



Slow Food®

Towards a New Common Agricultural Policy

Due to the way it has been conceived and managed to date, the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union (CAP) contains highly critical points that cause negative consequences for both producers and consumers.

First of all, the Policy is marked by glaring **inequality** in so far as the financial resources of the so-called “first pillar” (which comprises measures in support of the market, especially direct payments to producers) are distributed unevenly among types of production, farms (small, medium, large) and the Member States.

Secondly, it favours a **highly unbalanced consumer model**: 250 of the EU’s 500 million inhabitants are overweight and 42 million live in conditions of serious privation, while every year 90 million tonnes of edible food are thrown to waste (Eurostat 2010). De facto, food has lost its intrinsic value and price is the only parameter that remains to guide food choices.

Thirdly, the Policy devalues labour in the agrifood sector: a recent survey, showed that, in Europe as a whole, **employment in farming** has dropped by 25 percent in fewer than ten years, with an overall loss of 3.7 million jobs (Eurostat 2010). This fall in employment has not been accompanied by an increase in workers’ wages in the farming sector comparable to that in others; indeed earnings — and, as a consequence the professional level of the sector — have progressively dropped. The **insufficient income** of farmers is one of the root causes of the disappearance of many agricultural products.

The industrial agrifood model that has asserted itself over the last fifty years is one of the causes of the most serious **environmental and climate crises** ever experienced by humanity. On the one hand, insofar as they were considered inextinguishable, natural resources such as water, land, forests and woods have been exploited indiscriminately, and have hence deteriorated irreversibly. On the other, industrial farming has made an increasingly unbridled use of inputs of fossil origin, such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides and plastics.

Over the last few years, the CAP has been the subject of a wide-reaching **reform** process. This phase, scheduled to conclude with the entry into force of the new CAP in early 2014, is of fundamental importance for the future of the European Union. The new CAP has major challenges to address. It has to: ensure food security and sovereignty, offer a response to the environmental and climate crisis, and reinvigorate the economy and employment in the agricultural sector.

Slow Food has decided to join the debate by harnessing its experience and vision to promote a fairer, more sustainable CAP.

Slow Food and its philosophy

Slow Food is an international association that seeks to change the everyday relationship between people and food by promoting **food sovereignty**, the right of peoples to decide what they grow and eat.

According to Slow Food, a **holistic** approach should be adopted to agriculture, by which it means joining together aspects that are generally kept rigidly separate: social aspects (such as the relationship between producers and consumers), environmental aspects (such as the protection of biodiversity, water resources and soil fertility, the distribution of products, the sustainability of packaging and the reuse of resources) and cultural resources (the protection of traditional knowledge). A close interconnection exists between communities, their way of producing and consuming, and their culture and the environment in which they live.

Slow Food proposes to change production and consumer models through education and awareness-raising in the food and environmental field, the bolstering of local economies, the promotion of producers' knowledge and the protection of diverse cultural identities.

More specifically, Slow Food is promoting a closer **connection between producers and consumers** in order to endow more dignity to the former and greater awareness to the latter—who need to have more tools at their disposal to enable them make their choices.

The CAP of tomorrow according to Slow Food

A new paradigm and the objectives of sustainability and new rurality

The CAP of tomorrow cannot concern itself solely with productive aspects: it will also be paramount **to move on from a merely agricultural policy to one encompassing agriculture and food**.

In order to address cross-cutting problems such as environmental, landscape and natural resource protection and the fight against climate change more effectively and efficiently, it will also be necessary to increase interaction between the various Community policies.

The two macro-objectives that have to inspire the CAP in the future are social, economic and environmental **sustainability** and a **new rurality**, whereby the society of the future will be centred round rural areas.

Four fundamental changes

To achieve these objectives, four fundamental changes will have to be made to the structure of the CAP.

1. The promotion of small- and medium-scale production

The decision to structure agriculture according to the same rules as any other industrial sector is at the origin of the dramatic situation in which European agricultural production currently finds itself. It is necessary instead to promote agriculture in harmony with the ecosystems, joining together innovation and traditional knowledge to produce quality food sustainably.

The CAP should focus on sustainable, small- and medium-scale quality products exclusively for human and animal consumption. The challenge of the future will not be to produce larger amounts of agricultural products, but to produce food more efficiently and sustainably, placing the onus on small- and medium-scale quality production, strongly tied to the land and with a low environmental impact.

In so far as they are more labour-intensive, the small and medium scales create jobs, are more sustainable (in terms of energy saving), help support local economies (in marginal areas as well) and ease demographic pressure on urban areas.

2. Promoting local products

Yet the small scale is not enough on its own. A decisive factor in ensuring product sustainability is the bond between small-scale production and local areas (what we refer to as environmental vocation). Local and traditional products (vegetable varieties, animal breeds, processed foods) are the most suited to the climate and soil conditions and express their potential best in areas to which, thanks to human labour, they have grown acclimatised in the course of the centuries. This is why they are more resistant and less needy of outside intervention. They are thus more sustainable from both an environmental and an economic point of view. Finally, they play an important role in protecting biodiversity and promoting community food culture and traditions.

3. Promoting local agrifood systems

The global market economy is revealing all its limits in terms of waste and harm to the environment. A system of local food procurement, distribution and consumption could reduce environmental impact by reducing the distances food travels (food miles) and ensuring consumers fresh, seasonal local products. By cutting out some of the intermediate passages in the relationship between producers and consumers, it will be possible to create a **new relationship between the agricultural world and the urban world**.

A decisive role in the building of local agrifood systems will be played by **education**, not only in schools but also on farms and at points of sale. In this sense, it will be fundamental to create **networks of exchange** of knowledge and solidarity between farmers and city dwellers.

4. Promoting environmentally friendly agrifood systems

It is easier with small- and medium-scale products to apply the principles of **agroecology**, based on the proper management of natural resources (biodiversity, land, water, landscape), on knowledge of local agriculture, on implementation of the traditional and modern techniques most suited to diverse soil and climate conditions, on exclusion of genetically modified products, monocultures and intensive breeding, on reduction or exclusion of manmade chemicals, on protection of the agricultural landscape and on social equity.

The CAP of the future should not merely seek to reduce the size of agrifood enterprises but also, in parallel, to reward those who actually deploy agroecological techniques by offering communities contributions in the form of environmental services (the “greening” of the CAP).

It should also reward those who live and work in **marginal areas** (hills and mountains). The exodus from the mountains is the cause of serious hydrogeological difficulties and incurs economic, social and environmental costs for communities. People who decide to stay in these difficult areas play a key role in guarding the land and deserve to be supported.

The tools of the CAP of tomorrow

To achieve the objectives set out and implement the changes outlined, the CAP needs to be backed by adequate economic tools.

The budget

Member States and Community Institutions must avoid making cuts to the budget available and provide the CAP of the future with adequate financial resources. These must be redistributed in such a way as to reinforce the funding—hence the empowerment—of the “second pillar” (which includes measures for the development of rural areas and the environment).

Support for “green” agriculture: public money for public goods

Direct payments (first pillar) are one of the important economic tools available to the CAP. Their main function should be to provide economic compensation to farmers for the environmental services they supply to the community.

The approach to be adopted is that of “public money for public goods”. Most support should go to those people who deploy good environmental practice, thereby protecting the environment and public goods, such as soil and water, and to those who guard marginal areas.

It will be fundamental to accompany direct payments to single producers with the promotion of local actions and forms of aggregation. In order to disseminate sustainable agricultural and consumer practices, it will be just as fundamental to transcend individualism and foster the birth of **networks** of producers and consumers.

Supporting the earnings of agrifood producers

The future CAP must seek to ensure adequate support for the earnings of small- and medium-scale sustainable producers. Economic support should benefit exclusively active producers and privilege producers in marginal areas. This objective can be also achieved through concrete actions to hold down the volatile prices of agricultural products.

The Slow Food experience at the service of the CAP of tomorrow

In the light of its experience in the agrifood sector, Slow Food proposes a set of concrete initiatives, especially in two decisive sectors for the future of European agriculture: **young people** and **small- and medium-scale production**.

Young people

Young people must be at the centre of the next CAP: without clear action in this direction, European agriculture is without a future.

The countryside is being progressively abandoned and the population is growing older. Labour in the agricultural sector is increasingly marginal, and the presence of young people is dropping all the time. Estimates show that only 7 percent of farmers are younger than 35 and that one in five — 4.5 million in all — is older than 65 (Eurostat 2009).

Concrete proposals

1. Lend dignity to the farming profession so that it can be a stimulating, gratifying life choice.
2. Ensure young people adequate earnings (for example, through direct additional payments or further tax relief), hence sufficient security to plan their future.
3. Promote the creation of networks of young people — farmers but also other actors in the food supply chain, such as food artisans, restaurateurs, educators, consumers and so on — by creating spaces, opportunities and tools for interconnection (events, the Internet, social networks etc.), to avoid the isolation that sometimes characterises agricultural work and discourages young people from taking part in it.
4. Promote the training of young farmers through secondary school courses, but also through short courses and teaching by farmers themselves and exchanges of knowledge and experience.
5. Foster intergenerational knowledge transfers.

6. Facilitate the start-up of new enterprises run by young people, simplifying and speeding up bureaucratic procedures and offering incentives such as direct financing, fiscal relief, low-interest loans, favourable insurance etc.
7. Provide subsidised technical assistance on agroecological techniques, business management etc.

Small- and medium-scale production

It is fundamental to endow virtuous producers with a more central role and, at the same time, spread knowledge of their products (places of origin, processing techniques and so on), educating consumers and bringing them closer to farmers.

Concrete proposals

1. Rethink geographical indications, including rigorous criteria of sustainability, bonds with the land, history and defence of biodiversity. These tools must also provide adequate protection for those small-scale productions that represent a unique asset for European culture.
2. Simplify bureaucratic procedures to benefit small- and medium-scale production.
3. Reward producers who safeguard local and traditional biodiversity (native breeds and local vegetable varieties), who preserve the traditional agrarian landscape (old vineyards, millenary olive groves and so on) and traditional architecture (water mills, Alpine huts, old wood ovens and so on), who work in marginal areas and play an important role in guarding the land, and who create forms of association by respecting common production protocols.
4. Promote exchanges of information and knowledge among small producers and different generations.
5. Organise training programmes to optimize agronomic and processing techniques and strengthen the organisation of producers and their capacity to present products on the market (with proper labelling, simple and eco-sustainable packaging and so on).
6. Organise food and environmental education programmes in schools, promoting, by way of an example, the creation of school gardens. Organize awareness-raising and information programmes on the problems of the agrifood system, sustainability and diet. Promote a constant exchange of information among producers and consumers.
7. Create market channels for small- and medium-scale products: promote farmers' markets, local buying groups, the use of local products in collective catering and all other direct sale initiatives. Support groups committed to supporting forms of local agriculture directly.
8. Reward those who differentiate their supply by supplementing agricultural production with educational, tourist and cultural activities to promote knowledge of the environment, the land and agriculture (hence a multifunctional role for farms).