

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): good agricultural and environmental condition standards, schemes for climate, environment and animal welfare, amendments to CAP Strategic Plans, review of CAP Strategic Plans and exemptions from controls and penalties

2024/0073(COD) - 24/05/2024 - Final act

PURPOSE: to re-examine certain provisions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with the aim of simplifying matters while maintaining a strong, sustainable and competitive policy for agriculture and food in the EU.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2024/1468 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) 2021/2116 as regards good agricultural and environmental condition standards, schemes for climate, environment and animal welfare, amendment of the CAP Strategic Plans, review of the CAP Strategic Plans and exemptions from controls and penalties.

CONTENT: the aim of this regulation is to respond effectively to the concerns expressed by farmers by making targeted changes to the CAP regulations. The review addresses certain elements of the CAP strategic plans regulation and the regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy (the 'horizontal regulation'). It comes as a response to issues encountered during the first year of implementation of the new CAP.

The updated rules deliver **simplification, reduce administrative burden, and provide greater flexibility** for complying with certain environmental conditionalities, while ensuring a predictable framework for farmers.

The review covers the following points in particular:

- **removing the obligation for farmers to devote a minimum proportion of their arable land to non-productive areas**, such as fallow land. Instead, farmers will be able to choose, on a voluntary basis, to keep a proportion of their arable land non-productive, or to establish new landscape features (such as hedges or trees) - and thereby receive additional financial support via an eco-scheme that all Member States will have to offer in their CAP Strategic Plans. All EU farmers will be incentivised to maintain non-productive areas beneficial for biodiversity without fearing loss of income;
- **maintaining crop rotation, but allow EU farmers to meet this requirement by choosing to rotate or diversify their crops**, depending on the conditions they face and provided their country decides to include the possibility of crop diversification in its CAP strategy plan;
- allowing Member States, as regards **soil cover during sensitive periods**, greater flexibility in setting what they define as sensitive periods, and the practices allowed to fulfil this requirement, in light of their national and regional conditions, and in the context of increasing weather variability.

Member States may also:

- exempt certain crops, soil types or farming systems from compliance with tillage, soil cover and crop rotation/diversification requirements;
- grant targeted exemptions to allow ploughing to restore permanent grassland on Natura 2000 sites in the event of damage caused by predators or invasive species;
- provide for temporary derogations in extreme cases of **adverse weather conditions** preventing farmers from carrying out their tasks properly and complying with cross-compliance requirements. These derogations must be limited in time and apply only to the beneficiaries affected.

Lastly, this Regulation amends Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 to exempt **small farmers with no more than 10 hectares of agricultural area** from cross-compliance checks and penalties. This will considerably reduce the administrative burden imposed by controls on small farmers, who represent 65% of CAP beneficiaries.

ENTRY INTO FORCE : 25.05.2024.