

**Question for written answer E-000198/2024
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE)

Subject: Finland's decision to tighten up definition of areas eligible for subsidies under agri-environmental contracts

Traditional biotopes are threatened natural habitats, and many are also located in conservation areas. In Finland, such biotopes include forest pastures, grasslands, meadows and wooded pastures, which are becoming rarer and are under threat. Finland has changed its interpretation of the contract on environmental subsidies to agriculture. The change makes the criteria for receiving grazing subsidy more stringent, making it more difficult to preserve traditional environments unchanged and to use natural grazing to feed animals.

In its interpretation, the Finnish Food Authority has made the definition of areas eligible for subsidies in agri-environmental contracts more stringent. This interpretation removes a significant proportion of grazing areas from land eligible for subsidies. As a consequence of Finland's new interpretation of the agri-environmental contract, many farmers may have to cease using natural grazing. This could see small farms go out of production.

Finland will not be able to meet the goals agreed in its CAP Strategic Plan to increase its area of traditional biotopes due to this change in interpretation. The damage caused will be multiplied when small farms go out of business as a consequence of this change.

I would like to draw the Commissioner's attention to the change in interpretation of the contract in Finland, which is stricter than in EU law. It threatens the preservation of ancient natural grazing lands and the establishment of new ones.

1. Is Finland's new interpretation of the agri-environmental contract in line with the EU's biodiversity goals and principles?
2. Is this due to EU legislation?

Submitted: 23.1.2024