

14/10/2020

President letter to MEPs on the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation

Brussels, 12 OCTOBER 2020

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

As President of IFOAM Organics Europe, the European umbrella organization for organic food and farming, I would like to draw your attention to several issues concerning the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation, on which you will vote in plenary session next week.

To build a sustainable future and resilient societies, the Green Deal must be at the heart of the recovery plan and all public policies. The organic movement fully supports the objectives of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity

Strategies **to reduce pesticide, fertilisers, and antibiotic use in agriculture and to reach 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming by 2030**. The CAP is a crucial public policy to reach these targets, which should be reflected in the regulation (e.g. in articles 6, 92, 97 and Annex XI).

An **ambitious ringfencing of minimum 30% of Pillar 1 budget for Eco-schemes**-with a gradual increase to 50% over the next CAP programming period-is key to incentivize and help all farmers to transition to more sustainable practices, and to increase the provision of public goods that benefit the environment and European citizens. Areas with Natural Constraints (ANCs) should be excluded from the environmental ringfencing of Pillar 2.

The organic system approach delivers the ecosystem services needed for reaching EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity targets. Moreover, **organic agriculture is a well-known and EU-regulated food production system.** Member States and stakeholders can make full use of such a well-established and dynamic movement to make this transition to sustainable food systems a reality. But an appropriate remuneration for their delivery of public goods is crucial, as it is evident that the market for public goods is not functional and cannot be paid only by organic consumers. The Strategic Plans must underpin these goals and help to transition to organic and agroecological farming through both CAP pillars.

Conversion and maintenance payments play a crucial role to make this organic system approach competitive for the farmers. Therefore, we recommend mentioning in the regulation that future payments towards organic conversion and maintenance (through eco-schemes or through rural development measures) shall exceed the total payments made before 2021, calculated as a yearly average and using constant prices, as proposed in the ENVI opinion voted in February 2019 (article 92).

Whereas in theory Member States will have the possibility to support organic conversion and maintenance either through rural development measures in article 65 or through eco-schemes in article 28-or through a combination of both-organic farmers are concerned that the flexibility given to Member States in the current draft regulation will lead to a decreased level of ambition. To ensure coherent policy support throughout Europe, **all Member States should be obligated to include in their CAP Strategic**

Plans an analysis of the organic sector's needs and potential for further development through policy support (ENVIarticle 13 A), **and a national target to increase the share of agricultural land under organic management.** The level of this target should be decided at the national level.

Organic farming methods are knowledge intensive, rather than input intensive. Member States also need to build strong knowledge networks for organic farming. As part of the CAP Strategic Plans (articles 13 and 72), Member States should support or set up **advisory services supporting conventional farmers willing to convert to organic farming** and new entrants willing to start organic farming.

A set of policy action will be needed to enable both organic production and demand to rise in a balanced way (push-pull approach), and CAP measures to support organic production should go hand in hand with policy measures such as green public procurement (e.g. to increase the share of organic in public canteens), and measures to raise consumers awareness on the benefits of organic farming for the environment and animal welfare.

The organic food and farming movement, widely supported by European consumers and citizens, is committed to do its part to achieve the new CAP's objectives, and the Farm to Fork strategy vision. Hundreds of thousands of organic farmers across Europe are already leading the way to make agriculture fairer and more sustainable, to preserve our soils, water, and biodiversity, and to regenerate rural areas. They count on you to ensure that the new CAP will properly

acknowledge and support their efforts to make Europe's agriculture greener and to revitalizerural communities.