

## The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket)



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION AGENCY

**Name and role:** Oskar Jonsson, Innovation Coordinator

**Brief description of objective:** A financial support system for farmers that increase biodiversity

**Challenge and problem statement:** Biodiversity is a fundamental component of natural capital and essential to human well-being, as it delivers services that sustain our agricultural sector and European Union economies and societies.

Approximately 40%<sup>1</sup> of all land within EU is used for agriculture according to Eurostat. How this land is used effects climate and the environment. Over 25 years biodiversity and the general health of ecosystems have showed a declining trend, pointing to a major decline in biodiversity in Europe, according to the European Environmental Agency EEA<sup>2</sup>. Major causes include agricultural intensification, intensive forest management, land abandonment and urban sprawl. Some of the drivers are agrochemical use and abandonment of grasslands.

The major policy challenge is to achieve wide and effective deployment of measures designed to help populations recover in Europe. The European Union supports<sup>3</sup> productivity, farm income, stable markets, availability of supplies, affordable food prices, environmental and societal challenges. The largest share of the CAP(Common Agricultural Policy) budget goes to direct payments (approximately 42 GEUR in 2018<sup>4</sup>), a basic income support given to farmers based on the number of hectares farmed. Today each EU member state has a web based online tool for farmers to apply for financial support. For example in the UK the tool is called BPS (Basic Payment Scheme). In Sweden it is called SAM (Samlad ansökan om Jordbruksstöd).

The challenge is how can we in the near future create a European online financial support tool that give guidance and incentives for farmers to achieve effective measures to support biodiversity?

An inspiration in governance is how the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) has during the last ten years change its way of operating. From a focus of supervision and inspection into offering digital tools and support that makes it easy to do it right. In an analogy; how can an

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Farms\\_and\\_farmland\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_-\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Farms_and_farmland_in_the_European_Union_-_statistics)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eea-snapshot>

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance\\_en#howitspaidfor](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en#howitspaidfor)

online tool for direct payments to farmers support the users for doing right in increasing biodiversity?

Such an online tool should preferably strengthened rural development, not subsidise or make exceptions for counterproductive measures to biodiversity, support landscape-targeted and coordinated actions among farmers to reach larger-scale goals such as improved landscape connectivity and supporting farmers in high nature value areas.

The support system should not just compensate income foregone (i.e., opportunity costs due to implementing farm management beneficial to the environment) but should also reward the delivery of public goods in a way that makes such investment profitable and attractive for farmers.

The financial support system should preferably also make an effective contribution to the social development goals in Agenda 2030 such as supporting sustainable farming systems, promote employment for women, and diversify income and designing new ones such as high nature value farming systems, nature-based solutions for risk mitigation, and citizen participation.

**Background:** The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for environmental quality goals. The Agency carries out assignments on behalf of the Swedish Government relating to the environment in Sweden, the EU and internationally. We develop environmental policy - by providing the Government with a sound basis for decisions and by giving an input to EU and international efforts. Our vision is a good environment for people and all living things, now and for future generations. Responsive and proactive actions about the climate change, loss of biodiversity and the state of the environment is in our focus.

**Goals:** The goal with this challenge is to get suggestions about how to construct a digital financial support system for farmers that increase biodiversity. This can give us input to our work with the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and how the universal biodiversity challenge can take a leading role.

**End user:** Farmers and public policy makers

**Hashtags:** #innovation and #biodiversity

**Future plans:** The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is committed to work with innovative solutions that creates bold and transformative steps for biodiversity in Sweden, within EU, and globally. The hacking teams will be invited to present their results to representatives from the Swedish Environmental Agency, Swedish Tax Agency, EU Commission and the UN Development Program UNDP.

## Requirements and criteria:

An innovative approach to a wicked challenge!

- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/synthesis/report/3-naturalcapital>
- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eea-snapshot>
- <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6452/449>
- [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en)
- [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Farms\\_and\\_farmland\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_-\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Farms_and_farmland_in_the_European_Union_-_statistics)
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bps-2019>
- <http://www.jordbruksverket.se/amnesomraden/stod/jordbrukarstod/samansokan.4.789f98e165775faad8c430f.html>
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

## Agenda 2030:

This challenge focus on SDG 15 Life on land. But SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 2 Zero hunger, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 12 sustainable consumption and production are highly applicable! Social, economic, and environmental dimensions shall be treated as inseparable.

Be innovative and bold. We must take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path (UN Agenda 2030, 2015).