

DGx proposed priorities

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AGRI

SUSTAINABLE FARM AND FOOD POLICY (GREEN PAPER)

What's at stake?

Europe's farmers and fishermen, supported by common agricultural, fisheries, food safety and health policies, have been successful in assuring plentiful and affordable food for over 500 million consumers. However, current production methods are not without environmental costs. There is a growing policy need to intervene in the way food is produced, processed, distributed and consumed. Indeed, citizens' demands increasingly move beyond food security and food safety to issues such as animal welfare, use of pesticides and antibiotics, greenhouse gas emissions associated in particular to livestock production, food waste, biodiversity loss, health and lifestyle.

European public policies have an important part to play to support healthier and more sustainable diets by making available healthy food produced in a sustainable way. The ongoing reform of the common agricultural policy enhances the sustainability of the EU farming model, in line with new emerging societal demands.

To step up action on these issues it is necessary to launch a sustainable food policy. This policy will tackle agricultural, environmental, climate and societal issues. A sustainable food policy may imply additional costs for farmers. It is crucial to support solutions that improve the viability of farming (for example, new breeding techniques could make more resistant varieties available much more rapidly) to enable a sustainable transition towards a more integrated food policy.

Where to go?

In the long-run (2050), the EU food system must be fully sustainable. This long-term ambition as well as precise contours of a European sustainable food policy should be developed. Ambitious and concrete targets for such a policy could be:

1. Promoting organic food in schools and its use in school canteens in the EU
2. [25%] reduction of use of antibiotics in livestock production by 2030
3. [25%] reduction of use of synthetic pesticides and a decrease [25%] of the Harmonised Risk indicator by 2030
4. [80% of EU citizens consume 400 grams of fruit and vegetables daily by 2030]
5. Net zero GHG emissions from agricultural and forestry in 2050

How to get there?

- At the start (first 100 days): launch a broad public consultation to explore citizens' and consumer views as regards the tensions and synergies in the sustainable food debate, as well as possible solutions for the farming sector and the food chain.
- Commission paper setting out a long-term EU sustainable food policy and presenting an agenda of (legislative) change. This would be accompanied by actions such as mock European Parliament debates for school students on new breeding techniques.
- Common initiative of AGRI, SANTE, ENV, CLIMA, TRADE, MARE, GROW...

Expected outcome

Increased coherence between EU policies related to food, contributing to the Union's sustainability objectives.

Food and Farming 4.0 (Action Plan)

What's at stake?

World food and farming systems are in the midst of a major technological revolution. Based, among others, on benefits stemming from EU innovation (e.g., the Copernicus satellite system), Farming 4.0 technology mitigates one of the major weaknesses of the "green revolution" by allowing the economic efficiency of food production to increase in tandem with its environmental and climate efficiency.

The EU already supports the development of digital technology in agriculture and rural areas in several ways. Its earth observation system provides information monitor land-based activity, identify environmental challenges. Its research policy develops ready-to-use knowledge and innovation and invests in knowledge sharing within the sector. Its common agricultural policy, which already invests in knowledge development, exchange and pilot projects, is shifting towards performance, thus providing direct and indirect incentives for spreading digital and other technological advances in both public administration and the rural economy.

In the Digital Day 2019 declaration on 'a smart and sustainable digital future for European agriculture and rural areas', Member States underlined that more public and coordinated action is needed in this area. Initiatives are necessary to make sure that the entire sector and countryside benefit from the promise of digital technology, and especially to address existing gaps in knowledge, applications and perceptions, and above all to address the digital divide stemming from weaknesses in rural infrastructure and skills.

Where to go?

1. All MS use the Copernicus earth observation system for farm management and agricultural policy management by 2025
2. 100% fast internet access in rural areas by 2025
3. 25% of farms use artificial intelligence (including precision farming) by 2030
4. 10 new unicorns (start-ups with turnover > € 1 billion) offering agri-machinery/software solutions by 2030

How to get there?

- Presentation of a **Commission action plan**, developed with all relevant services, setting out how to boost digital development and rollout, by making use of Horizon Europe, the common agricultural policy, structural and investment funds and other tools.
- Developing exchange projects of IT students and start-ups to rural areas, award prize(s) for best upscaling start-up(s) in AGRI technology, etc.
- Initiative of AGRI, CNECT, REGIO, RTD, JRC, EAC

Expected outcome

A much more digitally advanced agricultural sector and well connected rural areas in the European Union, allowing all farmers to meet environmental and climate objectives in an economically sustainable way.

Vision for rural areas

What's at stake?

Despite the vibrant socio-economic developments in some parts of Europe, many rural areas face challenges related to relatively low income, depopulation, declining economic activity, poverty risk, youth drain and limited access to basic services (broadband, mobility, schools, health care, etc). This contributes to a negative spiral, with a perception among parts of the rural population of being left behind.

Several policies (EU level, national and regional) have very significant direct or indirect effects in rural areas. Different programmes under the proposed multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, including the ongoing reform of the common agricultural policy, aim to address the above issues. The proposed agricultural and rural development policy aims to promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas as well as to attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas. Other funds also make very significant investments and contributions.

To bring about the necessary change in rural areas and take advantage of the new emerging opportunities, there is a need to maximise the capacity for rural regeneration of the different sectorial policies and EU funds. The implications for rural areas must be taken into account ("rural proofing") in all EU policies. Rural issues must get the attention they need and deserve

Where to go?

A wide range of actions is necessary to provide socio-economic perspective and opportunity for rural areas. EU structural and investment funds and the common agricultural policy must continue to invest in these areas, in particular to ensure access to basic services and infrastructure (schools, doctors, etc.). Entrepreneurial activities and digital technology create important multiplier effects, therefore the following three flagship targets can be identified:

1. 100% fast internet access in rural areas by 2025,
2. Smart village strategies in all NUTS 2 regions of the EU by 2025;
3. [500 000] new businesses in rural areas by 2025.

How to get there?

- **Commission Communication** presenting a vision for inclusive rural areas, setting out the state of affairs of rural areas and policies and proposing concrete targets and actions that the Union aims to reach. This would link up to the ongoing corporate communication campaign for rural areas and include such initiatives as a European Year for Rural Europe with targeted actions.
- **Common initiative of AGRI, REGIO, EMPL and other DGs**

Expected outcome

By means of this initiative, the European Union will underline its strong commitment to rural areas, illustrated by targets for revitalisation through digital innovation.

BUDG

A partnership with Member States for EU budget: delivering results quicker

The EU budget provides the means to achieve the Union's political goals. The Commission retains the overall political responsibility, while Member States implement around 80% of EU budget.

In recent years, the public focus on the implementation of the EU budget and its results has increased, from media attention to the conflict of interest cases, to the concerns by the other European institutions over the growing level of the EU outstanding payments, mostly driven by the implementation of the cohesion policy funds. As this policy is implemented at national and regional level, the pace of implementation is largely dependent on the Member States themselves.

Structural and cohesion funds play a critical role in public investment in the EU. In 11 Member States, they constituted at least 40% of total investment for the period 2015-2017, and the impact of cohesion programmes for the current MFF is estimated to total 0.5% of GDP in the EU-28. Ensuring a stable and sustained level of public investment will be important throughout the next MFF cycle.

An agreement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework will be reached in a context of tight financial constraints. This has repercussions on the level of payments ceilings and the available means for pre-financing rates in order to eliminate any abnormal high levels of outstanding commitments and to kick-start implementation of the new programmes.

The implementation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework will take place in the context of **heightened public and political scrutiny**. The EU budget becomes increasingly also a tool to enforce compliance with other EU policies through a range of conditionalities.

This calls for a strategic initiative in order to strengthen the partnership with Member States in implementing the EU budget. This proposal builds on existing practices and instruments and on the Commission's proposal for the legislative framework for cohesion policy 2021-2027, which foresees a number of elements to ensure faster and more impactful implementation. It focuses on strengthening the governance on horizontal financial management issues, in articulation with ongoing efforts. The Commission will work even more closely with Member States in order to continue to:

- (i) ensure the robustness of financial management systems on the ground, including the prevention of conflict of interest, and the fight against irregularities and fraud,
- (ii) boost public investment by fostering timely implementation of programmes on the ground, in order to bring down the level of outstanding commitments (RAL) and avoid the build-up of abnormal RAL in the future,
- (iii) ensure that the public investment implemented delivers value to the citizens in line with clear budgetary performance targets, and