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Resilient Agriculture in Poland and the EU: Navigating challenges and opportunities in 2025



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Resilient Agriculture in Poland and the EU: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in 2025

*At the 2025 edition of the Think2030 conference on 28 March 2025, the Green Economy Institute hosted speakers to discuss " **Resilient Agriculture in Poland and the EU: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in 2025**". Moderated by Adrianna Wrona, analyst at the Green Economy Institute, the session featured insightful interventions from the following speakers: Krystyna Springer - Senior Policy Analyst at IEEP, Mirosław Korzeniowski - President, AGROEKOTON Association, Adam Wąs - associate professor in the Department of Economics and Organisation of Enterprises at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, and Michael Minter - Director of the Food and Consumption Programme, CONCITO, Denmark; as well as keynote presentation delivered by Melanie Muro - the Head of CAP & Food Programme at the Institute of European Environmental Policy.*

This policy brief presents the key takeaways from the discussion, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in building resilience in the Polish and EU agriculture in 2025.

Key recommendations:

- **Make resilience the central objective of the next CAP reform:** future CAP must move beyond maintaining the status quo. It should explicitly support not only robustness, but also adaptation and transformation capacities in farming, ensuring long-term productivity under environmental, social, and geopolitical stress.
- **Use the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to unlock investment across the agri-food value chain:** connect CAP with other EU instruments to finance transformation efforts not just on farms, but also among processors, distributors, and innovators.
- **Accelerate access to targeted financing for farmers and ensure better direction of funds:** streamline and simplify funding application processes to ensure that farmers receive support in a timely and accessible manner. Prioritise financing that drives innovation, resilience, and environmental performance.
- **Establish a clear 2040 and 2050 EU vision for agriculture and food systems:** develop a long-term strategic framework outlining what a sustainable, resilient, and competitive agri-food sector should look like in 2040 and 2050. Use this vision to guide investment decisions, align value chain actors, and provide farmers and businesses with predictability and confidence for transition.

Building resilience: a prerequisite for maintaining food security in Europe

While stable food production and supply depend on healthy biophysical, social, and economic conditions, European agriculture is increasingly threatened by extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and geopolitical tensions. These disruptions are not only already impacting the sector - they are also expected to grow in scale, frequency, and unpredictability¹.

In response to these mounting pressures, a resilient and future-proof agrifood system must demonstrate the capacity to remain **robust, adapt to change**, and, when necessary, **undergo transformation**. Only this way, it will be able to continuously deliver food and essential services over time, despite facing diverse and unpredictable shocks².

Although the concept of resilience is widely referenced in European policy discourse, it is not always fully understood or applied in a comprehensive way. Current policy instruments, such as those under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), tend to emphasize robustness and often focus on maintaining the *status quo*. So far, little attention has been paid to fostering adaptability, and even less on enabling transformation.

Given the current context, shaped by multiple overlapping crises, this narrow approach is no longer sufficient. Only a holistic understanding and implementation of resilience (encompassing robustness, adaptability, and transformation) can ensure the EU's long-term food production capacity, and with it, Europe's **food security**.

¹ IPCC, 2023: Sections. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 35-115, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647

² Melanie Muro. (2025). IEEP. Intro presentation in the panel: **Robustness** refers to a farming system's ability (i.e. social, economic, and biophysical) to maintain the expected outputs regardless of the impact of perturbations. **Adaptability** refers to a farming system's ability (i.e. social, economic, and biophysical) to maintain the expected outputs (i.e. consistency) regardless of the impact of perturbations (experimenting, flexibility in business operations, diversification...). **Transformability** is understood as the capacity to create a new system when ecological, economic, or the social structures make the existing system untenable.

Seizing the moment: how the EU Presidencies and MFF can drive agricultural resilience

The Polish and Danish Presidencies at the EU Council come at a decisive moment for the future of European agriculture. Both countries place food security high on their political agendas, but their approaches to agricultural resilience diverge in significant ways, offering a glimpse into the broader debate that Europe must confront.

Poland leans toward traditional understanding of resilience, prioritising robustness and stability in food production. Denmark, by contrast, embraces a forward-looking vision based on transformative innovation and ambitious environmental action. Under its Presidency, Denmark is expected to place the agreement on the EU's 2040 climate targets highly on its agenda, including setting a target for agricultural emissions, that is unlikely to be supported by the Polish government.

Polish and Danish Presidencies take place at the important time, one that marks the start of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations. As the MFF sets the financial architecture for the EU, including the budget for agriculture, its outcomes will be critical in determining both the pace and scope of agricultural transformation. Considering the number of competing priorities that EU leaders will need to address in the next MFF, the CAP budget may, at best, remain stable in real terms³. **Maintaining the *status quo* might thus not be an effective strategy for protecting agricultural funding.** In fact, it might put it in danger. As a result, the EU would risk falling short of its goals for food system resilience, environmental sustainability, and strategic autonomy⁴.

On the other hand, the current situation and the European Commission's intention to **reform the MFF might create a window of opportunity to reform the CAP and other funds** in a way that better responds to the needs of modern agriculture. Framing the conversation through the lens of **resilience and strategic autonomy** could provide the necessary narrative to justify greater support for agriculture and to ensure that the sector receives the attention it warrants in the next MFF. This would align closely with the Commission's broader vision for a sustainable, secure, and resilient

³ Régnier, E., Noël, V., Aubert, P.-M. (2025). Agriculture in the next European budget: avoiding the status quo: <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/issue-brief/agriculture-next-european-budget-avoiding-status-quo>

⁴ Régnier, E., Noël, V., Aubert, P.-M. (2025). Agriculture in the next European budget: avoiding the status quo: <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/issue-brief/agriculture-next-european-budget-avoiding-status-quo>

food system - anchoring future policy and investment in long-term priorities, rather than short-term fixes.

A reality check: policy rollbacks undermine resilience goals

While EU leaders increasingly invoke the language of resilience, current actions fall short of what is needed to deliver it. The wave of farmer protests that swept across Europe in late 2023 and early 2024 triggered a wave of concessions, rolling back or weakening several environmental standards introduced under the most recent CAP reform. These reversals, while politically expedient, risk stalling or even reversing the progress needed to future-proof Europe's food system.

Demands for administrative simplification and reduced compliance burdens - both from farming constituencies and national governments - continue to shape the political agenda. These have been echoed in the European Commission's proposals and are now taking form in the upcoming Omnibus simplification package⁵. **While streamlining bureaucracy is a legitimate and necessary concern, it cannot substitute for a long-term strategy aimed at building true resilience.**

Notably absent from the EU's recent political outputs, including the February 2024 *EU Vision for Agriculture and Food*, is a coherent environmental policy framework that supports long-term agricultural sustainability⁶. This lack of alignment stands in contrast to the recommendations of the Commission's own *Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture*, which stressed the need to move beyond short-term robustness toward deeper adaptation and transformation⁷.

There won't be any resilience without the farmers

Crucially, the **goal of resilience cannot be achieved without putting farmers at the centre of the resilience agenda**. Responding to immediate difficulties without addressing underlying systemic challenges risks eroding trust and undermining the very actors needed to lead the transformation. To succeed, the **transition must be environmentally responsible, economically viable, and socially acceptable**. This

⁵ Politico. (2025). EU farm plan: More cash for disaster relief and looser green rules: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-farm-green-rules-environment-green-deal/>

⁶ European Commission. (2025). EU Vision for Agriculture and Food: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075>

⁷ European Commission. (2024). Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/main-initiatives-strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture_en

means engaging farmers directly - not only as implementers of change but as co-designers of future-proof solutions.

Recent efforts to reduce bureaucracy, though welcomed by the farming community, are not enough. Without addressing the deeper structural and economic challenges facing the sector, these measures will become merely superficial responses. The profession is increasingly unattractive to younger generations, and without renewed interest in farming as a viable and dignified livelihood, the future of European agriculture remains uncertain.

Attracting and retaining a new generation of farmers already became a strategic priority in the EU's agricultural agenda. Both the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food and farmers themselves recognize this need. The foundation for achieving it lies in **making farming a profession that is not only sustainable, but also profitable and future-oriented**, both for the young entrants and experienced farmers alike.

Resilient is diverse, robust, adaptable and transformable but it is also profitable

When one-third of the EU budget is allocated to agriculture, yet many farmers continue to struggle financially, unable to invest in sustainability or secure generational renewal, it signals a critical misalignment. **The current agricultural policy framework, particularly its financing dimension, needs urgent redesign if the sector is to become truly resilient.**

There is no single model of farming in Europe. The sector includes a wide range of farm sizes, production systems, and regional challenges. While this diversity presents complexities, it should not be seen as a weakness. On the contrary, diversity is one of the sector's greatest strengths and a vital component of its resilience.

A future-oriented agricultural policy must support this diversity. It must ensure that **financing is more accessible, better targeted, and delivered in a timely way.** Crucially, public funds should be spent on delivering public goods. Farmers are central to this task, and they should be fairly compensated for their contributions.

Small farms play a vital role in securing local food systems, sustaining rural economies and cultures, and preserving biodiversity. Their contributions to emission reductions and climate adaptation are essential yet often go unrewarded. Environmental sustainability should therefore become an economic opportunity - one that ensures fair incomes for all. This includes more targeted support for vulnerable and

disadvantaged groups, alongside investments in knowledge and information-sharing systems to improve access and uptake.

At the same time, larger and well-managed farms should not be left behind. Their financial stability and capacity to scale innovation make them valuable actors in the transition to sustainability. Eco-efficient farming systems that optimise resource use while delivering public goods should also be recognized and supported as part of the resilience building block.

Leveraging carbon pricing in agriculture: opportunity or overreach?

As the need for better and more targeted financing grows, and the CAP continues to fall short in addressing modern environmental and climate challenges, the European Commission is exploring new avenues. One such option is the integration of agriculture into EU climate policy through mechanisms like the Agricultural Emissions Trading System (AgETS) or Mandatory Climate Standards.

This approach builds on findings from the European Court of Auditors, which highlighted the need to reduce agricultural emissions and recommended applying the “polluter pays principle” to achieve this goal. Similar systems have proven effective in decarbonising other sectors (particularly energy), not least because they generate additional funding streams to support green transitions.

However, agriculture presents a far more complex picture. Emission reduction in the sector is not just a technical challenge, but also a biological one, and it raises fundamental political questions about the type of food system Europe wants. The level of nuance required far exceeds that of other sectors. Understandably, this has generated hesitation, especially among conventional farming communities.

Many stakeholders have raised valid concerns about introducing systems like AgETS, warning that they could place additional strain on already vulnerable farmers, threaten food security, and increase volatility in agricultural markets. According to analysis from the Polish CAKE team (pol. Centrum Analiz Klimatyczno-Energetycznych) referenced during the Think2030 debate by Professor Adam Wąs, deep reductions in greenhouse

gas emissions from agriculture could result in lower food output, higher consumer prices, and increased market instability, including the risk of carbon leakage⁸.

These concerns are being considered in the ongoing design of potential schemes. Importantly, while initial reactions from the farming community may be cautious, many do recognise the need to reduce the sector's environmental footprint. The real problem often lies elsewhere: farmers lack access to the tools, support, and leverage they need to implement sustainable changes.

In this light, **it is essential to distinguish what the real barriers to enhancing sustainability are. Are there really binding emission reduction targets or is it the absence of affordable advisory services, limited bargaining power in the supply chain, or difficulty accessing insurance and credit that prevents farmers from shifting their practices?**

Beyond production: a clear vision for transformation across the agri-food chain

Despite a broad consensus on the need to support farmers in transitioning toward more resilient agricultural systems, an essential part of the picture remains largely absent from the current debate, including in the EU's *Vision for Agriculture and Food*: **food consumption**. Delivering on the priorities of sustainability and resilience requires not only supporting producers but also setting clear goals for what and how we consume. **A medium- and long-term vision for the overall structure of the agri-food system - looking ahead to 2040 and 2050 - is urgently needed.** Applying a value chain approach will be essential.

To effectively address long-term challenges, the EU must plan decades ahead and establish new funding mechanisms to support the sector's transformation. Only by doing so can we provide stakeholders with the stability, resources, and incentives they need, ensuring that transition finance reaches the right actors at the right time.

Looking through a value chain lens makes it clear that the necessary changes require investments not only at the farm level but also in upstream and downstream sectors. This has direct budgetary implications and demands a stronger alignment between

⁸ Pyrka M., Jeszke R., Boratyński J., Witajewski-Baltvilks J., Antosiewicz M., Tatarewicz I., Rabiega W., Wąs A., Tobiasz I., Lewarski M., Skwierz S., Gorzałczyński A., Lizak S., Zborowska I., Chodor M., Kobus P., Krupin V., Cygler M., Mzyk P., Sekuła M., Rośliniec M., Tylka A. (2023). *VII EW on EU ETS 2050: Nowe sektory w EU ETS w kontekście neutralności klimatycznej UE w 2050 – Skutki dla Polski*. Instytut Ochrony Środowiska - Państwowy Instytut Badawczy/ Krajowy Ośrodek Bilansowania i Zarządzania Emisjami (KOBiZE), Warszawa.

the CAP and other EU funding instruments to support the entire agri-food system in its transition.

Denmark offers a compelling example. Its **Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods** supports actors working on plant-based food development and alternative proteins, encouraging diversification in crop production. The Danish case shows that political decisions can drive real change, especially when they target the entire value chain and are backed by investment and long-term planning.

Conclusions

Building a resilient European agriculture requires more than rhetorical commitments. In turn, it demands bold, coordinated, and long-term action across policy, funding, and the entire value chain. The upcoming MFF negotiations and Presidencies of Poland and Denmark offer a unique window to reframe agricultural policy around resilience, profitability, and strategic autonomy. Farmers must be placed at the centre of this transformation, supported not only with fewer administrative burdens, but with the tools, financing, and recognition necessary to lead the change. To succeed, Europe must align its agricultural, environmental, and food policies toward a common goal: a sustainable and secure food system that works for people, nature, and future generations. The choices made now will determine whether this vision becomes a reality or just a missed opportunity.

About Think2030

Launched by IEEP and its partners in 2018, Think2030 is an evidence-based, non-partisan platform of leading policy experts from European think tanks, civil society, the private sector and local authorities.

By focusing on producing relevant, timely and concrete policy recommendations, Think2030's key objective is to identify science-policy solutions for a more sustainable Europe.

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