

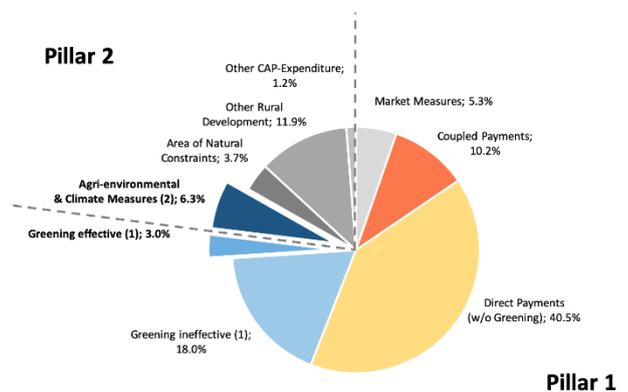
*Scientists call for the European Union to better align its agricultural policy to sustainability challenges*

Guy Pe'er, Aletta Bonn, Helge Bruelheide, Petra Dieker, Nico Eisenhauer, Peter H. Feindt, Gregor Hagedorn, Bernd Hansjürgens, Irina Herzon, Angela Lomba, Elisabeth Marquard, Francisco Moreira, Heike Nitsch, Rainer Oppermann, Andrea Perino, Norbert Röder, Christian Schleyer, Stefan Schindler, Christine Wolf, Yves Zinngrebe, and Sebastian Lakner

Agricultural sustainability is a global and urgent challenge. The European Union governs its agricultural sector through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Yet time and again, research has demonstrated that the CAP fails to deliver on the EU's environmental and socio-economic goals: biodiversity continues to decline, soils are eroding, agricultural activities are contributing to climate change and water pollution, and rural vitality continues to decline in many regions as well. This happens partly because the CAP pays farmers mostly by the size of their land holding (area-based) rather than how they manage it. This sets little motivation for farmers to preserve biodiversity or to avoid pollution. Scientists therefore call for a fundamental reform of CAP.

The European Union is an important food producer and is in the process of reforming the CAP. The CAP accounts for more than a third of the EU's total budget, these funds should be invested to the benefit of society and the environment. The European Commission's proposal for the future CAP does not do this. Instead, it allows Member States to determine their objectives and actions. Yet the experience is that this results in lower rather than higher ambition, as most Member States continue with business as usual, without addressing core environmental issues. Scientists demand that the European Union demonstrates how it intends to deliver sustainable agriculture. We propose ten concrete actions to make the CAP beneficial to nature, people and their joint futures. These include greater support for biodiversity and climate action, cancelling ineffective payments, and improved governance. The scientific community is

ready to support this, as demonstrated by over 3,200 signatories to the paper.



Key instruments in the CAP's budget. Source: EC (2019c) for total budget-appropriations.