



Policy mix on agricultural land use and related environmental impacts

This policy mix aims to reduce the EU agricultural land footprint and its related environmental impacts, both under both a consumption and a production perspective.

As regards the consumption side, the objective is to reduce the global agricultural land use due to the EU consumption of agricultural commodities. This objective will be achieved by addressing three key areas, i.e. by:

- 1) Reducing the EU **consumption of meat, dairy products and eggs**, as they have a much higher land requirement per calorie than any other kind of food. This is possible as the total per capita protein intake (including vegetable sources) in Europe is about 70% higher than recommended.
- 2) Reducing **food waste** in the EU, as currently about 90Mt of food is wasted per year, (42% by households).
- 3) Reducing the demand for **bioenergy**, and in particular for first-generation **biodiesel**, as it is generally characterised by high land requirement (and low energy intensity). In addition, to ensure the environmental sustainability of the bioenergy that is produced.

As regards the production side, this policy mix aims to decrease the environmental impacts related to agricultural activities in the EU and globally, which can be influenced by the EU and Member State policies. The specific objectives are the following:

- 1) To stop and revert the **loss of biodiversity**, which is currently mainly due to 1) the abandonment of less productive agricultural areas with semi-natural habitats (leading to natural succession to scrub or forests) and 2) agricultural intensification, with the related environmental impacts (e.g. eutrophication).
- 2) To improve **water quality** in all river basins where agriculture is the main land use and currently the main source of diffuse pollution (30-40% of European water bodies are under significant pressure from diffuse water pollution).
- 3) To reduce **consumption of water** for irrigation (agriculture accounts for 24% of total water abstraction in Europe, and 80% in southern European countries).
- 4) To improve **carbon storage in soil**, as 45% of soils in Europe have low or very low organic matter, due to a variety of drivers, including conversion of grassland, wetlands and forests to cropland and intensive agriculture.

The preliminary set of policies that are proposed for the consumption side are the following:

- 1) Food habits:
 - Increased **VAT on meat** products.
 - **Public canteens to supply recommended dietary limits** and have vegetarian days.

- Targeted **information/education campaigns** on changing diets.
 - **Sectorial agreements** with large food retailers to display recommended healthy dietary limits of meat and dairy products.
- 2) Food waste:
- **Review of eat-by labelling.**
 - Development of **food redistribution programmes.**
 - **Clear guidance** on how to store products in retail.
 - **Food waste campaigns.**
- 3) Bioenergy:
- **Strengthening of biofuel feedstock sustainability criteria in the Renewable Energy Directive** and their extension to incorporate **indirect impacts of land use change; future renewable energy legislation without biofuels targets.**

As regards the production side, the policy mix includes the following policies:

- Stronger and more effective **environmental and climate dimension for EU land management in future CAP reforms** – GHG emissions, soil quality, water quantity and quality, biodiversity.
- **Revised emissions levels in the National Emissions Ceilings Directive (NECD)** to reduce eutrophication; measures for **better management of the nitrogen cycle on farmland** (higher fertiliser use efficiency, improved crop and manure management that reduce emissions, low-protein animal feeding, improved manure storage).
- Increased **irrigation water prices** to cover at least full supply costs; irrigation water prices linked to consumption and not to irrigated areas.
- Strengthening of the **pesticide reduction targets** under the Pesticides Directive, and provision of guidance to farmers on integrated pest management.
- **Improved implementation of EIA** on permanent grassland conversion, afforestation, and other agricultural developments.
- Increased **management plans/measures for Natura 2000 areas** dependent on agricultural activity (grazing and/or mowing) and all habitats listed in the Habitats Directive.
- Promotion of **PES** programmes financed by private actors to reward farmers for producing ecosystem services.
- Establishment of a **EU soil legislation** which provides a mandate for cost-effective tackling of soil problems, and protection of soil functions.
- Development of a **LULUCF regulation** setting targets for net carbon emissions from the land use sector.
- Promotion of the **research, monitoring and data collection and systematisation** that is needed to improve the environmental performance of the agricultural sector.