



Society for Conservation Biology

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Europe Section

**Members of the European Parliament
Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Commissioner Dacian Cioloş
Commissioner Janez Potočnik**

Re: Recent rejection of necessary radical CAP farm subsidy reforms

3 April 2013

Dear Madam/Sir,

The Society for Conservation Biology – Europe Section (SCB-ES) would like to express its deep concern about the recent rejection by Members of the European Parliament and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of necessary elements of the CAP farm subsidy reforms. The view held by SCB-ES, (and shared to our knowledge by all main European environmental organisations) is that **the rejection of more profound CAP reforms amounts to a significant retreat from the international targets on sustainable development, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.**

The European Parliamentary Report (2012) ‘Our life insurance, our natural capital: An EU biodiversity strategy to 2020’ deplored the failure of the European Community to meet its 2010 biodiversity target, and made straightforward statements regarding the CAP towards 2020, emphasising “*the vital role of farmers in achieving the new EU biodiversity objectives*”.

In an uncompromising language, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 indicates the commitment required by decision-makers to ensure these targets: “*biodiversity safeguards contained in existing EU law must not be weakened, and new strategies must not fail.*” It also states that “*CAP is a crucial tool for biodiversity conservation, mitigation of climate change, and ecosystem services.*”

In the light of the above, the recent parliamentary decision is disappointing. We are particularly concerned that a) the reduction of ecological focus areas to merely 3%, and b) the

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weakened requirements on crop diversification, may lead to a failure in achieving a favourable conservation status of 40% of all habitats and species by 2020. These decisions specifically contradict Target 3A) *By 2020 maximise areas under agriculture to ensure conservation of biodiversity and bring about a measurable improvement.*

SCB-ES does not doubt the need to support robust and adaptive strategies for sustainable food production. However, scientific evidence clearly suggests that short term maximisation of productivity may well hamper long term provision of ecosystem services and thus productivity in agricultural systems and beyond.

We urge the MEPs and European Commissioners to honour the parliament's commitment to the EU Biodiversity strategy 2020 and global biodiversity targets agreed upon by the EU and member governments during the COP 10 in Nagoya (Aichi targets) by ensuring that the CAP subsidy reforms are appropriately aligned to the six principal targets of the EU strategy, as well as the environmental requirements set by the Maastricht Treaty.

We specifically urge to maintain the 25% minimum spending on the environment, set back the Ecological Focus Areas at 7% or higher (noting that scientific evidence indicates a need to set it at 10% or higher), reinstate the protection of carbon- and biodiversity rich grasslands, and perform a careful inspection of eligibility criteria to ensure that funding is spent wisely. SCB-ES further calls to acknowledge the biological (and cultural) diversity of European landscapes in ensuring crop diversification, especially in environmentally sensitive areas, as means to halt the rapid intensification and homogenization of agricultural areas across Europe.

The upcoming meetings of the trilogue among DG Agriculture and Rural Development, the Council of Agriculture Ministers and representatives of the EU Parliament offer still the opportunity to rectify these elements of the CAP reform. The SCB-ES Policy Committee stands ready to support any effort to identify the means that are still available to ensuring that the common agricultural policy supports maximisation of both economic and environmental benefits, using best available knowledge. We are prepared to provide any evidence, documentation and tools that could prove useful, and are keen to organise any necessary meeting(s), or a round table with relevant European Commissioners and stakeholders.

In the longer term, it is the intention of the SCB-ES Policy Committee to present a more comprehensive response to the recent decision made by the MEPs on the CAP farm subsidy reforms. It will offer recommendations based on sound principles of cost efficiency, sustainability, and adaptive ecosystem management.

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Please be so kind to contact us at europe@conbio.org (or the addresses below) to organise a meeting or a round table at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. András Báldi, President, Society for Conservation Biology - Europe Section
Institute of Ecology and Botany, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Ecological Research

Prof. Dr. Pierre L. Ibisch, Chair of Policy Committee, Society for Conservation Biology - Europe Section
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Copies: IEEP, WWF, BirdLife International, Butterfly Conservation Europe, IUCN

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