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Project of the month



Clustering carbon farming expertise in Poland

Carbon farming is a concept that is growing in significance for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In Poland, CAP funds have been used to strengthen a critical mass of expertise in the carbon farming field contributing to the goals for the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy.

Technical assistance funds from the Polish Rural Development Programme resulted in a good practice approach to raising awareness about low carbon emission solutions in agriculture. This was achieved by bringing together public authorities, research institutes and farmers to consider opportunities for mitigating emissions from livestock production and other farming models. [Learn more about the project's good practice here](#).

News



Next steps following the Common Agricultural Policy reform approval

The European Parliament and Council of the European Union have given the green light for the new CAP proposals to become operational in 2023. This decision paves the way for [a new CAP](#) aimed at making the policy greener, fairer, more flexible and transparent, with a broader role for networking across both CAP Pillars.

#NewCAP features include reinforced support for biodiversity conservation as well as other EU environmental and climate laws and commitments. Member States will be obliged to ensure that at least 35% of the rural development budget and at least 25% of direct payments will be dedicated to environmental and climate measures. Other features of the #NewCAP include dedicating of least 10% of direct payments to redistribute funds from large to smaller farms, a permanent crisis reserve that can be used when prices or markets are unstable, a new social conditionality to receive CAP payments and a minimum allocation of 3% for young farmers.

In terms of next steps, secondary legislation clarifying CAP implementation details is currently in the works. The most urgent secondary acts will be adopted by the Commission before the end of the year, the rest is expected to be adopted in the first part of 2022. Member States have until 31 December 2021 to submit their CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) proposals. The Commission will then assess these plans and provide its observations to Member States. The Commission has a total of six months to approve the CSPs, as revised by Member States where necessary, in order for them to apply as of 1 January 2023 when the policy enters into application, after its transitional period.

See the [statement by Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development Janusz Wojciechowski](#) and the [read the Council's press release about the #NewCAP's approval](#).



Promoting best practices for cooperation in Europe's Agri-food supply chain

The launch of the European Commission's Forum on Best Practice in the Agri-Food Supply Chain gathered expertise from across Europe at the ENRD-supported

virtual webinar on 2 December.

More than 80 participants took part in the Forum's first session which combined keynote perspectives from different European Commission services and practical experience from successful producer organisations. The event was opened by Maciej Golubiewski, Head of Cabinet for Commissioner Wojciechowski, and Michael Scannell, Deputy Director General, DG AGRI. They highlighted the value of sharing good practices in transparent supply-chain cooperation that strengthens positions of producers and others during the EU's transition to more sustainable food systems.

Delegates taking part included producers, processors and retailers with information being provided about relevant Farm to Fork tools that can help drive a transition to sustainable food systems - such as the [Code of Good Conduct for Responsible Food Business & Marketing Practices](#) to which over 100 organisations have already signed up to. [See the Forum event webpage](#) to learn about its findings regarding CAP mechanisms available for supporting producer organisations (POs) and more.



Questionnaire to suppliers in the agri-food chain on unfair trading practices

ENRD stakeholders are invited to participate in a baseline survey, carried out by the Joint Research Centre and the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission, to inform the introduction of the EU Directive on unfair trading practices (UTP) in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain.

Survey results will help assess the effectiveness of measures taken by Member States in the context of this [UTP Directive \(2019/633\)](#). The aim is to capture the existing state of play before new national measures are implemented. [Responses to the questionnaire are encouraged by suppliers covered by the Directive](#) from all the different stages of the agricultural and food supply chain. The survey will be open until Monday 31 January 2022.



New ENRD Thematic Groups on Rural Revitalisation and Rural Proofing

New ENRD Thematic Groups on Rural Revitalisation and Rural Proofing are becoming operational with ambitions to support Member States', regions and stakeholders roll out of the European Commission's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas up to 2040.

Rural Revitalisation Thematic Group members met in December to [hear and learn from strategic approaches implemented by countries and regions to revitalise rural areas](#). Such sessions helped participants network know-how and build common understandings about enabling factors for rural revitalisation. **Particular attention is being paid to rural areas affected by population loss, ageing and a lack of economic opportunities.** Find out more from the [ENRD website pages about this Thematic Group](#) and outcomes from its first meeting, including next steps for promoting policy tools that leave no one behind during the revitalisation of rural Europe.

Our new [Thematic Group on Rural Proofing](#) is also starting up with aims to share experience and develop recommendations that can guide the design and implementation of rural proofing mechanisms within Member States at different administrative levels (national, regional and local). [Further information is available on the ENRD website about our new Rural Proofing Thematic Group.](#)



EU Soil Strategy proposes that soil has the same legal status as air and water

Some 70% of Europe's soils are considered to be degraded, posing a direct threat to food security and the health of ecosystems. Degraded soils mean high costs to the EU economy; currently more than EUR 50 billion every year. Factors such as these contribute to the rationale behind proposals for an EU Soil Health Law, included in the EU's new Soil Strategy published last month.

This new Soil Strategy is tasked to have all European soils restored, resilient, and adequately protected by 2050. Agriculture will play a decisive role and farmers will be aided by risk assessment methodologies implementing the [Fertilising Products Regulation](#). The feasibility of introducing a soil health certificate for land transactions will also be examined as part of the new Strategy. In addition, a "test your soil for free" initiative is proposed, allowing farmers and other actors to know more about the health of their soil.

See the [Soil Strategy's official text](#) to discover these latest soil developments including how farmers will be rewarded for storing carbon and delivering ecosystem services.



#NewCAP supports Member State planning for carbon farming concepts

Member States continue to embrace the concept and benefits of carbon farming approaches which are actively encouraged through the #NewCAP.

Baltic countries recognise the importance of carbon farming and are proactively sharing and networking their experiences through the [Baltic Sea Action Group](#), highlighting success factors which can be of use to other Member States. In Germany, a [national Arable Farming Strategy](#) is prioritising climate-friendly agriculture and [debate in the country continues about the merits of production methods promoting humus build-up](#). Long-term commitments to funding carbon farming are considered vital for a transformation of the agri-business sector's modernisation plans.

Spain is another Member State planning to use CAP support to upscale organic agriculture and here the transformation to carbon-fixing, emissions-reducing farming is seen to “[help boost rural economies, combining job creation and economic benefits with the protection of the environment, the fight against climate change, and an improvement in animal welfare.](#)”

Enthusiasm for [French](#) and [Polish](#) carbon farming developments are also becoming more widely known thanks to communication campaigns such as the EU-funded information provided by [EURACTIV's special report on Europe's carbon farming trend](#). Keep an eye on the [European Commission's Carbon Farming webpage](#) and also on the ENRD website for more news about latest developments in EU carbon farming.



Agreement reached on collection of regional farming data

A new EU agreement on farm data collection provides clarity on aspects of the Member States' CAP reporting requirements. Existing legislation will now be amended, formalising the requirement for Member States to report regional agricultural data.

Regional data reporting aims to contribute to a more targeted and effective implementation of the CAP. Speaking after the agreement, Simona Vrevc, chair of the Special Committee on Agriculture on behalf of the Slovenian EU Presidency, said that the agreement "marks an important step forward in our efforts to modernise the European agricultural statistics system, thus improving the quantity and quality of data available for policy making, administration and research." [Learn more about the background and next steps for this #NewCAP development.](#)



Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis

Ensuring food supply and food security is an objective set out in Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. However, risks related to climate or health continue to underline that achieving this Treaty objective cannot be taken for granted.

[A European Commission Communication](#) was released in November to address the safeguarding of EU food systems from risk. The Communication confirms that there is no ready-made solution to address a future, unpredictable crisis and it states that the best solution is to enhance the knowledge of, and mitigate to the extent possible, the

vulnerabilities and risks.

Networking acts as a valuable crisis management tool for sharing and creating such knowledge. [Find out more about the EU's new contingency plan for food supplies](#) and reflect on how CAP networking can help support its aims to strengthen the resilience of EU food supplies.



Podcast - #Foodsecurity: is Europe ready to face the next crises?

Food security is the subject of a new episode from DG AGRI's Food for Europe podcast series.

In response to the supply chain issues experienced in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, EU leaders have developed a food security contingency plan to safeguard the EU's food supply in the event of new natural or man-made crises.

This tenth episode of [Food for Europe](#) podcasts looks at the issues at play in creating a plan fit for all events. Like the effects of climate change, cyberattacks, earthquakes, volcanos, crop failure or nuclear accidents. We examine the lessons to be learned from what went right - and wrong - during the pandemic.

Guests in this episode include Michael Scannell, Deputy Director General at the Commission's Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; crisis management expert David Horobin; and Valentina Zanetti, an Italian dairy farmer and cheese producer who weathered the many storms that Covid brought.



Member States endorse new EU Forest Strategy for 2030

The EU's Agriculture Ministers have welcomed the publication of a new EU Forest Strategy for 2030. In the conclusions adopted during last month's agriculture and fisheries meeting, Ministers recognised the need for forests to contribute more to the European Green Deal and global targets such as the 2030 Agenda.

Forests' essential roles for human health, animal health and a healthy natural environment were highlighted by Ministers under the 'One Health' approach. The [new Forest Strategy's](#) emphasis on promoting sustainable wood-based products was considered to be key as are proposals to set up a new partnership for forestry research and innovation. [Council conclusions](#) also highlighted the need to strike a balance between the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable forest management. They stressed the importance of respecting and maintaining the diversity of forests and forest management practices in different Member States and regions.

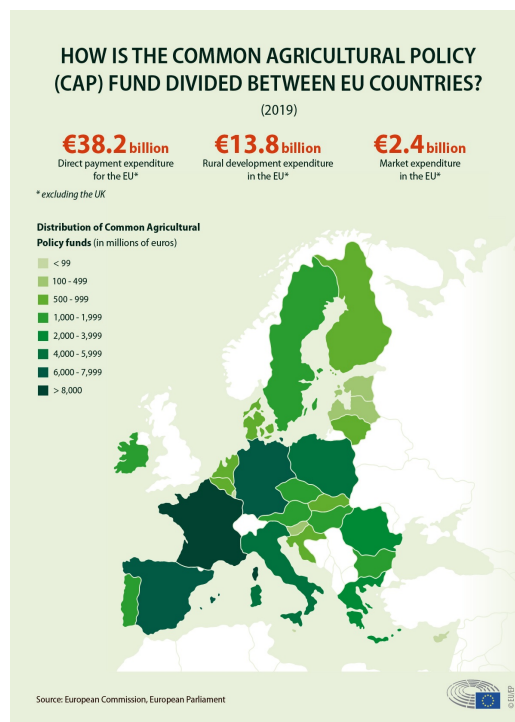


Deforestation

Plans were revealed last month by the European Commission for mandatory due diligence for products sold on the EU market to make sure they are not linked to deforestation or forest degradation.

Such legislation would place more focus on the production of beef, soy, palm oil, wood, cocoa and coffee products and derived products placed on the EU market. [Vice-President Timmermans explained the background for this new proposal saying](#) "Our deforestation regulation answers citizens' call to minimise the European contribution to deforestation and to promote sustainable consumption. Between 1990 and last year, we have lost 420 million hectares of forest – that is an area larger than the European Union. EU demand for commodities like palm oil, soy, wood, beef, cocoa, and coffee are strong drivers of

deforestation. More and more citizens want us to put an end to this. Our proposal therefore creates a strong due diligence system. It ensures that we only import these products if we can ascertain that they are deforestation-free and produced legally.”



Infographics: farming facts and figures from the European Parliament

Multi-lingual information about farming in the EU, including funding by country, employment and production is available in a new set of “at a glance” infographics from the European Parliament.

This new collection of CAP communication material is available in each of the EU official languages via the European Parliament website’s different language versions. The infographics raise awareness about agriculture’s importance for all EU countries. It covers both CAP Pillars and [spotlights CAP funds for farming, rural areas, climate action and the management of natural resources](#).



Food nutrient profiles: public consultation

A new [public consultation](#) by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is now open and seeking opinions about the future of harmonised front-of-pack labelling as well as restrictions on “claims” on food.

Proposals for a traffic light system are being discussed by Member States similar to the EU energy standards for electrical appliances and buildings. This would aim to increase awareness along the value chain from producer to consumer about diet-related food properties, especially nutrients and non-nutrient components of food that are of public health and dietary importance for European populations. [Have your say](#) on the science behind EU food nutrient profiling. The public consultation runs until 9 January, after which EFSA will finalise its scientific opinion in early 2022.



Call for EIP-AGRI Focus Groups experts now open

New [call for EIP-AGRI Focus Groups](#), temporary groups of selected experts focusing on a specific subject, sharing knowledge and experience, is now open.

The topics to be covered by the three new Focus Groups are:

- Sustainable ways to reduce the use of pesticides in pome and stone fruit production
- Digital tools for sustainable nutrient management
- Water: Nature-Based Solutions for water management under climate change

If you have practical experience on any of these topics and would like to share this with 19 other experts to identify promising and inspiring ideas for innovation, you can apply by Tuesday 11 January 2022 23:59 hrs CET (Brussels time).

Publications

Assembly

The 8th Rural Networks' Assembly, the main governance body of the ENRD and the EIP-AGRI networks, took place on 7 December. The meeting was opened by Wolfgang Burtscher, Director-General, DG AGRI and an update on CAP reform was provided by Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director-General, DG AGRI. Other information discussed during the assembly included: CAP secondary legislation and related CAP Strategic plan matters; the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas; Horizon Europe; EU rural networking; EIP-AGRI European Innovation Partnership, and future governance of the EU CAP Network. A Highlights report from the Assembly meeting will be available shortly [on the event's ENRD webpage](#).

Celebrating 30 Years of the LEADER Programme

Two events have recently celebrated 30 years of LEADER. The Irish National Rural Network (NRN) hosted a half-day [online conference, entitled '30 Years of LEADER: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future'](#) which provided an opportunity for rural stakeholders to reflect on past and current programmes, and to debate rural policy and practice in the context of the next LEADER Programme. The event included a [DG AGRI presentation about the future of LEADER](#). ELARD also organised a meeting celebrating the successful implementation of LEADER during the last 30 years. It investigated how the LEADER/CLLD methodology can work for local democracy and participatory approaches all over rural Europe in order to build a viable Europe. A video [recording of the conference is available online](#).

EIP-AGRI Seminar: Turning forest innovation into practice

The [seminar](#) took place on 24 and 25 November. It focused on the social aspects playing a role in forest innovation and on how innovation is inspired. The main aim of the event was to support the strengthening of the "Forest Knowledge and Innovation Systems" through knowledge exchange to contribute to fostering cooperation, education, training and advice to support sustainable forest management and unlock the socio-economic and environmental potential of

Conference 2021

The [2021 EU Agricultural Outlook conference](#) took place online on 9 and 10 December. The theme of this year's event was "Fit for 2030 – resilient EU agri-food systems and rural areas". The conference examined what we can expect global agricultural markets to look like in 2030, in light of the political and market uncertainty currently facing the agricultural sector. Senior representatives from EU bodies and international organisations, farmers, agricultural experts, and rural actors participated. Each year EU Agricultural Outlook conference coincides with the release of the [annual report on market prospects](#).

EAFRD financial instruments annual EU conference

This conference was organised by the [European Commission's fi-compass initiative](#) and was opened by EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski. The conference set the policy directions for the use of new financial instruments under the CAP Strategic Plans, or the continuation of current ones. Representatives of EAFRD managing authorities from several European capitals shared their current experiences and intentions for using financial instruments for agriculture in the future. This was complemented by advice outlining possibilities for further support to the EAFRD managing authorities.

forests. It considered the following four key themes for forest management: 1. Adaptation and mitigation of climate change, 2. Circular bioeconomy, 3. Monitoring in forest management, 4. Forest biodiversity, ecosystem services and multifunctionality, including agroforestry.

Events

27 January 2022

1st meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group on Rural Proofing

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

31 January - 1 February 2022

SHERPA Annual Conference: Make it happen! Implementing the rural vision

Organiser:
SHERPA project

[Find out more](#)

22 February 2022

10th Meeting of the LEADER/CLLD Sub-group

Organiser:
ENRD

[Find out more](#)

26 February - 6 March 2022

Salon international de l'agriculture 2022

Organiser:
Paris

[Find out more](#)

10-14 April 2022

European farming systems conference

Organiser:
The Mediterranean Institute for Agriculture, Environment and Development (MED)

[Find out more](#)

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