

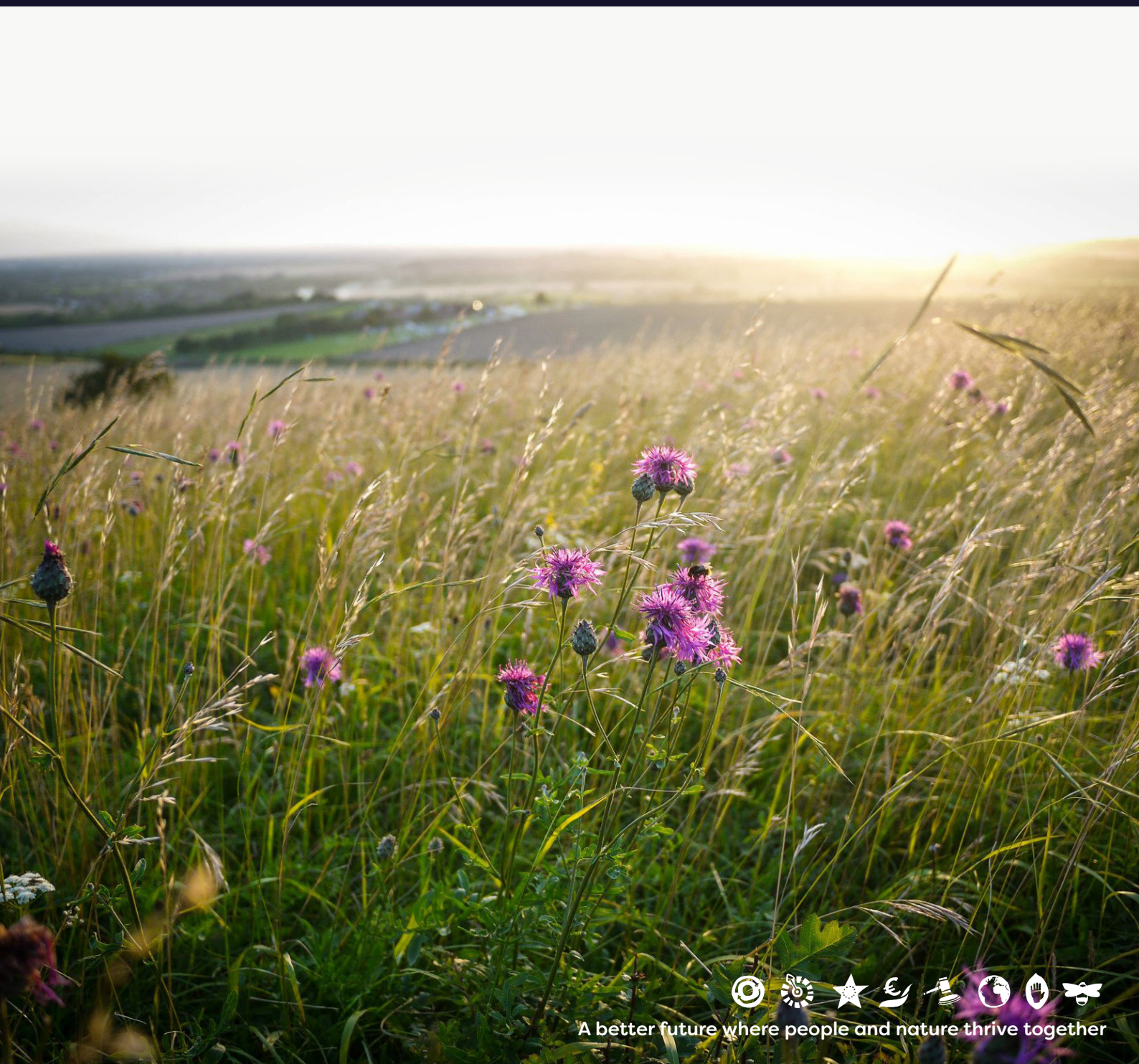


**EEB** European  
Environmental  
Bureau



Delivering the EU Green Deal and a Green Recovery in the new CAP

# A CAP to bring nature back to our farms



A better future where people and nature thrive together



# The problems

European wildlife and ecosystems are in freefall. Human activity threatens more species with global extinction now than ever before.<sup>1</sup> In the EU, agriculture, through land-use change, pollution and landscape simplification, is the single largest driver of biodiversity loss,<sup>2</sup> and is itself already feeling the negative impacts of the biodiversity crisis.<sup>3</sup> The biodiversity crisis, coupled with and exacerbated by climate change, unsustainable rates of soil erosion and water abstraction, now threatens our long-term food security and future generations' ability to farm.



## Two landscapes, two futures

The left side of the above illustration shows an intensively farmed landscape, bereft of the natural features that wild species depend on. On the right is a diverse landscape with semi-natural and natural features such as rivers, wetlands, woodlands, ponds, hedgerows and meadows. This heterogeneous landscape provides a multitude of feeding, breeding and sheltering opportunities for insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Additionally, the natural features act as a buffer to floods, wildfires, pests and pathogens. Research has even shown that farming in such areas results in higher yields (see reference 5).

### References

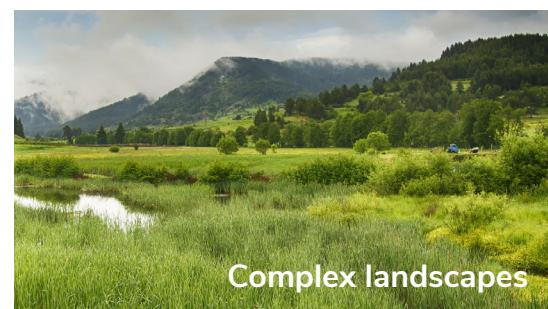
- 1 [IPBES, Global Assessment Report Summary for Policymakers \(2019\)](#)
- 2 [EEA, State of Nature in the EU \(2015\)](#)
- 3 [Dainese et al, A global synthesis reveals biodiversity-mediated benefits for crop production \(2019\)](#)
- 4 For practical examples see [the EEB's Future Farming Stories](#); for peer-reviewed evidence see [van der Ploeg et al, The economic potential of agroecology: Empirical evidence from Europe \(2019\)](#)
- 5 [Gagic et al, Combined effects of agrochemicals and ecosystem services on crop yield across Europe \(2017\);](#)

# The solutions

Many farmers are demonstrating that **it is possible to farm in harmony with nature while producing plenty of food and making decent livelihoods**.<sup>4</sup> By prioritising soil health, crop diversity, and landscape complexity, these nature-friendly pioneers enhance crucial ecosystem services: natural fertility, water management, and pest control.<sup>5</sup> This brings additional climate benefits, as healthy soils store more carbon and diverse farming systems are more adaptable to a changing climate.

**Reversing biodiversity loss on farmland requires a paradigm shift in how we produce food**; techno-fixes will not suffice. Three key measures must be implemented through the new CAP:

- 1 Mainstreaming agroecological practices to bring biodiversity back on farmland, below and above ground**, and to reduce pollution from pesticides and fertilisers. Key practices include long crop rotations, intercropping and/or smaller plots, constant soil cover, minimum or no tillage, and the use of composted organic waste as fertiliser.
- 2 Dedicating 10-14% of agricultural land at farm-level to non-productive, biodiversity-focused features and areas** such as hedges, flower strips, fallow land, dry stone walls, ponds, trees etc.<sup>6</sup> These provide habitats for pollinators and predators of pests and are crucial for healthy agro-ecosystems.
- 3 Improving the management of Natura 2000 sites and other semi-natural habitats**, by ensuring they are protected from land use change, intensification, or abandonment, and giving farmers access to well-designed and funded schemes for the sustainable management and large-scale restoration of these areas.



**The EU has committed to “reverse biodiversity loss [and] lead the world by example and by action”. Action by 2027 will determine our success or failure in stopping a global mass extinction. Agriculture, as a major driver of the biodiversity crisis, is front and centre in this challenge.**

The **Farm to Fork Strategy** commits to help “protecting land, soil, water, air [...] and reversing the loss of biodiversity”. Accordingly, it sets targets to reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50%; nutrient losses by 50%; the use of fertilisers by 20%; and to manage 25% of the EU’s farmland under organic farming by 2030.

In addition, the **Biodiversity Strategy** commits to deploy “nature-based solutions, such as protecting and restoring wetlands, peatlands and coastal ecosystems, or sustainably managing [...] grasslands and agricultural soils”. It also stresses the “urgent need to bring back at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features”.

<sup>5</sup> (continued) [Pywell et al, Wildlife-friendly farming increases crop yield: evidence for ecological intensification](#) (2015)

<sup>6</sup> [BIOGEA, A green Architecture for Green Infrastructure: How the future CAP could support Green and Blue infrastructures](#), 2020.

## Picture credits

Front cover and Page 2 [Gemma Bowcock \(EEB\)](#).

Page 3 Top [SoilPaparazzi](#), [Adobe Stock](#); Middle [JürgenBauerPictures](#), [Adobe Stock](#); Bottom [jdblack](#), [Pixabay](#).

# Align the CAP with the EU Green Deal

## A clear direction

Require Member States to set national targets against the agriculture-related EU Green Deal targets and to ensure sufficient progress towards those EU-level objectives through their CAP Strategic Plans.

Amend **articles 6, 7, 92, 95, 97 and 106**

## No harm

Ensure the CAP does not fund unsustainable practices and production systems, by setting strict and common rules in conditionality, introducing robust safeguards for coupled support and investment support, and reviewing eligibility rules for direct payments to remove perverse incentives (e.g. incentives for farmers to cut trees and hedges or drain peatlands to maintain their CAP support).

Amend **article 4**  
Adopt the ENVI opinion on articles **3, 11, 12, 17, 29-31, 68** and **Annex III**

## Money for Nature

Dedicate sufficient CAP funds to biodiversity protection in agriculture, by setting ambitious ringfencing of funds in each Pillar, including earmarking €15bn/year for biodiversity measures; by moving ANC payments to Pillar 1 and excluding them from environmental ringfencing; and by ensuring Green Recovery funds are spent in line with the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. Additionally, the “climate tracking” methodology must be reformed to end greenwashing.

Adopt the ENVI opinion on **articles 66(28a) and 86**  
Amend **article 84a** and **87**

## Accountability

Ensure good governance in the new CAP by reinforcing the rules for CAP Strategic Plans approval, enhancing the transparency and involvement of civil society in that process, and strengthening the requirements on Member States to collect good data and on the Commission to monitor and evaluate the performance of the CAP.

Amend **articles 94, 106, 111, 127 and 129**

## Beyond the CAP

The CAP is a crucial instrument to deliver the EU's biodiversity commitments in agriculture, but not the only one. The EU biodiversity protection and nature restoration agenda must address agricultural land and ecosystems and all EU policies must be coherent with the EU Green Deal. Complementary policy measures targeted at supply chains actors and addressing the demand-side must help make the food system more nature-friendly, and a coherent trade policy is crucial to end drivers of biodiversity loss stemming from EU consumption.



### Contact

Célia Nyssens  
Policy Officer for Agriculture  
[Celia.Nyssens@eeb.org](mailto:Celia.Nyssens@eeb.org)

[eeb.org](http://eeb.org)  
[@Green\\_Europe](https://twitter.com/Green_Europe)



With the support of the European Climate Foundation, the LIFE Programme of the European Union and the MAVA Foundation (Fondation pour la Nature)  
This communication reflects the authors' views and does not commit the donors.

