

TOWARDS CAP STRATEGIC PLANS FIT FOR PURPOSE

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A fairer, greener and performance-oriented CAP

On 25 June, the European Parliament and the Council reached a provisional political agreement on the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in response to a legal proposal tabled in 2018 by the European Commission. Much is expected from the new CAP, which will cover the period 2023-2027.

Against a backdrop of growing challenges in relation to climate change, biodiversity and management of natural resources, the policy will be an essential tool for achieving the ambitions of the **European Green Deal** – a wide-ranging and far-reaching strategy for environmental, economic and social sustainability in the EU. At the same time, more than ever, the CAP must clearly address the needs of the farm sector and rural areas.

As key novelties of the future CAP, the following three elements should be highlighted:

- A new tool to increase the environmental ambition, the **eco-schemes**, which will be funded with, at least, 25% of the direct payments budget.
- A new mechanism to link CAP support to the respect of basic social and labour rights of farm workers, as enshrined in EU laws, the so-called **social conditionality**.
- A fairer and more targeted system of direct support, with the obligation of Member States to **address the needs** of smaller farms through redistribution.

At the same time, the CAP needs to streamline its governance and shift towards a more performance-oriented policy. The future **CAP Strategic Plans**, as a single programming instrument implemented in each Member State, will be the key tool to advance towards a more coherent and strategic approach in pursuit of the CAP's objectives.

To enhance the EU added value, ensure ambitious and compliant plans that preserve a functioning internal market, the new CAP Strategic Plans will be assessed and approved by the **European Commission**. We expect to receive the draft CAP Strategic Plans by the **end of 2021**, so that these plans can be applied as of 2023.

Recommendations to contribute to the European Green Deal

In order to support Member States in this process, the European Commission proactively established a structured dialogue with Member States. In that context, last December we published **recommendations to each Member State**: these recommendations are based on an assessment of the national situation with regard to the nine specific objectives of the CAP strategic plans, based on the latest available evidence. This analysis also includes the assessment of each Member State as regards its contribution to each of the **European Green Deal** targets and ambitions.

For the Netherlands, the Commission provided 14 recommendations, which define the key expectations of the Commission on the future **CAP Strategic Plan for Netherlands**. The following recommendations in particular, identify key areas where the Dutch CAP Strategic Plan holds great potential to significantly contribute to the ambition of the European Green Deal and its Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy targets for 2030:

First of all, **reducing nutrient pollution of water and air, reducing nitrogen deposition below their critical level in nitrogen-vulnerable Natura 2000 sites**, and contributing to achieve the EU Green Deal target on nutrient losses. It will be important that the future CAP Strategic Plan provides well-integrated measures that support the transition to more sustainable, less intensive farming. Support available under both CAP pillars should address the need for more efficient use of mineral and organic fertilisers, as well as generally improved soil management.

Secondly, **reducing non-CO2 emissions from the livestock sector and soil fertilisation**, and improving the carbon storage capacity by supporting peatland/wetland restoration via carbon farming approaches and the shift to a bio-based and circular economy. Among other things, the CAP Strategic Plan should support the shift to less-emitting livestock production systems including by considering sustainable manure management in line with the Methane Strategy.

Thirdly, **achieving favourable conservation status of habitats and species associated with agricultural systems, reducing habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss, and contributing to the EU Green Deal target on high diversity landscape features**, by supporting appropriate management practices and other nature restoration measures in Natura 2000 areas.

Forthly, **contributing to the EU Green Deal target on organic farming** by supporting conversion and maintenance schemes. This should go hand in hand with identifying potential in national organic food demand and with improving food supply chain structures, as also outlined in the the Commission's Action Plan for Organic Production in the EU.

Fifth, **contributing to the EU Green Deal target on reducing the use and risk of pesticides** by continuing to implement schemes to reduce the use and risk of plant protection products, by promoting non chemical pest management practices and low-pesticide-input pest management and by ensuring full use of Integrated Pest Management.

Drafting effective and transparent CAP Strategic Plans

Future CAP Strategic Plans are not only planning tools. They are the basis of a new governance, with strengthened cooperation among the different levels of government and more openness and transparency towards European society.

In order to increase the available knowledge, expertise and viewpoints in the design and implementation of the future CAP, it is important that the new CAP Strategic Plans are prepared under the **partnership principle**. The involvement of all relevant public bodies, economic and social partners as well as relevant bodies representing civil society needs to take place at all preparatory stages of the future CAP Strategic Plan.

The next months will be crucial in the process to draft CAP Strategic plans which are fit for purpose. Thus, the European Commission will reinforce its cooperation with the Member States and will increase the efforts to support national authorities in this task.