

Scottish Environment LINK response to The CAP Debate

<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-debate>

Question 1: Why do we need a European common agricultural policy?

Around 50% of the European land mass is farmed. Influencing land managers' activities is therefore essential to meet our environmental targets e.g. halting biodiversity loss, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, meeting Water Framework Directive objectives and respecting the European Landscape Convention. Without intervention, land managers will be under rewarded for the environmental goods they provide which are not paid for by the market.

To meet these objectives we need a common approach, many European resources are shared and demand integrated approaches to their management. Member states addressing them on an individual bases could lead to distortions of the market. A shared approach to paying for the non-market public goods provided by agriculture is therefore needed.

Question 2: What do citizens expect from agriculture?

EU citizens expect quality food to be produced to the highest animal welfare standards in a manner which is sustainable in the long term. While food production can be rewarded by the market, the public goods produced by agriculture, generally are not. Therefore, in return for public money, agriculture should be expected not only to cause no environmental damage, but also to actively provide environmental goods, for example habitats for wildlife, management of Natura sites, protection of heritage sites, a quality landscape and management of water resources.

There is currently particular concern about climate change and agriculture needs to play its part in reducing emissions. Since large areas of land are managed through agriculture, it has a special role to play leaving space for other species to adapt and providing carbon sinks e.g. through the management of peat bogs.

EU citizens want to understand the CAP and be able to see that their money is spent to meet the priorities they believe are important, in a transparent way.

Question 3: Why reform the CAP?

Agricultural practice continues to cause significant environmental damage e.g. artificial inputs and a general decrease in habitat heterogeneity has, led to declines in farmland species and reduced the quality of the landscape. The focus of agricultural payments on the more productive types of farming, has also contributed to the abandonment of land which was managed using some of Europe's more "marginal", farming systems which are likely to be of greater environmental value. In Scotland, crofting is an example of such a high nature value system. Its small scale and low intensity forms of agricultural land use, can create and maintain valuable wild life habitats and iconic coastal and upland landscapes for all to enjoy.

The majority of funds continue to be paid out through pillar 1 of the CAP which is insufficiently targeted to produce public goods. Distribution of pillar 1 is unfair and in many countries rewards those most who also receive the best returns from the market. It is important that in future, funds are directed towards encouraging the production of environmental goods.



Question 4: What tools do we need for the CAP of tomorrow?

LINK's ideas for the future of the CAP in Scotland are laid out here:

<http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/LINKatfReportBeyondCAP.pdf>. We also support the proposal for a new CAP developed by a coalition of NGOs, available online at <http://cap2020.ieep.eu/vision/NGO-CAP-proposal.pdf>.

In future, the CAP should be considered a contract between land managers and European citizens. Payments should be in return for the production of public goods and accord with the 'polluter pays' principle. It should reward sustainable practices across Europe, with higher support for High Nature Value farming systems and organic farming. Targeted agri-environment schemes should continue to be funded to meet particular challenges e.g. halting biodiversity loss and managing protected areas.

It is important that a programming approach is incorporated into the whole of the CAP. It should be transparent, with effective monitoring, evaluation and consultation.