implementation; whereas the delegated regulation would have no impact on the majority of farmers, who already respect the intent of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115; whereas the apparent urgency of this decision appears to stem from a sudden concern within the Commission, previously reluctant to address criticisms about the contradiction between ‘market orientation’ and farmers’ acceptance of the environmental transition;
- K. whereas the agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in Union climate policy, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050 in line with the European Climate Law, with agricultural land expected to act as a carbon sink to offset unavoidable emissions, the sector currently emitting more than it sequesters; whereas the delegated regulation would exacerbate this issue, undermining the Union goal to store 310 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030;
- L. whereas the effectiveness of GAEC 1 has been limited since its introduction in the early 2000s due to frequent updates of the reference year for the 5 %-loss ratio, the delegated regulation would negatively affect one of the important parameters of the Union climate policy; whereas converting permanent grassland to arable land results in a carbon release of 4 to 6 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare annually for 40 years;
- M. whereas permanent grasslands and extensive livestock farming play a crucial role in fostering biodiversity and hosting rich ecosystems, and the ploughing of these permanent pastures has huge detrimental effects on water quality due to nitrogen release, and reduces protection against soil erosion in valleys and on hillsides; whereas the delegated regulation is therefore at odds with the objectives of the Nature Restoration Law and the Soil Monitoring Directive currently under negotiation, as well as the fundamental principles of ‘carbon farming’;
- N. whereas the frustration among farmers has intensified in recent weeks, primarily due to plummeting agricultural prices, with cereal prices halving over the last 18 months; whereas the backsliding on the greening of the CAP will not be a solution to ensure farmers’ income and assuage their justified feeling of economic insecurity; whereas,

while the European Commission's Green Deal introduced an ambitious agricultural transformation agenda, neither the Commission nor Member States have allocated adequate means towards achieving these objectives. These goals appear increasingly unattainable for farmers, especially considering their insecure economic situation compared to better-protected counterparts such as American farmers; whereas the social acceptability of the transition to agro-ecological practices obliges us to call into question the 'market orientation' of the CAP;

1. Objects to Commission delegated regulation (C(2024)01488);
2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and to notify it that Commission delegated regulation (C(2024)01488) cannot enter into force;
3. Considers that while improvements of the rules of GAEC 1 are needed, this delegated act fails in terms of content and methodology, notably lack of impact assessment and supporting data;
4. Argues that the Commission delegated act appears to contradict the political orientation of the related basic act, proposes a weak justification, seems to be disproportionate, creates more distortions between EU farmers, undermines the European Climate policy and offers no answer to the real difficulties facing EU farmers, especially economic insecurity;
5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.