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# Scrap the CAP

**A fresh start for Europe's food system**

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**April 2020**

**GREENPEACE**

# SCRAP THE CAP : a fresh start for Europe's food system

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We already knew the global food system was broken. Controlled by corporate powers, it drives destruction of natural ecosystems and contributes massively to climate breakdown. Most importantly, it is unfair: it does not guarantee fair prices and safe jobs for many farmers, leading millions of them into bankruptcy, nor provides the diets Europeans need for the future – less meat and dairy, more plant-based food, ecologically produced and affordable.

Despite ample [research and evidence](#) of its failure, European politicians have doubled down on maintaining this system. Now that the COVID-19 crisis has hit, those weaknesses are laid bare again.

As politicians scramble to respond to the crisis and put recovery funds together, efforts must focus on building the food system of the future, not patching up the system of the past. A third of the EU's budget is used to maintain the current system through agricultural subsidies from the common agricultural policy (CAP). Public money drives the type of farming we have, it should support farming that provides public goods.

**WE MUST SCRAP THE CAP**  
and start fresh to build a truly just and sustainable food system in Europe, rewriting the rules on how billions of euro of public funding for farming are used.

The first steps to more just, ecological and healthier European food systems are:

- 1. Public funding for farmers, not hectares**
- 2. Feed people, not animals**
- 3. More veggies, better health**
- 4. Fund food production – not fuel and globalised trade**

# 1. PUBLIC FUNDING FOR FARMERS, NOT HECTARES

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EU public money is fuelling inequality by making big factory farms even richer while smaller-scale farmers that haven't industrialised get left behind. [The top 1% of European farms](#) receive one third of all CAP public funding. That's 10% of the entire EU budget going to just over 130,000 big land owners. The public payment system is largely based on the amount of hectares a 'farmer' owns or rents, instead of what they produce or how the land is farmed and maintained. This has made just owning farmland a big business, which has attracted [corruption](#), [oligarchs](#) and even [the mafia](#) – all thriving on public subsidies.



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[Millions of small farms have already disappeared](#) in recent years as they were swallowed up by megafarms gathering most of the public financial support and pressing down market prices. Without a swift change of public policy, the COVID-19 crisis will only make the situation of many vulnerable farmers worse.

EU farm policy must be radically reformed so that payments support farmers and local communities, not blindly pay for the hectares of wealthy landowners.

**WE CALL FOR AN END TO DIRECT PAYMENTS BASED ON HECTARES**  
and for farmers to be given public support based on the environmental and social benefits their farms provide.

## 2. FEED PEOPLE RATHER THAN ANIMALS

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Much less land would be needed for healthy food production globally if more agricultural land was used to grow food directly for people, rather than growing crops to feed farm animals. In the EU, [71% of the total agricultural land](#) is used to feed animals. Still, industrial production of meat, dairy and eggs relies heavily on imported feed like soy, further requiring an area outside the EU's borders [the size of Austria and Belgium combined](#).

This system makes farmers dependent on big corporate market operators, such as feed traders and agro-chemicals manufacturers, and vulnerable to any disruptions in trade. At the same time, increasingly more European meat and dairy is produced solely for export. As earlier outcries and [demonstrations by farmers](#) have shown, this sector was in crisis well before COVID-19 hit.

Animal feed production is also a key driver of deforestation and ecosystem destruction, which together with expansion of agriculture, intensive factory farming and exploitation of wild species have created a '[perfect storm](#)' for diseases similar to COVID-19 to spill over from wildlife to people.

More than ever, European agricultural production needs to move away from the industrial animal farming model, supply more plant-based and healthier food, and ensure a greater number of quality jobs in the agriculture sector. Greenpeace [has already called for an end](#) to public subsidies for factory farms. The EU should put a maximum limit on the number of animals per hectare for farms to receive subsidies – factory farms with too many animals on too little land should not get public money.

Further steps are however needed. **Rather than using ever more public money in times of crisis to buy up excessively produced and over-consumed meat and dairy products** – in addition to subsidies already given for the production – we should tackle the problem at its source.

### **WE MUST LIMIT PRODUCTION OF MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS**

**in Europe, based on healthy and sustainable consumption levels and ensuring balanced regional developments.**

Public funding must **encourage and reward farmers for reducing the numbers of animals farmed.**

### 3. MORE VEGGIES, BETTER HEALTH

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In times of social and economic instability, it is even more important that healthy and ecological plant-based food is widely available and affordable. But the public subsidies system currently in place has failed to drive European farming away from food that is bad for both our health and the environment, contributing to making it often an 'easier' choice than healthy and sustainably produced food.

While individuals do have a role to play in their dietary choices, their choices are heavily skewed and guided by the societal, cultural and commercial environment in which they make them.

#### **THE DIETARY SHIFTS WE NEED TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND NATURE SHOULD BE PUBLICLY SUPPORTED**

**by shifting subsidies, reducing taxes on fruit and vegetables, and by removing tax breaks that encourage unhealthy consumption.**

**Marketing regulations and socially and environmentally guided public procurement and catering** can also make a difference.

To get started, and to set a clear political direction, we call for the EU and national governments **to set targets to reduce EU's meat and dairy overconsumption [at least 70% by 2030 and 80% by 2050](#)** compared to current levels.



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## 4. FUND FOOD PRODUCTION – NOT FUEL AND GLOBALISED TRADE

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We are seeing our highly globalised food and commodity chains struggle with the Covid-19 crisis. Instead of further investing in global supply chains of bulk-produced food, we need to reevaluate what is essential and start moving towards local, sustainable, diversified and resilient systems focused on ecological food. Europeans are already among the world's top exporters of [dairy](#) and some [meat products](#), sometimes with [dire consequences](#) to the local economies of the importing countries.

We are also driving the expansion of agricultural land around the world to grow crops for fuel production rather than food. Almost all biofuels in Europe are made of food crops, and [more than half of the palm oil](#) imported into Europe is used to make fuel. Taking into account the deforestation driven by the growing demand for land to cultivate these crops, the emissions of biodiesel made of [palm or soy oil can be 2-3 times higher](#) than fossil diesel.

We call for a food system that is not focused on ramping up commodity production, but rather producing less and better food for people. This requires the **redirecting of public subsidies away from the wasteful use of food crops to make fuel.**

Even more so, new measures are needed to

### **END PUBLIC SUPPORT OF EXPORTS AND IMPORTS**

**of over-consumed products, specifically industrial meat and dairy.**

#### CONCLUSION

The response to the ongoing crises must address the underlying issues that make the current food system unsustainable and vulnerable – not just treat the symptoms. It is now time for bold decisions to start the needed transition to the food and farming system of the future. The public money spent on recovery from the Covid-19 crisis and beyond build a more resilient, diversified and sustainable food system, that provides healthier food and a safer environment and climate, as well as fair incomes and quality jobs in the food and farming sector.

