

# AGRICULTURE ATLAS

Facts and figures on EU farming policy

2019



REFORMS  
FOR A  
SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURE

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG

  
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It is a common sight: a tractor with a big tank on the back and long booms

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Year by year, the EU makes large payments as direct per hectare premiums. But this money is required for the expensive, and badly-needed conversion of animal husbandry. The Common Agricultural Policy currently does little to improve conditions. This is true not only for small animal stocks, but also for larger ones. For many people in Europe it is important that the animals are kept well.

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Applied in moderation, nitrates are good for agriculture. Nitrogen is a major plant nutrient and a key component of fertilizers. But an overabundance of nitrate is a menace. Plants cannot take up the huge amounts of N from fertilizer, manure or slurry spread on the land. The nitrates wash into rivers, lakes and the sea, where they cause algal blooms and fish die-offs. In drinking water, excess nitrates cause circulatory system problems. The EU recognizes the risks, but its institutions and member states' governments do far too little to prevent them.

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# INTRODUCTION

Europe's culinary offerings are a joy to behold: mozzarella from Italy, mushrooms from Poland, olives from Greece, wine from France, bread from Germany, beer from the Czech Republic, ham from Austria. A huge range of specialties from a huge range of landscapes – each one shaped by its environment, climate, community and history. This is the taste of Europe.

No other economic activity is so closely interwoven with the human and natural environment as is agriculture. If farming changes, so too the ecological and social systems that it hosts must change. All over Europe, there is a shift in how the soil is managed and livestock are kept. In many places, farmers are throwing in the towel and giving up their farms. The remaining farms are getting bigger, and every patch of land is being used as intensively as possible.

The economy does not stand still, and economic sectors change as dynamically as does society itself. That is neither good nor bad. The question is, who guides the change, and how. For changes in agriculture affect not only farmers but all Europeans, precisely because they are so closely connected with our food, the climate, nature and rural areas. It is therefore important that as a society, we agree on the direction in which agriculture should develop.

We must decide what other services we expect from farmers (apart from growing our food), and how we want to pay for these services. Europe must have a set of common goals to help it

“ The EU's agricultural policy is a bureaucratic monster, scarcely comprehensible for normal mortals.

mould the future. The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, generously furnished with an annual budget of almost 60 billion euros, is the most important means to achieve these goals. Despite this, policies are not geared to what many European citizens regard as important: conserving the environment, keeping animals in appropriate conditions, protecting water, birds and insects, and maintaining life and livelihoods in rural areas.

On the contrary, the EU's agricultural policy is a bureaucratic monster, scarcely comprehensible for normal mortals. Many people don't even know that it exists. It is revised every seven years, yet it still promotes an outdated, misguided system – one that is unjust, unecological, and not designed to strengthen society's goals. Funds are paid out to farmers for each hectare they manage. Big farms rake in a bounteous harvest, while programmes to support smaller farms are utterly underfunded.

Europe's farm policy has been criticised for years. Many of its problems could be resolved while the coming reform is in full swing. A decision will be made in the next couple of years on what exactly it will look like. But the draft for the coming budget period ignores the criticism and sticks to the same old

erroneous approaches. The proposal that is currently on the table goes in the exact opposite direction of what is needed for a courageous, forward-looking Europe.

**T**hat is why we have produced this atlas. It shows how closely Europe's agriculture is intertwined with our lives and our living space. It also reveals how little of the funding from the Common Agricultural Policy is fit for purpose: how little of the funding actually furthers the goals that Europeans wish for their farming.

But the atlas also illustrates that it is worthwhile pushing for a better, fundamentally different set of agricultural policies. In many countries in the European Union, movements are growing for a sustainable food system that is socially acceptable and globally just. Farmer and consumer associations are forming networks with groups that promote nature, the environment and animal welfare, as well as with international development organizations.

**T**he European edition of this atlas takes up this banner. It combines elements from various already-published national editions, giving both an overview of Europe as a whole as well as insights into the agricultural structures in various EU member states. The product of a Europe-wide network, this atlas aims to strengthen civil society and social movements throughout the continent, thereby advancing the ecological and social transformation in our agricultural and food systems.

**” It is high time for a lively social debate about the future shape of agriculture.**

For many years, Europe's governments have ignored the demands of a large part of the population. Not only that, they have pandered to the interests of the industrial agricultural lobby at home and in Brussels. This is outrageous. They are doing a disservice to European farming – and they are jointly responsible for ensuring that the major goals set by the EU are not achieved; they neither protect the climate, soils, water and biodiversity, nor promote global justice through the sustainable use of resources and fair international trade.

**T**here is enough money in EU coffers for a different type of farm policy. But it has to be used in a way that rewards agricultural services that serve the common good. It is high time for a lively social debate about the future shape of agriculture. People in the European Union must have the knowledge and certainty that agricultural policy is being used in a sensible way and for the common good. Only then will they give it their support.

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## 12 BRIEF LESSONS ON

# AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN EUROPE

**1** The European Union's **AGRICULTURAL POLICY** is important for everyone in Europe. It shapes our farming, which in turn moulds the **RURAL** environment and its **SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL** conditions.

**2** The Common Agricultural Policy takes **THE BIGGEST SLICE** of the EU's budget pie. The next seven-year support period begins in 2021. Negotiations on reforms are **IN FULL SWING**.



**3** Structurally weak **RURAL AREAS** – and the people who live there – should benefit from the funding. But few do so because of **MISGUIDED** goals and rules. The proposed reforms will do **LITTLE** to change this.

**4** Sustainable farming is key to the protection of **INSECTS AND BIRDS, CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY FOOD**. Few EU funds flow into these areas.

**5** Farmers who manage a lot of land get **LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY**; small farms get **VERY LITTLE**. As a result, investments are **HARDLY STIMULATED** in countries with many small farms.



**6** Rural areas also get further support, other than for agriculture. But **FAR LESS MONEY** is available for these purposes than for the direct payments.



**7** The EU has committed itself to international goals for **CLIMATE PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY**, as well as for **GLOBAL JUSTICE**. Without far-reaching reforms to its farm policies, it will **MISS** these targets.

**8** Agricultural production in the EU has **NEGATIVE** ecological and social effects in many countries **AROUND THE WORLD**. Imported commodities produced in many countries overexploit the soil and water there; exports of milk powder and meat outcompete local producers.



**9** **ANIMAL WELFARE** is a big concern for many European citizens. But **FEW** EU agricultural policy funds are allotted to solving welfare problems in animal husbandry.

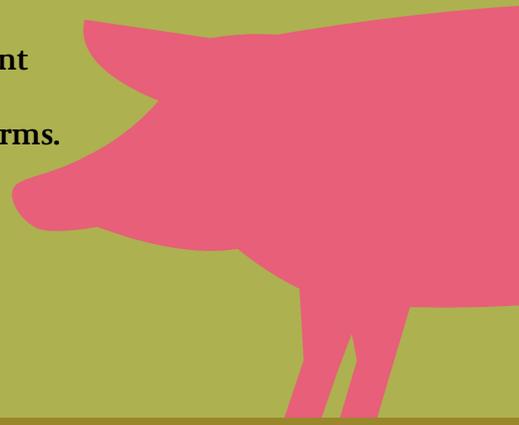


**10** In the EU, just **3.1 PERCENT** of the farm enterprises manage **MORE THAN HALF** the agricultural land. Between 2003 and 2013, more than one-quarter of all farms **CLOSED DOWN**. Their land is now worked by others.



**11** The EU's agricultural policy helps **COMBAT THE POLITICAL EROSION** of the European Union. It is especially important in rural areas, where dissatisfaction with the EU is high.

**12** For the Common Agricultural Policy to be more widely accepted, it must **PROTECT** the environment and the climate, **IMPROVE** animal welfare and **PROMOTE** small and medium-sized sustainable farms.



# WORKING WITH NATURE

**Rising demand for organic products in Europe is a market opportunity for producers and the food industry. But farmers need help to switch from conventional to organic, and to stay organic in face of market pressures inducing them to switch back. The Common Agricultural Policy offers some support – but not enough.**

In marked contrast to conventional agriculture, organic farming avoids using synthetic chemical pesticides, easily soluble mineral fertilizers and genetically modified organisms. Livestock raisers must comply with strict rules as to the types of feed they use, and their animals must have access to paddocks and grazing areas. In organic production, the farm is regarded as an integrated ecosystem in which the various elements are maintained in balance with each other. Within the European Union, organic products are produced in accordance with EU legislation. But within each country, organic farming associations may in addition set their own private standards. These are often stricter than the EU rules. Because it uses limited resources judiciously and strives to reduce its impact on the environment, organic farming provides significant benefits for the environment and society.

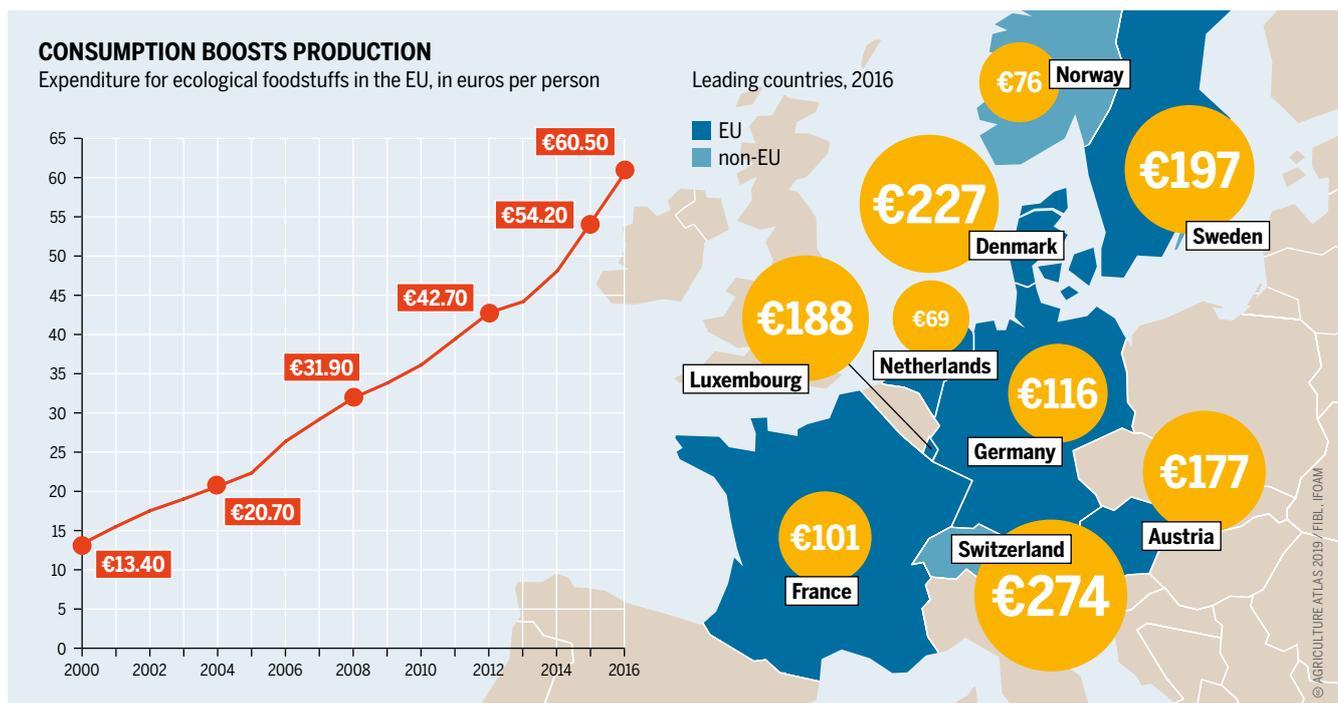
In Europe as a whole, organic agriculture accounts for 2.7 percent of the farmed area; within the EU, the figure is 6.7 percent. The highest shares within the EU are in Austria (21.9 percent), Estonia (18.9 percent) and Sweden (18.0 percent). The countries with the largest absolute areas of

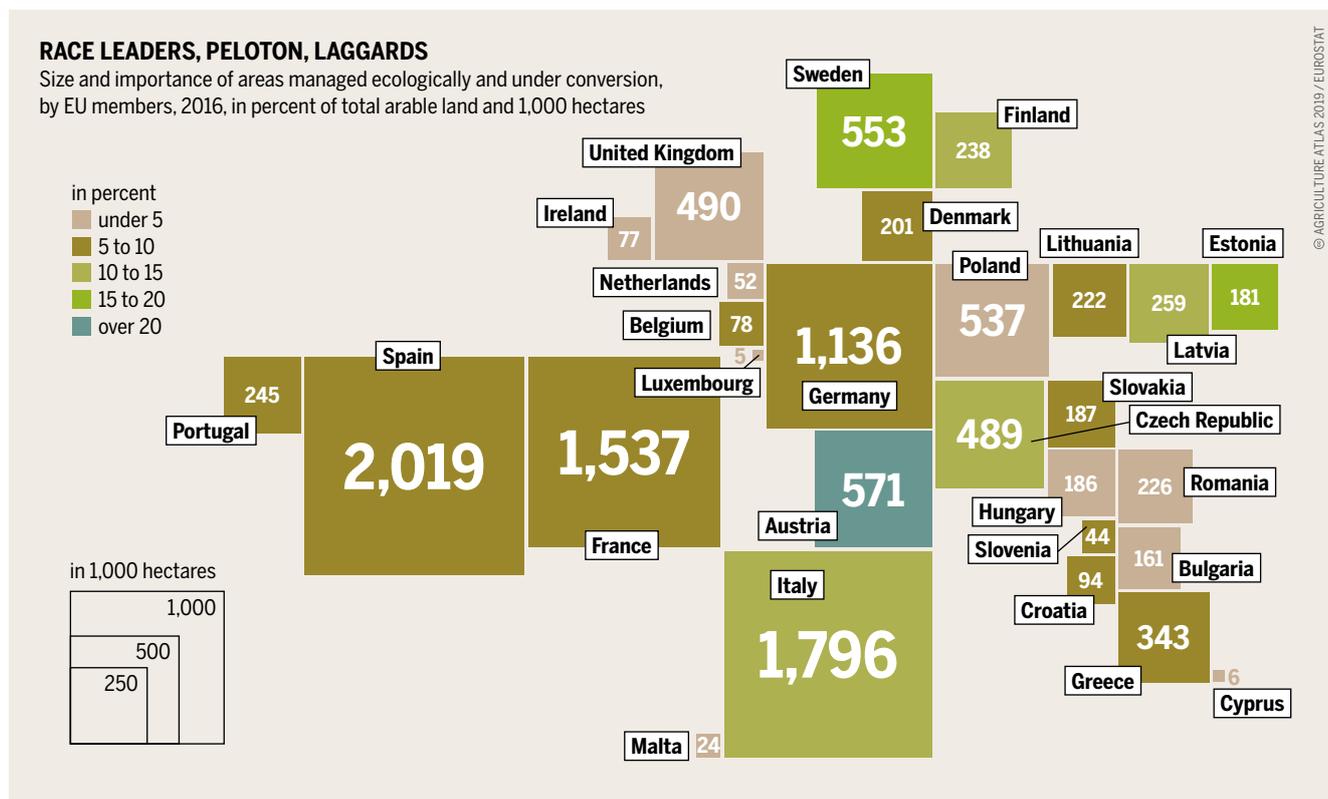
organic production are Spain (2 million hectares), Italy (1.8 million) and France (1.5 million). Italy, France and Germany are the countries where the organic area increased most between 2015 and 2016: in Italy it rose by 300,000 hectares, in France by 215,000 hectares, and in Germany by 160,000 hectares.

The expansion of organic farming in the EU can be attributed to two factors: strong demand from consumers, and government support. Between 2000 to 2016, the per capita consumption of organic food in the EU almost quadrupled, reaching an average of 60.5 euros per person in 2016. During this period, for the EU as a whole, the market for organic food grew by between 5 and 19 percent a year. In Germany, the world's second largest market for organic groceries, 10 billion euros worth of organic products were sold in 2017: that represented a market share of over 5 percent. At over 10 percent, Denmark had the highest market share for organics in the whole world.

The EU and its member states support organic farming through targeted subsidies drawn from Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy, which deals with rural development. Organic farms automatically fulfil the environmental requirements for direct payments. For the EU as a whole, an average of 6.4 percent of the budget for agri-environmental and climate measures goes to organic farming. But this figure masks a wide range, with expenditure varying from

*In ten years, spending by nutrition- and environment-conscious consumers has doubled*





one country to another: from just 0.2 percent in Malta to as much as 13.2 percent in Denmark. The Netherlands is the only country that does not make any specific area-based allocations for organic farms from the agri-environmental and climate budget; it instead focuses on policies that aim to strengthen the competitiveness of the organic sector.

The support for organic farming distinguishes between premiums for farmers who convert to organic farming, and subsidies to encourage them to maintain organic production. Support also varies according to the land use, stocking density and crop types. The levels also differ from country to country. Denmark promotes lower applications of nitrogen fertilizer (up to a maximum of 60 kg per hectare), while Hungary offers more support for land used for grazing than for meadows that are mowed. In 2015, the subsidy for maintaining organic grassland ranged from 43 euros per hectare (Sweden) to 545 euros (Estonia). For arable land, rates ranged from 90 euros (United Kingdom) to 600 euros (Slovenia). For vegetable production, the range was 184 euros (Denmark) to 900 euros (Belgium and Cyprus).

Although organic farming has increased in importance over the last three decades, it is unable to satisfy consumer demand. The Common Agricultural Policy should be re-oriented to promote organic farming through national strategies that cover the entire value chain, and via targeted use of subsidies for agri-environmental and climate measures. In June 2018, the European Commission proposed to continue supporting organic farming in the coming budget period through area-dependent payments to meet the EU's envi-

*Countries as different as Austria, Italy and the Czech Republic are among Europe's eco-leaders*

ronmental, climate and other management commitments. It remains up to the member states to decide whether and how they promote organic farming. The level of future support will depend on the extent to which the new-look Common Agricultural Policy will reward the concrete environmental services of agriculture. ●

*Ecological livestock raising and meat production have a smaller market share in the EU than ecologically grown crops*

