

Land Use Policy Group

*The GB statutory
conservation, countryside
and environment agencies*



Securing Our Common Future through Environmentally Sustainable Land Management

*The Land Use Policy Group Vision for the Future
of the CAP post 2013*

A policy for Europe's rural space that puts sustainable land management at its heart.

The Challenge

To safeguard a functioning and healthy rural environment in order to secure the many services that it provides to wider society: for those that live and work in it; for those who visit it and for its intrinsic value. Rising human pressure on the environment and climate change combine to increase the challenge.

We believe:

- Europe's rural space is not just the source of food and other raw materials; it supplies a wide range of environmental services to society which the market alone cannot be expected to deliver.
- A well cared for rural environment is a social and economic asset. It is vital to the well-being of Europe's citizens and to our future prosperity.
- The character of Europe's countryside reflects many generations of human activity, but we now face new challenges. Land managers should be central to meeting these challenges and ensuring that the rural environment can continue to provide the full range of services that society expects.
- Land managers should be rewarded from public funds where there are no markets for the provision of services going beyond agreed environmental standards.

Europe requires a rural policy geared to encouraging and rewarding the supply of these environmental services and helping rural communities make the most of their environmental assets in a sustainable way.

We want to see:

- Sustainable land management and use of soil, air, water and biodiversity.
- Sustainable production of food, fibre, timber and energy in accordance with high environmental standards.
- Management to enhance ecosystem services such as the storage of carbon and the regulation of water.
- Action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Action to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity.
- Action to protect and enhance landscapes, historic and geological features.
- Action to improve opportunities for people to understand, enjoy and benefit from the countryside.
- Land management that delivers quality environments, thereby contributing to sustainable rural economies and socially inclusive communities.

We propose:

Progressively transforming the CAP so that it is focused more clearly on rewarding the environmental services arising from land management where the market fails to do so. These rewards should reflect the services provided and the costs incurred. The new policy should:

- Have a clear role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, addressing water and biodiversity management and ensuring that farming and forestry have the capacity to deliver environmental security and sustainable production in the long term.
- Promote the sustainable use of the natural resources on which all production depends through the use of good practice guidance together with agreed environmental standards, enforced by risk-based regulation which is binding on all land managers.
- Reward the positive management of existing biodiversity, cultural landscapes, carbon and water resources whilst securing improvements in the environmental quality of all rural land.
- Help reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture and forestry, by targeting capital investment on environmentally beneficial technology and infrastructure.
- Integrate sustainable land management with economic and social policy in order to encourage integrated land use that enables rural communities to benefit from the economic potential of their environment.
- Ensure that progress towards environmental, social and economic objectives is monitored, evaluated and regularly reported on.

Transforming the CAP in this way will take time. Any income support retained in the short term should be targeted, with conditions, on those farming systems making the greatest contribution to the management of environmental services for the benefit of society.

Research and development should be focused on the challenge of enhancing long-term productivity in ways that reduce environmental impacts and help adapt to climate change.

In order to avoid the export of environmental problems, the EU should continue to play a major role in engaging with international mechanisms to develop global environmental principles underpinning food, fibre and energy production.

We see our proposals as providing a sustainable justification for a “new contract” between predominantly urban taxpayers and those who manage rural land.