



Dublin, Ireland– 03 May 2017,

Over 258,000 Europeans call on EU Commission to radically reform EU agriculture

Today a clear and strong message reached the European Commission: the EU's agricultural policy needs to be radically changed. This is what 258,708 citizens, An Taisce and over 400 other civil society organisations including and businesses have told the Commission in the largest EU public consultation on agricultural policy, which closed yesterday (2 May).

The large mobilisation was generated by [Living Land](#), the online campaign launched by WWF, Birdlife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, calling for an EU agricultural policy that protects our climate and environment, is fair for farmers and consumers, and contributes to healthy and sustainable food production. Over 258,000 people and over 400 organisations and businesses representing consumers, the food sector, drinking water providers, and those promoting environmental protection, development, health, and animal welfare joined Living Land.

Fintan Kelly, Natural Environment Officer, An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland said:

“The people of Europe have stated loud and clear that they believe that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy is not fit for purpose. In countries like Ireland agricultural intensification continues to be the greatest driver of biodiversity loss and is a major source of water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Despite decades to intensification and increased output many farming families are less financially secure than they ever have been. It is time for a new vision for European farming which can deliver a rural environment which is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.”

Jabier Ruiz, Senior Policy Officer on Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems at WWF European Policy Office, said:

“The message is clear: Europeans care about farming, food and nature and they do not want their food to be produced at the cost of nature. They want their public money to be invested in a different agricultural model that serves sustainable farmers and rural communities, and does not destroy our finite natural resources and species. We will see whether the European Commission is at the level of its mandate delivering a new policy that supports a truly sustainable food and farming system for the future.”

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, Birdlife Europe & Central Asia said:

“Hundreds of thousands of people from across Europe have demanded action. With this mandate, the Commission must now respond with an ambitious new policy that will restore the biodiversity that is disappearing across the continent. The time is now to transition to sustainable farming. At a time when faith in the European Union is on the decline, the Commission must listen to this major signal from the citizens of Europe and respond convincingly.”

Pieter de Pous, EEB EU Policy Director, said:

“If the EU is to reinvent itself, face up to the major challenges of climate change, ecosystem collapse and fixing a broken food and farming system, a root and branch reform of the CAP – its oldest, most controversial and least-efficient common policy – is not only long overdue, it is inevitable. First we need clarity on what a future farm subsidy system should do, only then can talks on EU budget figures start.”

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which takes up almost 40% of the EU budget, is a major driver of unsustainable farming in Europe, as it continues to stimulate industrial food production that causes environmental degradation. Unsustainable agriculture is the single biggest driver of biodiversity loss in Europe, causing the depletion of species like farm birds and bees. Evidence shows that our rural areas have lost over 58% of their farm birds, and 24% of European bumblebees are threatened by extinction, with huge economic losses associated. The CAP also fails to address the needs of rural areas: between 2007 and 2013, about 20% of jobs in the farming sector have been lost, with more and more small farmers being put out of business.

The European Commission is expected to present the results of the public consultation publicly in a Conference in Brussels on 7 July and to publish a communication on the future of the CAP before the end of 2017. The new EU Common Agricultural Policy should be implemented in all Member States by 2021.

END

Notes:

The [Living Land campaign](#) was started by [BirdLife Europe & Central Asia](#), the [European Environmental Bureau](#) (EEB) and [WWF EU](#). The organisations that have joined Living Land agree that the EU's new agricultural policy must be:

- **Fair** – for farmers and rural communities.
- **Environmentally Sustainable** – for clean air and water, healthy soil, and thriving plant and animal life.
- **Healthy** – for good food and the well-being of all people.
- **Globally Responsible** – for the planet's climate and sustainable development around the world.

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