



Paper 3 in the 'CAP Unchained Series'

TOWARDS A ROADMAP FOR RENEWING RURAL LAND USE IN EUROPE

IEEP background paper
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David Baldock
Allan Buckwell

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Contact: David Baldock, dbaldock@ieep.eu

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List of acronyms

AFOLU	Agriculture, forestry and other land use
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
COGECA	General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives
COPA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations
CSP	CAP Strategic Plan
DG	Directorate General
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EGD	European Green Deal
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELO	European Landowners' Organisation
ETS	Emission Trading System
EU	European Union
F2F	Farm to Fork
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HNV	High Nature Value
IEEP	Institute for European Environmental Policy
INRAE	French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment
IPCC AR6	6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LULUCF	Land use, land-use change and forestry
LTS	Long-term strategy
MFF	Multi-annual financial framework
MRV	Monitoring, reporting, verification
MS	Member State
NECP	National energy and climate plan

NGEU	Next Generation EU
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SUPD	Sustainable use of pesticide directive
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Summary

The first paper in this three-part series made the case for the transformation of the rural land use system to achieve food and environmental security. The second indicated the breadth of issues and therefore policy areas which have to be coordinated to effect this transformation. This third paper outlines a road map to take us from current policies to achieve the required transformation.

A new generation of policies for this purpose needs an EU wide frame as well as a more local one. This is justified by the transboundary nature of climate and biodiversity challenges and by Single Market considerations. The 2019 Green Deal and strategies being developed to deliver this are an important start in the transformative process. However, there is a need for a stronger and more widely accepted “transition” narrative covering both the food system and strategic land management in the EU. This should start from an acceptance of the distance to be travelled by 2030, and then by 2050 and focus on how to get there. A clear rationale and accompanying roadmap should weave together the case for changes in food consumption and improved public health with a new perspective on land use consistent with climate stability and ecosystem restoration whilst maintaining a viable agricultural economy and society.

Unfortunately, a transition of this magnitude cannot rely on significant progress arising from the current round of CAP reform and its subsequent implementation through CAP Strategic Plans, helpful though that would be.

To achieve long term changes in European land use and associated food production requires a set of coordinated initiatives that are the main topic of this paper. However, it cannot be isolated from the need both to guide healthier patterns of food consumption and address the issue of food prices. Higher prices for a number of foods may follow from the combination of reduced production subsidies, new policies to promote healthier eating and more internalisation of environmental costs in the food system. Getting the right balance of prices and measures to prevent food poverty is a critical issue requiring more work as part of the transition pathway.

A substantive toolbox of EU measures is suggested to drive more decisive progress in the transition. The policy mix would include:

- the setting of timebound environmental targets for the sector,
- the provision of a new pattern of land management incentives,

- supplemented by expanded markets for ecosystem services
- more targeted initiatives for the livestock sector
- dedicated measures to deliver specific targets in the Farm to Fork Strategy; more use of input taxes is one option.
- a greater focus on advice, research, pilot measures and enhanced support for co-operative action by land managers.

The change programme would extend considerably beyond CAP reform and may need to include a trade dimension, especially if European environmental standards rise above those of trading partners.

A European roadmap of such measures must bring together the wide spectrum of initiatives required, giving added coherence to the transition. It would give confidence to actors in the food chain and land managers as well as public authorities that the new direction was a decisive strategic choice for the rural economy as well as the environment.

The results on the ground will be a mix of more extensively managed land, including organic, highly efficient productive systems including contained and vertical farming, and larger areas devoted to nature and carbon sequestration. Appropriately chosen and sited woody vegetation, including agro-forestry and enlarged woodlands and hedges will take a larger share of rural land use. Overall food production may fall but the added value on farms could increase. The issues of dietary change and food prices and any necessary adjustments to social welfare systems will have to be an overt part of the developing transition narrative.

The increased funding available for supplying public goods on farmland will provide new opportunities for land managers but there will be losers as well as winners from land-use change within and between the EU Member States. This should not be glossed over. There is a need for a just transition in the rural world as well as the industrial one and appropriate time-limited adjustment aid should be part of the agenda. A transparent debate confronting the full impacts of change is essential and an important step in getting land managers on board and allowing them to plan.

A timeline for activating such an approach during the 2020s is sketched out, leading up to the next EU budget period for 2027-2034, which will be critical. The recent CAP reform negotiations suggest there may be insufficient reform momentum from within the current bodies driving agricultural policy, pointing

to the need for institutional innovation and greater engagement in the Member States as well as in the European institutions.

As a large part of agricultural support switches to payment for environmental public goods, the distribution of EU funds in rural areas will evolve and it is important that this is not blocked by the historic division of CAP funds between Member States. New funding streams unencumbered by such constraints will be needed for this as well as other reasons.

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1. Introduction

The first paper in this series set out a rationale for what we need from and for rural land in Europe. Then, the second spelled out the goals for the future- a healthier population, provided for by a food and land system which is consistent with climate stability and ecosystem restoration, and managed by stable, viable farms and other rural actors. Both the food consumption and production sides of the equation must be tackled in parallel.

The second paper teased out what might be considered an effective set of collective and coordinated actions capable of steering the EU food system and rural land use onto a sustainable path. For land use, a mixture of inducements, controls and regulations to change the allocation and intensity of management of agricultural and other rural land was proposed.

Beyond this, there is a need for a "transition" narrative for the food system and land management in the EU. This should start from an acceptance of the distance to be travelled by 2030, and then 2050 and focus on how to get there. There is no shortage of evidence of the challenges for biodiversity and climate. The State of Nature report ¹published in autumn 2020 for example set out the urgency of reversing the decline of nature quite starkly. Nonetheless, at farm level, and within traditional agricultural ministries, it may not be easy to come to terms with what can appear quite abstract challenges. It entails acceptance of a new mix of societal priorities and a requirement on land managers to change practice and some business models in order both to comply and to qualify for future support. Accepting that the threat to food security in the EU is a matter of environmental and economic unsustainability, not a shortage of European food supplies requires a new perspective. However, progress in agricultural and related land use policy depends on accepting that the focus of public funding should be on the provision of environmental and other "public goods" rather than on increasing output of food. Current policies are not well aligned with these new requirements and will change but this does not mean a withdrawal of public funding from rural areas.

¹ European Commission (2020) The state of nature in the European Union, Report on the status and trends in 2013 - 2018 of species and habitat types protected by the Birds and Habitats Directives COM/2020/635 final

Whilst potentially it has an important role, making limited alterations to the Common Agricultural Policy will not be sufficient to fund land managers in a way which will bring about the transformation required. This paper, the final in the series, identifies a transition pathway to enable systemic change, taking the current CAP and wider policy and institutional frame in the EU as the starting point.

While the consumption side of the issue is critical and needs to move forward in parallel, as emphasised in Paper 2, the focus here is predominantly on the land use dimension.

2. Establishing a new narrative and policy frame

It might be ungenerous to describe the attitude of agricultural ministries in the EU as aiming to maintain business as usual, but there are few signs that they see transformational change in the food system as desirable or a key challenge for them. This is exemplified by the 2018-2020 negotiations over the post-2020 CAP and the pressure from most Member States to roll back the more environmentally ambitious elements of the Commission's proposals² while resisting being bound into the kind of goals and targets being outlined in the recent Farm to Fork Strategy³. In agricultural circles there remains a strong attachment to the narrow "Europe 'must produce more' for the growing population and starving millions" argument. This can be presented as a defence of essential food security. However, frequently it becomes a justification for increasing EU production, whether for domestic or export markets, and resisting any throttling back in output in the cause of sustainable production and consumption.

It is possible that commitment to develop and roll out a new narrative may occur within the current set of institutions driving policy at the EU and Member State levels. More likely is that it will require institutional change, especially in the realm of agricultural policy where the preponderance of public funding is now concentrated⁴.

The new narrative will demonstrate that the challenges cannot be met purely on the demand side or on the supply side. There will be a place both for conventionally measured high productivity in some forms of land use and for innovative types of production alongside more extensive forms of land use where non-market services are a higher priority and there is an expanded area

² See Institute for European Environmental Policies (IEEP), 'Preliminary assessment of the AGRIFISH Council and the European Parliament's position on the future of CAP' and comments by Ursula von der Leyen at the December 2020 Agricultural Outlook Conference in Brussels where she said "certain aspects of the Parliament and Council positions raise doubts on the capacity of the CAP to deliver on environment and climate", quoted in Agra Facts No100-20, 16/12/2020.

³ European Commission 2020

⁴ For discussion of why changes in arrangements within the Commission might be helpful see for example Buckwell A et al 2017 CAP – Thinking Out of the Box: Further modernisation of the CAP – why, what and how? RISE Foundation, Brussels. and recent papers by Pe'er et al.

for nature. In agriculture, a simple polarisation between more organic/extensive and more high-tech robot-controlled production is not helpful.

Building an EU framework that is fit for purpose will call for policy development both within existing sectoral policy spheres, such as agriculture, energy and climate policy and in new cross-cutting arenas, such as land use per se and the promotion of healthy sustainable diets.

In order to do this, a critical task is to establish and gain public and political support for the over-arching idea that the food system and rural land use have to be transformed. This requires an EU transition covering the combination of changes in the way we produce and consume food and manage rural land for nutrition, climate, energy and biodiversity in an integrated way. The focus of this paper is on the required changes in land management but the need to induce changes in consumption behaviour to improve health, reduce food waste and facilitate the achievement of greater environmental sustainability is critical too.

On both fronts, some initial steps already have been taken with the European Green Deal and suite of strategies and initiatives being introduced or developed in its wake. In the next stage, the transition can be further developed and expressed in a cross-cutting strategy or roadmap with interim and longer-term dates for accomplishing key objectives. This roadmap should include review and engagement processes that would help to clarify the roles of the wide sweep of partners to be involved, including national and sub-national authorities, land managers and other stakeholders. As part of this, the CAP, currently a silo of agricultural support, should become an instrument or set of instruments to support both the transition and the longer-term supply of ecosystem services including food.

3. A Programme to transform land use policy in the EU

Fifteen key elements of the required roadmap are presented below, grouped under four broad headings. Changes in agricultural policy are a significant but by no means the only priority and are summarised under point No. 8 below as a sub-set of measures within the broader constellation of policies to be addressed.

A. Setting clear environmental targets to confirm and give confidence in the direction of travel

1. **In the climate sphere**, the EU should press forward with sufficiently ambitious, quantified objectives for GHG emission reductions at the EU level, for both 2030 and 2050 but more strongly linked to Member State targets than at present. This would sharpen the focus on the scale and timing of action required outside the ETS sector, including in agriculture and land use. The small scale of most individual emitters is a barrier to the inclusion of farming in the EU ETS.
2. **Quantified GHG emission reduction/sequestration targets** should be set for the agriculture and LULUCF sectors, which should be integrated more closely, for example through the creation of a combined Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector with specific dedicated rules and reduction targets. Business as usual policies are not expected to generate much change in agricultural emissions and the size of the LULUCF net sink is shrinking. To reverse this requires a much-increased focus on both the reduction of agricultural emissions and effective sequestration options, notably in soils, peatland and forests. These should be taken forward in parallel. A variety of technical options such as the incorporation of biochar in soils is opening up. However, a more developed and supportive policy frame is needed to encourage investment and address the non-trivial practical and legal challenges, such as clarifying the precise role and scale of carbon dioxide removals, establishing robust baselines, metrics and verification systems to monitor progress and permanence (see 6 below)⁵. The lack of clear emission reduction and sequestration targets for the sector makes it difficult to build sufficient momentum behind mitigation action in farming, forestry and land use and there is an understandable reluctance by farmers and others to invest in new approaches (and take the risks they may involve) without stronger pressure or the existence of a binding deadline. The sectoral targets

⁵ The small scale of most individual agricultural emitters is a barrier to the inclusion of farming in the EU Emission Trading System. There are also measurement and verification issues, such as those associated with the permanence of increased soil carbon and on arable land.

would in turn help to drive specific initiatives for the sector some of which would vary considerably between Member States. Further pan European measures to incentivise emission reductions may be needed (as in the case of livestock, see point 10).

3. Agreeing on the route to implementing the **Biodiversity Strategy** and ensuring its coherence with the Farm to Fork Strategy, agricultural policy and future EU land use also is a priority⁶. The Strategy signals the need to set and deliver binding targets for biodiversity and ecosystem restoration. This will be a key step forward, with implications for land use within and beyond farmland, including larger-scale habitat restoration projects. However, success will require very much greater levels of policy development, political buy-in and response on the ground than previous strategies if it is to deliver significant change. The Commission is to propose restoration targets that will be binding on Member States as a key component of the Strategy. In principle, these offer an opportunity to address both ecosystem degradation and the need to incentivise nature-based approaches to carbon sequestration and storage. Their success will depend not only on their design and ambition but also on the resources available to deliver them on the ground, including an adequate level of support through EU funds, including the CAP (see point 8 below). The new strategy needs a level of political status and realistic delivery pathways that its predecessors have lacked.
4. **Specific measures to support Farm to Fork and other Green Deal targets** are likely to be required over and above the changes to agricultural support policies outlined under point 8 below. One is the Farm to Fork Strategy target of 25% of the agricultural area being under organic management by 2030. Here there is scope for aiding new and existing producers, strengthening advice and supporting market development but parallel effort to stimulate consumption of organic food also is likely to be essential if the target is to be credible. Other forms of more extensive and regenerative agriculture with the potential to contribute to both biodiversity and reduced input goals, also merit support. They include the novel as well as the more traditional. For example tracts of well managed high nature value (HNV) farmland could contribute to the raised targets for protected areas. They could receive support under the aid provided for long term supply of ecosystem services bearing in mind the parallel need to renew the ageing farm population in this sector (See 8 ii below). To meet the targets of a 50% reduction in the use and harmfulness of pesticides and the reductions in the use of fertilisers⁷, the Member States will have to

⁶ The two strategies are intended to be mutually reinforcing but are yet to have common targets. For example, the Biodiversity Strategy has a proposed target of 10% of farmland consisting of high diversity features but, although this is clearly relevant to agriculture, it is not a target in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

⁷ The former of these appears considerably more demanding to comply with, although there are some synergies with other measures, such as extended areas of organic farming, some transfer of farmland to ecosystem restoration and fuller deployment of integrated pest management under the Sustainable Use Directive.

devise their own programmes of action. However, there also is a case for action at the EU level to assist this process. This might include an element of EU wide incentives through agricultural policy and also new regulatory requirements influencing pesticide use and the application of Integrated Pest Management and other approaches. Some Member States may choose to impose taxes or levies on such inputs where reductions in consumption are the aim, following the example of Denmark. Taxation affairs generally are the domain of Member States but there may be a place for introducing a form of EU framework for sustainable taxation in relation to input use or other aspects of the delivery of the European Green Deal.

B. Better deployment of Regulations and Strategies to drive change

5. Although incentives for farmers are important, they are not the only form of policy intervention required. Given the slow progress to date in implementing measures such as the Water Framework Directive in most Member States, there is a good case for supportive action to improve levels of **compliance with key environmental measures**. Member State efforts to ensure compliance with water and biodiversity legislation are mixed. A recent study noted that some were failing to provide accessible information appropriate to the audience, with farmers a key example⁸. Illegal afforestation remains a problem in some parts of Europe. Where current regulatory provisions don't align sufficiently with emerging environmental priorities, for example, the protection of peatland and prevention of serious soil erosion then a tightening of regulations may be necessary. One purpose of new/amended regulations would be to inhibit or stop undesirable practices such as deforestation, burning of peatland vegetation and poor manure management. The Environmental Impact (EIA) rules applying to rural land use have not been very effective in the past but could be re-examined and developed further to aid new objectives.
6. **Monitoring and metrics.** It is necessary to establish a more ambitious and forward-looking system of land use, soil and carbon monitoring at the EU level using consistent and increasingly robust metrics, with greater use of satellite technology. This should include key biodiversity parameters. The Commission should ensure that the environmental indicators used to support land use and agriculture policy are regularly updated to reflect progress in the data that can be obtained. A consistent European approach is essential in terms of both environmental and market coherence. Practicable metrics must align indicators with a policy role, such as those used to measure results under the CAP. Robust

⁸ Nesbit M et al (2019). Development of an assessment framework on environmental governance in the EU Member States. Report to the European Commission, DG Environment, under Contract No. 07.0203/2017/764990/SER/ENV.E.4

and authoritative metrics would provide a much stronger evidence base for land managers and, importantly, also for those further down the supply chain seeking to reward verifiable progress. A stronger baseline and greater capacity to measure change would help to guide public policy and support the increasing use of quantitative targets and results-based payment schemes for land managers.

7. A much-reinforced set of EU and Member State strategies for adopting **nature-based solutions** for achieving both ecosystem restoration and a combination of climate mitigation, sequestration and adaptation goals. These could be integrated with strengthened climate adaptation plans, including water and habitat management on a catchment scale as well as farm-level investment in water recovery, efficiency and storage. More concrete strategies are emerging in several Member States, such as Germany, but further impetus at an EU level would help to drive beneficial land-use changes and to focus different funding streams. In addition to the support for investment and in some cases, longer-term land and water management work, there is a need for accompanying information, advice, training and demonstration projects. Bringing environmental land management more prominently into the earliest levels of farm education, for example in agricultural colleges, could be helpful to equip the next generation of farmers for a changing role. This is also an area where more innovative financing instruments for changing land uses have a potentially larger role.

C. Restructuring agricultural policy to become a more effective delivery tool

8. **Restructured agricultural policy measures.** A fundamental part of a new system would be revised forms of support for land managers. These should be framed as a suite of coherent funds replacing a single dominant CAP with its out-dated two-Pillar funding model. Some funds might be managed within a heavily revised CAP and others operated independently but in this scenario, the operational rules and funding mechanisms would need to dovetail. They would be guided by a set of connected aims, including support for positive land management per se, maintaining food production resources and structures, and providing long term ecosystem services where the market was not doing so. A combination of transitional and longer-term measures will be required summarised in BOX 1.

BOX 1: RESTRUCTURED AGRICULTURAL POLICY MEASURES

- I. **Investment aid for transition priorities**, aiming at new generations of equipment, infrastructure and management in all land using sectors, including agriculture. Farm-level energy and water management would be an important theme, supporting investment in flood management, appropriate forms of waste and residue management and exploitation, biomass production and energy production across a range from solar to biogas. Increasing resource efficiency, in food production including knowledge-intensive precision farming methods and improved animal health, would be a key aim in this strand.

- II. A new **long term EU funding mechanism for ecosystem management and restoration**, to support the achievement of the recently published Biodiversity Strategy and subsequent objectives on a European scale. This would be able to fund larger-scale and longer-term initiatives, and would not be tied to the conditions or distributional logic of the CAP. It would be focussed on maximising ecological value added at the European scale and complementing rather than displacing the necessary initiatives and spending by Member States. Amongst the projects to be funded would be the restoration of habitats, including grassland and peatland, continued sustainable management where required and the creation of new ecosystems supporting both biodiversity and climate objectives, such as flood meadows and coastal wetlands.
- III. Stronger incentives for the establishment of **trees, forests and woody vegetation (including scrub) and their appropriate management** over time. This is a more diverse and sophisticated project than setting targets for large numbers of trees to be planted. Activities will range in scale and scope from appropriate agroforestry and woodland creation on farms to larger-scale afforestation of former agricultural land. These can be achieved both by natural regeneration and by planting with locally appropriate species mixes, subject to safeguards to ensure that this occurs in the correct locations. In some areas incentives to manage existing woodlands and forest more actively in the light of new land-use objectives are likely to be justified and will need to be made available, again subject to safeguards. The EU Forest Strategy, due in 2021 could help to guide this revised and more ambitious approach.
- IV. A core part of a transformed CAP would be a broader spectrum support scheme for **sustainable agricultural land management**. This should focus on the provision of public goods, including the retention of viable agricultural structures and skills. Here we can envisage a mix of the highly targeted and often results-based forms of payment for land managers, building up in scale over time alongside the more generic forms of support to maintain the agricultural land and production base and support the introduction of innovative forms of food production (hydroponics, contained and vertical forms of crop production, and advances in precision farming) where the market was not providing sufficient incentives. Agriculture will be a mix of the more extensive and the more high-tech, in both cases responding to a need for greater efficiency in the use of key resources including energy, water and soil.
- V. Enhanced aid for **strengthening partnerships and collective projects amongst farmers and land managers** and within the food chain. Local networks can help to translate the integrated approach to land management and the new use of resources within the food chain to practical results on the ground. But they do not happen spontaneously and need help for example in the form of facilitation⁹, special incentives and tailored legal structures.

⁹ See for example Maréchal, A et al. (2018) Policy lessons and recommendations from the PEGASUS project

VI. A **revised rural development policy** to accompany the transition, including help for those farms and regions in danger of being “left behind”, especially on marginal holdings and the least prosperous rural areas. EU recovery funds could be used to intensify the effort to create new activities and employment compatible with a changing food system and a growth in interest in living in rural areas, which has grown in response to the pandemic.

9. Providing improved safeguards by **desisting from funding damaging activities** such as inappropriate irrigation, ill sited forestry, ecologically disruptive and unnecessary infrastructure and coupled support for livestock production in the absence of strong environmental rationale would all be examples. This is a matter of designing aid schemes appropriately, including the eligibility rules and conditions for those receiving funding, Clear definition, guidance and explanation for recipients will be needed.
10. A more **specific transition strategy for the EU livestock** sector that recognises limits on the levels of emissions associated with livestock production that will be compatible with net-zero and the consequences for future livestock numbers in the EU. Some of the limitations were set out in the RISE report on the sector in 2019.¹⁰ Questions about the specific role of grazing animals and the grassland associated with their production and the advantages and drawbacks of the more energy-efficient and less directly GHG-emitting but intensively produced pigs and poultry should be addressed in an integrated way. Incentives and regulations would be needed to support this, along with a willingness to take on board a redistribution of the current livestock population between localities and Member States. The raising of farm animal welfare standards will move forward alongside this and action will be required to build on the review of EU legislation announced by the Commission as part of the Farm to Fork strategy. Funding to help those who are major losers in economic restructuring in a sector with many economically marginal farms may be needed as part of an EU “Just Transition” funding mechanism. Transitional aid of this kind may be required in other segments of the farming community as well but marginal livestock farmers who are not able to participate in environmentally focused schemes appear a particularly vulnerable group.
11. Facilitating the **creation of new markets for the supply of ecosystem services**, including carbon storage, flood management and ecosystem restoration. Such markets are needed to increase the scale of sustainable land management, to create new income sources for rural land managers and to reduce pressure on public funding. However, they often need significant public intervention to bring them into being and to help them function

¹⁰ Buckwell, A. and Nadeu E (2018) What is a Safe Operating Space for EU livestock? RISE Foundation, Brussels.

effectively. Some of these markets will be purely local but others may be on a European scale or emerge from EU legislation. At present, there are only a few small-scale examples of results-based “carbon farming” (sequestration focused) market schemes in the EU. Even if such markets are primarily national, a European initiative could help to give greater confidence in the stability and longevity of new approaches and allow more rapid progress in establishing them, perhaps starting with a quasi-market in carbon storage in biomass or peat. There are important features of carbon and biodiversity ‘trading’ schemes which have to be resolved. The certification of the processes and products, choice of indicators and the establishment of the contracts involved to ensure additionality and permanence are not trivial issues. Monitoring, reporting and validation are key aspects of such schemes. Such issues will be addressed in an upcoming guidance handbook on public or private results-based carbon farming in 2021 which should help to facilitate further initiatives¹¹.

12. Whilst the support of agriculture through the CAP budget is the most important element of agricultural policy in the EU there is also a system for regulating the support given separately by public authorities in the Member States. These **State Aid rules** are being revised at present and there would be a case for reviewing their potential influence on the transition to sustainability and adjusting them if necessary

D. Greater learning, knowledge sharing and innovation

13. A reinforced and more focused set of **publicly-funded EU Research and Innovation** programmes, with a broader land-use theme, should be put in place alongside agricultural, food chain, biodiversity and technological development themes as now. Within agriculture, there would be benefits from greater EU level engagement in more applied demonstration work, including farm-level demonstration, dissemination of best practice, more investment in practical experiments on a larger scale, with control areas included. EU funding would continue to be central here.
14. Alongside this, there is an important role for the EU in enhancing **communication and learning between actors** (including policymakers) at the European scale. Sharing experience and building contacts is particularly necessary when a substantial change in direction is planned and there is a lack of local experience to draw on. The current European Network for Rural Development offers some of this role in its own sphere and a deeper initiative with a focus on the transition could learn from its experience.

¹¹ COWI, Ecologic Institute and IEEP (*forthcoming*) Technical Guidance Handbook - setting up and implementing result-based carbon farming mechanisms in the EU Report to the European Commission, DG Climate Action, under Contract No. CLIMA/C.3/ETU/2018/007. COWI, Kongens Lyngby.

15. **Supporting Member States in establishing long term sustainable land uses** that correspond both to local priorities and wider goals at the European and global levels. The great majority of land-use decisions will continue to reside at the local level. However, they are influenced by a range of EU policies, such as the balance between the supports for agriculture and for forestry, the rules covering biofuels and bioenergy, the focus of effort on ecosystem restoration and coherent ecological networks, the proportion of the EU contribution towards the sectoral support schemes and the rules for environmental impact assessments. Improved strategic co-ordination between the different EU influences in play could be introduced with a conscious strategy to promote a pattern of rural land use that is more sustainable at both the European and local levels. This would aim to reflect the great variety of natural conditions and restraints more sensitively than the present use of land but it would certainly not try to impose a European master plan for land use.

4. Building up a land-use transition Strategy

Moving from the current position to an array of new policies in Europe designed to deliver the transformation envisaged here is no small challenge! There is a very considerable gap to be bridged and some urgency in doing so if significant changes are to be made in the coming decade to 2030, the first of a series of key target dates on the route to 2050. Yet the pace of change in the EU can be slow, not surprisingly perhaps in a democratic enterprise involving 27 separate countries.

In launching the 2019 Green Deal, the European Commission has provided an important lead, even if some Member States and many rural stakeholders are not yet signed up. In this final section, we consider how this stepping-stone can be built upon and progress made towards a new set of policies resembling those sketched out above.

There are many aspects of this challenge but here we focus especially on three. First is the question of building up the new policy framework in stages, bearing in mind the EU's policy cycle and the seven-year budgetary planning periods, one of which is on the cusp of starting. Second is how to reshape the CAP and its budgets to make it fit for purpose for the transformation and helping the transition. Third is how to get the land managers alongside – at present most of them are not.

The Starting Point

There is no comprehensive EU road map to future land use in place at present. However, many of the ingredients for it either are already, or could be, included in the various strategies and proposals that are due to flow from or alongside the European Green Deal. Amongst these are the two key strategies for the food system, the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.^{12 13} A detailed work programme has been launched to develop these ideas and draw up legislative proposals. Further strategies are in preparation to give effect to

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf

¹³ European Commission (2020) Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives COM/2020/380 final

the EU Net Zero GHG emissions 2050 target for the land sector, including forestry. Complementary initiatives include:

- The new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, due in 2021.
- The new EU Forest Strategy, also due in 2021.
- The Zero Pollution Action Plan for water, soil and air, due in 2021.
- The recently published chemicals strategy for sustainability.
- The Eighth Environmental Action Plan, published in October 2020.
- Other initiatives, such as support for deforestation-free value chains.
- The long-term vision for rural areas in Europe (to 2040) due mid-2021.

These strategies and initiatives from the Commission indicate at least to some degree, that there is a high political level agreement that transformation in the food system and land use is necessary. The Green Deal has received broad political backing from the Council and Parliament and from many leading NGOs and civil society organisations. However, there is also a strong push back from several quarters. The principal organisations representing farmers, COPA-COGECA, and land managers, ELO, gave a luke-warm welcome to the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy¹⁴. However, during the latter part of 2020, the Agriculture Council and the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament have sought to weaken many of the environmental elements of the Commission's proposals for the CAP, which date from before the appearance of the Green Deal and are far from radical.¹⁵

An independent report commissioned by the European Parliament from INRAE and AgroParisTech concluded that, even without modifications from the Parliament and the Council, "Making the post-2020 CAP compatible with the Green Deal objectives requires major changes to the Commission's June 2018 proposals for this policy".¹⁶

¹⁴ See Euractiv 28/1/2020 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eu-farmers-tread-carefully-on-green-deal-as-balance-with-cap-is-not-easy-stuff/>

¹⁵ See IEEP 2020 <https://ieep.eu/news/the-6-essentials-for-keeping-the-cap-s-green-ambition-alive>

¹⁶ Guyomard, H., Bureau J.-C. et al. (2020), Research for AGRI Committee – The Green Deal and the CAP: policy implications to adapt farming practices and to preserve the EU's natural resources. European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

Building a strategy beyond 2020

The Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies together provide a set of targets and a narrative, and this is a major step forward. However, they do not spell out the centrality of sustainable land use as a core objective of EU policy, moving beyond the silos of the past. Generally, the targets are not binding at the Member State level where they would have the most direct impact on land use. There is no decisive signal that the system of support embodied in the CAP is now to be replaced by a model that is firmly tied to the provision of environmental public goods and that the distribution of support, therefore, should change to favour those offering such services rather than those in the most agriculturally productive parts of the EU who traditionally have benefited most. There is no sectoral GHG emission reduction target for agriculture and land use or clear signal about how a transition will be paid for. The possibility that the Biodiversity Strategy is yet another aspirational document in this vein which will not have to be taken too seriously by Member States or land managers remains while there is no convincing machinery to implement it.

All this points to the need to build political support for the new narrative that takes the extra steps and does not seek to temper the case for change or be over defensive of the current mechanisms of the EU budget. The grounds for a decisive departure from the current structures must be firmly embedded in the next CAP and MFF. Making this case will be more convincing if it shows that the new land management challenges can provide opportunities as well as constraints and that land managers will be able to take advantage of them if they are willing to adapt. This will be aided by spelling out more concretely what future land uses are expected to look like, why this will be environmentally, socially and economically beneficial and how it could be compatible with raising incomes in rural areas, which is a matter of legitimate concern. To the extent that the new deliverables from land management, carbon sequestration, bioenergy water management can bring with them new sources of funding this will also raise their attractiveness to land managers.

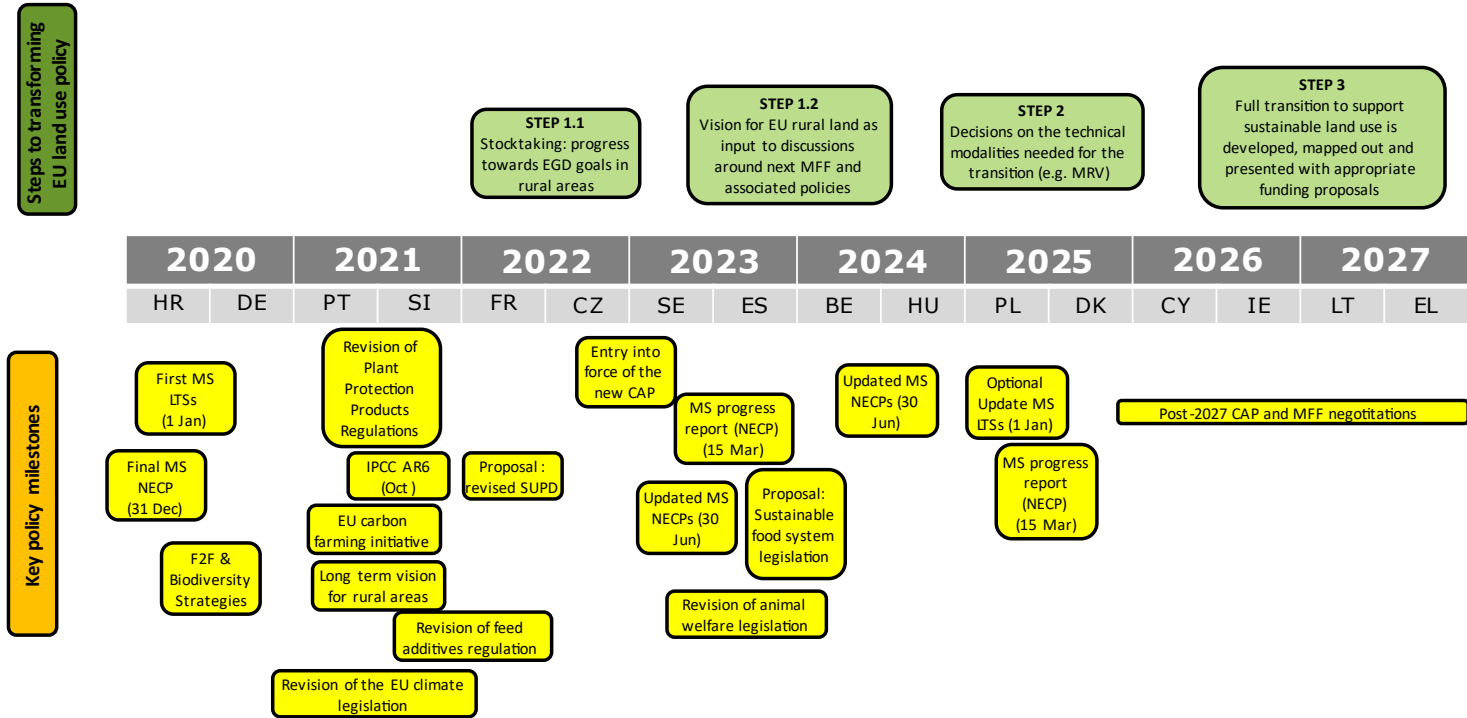
In principle, some of this could be captured in the Commission's forthcoming long-term vision for rural areas in Europe, although this starts from more of a concern about the demographic and social decline in many rural areas rather than the environmental sustainability agenda. Certainly, there is a need to tie together social and environmental regeneration but a separate vehicle for the land use and future food strategy probably is required.

A land-use vision might best be put together by the Commission but with active co-operation from independent public bodies in the Member States, such as scientific advisory bodies, the EEA, the JRC and others. It is essential that at least a key group of forward-looking Member States buy into both the process and the outcome and are ready to engage with their own stakeholders.

Within the Commission, the case for re-organising the services and their responsibilities for different elements of rural policy to encourage a more cross-cutting approach to land use should be examined. A review and potential restructuring could draw on the lessons of the CAP Strategic Plan approval process in 2021 and 2022 and be timetabled for 2023, once the current round of strategies is in place.

Several further steps to advance the plan should be taken in the early and mid-2020s ahead of the next strategic round of EU decisions that are linked to the budget and next CAP later in the decade. The timeline below offers a sketch (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Rural policy development timeline



A stocktaking of progress towards the Green Deal goals in rural areas could be undertaken around 2022/2023 as the content and contribution of the CSPs is clarified and the Green Deal legislative proposals have been published. This could be used as the springboard for developing the new vision and narrative which should appear not later than 2023 or early 2024 in order to influence the next round of critical spending decisions and associated policies to be taken in the late 2020s.

In the mid-2020s there should also be space in the cycle of EU decision making to bring in many of the more detailed and technical advances set out in points 1-15 above, principally those that are less dependent on the larger budgetary and spending decisions. Improved monitoring and verification procedures, reviews of environmental regulations and strengthened technical support would be examples. On the consumption side, accelerated efforts to address obesity and pursue healthier diets would be amongst the priorities.

The third stage would be the period leading up to the next MFF and the next stage in the evolution of the CAP from 2027. This should be the point at which a full transition to support sustainable land use is developed, mapped out and presented alongside realistic proposals for funding from EU, Member State and private sector sources. A new Commission will be in place to take this forward. If this opportunity is missed a further seven years will elapse before the next major spending and policy review unless there is a decisive change in the EU policy-making cycle. This cannot be excluded but certainly should not be relied on. Both spending and regulatory measures need to be assembled and tied closely to the meeting of targets, which have to be monitored rigorously and fairly. As mentioned in the previous paper in this series the EU may move significantly ahead of its trade partners, risking distortions in both competition and environmental outcomes. In this case, forms of border tax adjustment or similar measures may be required to be in place.

The CAP and its two funds¹⁷ still represent a significant slice of the overall EU budget. It will be vital to align this or its successors, perhaps in the form of an

¹⁷ The funds agreed under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-27 for CAP pillar 1 market support and direct payments (under the EAGF, European Agricultural Guidance Fund) are €258.594 billion, and for Pillar 2 Rural Development (under the EAFRD European Agricultural Fund for Rural

EU land and food fund for example, with the new focus on land use. This can be aided by the inclusion of an allocation of funds from the new NextGenerationEU fund which was agreed as part of the MFF specifically directed at post-Covid-19 economic and social recovery. This is a temporary recovery instrument to ensure 'Europe will be greener, more digital, more resilient and better fit for the current and forthcoming challenges'¹⁸. Realigning CAP funds in this new perspective will not only help to shift the activities that receive financial support on the ground but also will give Member States the incentives they need to adjust their policies to new EU priorities in order to retain their budgetary flows, if not their exact share of the budget. The great sensitivity of distributional impacts, between farms, regions, sectors and Member States has to be understood and managed. This applies to the EU budget but also to the pattern of future investment in Europe.

As a first stage, it helps to acknowledge that distributional impacts are an important issue, that can and must be addressed, and that the plight of losers will not be ignored. The just transition principle must be part of the overall narrative. Full and enduring compensation for all losses is not realistic and cannot be justified. However, the principle that serious changes are to be made in land management and the way it is supported and that there is a willingness to ease the process with the support of the EU budget should be secured as much as possible ahead of the crucial negotiations on the next MFF and CAP that will begin in the mid-2020s. This should ease a difficult process of adjustment which also will need the political support and preferably leadership of key member states, particularly Germany and France.

Support in national capitals is pivotal too. Even the most brilliant and politically adroit Commission with the European Parliament behind it (not to be assumed) can only drive change to some degree. A coalition of the willing Member States is required as well, with Germany, in particular, an essential member. The power of scientific evidence-focussed influence from civil society and commercial pressures from those companies who see that change is essential

development) are €77.85 billion. The total for the CAP of €336.444 billion is 31% of the total EU MFF of €1074.3 billion. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47567/mff-2021-2027_rev.pdf

¹⁸ The NextGenerationEU fund amounts to €750 billion over the 2020-27 period and €17.5 billion is earmarked for Natural Resources and Environment, and specifically within this €7.5 billion for Rural Development and €10 billion for Just Transition Funds. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

to them (many food retailers included) can be effective in shifting national decisions. Historically it has not been easy to excite political interest or mobilise support for a new approach to rural policy other than in countries where the CAP is seen as of vital interest to farmers, such as France and Ireland. However, the story could be very different with a new narrative in which the future of food, diet and health, the climate and wildlife all have a central role.

Already polarised views about the future of meat and livestock are emerging, especially in a younger generation. Farmers and landowners may be wary of the direction of travel in agricultural policy, but they may also see that they have much to gain from a more holistic approach to the future of land use and willingness to devote public funding to the provision of ecosystem services. If they remain in opposition to the new agenda they are in danger of being seen as blockers of change and so undermining the support that could be available to the rural sector.

Engaging the land managers

At present, there is considerable reluctance amongst these groups to accept the specific targets which have been identified in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies and a determination to protect the CAP in its current version, especially the retention of the basic payments. This has not been made easier by the way in which the new Farm to Fork proposals have emerged. Farming and land managing organisations have identified the lack of a holistic impact assessment of the package of measures and targets – particularly the economic impacts on farmers, commodity markets and on consumer prices and thus consumer welfare of these targets. Such impact assessments, which will also include environmental impacts, are not required for Commission Communications (like the Biodiversity Strategy) but are a necessary part of legislative proposals. As these proposals are brought forward, proposal by proposal, the impact assessments will therefore be produced and published piecemeal.

However, there is a legitimate point to be made that assessment of specific proposals for individual elements of what is a broad package of policy realignment is not sufficient. There are, and should be, strong interactions between policy changes aimed at consumers, the food industry, farmers and land managers induced to reallocate agricultural land to other purposes. These should be analysed comprehensively as a package, including their impacts of food prices and international trade. This is an essential requirement to try and draw-in the constructive participation of land managers to bring about the transformation. Without this and including a credible identification of any

necessary set of adjustment assistance measures, including a possible trade dimension, it can only be anticipated that those fearing they will be asked to bear the costs of transformation will resist change. The protracted history of the reform of the CAP over three decades is testament to the capacity of those anticipating that they will be losers of change successfully resisting it.

One helpful step would be for policymakers at different levels to spell out more clearly to land managers how the provision of environmental public goods could become a significant and reliable source of income if they sign up to the kind of payment schemes that should be in the pipeline. Payment levels have to be sufficiently high to make schemes attractive on a large scale. However, practical examples of how new generations of more ambitious and better-rewarded schemes might deliver more for farm incomes as well as the environment can be difficult to find. They are needed to build confidence and lay the ground for sufficient take up in future.

Different levels of engagement with land managers are required, ranging from the broad framing at the European level to the much more local where specific opportunities, practical partnerships and economic realities can be explored in greater depth. Finding ways of creating a greater sense of agency, with farmers more in the driving seat as rural entrepreneurs of a sustainable future, is a key challenge for the many different institutions and initiatives active in this area. Projects to help farmers to get to grips with new technologies and environmental challenges have a valuable role and can seed creative concepts, such as "transfarm."¹⁹ It is important that messages from local projects are able to flow up to the wider policy process, fostering a two-way exchange. EU initiatives and funding might also help to ignite the necessary wave of innovation in rural business models. The incubation of creative ideas should be an integral part of the next phase of rural development, for which there is additional funding from the Next Generation EU (NGEU) fund, as noted earlier.

Grasping the need for structural reform of the CAP

The current two pillar CAP with its two budgets will continue to the end of 2027. The current reform proposals, which are finally expected to be

¹⁹ "Transfarm 4.0" is the name of an Interreg project that aims to help farmers in part of Central Europe to engage with new resource efficiency agendas and to increase the direct participation of farmers in the precision farming sector.

concluded in early 2021 and to enter into force in January 2023²⁰, do not change this structure, nor the broad objectives. They modify the way the detailed measures are combined, deployed and then evaluated with much more discretion devolved to the Member States.

The Commission model for the post-2020 CAP relies on the Member States choosing to deliver the (mostly non-binding) targets set out in the family of Green Deal documents, using their CAP budgetary allocations to help them do so. They are required to present their proposals for Commission approval in the shape of national CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs). This is a critical process which has already begun and will test both the level of commitment to change in the Member States and the Commission's ability to tie CAP funding to the new agenda. The Commission's first major round of specific recommendations to the Member States in December 2020 made it clear that they did expect to see national proposals in CSPs for using CAP policies to assist progress towards the meeting of Green Deal targets for the rural sector.²¹ There will be much interest in the agreed versions.

It is possible that at this late stage the proposed new post-2020 CAP can be made more ambitious environmentally. However, at the time of writing, with the trilogues underway, there was as much sign of slippage backwards from the 2018 proposals as of progress, as noted above. There are still important decisions ahead, including the outcome of the political negotiations on the legal texts, the review of draft CSPs by the Commission and the implementation by Member States on the ground. At each stage, there are opportunities to introduce the new sustainability agenda more actively. It is essential that at least some Member States do so, to create pathfinders, lay down experience and help build confidence in a new approach.

Nonetheless, the outcome remains highly uncertain and a strategy for far-reaching change should not depend too much on decisive developments in this round of CAP reform. In any event, the CAP and accompanying policies must be substantially overhauled for the next period 2027-2034 to effect the envisaged transformation of land use. The sooner that a new direction is

²⁰ The jurisdiction for the current CAP has been extended for two more years until the end of 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/30/extension-of-current-cap-rules-until-the-end-of-2022-informal-deal-on-transitional-regulation/#>

²¹ European Commission 2020 Recommendations for CAP National Strategic Plans https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/cap-strategic-plans-c2020-846_en.pdf

outlined, the faster the ensuing debates can be launched and the conditions for a transition negotiated. A significant period of preparation is essential.

Moving on from the current CAP model means abandoning the principle of looking backwards and paying compensation for the historic loss of market support and instead looking forward and tying payments to the provision of public good provision and other services. A new contractual arrangement with farmers which is more purposeful and transparent will entail the ending of the historic basic payments at the heart of the current CAP. It would provide an opportune moment to review the usefulness and necessity of the CAP's two-pillar structure and funds, whose objectives and principles have become increasingly blurred by successive reforms. It would also be the time to reconsider how best to channel extended EU funding for sustainable land use.

The new suite of payment schemes should be developed, as outlined in the 15-point programme above, with a far stronger environmental and transitional set of objectives. This will be more of a concerted and coherent system of support for managing rural land, regulating relationships in the food chain and the associated social and physical infrastructure in rural areas than a common *agricultural* policy. The continuation of agricultural production is, of course, vitally important, even if the volume may be lower than it is today but the incentives for farmers should come from fair market prices rather than from a collective European fund. The CAP in this sense may be replaced by a different structure overseen in different ways than now but retaining the substantial budget necessary to secure service provision in rural areas and to support rural livelihoods attached to this provision.

The common budget will continue to represent Europe-wide solidarity, the coherence of a collective aim and some single market considerations as well. There will not, however, be a requirement to manage rural land in exactly the same way within the diverse regions of Europe but instead a focus on helping to contribute to common EU objectives through locally appropriate management solutions and a fair and sustainable EU market for food.

This is a considerable step from the current CAP and it is unlikely to be taken without a strong impetus from outside the current agricultural establishment in Europe. The power within the Council, the Parliament and the Commission for rural/land-use/ agro-environmental policy will have to shift and corresponding changes will need to occur within the Member States. As the objectives and outputs of multifunctional land management are widened to include the climate and environmental goals then the inputs into the policy decision processes should widen correspondingly.

The present responsibilities and decision structures and practices, in which the detailed work in developing the legislative instruments is dominated by the input of production agriculture interests, should broaden. This might be achieved by proposals being generated within several Commission DGs before being submitted for College approval, and then joint Councils and Parliamentary Committees engaging in the co-decision process. Alternatively, it might be more effective to consider a more fundamental restructuring of these agricultural institutions and how they operate.

Reform would be an easier task if the central role of the CAP in the distribution of the EU budget between Member States and regions could be diminished. The aim should be to allow payments to rural areas to reflect EU and local needs (e.g. for public goods) rather than the historic flow of EU funds to particular MS and farming populations. The CAP is and should be a budgetary tool to deliver the targets and ambitions of the EU, not a mechanism to ensure that funds get distributed on historic grounds. Member States will be reluctant to give up the flow of EU funding that they secure from the CAP unless they see alternatives open to them. This is a major barrier to change and means that the transition strategy must address the EU budget and a changing but fair settlement for the MS alongside the CAP itself.

One merit of introducing new EU funds rather than simply modifying old ones is that fresh funding initiatives rarely come into being unless they have a distinctive rationale of their own. They are less likely simply to replicate the distributional patterns of the current CAP and so have a better chance of being focused on more recently agreed objectives and results. This is a powerful argument for moving towards a larger role for new funds rather than relying solely on even radical CAP reform to bring about a fresh approach.

At the same time, with the growing priority to be given to new roles for land managers in sequestering carbon, enlarging the space for nature, and managing water, there can be a larger role for new sources of private as well as public funding for the activities required. Some of these may operate across the EU, others will be regionally or nationally organised, and some international. These funding streams could emerge from carbon and biodiversity offsetting schemes, from watershed flood alleviation programmes, energy substitution schemes and pollution taxes. Such developments will provide opportunities and new income streams for land managers and this too can help the transition away from dependence on limited public funds.

Finally, as noted in Paper 2, ambitious domestic measures within the EU cannot develop in isolation, especially if they involve significantly higher

environmental standards than in competitive trading countries. They will have to be accompanied by a supportive or at least compatible trade policy, which the EU is well placed to advocate at a global level within the WTO, in bilateral Free Trade Agreements and elsewhere. Mechanisms to deter or prevent unsustainable imports, such as those directly associated with tropical deforestation are part of the picture and already are being developed. Another aspect is the protection of EU producers from unfair competition from countries with significantly lower environmental requirements. Potentially this could include a border tax adjustment mechanism to protect the EU market and producers from being undermined by imports should this prove necessary. In tackling this agenda the EU will need to resist the danger of slipping into a form of protectionism and penalising Less Developed Countries unjustly. Instead, it should be orientating EU trade and associated activities in such a way that enables other countries themselves to develop on a sustainable trajectory. While some EU unilateral action may be needed, global agreements are preferable.

5. Conclusions

As the Green Deal strategies are put in place there will be opportunities throughout the EU to re-consider key elements of land use and overhaul the policies that drive it. The process of drawing up and approving CAP Strategic Plans will be an early test of commitment to change and should be subject to vigilant external scrutiny.

Irrespective of the progress made, it is not necessary to wait until the next round of CAP reform to launch the policy agenda sketched out in this paper. Progress can be advanced on several fronts, as suggested in the timeline presented here. One fundamental is to further **establish the narrative** about why a food system and land use transformation has to take place, what shape it should take and the main steps to get to it. Whilst some significant rural decision-makers are already accepting of this need, it is far from universal and the narrative needs to reach a much fuller spectrum of actors involved.

A second fundamental is to build arguments and measures to propel the changes in consumption that are an integral part of the transition. These would reinforce many already evident trends amongst European citizens and consumers for food which is kinder to their own health and the environment. Progress is not dependent on the CAP reform agenda but does fit alongside the growth in public health awareness that has come with the covid pandemic. In addition to the health benefits, action in this direction would provide the clearest sign to land managers and the whole food chain that their world is changing. If they see that consumer preferences are moving towards lower calorific intake and a better plant versus animal protein balance they will realise they have to adjust. Further, if the signals in front of land managers make provision of public goods such as carbon sequestration, or biodiversity provision more attractive then their land allocation decisions are likely to follow. For this reason, it would be helpful to progress new markets for ecosystem services without waiting for further CAP reform.

Moving from the CAP to a transition logic and the longer-term policies that will follow is not a small project. But there is a real opportunity to do so as part of a refreshed sense of purpose in the EU. If a new generation has a deeper appreciation of the urgency of responding to the threats to the climate and biodiversity, as it appears, there will be a much larger and more engaged audience for the debate on farming, food, land use and the environment than has been visible or vocal for many years.



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