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Circular
Economy



Health and
Environment

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

A CAP for zero-pollution and a circular economy

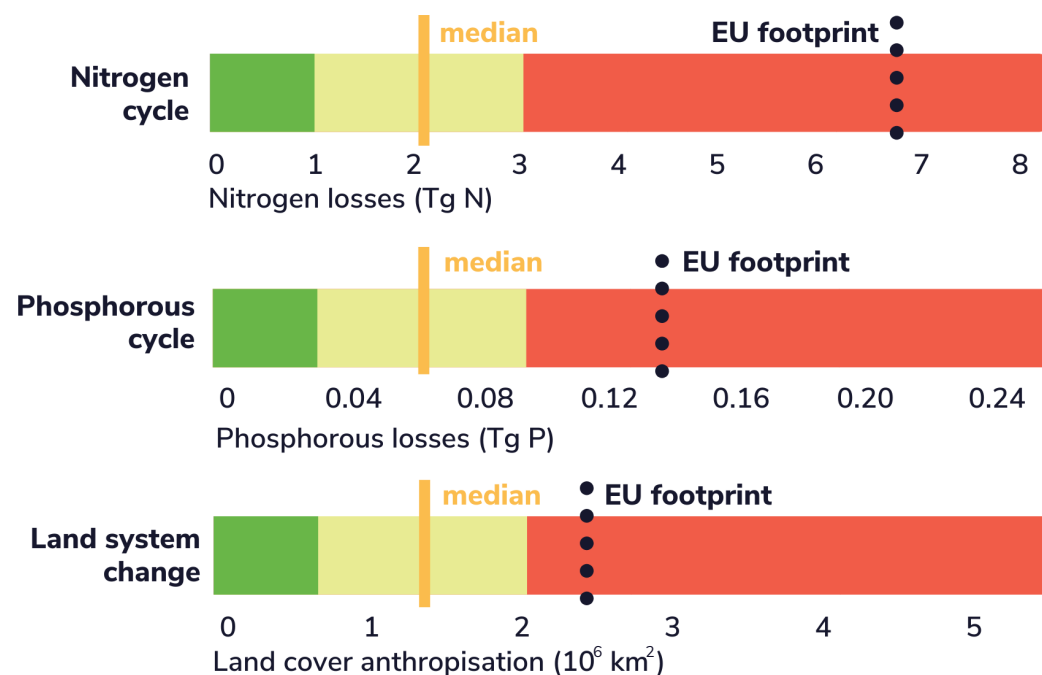


A better future where people and nature thrive together

The problems

Intensive agriculture is polluting our environment and depleting natural resources. Intensive livestock farming, excessive and inefficient fertiliser use, and widespread pesticide use cause major pollution of our precious air, water, and soil. At the same time, intensive agriculture is using unsustainable amounts of water in many parts of Europe and causing rapid erosion of our fertile soils. Desertification is threatening large swathes of Southern and Eastern Europe, under the coupled and increasing pressures of unsustainable land management, climate change and biodiversity loss.¹

Overview of European performance for three planetary boundaries



Did you know?



Agriculture is the source of 54% of methane and 92% of ammonia emissions, causing health-threatening air pollution.³



Where agriculture is most intensive, 92% of surface waters do not meet legal quality standards.⁴



More than 65% of agricultural soils contain pesticide residues and too much nitrogen and 45% have accumulated heavy metals from mineral fertilisers.⁵

The solutions

A cleaner, sustainable, and circular farming system is possible. The answer lies in moving from an input-intensive to a knowledge- and labour-intensive model; and from vast amounts of intensive livestock production to less livestock, farmed extensively in mixed systems. Efficiency improvements and technological solutions alone will not bring EU farming's ecological footprint within sustainable levels; structural change is needed.

To achieve a clean and healthy environment and safeguard natural resources for future generations, European agriculture must:

- 1 Replace routine pesticide and fertiliser use with first-rate agroecological science.** Huge advances in soil biology and farmland ecology provide scientific backing to traditional agroecological practices such as crop rotations, mulching, and agroforestry. Applying this new knowledge by mainstreaming agroecology across the EU can help drastically cut pollution from pesticides and fertilisers.
- 2 End factory farming and enable a transition to less and better animal farming.** Reducing livestock numbers in Europe is essential to bring our resource use within sustainable levels, and should be part of a transition to extensive livestock rearing in mixed farming systems to end air and water pollution
- 3 Close the nutrients loop:** our environment is overloaded with nutrients (in particular N and P), and we keep adding more, by using vast amounts of mineral fertilisers and importing millions of tonnes of livestock feed. In addition to the above actions which will reduce unsustainable nutrients inputs, more must be done to recycle nutrients from bio-waste and to achieve fully circular, localised nutrients management.



The EU is committed to a “zero pollution ambition”, recognising the need “to better monitor, report, prevent and remedy pollution from air, water, soil”. Agriculture is central to this commitment.

The **Farm to Fork Strategy** highlights the contribution of livestock, pesticides and fertilisers to air, water and soil pollution and commits to tackle this pollution by cutting nutrient losses by at least 50%, fertiliser use by at least 20%, and the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% by 2030.

The **Circular Economy Action Plan** “provides a future-oriented agenda for achieving a cleaner and more competitive Europe”, identifying food waste, water use and nutrients as key areas for action.

References

- 1 European Court of Auditors, Combating desertification in the EU: a growing threat in need of more action** (2018)
- 2 EEA and FOEN, Is Europe living within the limits of our planet?** (2020)
- 3 European Environmental Agency, National emissions reported to the UNFCCC and to the EU Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Mechanism** (2020). **European Environmental Agency, European Union emission inventory report 1990-2017 under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution** (2019)

4 European Commission, Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on water (2020)

5 European Environmental Agency, The European environment - state and outlook 2020

Picture credits

Front cover **AYAIMAGES, Adobe Stock**

Page 3 Top: Eco-vinyard, **Franciso Robles**; Middle: Cattle grazing at Mottleston Down, **Martin Warren**; Bottom: Compost, **Sippakorn Yamkasikorn**.

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 climate 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**

Funds for change

Dedicate sufficient CAP funds to sustainable resource management in agriculture and to the protection of air, water and soil, 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 Strategy and Zero-Pollution Ambition. 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 zero-pollution commitments in agriculture, but not the only one. EU industrial policy, air and water laws and the circular economy and zero-pollution agendas are key tools too; all these EU policies must break the silos to also look at agriculture-related issues and be coherent with the EU Green Deal. Complementary policy measures targeted at supply chain actors and addressing the demand-side, and a sustainable trade policy must help steer the food system towards zero-pollution and circularity



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