THE HIDDEN TRUTH

Environmental Impact of New EU Rural Development Programmes

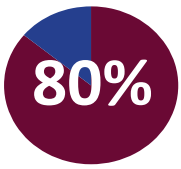
EU

BACKGROUND

One of the overarching aims of CAP reform was to make it deliver more for the environment. To find out what EU Rural Development actually means for the environment, specifically for biodiversity, this factsheet analyses how public money will be really spent and what hides behind the official numbers (EC and national figures). The analysis has been carried out for the EU28 and for 19 regions and Member States.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture remains one of the main sectors impacting our environment and one of the main threats to biodiversity in the EU – this is an assessment made by the Member States themselves when reporting to the European Commission. According to the EEA State of the Environment report, over 80% of protected extensive grasslands in Natura 2000 sites are in an unfavourable condition.



OF PROTECTED EXTENSIVE GRASSLANDS IN NATURA 2000 SITES IN UNFAVOURABLE CONDITION

53% **DECREASE IN FARMLAND BIRDS SINCE 1980**

GREENING

The original idea behind the reform of the CAP post-2013 was to ensure public money was being used to pay for public goods (clean water, healthy soils, and biodiversity).

This was translated into good agronomic practices linked with farmers' direct payments and building on those, more ambitious measures for the environment in Rural Development.

But as political negotiations got underway this intention rapidly disappeared, leaving us with very weak basic regulations.

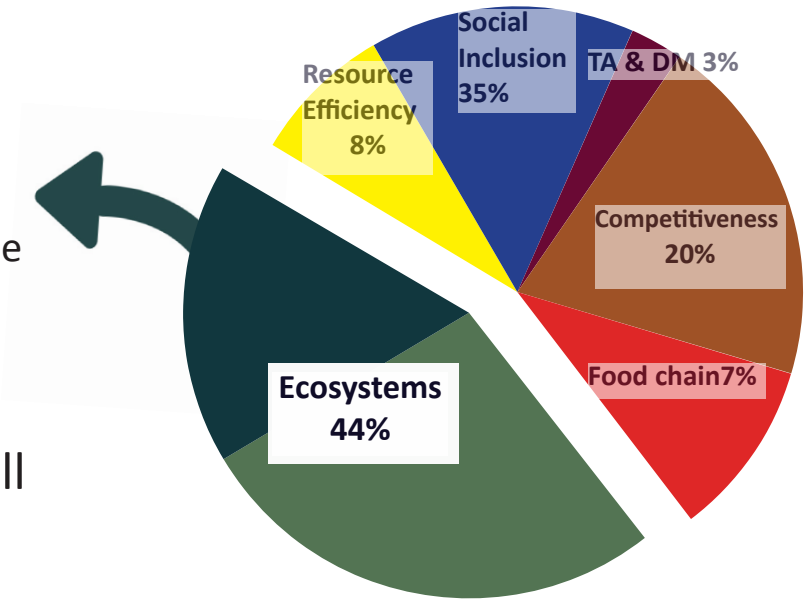
Now that evidence on the likely failure of greening of Direct Payments delivery is growing it is also time to check the impacts of the reform on Rural Development and check whether objectives such as freeing up money for more efficient and targeted measures which benefit the environment and biodiversity are being met or not.

PAPER VS. PRACTICE

More than a **1/3** of ecosystems spending goes to ANC measures despite the fact that no environmental conditions are attached to these measures.

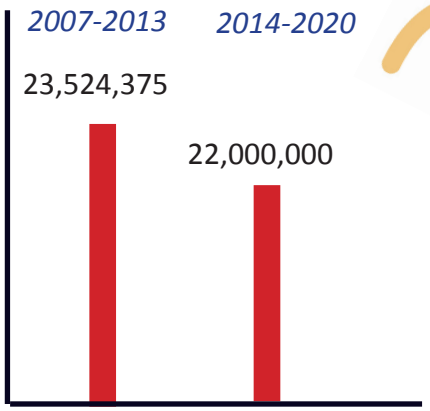
66% of spending for ecosystems in Finland will go to ANC measures.

RD spending 2014-2020



In a 2013 report, the Finnish Ministry of Environment highlighted the perverse effect ANC spending could have on the environment.

HOW DOES TOTAL EU AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SPENDING COMPARE WITH THE LAST FUNDING PERIOD?



Figures in millions of euros.
2014-2020 figures include organic measures.

Around **73%** of the analysed countries and regions' programmes have decreased their spending for environmental measures. *(i.e. 14 countries and regions out of the 19 that were analysed).*

In **79%** of the cases looked at, the quality of the measures was overstated. This means that less than 17% of EU land will be under contracts that meaningfully contribute to the EU's Biodiversity strategy.

Agri-environment measures differ in quality and there is a clear difference between so-called 'dark green' and 'light green' measures. Only dark green measures have true potential to deliver for biodiversity objectives. The analysis above is based on this differentiation.

What are 'dark green' agri-environment measures?

There is no common definition of light or dark green measures. Our analysis uses the following principle: the scheme has been considered dark green if it targets specific species (groups of species), habitats or a specific biodiversity problem (e.g. pollinator strips).

EUROPE must OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Ensure that a well-designed greening and reinforced cross compliance represent a firm baseline for Pillar 2 environmental measures. This could help free up money for more efficient and targeted measures that benefit the environment and biodiversity.
- ✓ Ensure the CAP is designed in a way which helps reach the EU Biodiversity Strategy goals by 2020. So far evidence shows that the agriculture target is the most problematic.
- ✓ Have a genuine system for tracking environmental spending. Only measures with clear environmental objectives and delivery can be included. Areas of Natural Constraints (ANCs) must not be counted as environmentally-beneficial measures as there are no environmental obligations or management requirements attached to the payments.
- ✓ Ensure proper monitoring of the Rural Development schemes' delivery.

Europe needs to take a proper look at the whole of its agricultural policy to see whether it is working for or against environmental commitments and priorities. Even if Rural Development can be a large part of the answer and has the potential to play a positive role in many parts of Europe, the figures unfortunately show adjustments are necessary for this policy to truly deliver on its objectives. It is now clear that this reformed CAP still has a long way to go before it can be called green.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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BirdLife INTERNATIONAL
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The data in this factsheet is based on the first version of the Rural Development Programme.