



# TRANSITIONING TOWARDS AGROECOLOGY

Using the CAP to build  
new food systems



**Friends of  
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# Introduction

**In Europe, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the key legislative framework influencing the production, sale and processing of agricultural products.** The CAP has driven major decisions on the direction of agriculture in Europe and the spending of considerable amounts of EU public funds - today it takes up around 40% of the total EU budget. Responsible for our food, our rural communities, our countryside, our health, our environment and our farmers, the CAP affects everyone.

It is widely acknowledged that the CAP has encouraged a model of agriculture that damages the environment - contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, soil erosion and water pollution - and has promoted factory-style farming at the expense of viable incomes for farmers and jobs in rural areas. A strong commodity-orientated production has increased imports of cheap raw materials produced in socially and environmentally damaging ways, and cheap exports to the global south which means that the CAP's impact is felt much further afield than in the EU alone. Yet, despite reforms over past decades, so far the CAP has not gone far enough to support or stimulate food sovereignty and agroecological approaches.

This needs to change urgently and it requires better CAP implementation across the European Union.

The new CAP can help transition EU agriculture towards agroecological approaches. Any push to scrap this by promoting and incentivising factory-style agriculture based on models of sustainable intensification or by simplifying the system at the expense of agroecological outcomes would be a step backwards and cannot justify CAP funding. Public money must be spent for public goods!

There is a need to re-connect farmers and consumers to help build vibrant local food economies. The aim of all governments should be to support sustainable producers, processors and retailers, and build strong local and regional links between consumers, farmers and food businesses. Rural Development Programmes need to be fully utilised to support the sustainable development of rural areas and the environment with dedicated funding allocated to these practices on a progressive basis to 2020. This means ensuring a strong and stable support environment for high quality food production based on sustainable systems and practices such as organic farming and other environmentally-friendly farming practices with strong support for agroecological knowledge transfer, advice, cooperation and innovation. Consumers should be able to purchase ecologically-produced food from local and regional producers. Therefore the creation of short, decentralised supply chains, diversified markets based on solidarity and fair prices, community-led initiatives and closer links between producers and consumers locally and regionally must be prioritised.

This publication aims to showcase successful examples from a diverse range of EU countries where a transition towards agroecological approaches is already happening. It gives clear indications for the priorities governments should have if they are serious about making good use of public money to support this transition.

These cases are only a few from the many diverse approaches and practices already happening across the EU. Over the coming years civil society groups will continue to observe the CAP implementation and development by collecting further best practice examples, but also by highlighting failures of agro-industrial models to actively support a successful transformation.

**Samuel Féret,**

**ARC2020**

## ROMANIA

# Saving traditional seeds for future generations to grow and share

**A significant number of traditional seed varieties are still being used in Romania but the extent to which they are being propagated has declined.**

Despite this, public demand for traditional seed diversity and healthier food has increased in recent years. Alternative food networks, seed exchanges and garden projects are working to preserve this precious heritage while also trying to meet producer and consumer needs.

Eco Ruralis is a membership-based organization that supports agroecology and peasant farming in Romania. Since 2009, its Agro-Biodiversity Campaign has worked with peasant members to establish a network of 15 “seed guardians” that are responsible for propagating specific varieties of traditional seeds. In addition, the Suceava National Gene Bank provided seeds and knowledge about how to code and preserve them.

Over the past four years, the University of Agricultural Sciences in Cluj-Napoca (USAMV) has given Eco Ruralis small plots of land to build seed multiplication gardens where workshops on seed saving take place. Almost 5,000 packs of free seeds have been given to 2,000 food producers around the country through annual distributions and regional exchanges in the past five years.

USAMV professors make observations of seed saving plants with students and Eco Ruralis staff to create a yearly catalog



*Seed savers mark up planting modules with labels as they work.  
Photo: Attila Szocs*



*Cropping diversity spreads the risk of total crop failures across a wider range of plant traits and characteristics. Photo: Attila Szocs.*

that expresses the benefits of traditional seeds to the public. It also serves as a guide to choose varieties from the annual distribution list.

Heterogenous seeds carry important traits of climatic adaptability and can be multiplied every year unlike hybrid or genetically-modified seeds. By offering free traditional seeds, Eco Ruralis enables food producers to grow healthy organic food for themselves and others. This decreases the public's dependence on an industrial food system that demands the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides which diminish living ecosystems and food quality.

Soon, Eco Ruralis will start a new partnership with the USAMV Gene Bank to store and study its seeds. Next year, the seed guardian program will expand and a new community garden that focuses on seed saving will be built. The organization also plans to exponentially spread seeds to many more food producers and increase public awareness by collaborating with two national organizations whom work on seed propagation, CRIES and Seminte Libere.

The new Common Agricultural Policy's second pillar offers the possibility to develop activities related to agrobiodiversity conservation and propagation using specific measures of the National Rural Development Plan. Measure 4, with a budget of EUR 6 million, could be used for facilitating knowledge transfer on traditional seeds and undertaking public information activities regarding agroecological growing methods, while Measure 6 with EUR 849 million allocation, is totally dedicated to agroecology and climate. Measure 7 broadly supports work on organic agriculture.



The University of Agricultural Sciences in Cluj-Napoca (USAMV) has helped Eco Ruralis with small plots of land for seed multiplication.  
Photo: Attila Szocs

Efforts to conserve agricultural biodiversity must take into account the knowledge of peasants. Sharing traditional seeds creates dynamic communication channels between food producers that increase cooperation. Connecting consumers and producers that support agroecology is the only way to develop a truly sustainable food model.

By bringing a range of participants together to really develop traditional seed varieties across Romania, Eco Ruralis shows how an agroecological community of practice can function. Europe needs a lot more of this kind of activity to improve its agri-food policies.

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CONTACT:



Eco Ruralis Agro-Biodiversity Campaign  
[www.ecoruralis.ro](http://www.ecoruralis.ro)

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### KEY FACTS



- 5,000 packs of traditional seeds have been distributed
- Regional events and seed distributions have reached 2,000 food producers.
- 15 Seed savers' associations care for specific varieties
- Plans in hand to recruit more Seed Guardians and roll out the propagation of traditional varieties

# Harvesting the fruits of a 1,200 year tradition with a real future

**Calypso started as a Greek family farming start-up in 2011. The company aimed to add value to an ancient family olive grove in the small village of Makri in Thrace, Greece.** The founders aimed both to produce quality, authentic Greek products and create a model for other producers in the region to follow. Using traditional harvesting methods the family has been applying for four generations, they cultivate 1,200 old trees and are the region's first organic certified producers.

Calypso is now a branded Single Varietal Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the indigenous olive variety Makri. The oil is marketed directly to local consumers and restaurants as well as to selected communities in Germany and the Czech Republic. A commitment to specific methods and standards across the

whole chain from cultivation to extraction, storage and packaging, has allowed this olive oil to be branded as a quality product achieving good returns for the producers. The producers interact directly with consumers to share their story and educate the market through tastings and farm visits. Other products include traditionally cured olives and a series of olive oil soaps, to maximise the product range.

The family business is managed by young people completely committed to the cultivation of the olive grove. They combine a business focus including innovative use of social media, with a deep understanding of the traditions of local olive culture. Being dedicated to the continuous development and improvement of the taste quality of their products, they are constantly updated on latest culinary trends and technologies around the world of olive oil.

Local authorities are currently working on the inclusion of the olive variety of Makri into the PDO system. Additionally, the variety has recently entered the international Ark of Taste of Slow Food. Already certified organic, the producers are currently in discussions with other local producers interested in converting to organic. Unfortunately, the region falls outside the LEADER area. The entrepreneurial success of Calypso is both inspiring and spearheading the creation of a cluster of producers. This will help reduce production costs, increasing yields and increase the land area managed under sustainable land use practices in the region.

*The indigenous Makri olive trees are some of the most northerly populations of Olea europaea in the world. They grow in a unique microclimate of cold winters and dry summers.*



*Olive oil is only part of the Calypso story, which stretches back over many generations. Photo: Calypso.*

In Calypso, the olive grove is treated as a living ecosystem through the application of sustainable methods of autonomous management, following an approach that is in harmony with the rhythms of nature. Conservation of local biodiversity is the farmers' strongest incentive, which is expressed by the large number of herbs and tree species, including almond, plum and apricot trees in some fields, as well as local vegetable varieties growing under the olive trees. They produce an olive oil that comes from carefully cultivated trees thriving in clean, healthy soils. The cultivation follows

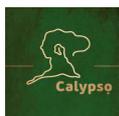


To ensure the trees will still be carrying fruit for future generations, a lot of the harvesting is done by hand. Photo: Calypso.

innovative methods to increase fertility, always respecting the biodiversity and the structure of the soil. The aim is to gradually increase organic matter, with the application of organic plant and animal manure, leguminous plants, zeolite, effective microorganisms and our own farm-made organic compost.

The story of how Calypso Oil has formed and now operates is a story of traditional methods fusing with agroecological practices. It also signposts how young farmers can find a way to get the best returns for their produce, while also working together and with quality labels such as PDO, Ark of Taste and organic certification.

CONTACT:



Calypso Single Varietal Extra Virgin Olive Oil  
calypsotree.com

**KEY FACTS**

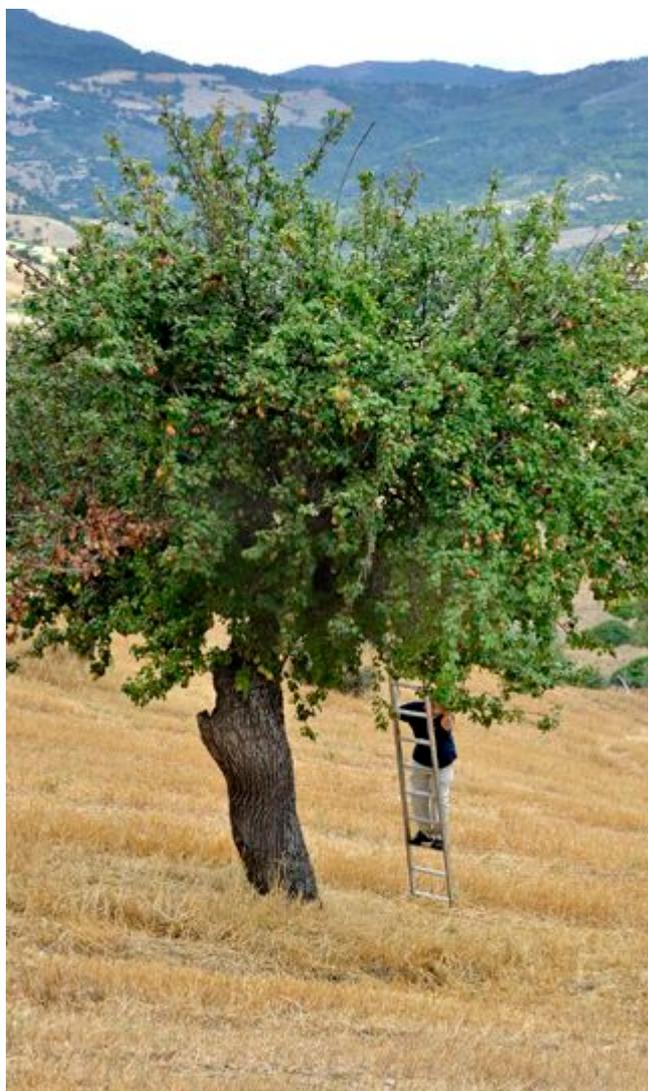


- Family - owned olive farms can operate profitably using traditional methods
- quality labels and organic certification can be beneficial in helping to develop and promote agroecological production methods as well as sales
- Producers share the story of Calypso project with consumers

# Pear trees and cereals: a traditional Italian pairing in the Sinni valley

**The modern story of an 18th century fruit - the Sinni Valley Signora pear - is also a story of agroecology.** It is a story of revitalising food and rural communities; of producers working together using aspects of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy, and of Slow Food Presidia helping this agroecological approach develop.

Documented since the 18th century, the cultivation of the Sinni Valley Signora pear has played an important role over the centuries in the agricultural areas of Matera. In the last 30 years, this local ecotype faced extinction: the establishment of large scale specialised fruit farms in the valley led to the



*Pear trees in the middle of cereal crops are an historic throwback to pre-industrial farming. Photo: Giuseppe Cucco.*

abandonment of the agricultural activities that typified the surrounding hills (cereals and fruit trees), hence to the abandonment of the Signora pear too. Moreover, pear trees cultivated in cereal fields were removed, so as not to impede mechanised farming and harvesting. Only a few trees survived in marginal areas. This loss of agro-biodiversity is widespread in Europe and worldwide, as also documented by the FAO.

Slow Food Presidia aim to sustain quality production at risk of extinction, to protect unique regions and ecosystems, to recover traditional processing methods and to safeguard native breeds and local plant varieties.

The Presidium of Sinni Valley Signora Pear was established by Slow Food with the support of the Local Action Group. The aim was to protect the remaining trees in the area and to encourage new cultivation. The latter was to be done by supporting the creation of small professional fruit fields of local ecotypes on the hills, where the microclimate is ideal. The Presidium involves 20 producers, united in an association, cultivating approximately two ha of land each, counting overall 357 productive adult plants.

Slow Food launched the Presidium by facilitating the creation of a producers' association and carrying out field visits to collect data to draft the production protocol. Slow Food assists the producers (by organizing training and exchanges), promotes the producers and their product through its communication channels and events, and relies on its network to link producers with consumers (by involving chefs and supporting forms of direct selling). The Local Action Group supports the costs incurred for the development of the Presidium, through the Leader+ programme (Pillar 2 of the CAP).

By promoting a product with a strong identity, the Presidium helps the local community to focus production in a different direction to that dictated by the principles of mass produced

*The Sinni Valley Signora pear was almost completely cleared to make way for the mechanised harvesting machinery used on surrounding cereal crops. Only 357 trees still remain in marginal areas.*

agribusiness, refocusing on the development of landscape, biodiversity, agroecological practices, enriching ecosystem services. The Presidia promote good products, namely with distinctive sensory qualities; clean products, produced using sustainable methods that respect the local environment; and fair products, produced in a way that respects people's rights and culture, while assuring them a reasonable financial return.

Italy can support similar initiatives in the framework of the Rural Development Plans and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EUR 10.4 billion).

Slow Food Presidia represents a development model for traditional productions realised by small groups of producers, which can be applied to other products and other contexts.

A study analysing the sociocultural, agro-environmental and economic sustainability of European Presidia reported significant positive results of the Presidia across the sustainability scales. A substantial increase was observed in sociocultural sustainability, due to the significant increase in internal relations within the producer group and their external relations, greater producer awareness of the value of their work and product, better producer's organisation and negotiating power. Positive results were also recorded on the agro-environmental sustainability scale (e.g. involving a general reduction in the use of synthetic chemicals for plant-based products) and on the economic scale. Alternative energies and packaging materials with low environmental impact need to be further encouraged.

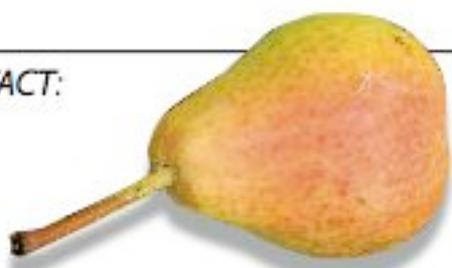
On the wider scale and in the Sinni Valley then, Slow Food Presidia help encourage the development of agroecological communities of practice.



*The true value of Sinni Valley's Signora pear trees is now starting to be rediscovered by a new generation. Photo: Giuseppe Cucco.*

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**CONTACT:**



Sinni Valley Signora Pear Producers' Association

<http://presidislowfood.it/italian-presidia/details/6324/sinni-valley-signora-pear>

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## **KEY FACTS**



- **The Sinni Valley Signora Pear Presidium has helped to preserve a traditional crop, which is now viable once more**
- **Slow Food can help farmers, chefs, rural development organisations, eg LEADER, consumers and other stakeholders to support environmentally important foods**

# Rebuilding Manchester's local food economy from the ground up

**Short food chains and local food can be good ways to reduce waste and have a lighter carbon footprint.** Increasingly too, eateries, including catering outlets, are looking for healthy organic fruits and vegetables, while lots of young people would love to get growing, but lack land. Manchester Veg People show that cooperatives can be formed which bring these strands together.

Once a cradle of the industrial revolution, Manchester is starting its own food revolution, from the ground up! UK Cooperative Manchester Veg People brings land access, training, growing and catering together into one coherent agri-food network. This is a working agroecological community in practice, one that shows us how the Common Agricultural Policy can best be used and where some of the limits are.

A cluster of organisations called the Kindling Trust (co-founded by Chris Walsh and Helen Woodcock) is committed to rebuilding the local food economy. Rather than dealing with one aspect of a supply chain, they are trying to build a small-scale food supply system for the whole of Manchester.

Just one of the organisations working with the Kindling Trust is the Manchester Veg People cooperative, supplying organic fresh produce across Greater Manchester. Both growers and

buyers can join, and they ensure fair prices for growers, many of them in the county of Cheshire.

Buyers include many restaurants, from gastro pubs and delis to bistros and haute cuisine. Shops include grocery stores and vegetarian co-ops. Catering clients range from the intimate to a university campus.

Manchester Veg People is supported by the English Rural Development Programme. This EU Rural Development funding, part of the Common Agricultural Policy, the CAP, pays for a project co-ordinator, contributes towards a refrigerated van, cold storage facilities, crates and branding. Other necessary funds were generated by online crowd funding.

This part of the rural development measure tries to better integrate farmers into the food chain, through promotion schemes aimed at quality food and in this way, farmers can add value to their products: they can become more competitive. Because they are helped to promote their goods, they can find local markets, and that helps to achieve a major policy goal: building up local economies and short supply chains.

Short food chains and local food are also good to reduce waste and have a lighter carbon footprint due shorter distances to transport goods. But those environmental aspects are not costed, so imported produce can look cheaper. That is where the grower-buyer relationship is important. The buyers see all the benefits, so are less likely to complain about price.

Part of the project is building up small farms: 25 km south west of Manchester is the first FarmStart site, it comprises 10 ha of land at Abbey Leys, an organic farm. Aspiring growers are first trained up (as "TestCroppers"), then start growing crops on their own quarter acre (0.6ha) (as "FarmStarters"). Yet because the UK only gives CAP basic payments to farms above 5ha, the dozen or so organic food producers will not qualify for Pillar I support.

*By joining the cooperative as buying members, foodservice buyers understand the pricing of their purchases and have complete transparency in their routine dealings with MVP growers*



Not every foodservice kitchen is equipped or staffed to peel potatoes fresh from the field. Photo: Manchester Veg People.

The long-term objective is to have four FarmStart sites. One planned at Stockport would cover the south-east corner of Manchester. Walsh is also keen to establish a site for organic fruit production, since there is a huge demand.

Manchester Veg People ticks lots of important boxes. It is a really well integrated quality regional food system. It supports a local mixed organic farm, giving them the opportunity to diversify into a new area. It gives people access to and to grow on; and it provides training and also larger plots as participants learn.

Aspects of CAP are used, while some of CAP limitations are also exposed. Nevertheless, Manchester Veg People is a viable expression of agroecological communities of practice.



*Salad days: by supplying only local customers, fresh produce is often delivered the day it is picked. Photo: Manchester Veg People.*

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CONTACT:



Manchester Veg People  
vegpeople.org.uk

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## KEY FACTS



- Both buyers and growers join the cooperative, ensuring complete price transparency
- local food cannot always be delivered in forms that catering kitchens can use directly
- wide variations in kitchen equipment and layouts can exclude otherwise keen public sector clients

# Sharing knowledge and experience in Leitrim Organic Farmers' Coop

**The Leitrim organic farmers' co-op (LOFC) does a rare thing in Ireland: it brings livestock farmers together, to act as a unified group.** LOFC has really spearheaded the development of organic livestock farming using traditional breeds, eating a largely permanent pasture, grass fed diet. And it has done so in an especially marginalised part of Ireland. It has encouraged the development of a typically agroecological type of organic farming, with farmer to farmer connections, the development of local markets, and the development of member-focused learning.

If acronyms can be sardonic, then calling the Border, Midland West region of Ireland the BMW region probably fits the bill. This part of Ireland has been marginalised in many ways. It has

*LOFC has secured local markets and better prices for its members' meat than are found in some more affluent parts of Ireland. This means that members do not have to be passive price-takers.*

more rain but less investment, more challenging land and less economic activity than most of the rest of the island. The population is sparse and the topography hilly. This is the land of the stony grey soil. Into this stark setting stepped the Leitrim Organic Farmers' Coop (LOFC) in 1998.

This vibrant organisation now has 170 farmer members, mostly cattle farmers with traditional British and Irish breeds such as Herefords, Angus and Shorthorn.

"DNA analysis tells you that 96% of our beef come from either British or Irish breeds on at least one side" John Brennan

of LOFC says. These breeds are well suited to the conditions, where extended outdoor pasture-based grazing is the norm. This reduces the need for imported feeds, on which continental animals like Charolais or Limousins are more dependent.

When feeds are required, be it a crop or farm-based distribution of organic feed, the coop brings farmers together. Farmer to farmer connections are made, face-to-face, on the phone or on the LOFC's website. Livestock, too, are bought and sold through this route.

All members are in the organic farming scheme, so the inputs and processes of industrialised farming (synthetic pesticides and mineral fertilizers), dependent as they are on finite resources such as fossil fuels, are not part of the farming systems employed. And the beauty of the organic farming rules, which insist on a lower stocking rate, is that higher stocking rates would be difficult and completely inappropriate in these regions anyway.

Finding markets for members is a core part of what LOFC does. It has established farmers' markets and mobile butchers to supply these and other markets with local meats. This means that members have local outlets too.

On the larger scale, LOFC both created the demand for and is actively involved in organising organic cattle marts. Members have achieved good, often better prices than organic meat achieves in the wealthier parts of Ireland. They also bring vital competition to the organic beef processing sector. In Ireland livestock farmers, unlike dairy farmers, are isolated price takers.

Learning and education is the other main aim of the coop. The organisation runs programmes for beef and sheep farmer discussion groups: these are led by members. Six events are held yearly in this programme. LOFC helped to establish the National Organic Training Skillsnet, which works with almost



*Close-up view: a group gets down to identifying the key plant species that can be found in organic meadows. Photos: LOFC.*



Grandstand view: farm visits are an integral part of the LOFC programme. Photos: LOFC.

700 people per year, doing about 70 courses and about 6,000 training days. Training is open to all - not just organic farmers - and is subsidised (up to 100% for low income participants in some cases).

The training really focuses on value adding for small to medium producers, and is often peer-led, from hoof care to ice cream making, agroforestry to meat curing. Even the social media training is delivered by a farmer who uses it successfully.

“Certified organic or not, we always encourage the use of organic systems and methods with whoever gets in contact with us for advice or training,” Brennan adds.

With good market prices, group learning initiatives, and the certified organic farming of suitable traditional breeds, the Leitrim Organic Farmers co-op leads the way in agroecological approaches to farming in Ireland.

**CONTACT:**



Leitrim Organic Farmers' Cooperative  
leitrimorganic.com

**KEY FACTS**



- LOFC helps members to gain market access
- Creating demand for organic meat
- Earns good prices for members' production
- Full education programme and agricultural discussion groups
- Training open to all, with a clear focus on adding value for small to medium producers.

# Adding value to organic fruit and vegetables in the Carpathians

**The Lower Carpathian region and Roztocze in the south-east of Poland are well known for their good climatic and soil conditions, ideal for fruit production, with good soils and a long growing period.** While the hills and small farm structure were not conducive to intensive or industrial agriculture, organic fruit farming was seen as a viable option from the 1990s onwards. In a 10-year period in the voivodeship or province of Podkarpackie, the numbers went from just a dozen organic farms to about 2,000 by 2011.

The farmers established an association called "Truskawka" (Strawberry), and producer group "Bio-Food Roztocze". The Polish Rural Development Plan supported an investment of around 8 million złoty (2 million EUR) in 2012. Currently about 100 farmers are members of the producer group, which owns its own sorting building, under a measure aimed to support establishment of producer groups or cooperatives.

The building was operational in 2012 and represents an investment of about 8 million złoty (EUR 2 million), made with the support of the Rural Development Plan, under the measure "Supporting setting up of producer groups". The farmers bring the produce in standardised boxes that were also bought by the producer group. After preliminary sorting, these go directly to the cooling and freezing facility.

The annual turnover of the producer group Bio-Food Roztocze is about 5 million złoty (more than EUR 1 million) and is growing. The main range is fruit: strawberries,

gooseberries, blackcurrants and redcurrants, raspberries, aronia, sour cherries and apples. There is also a range of vegetables: runner beans, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflowers, pumpkins, leeks, cabbages and rhubarb.

The farms are rather small, ranging from 2 to 10 ha, many have small plots of 0.2 to 0.4 ha, which are often scattered across one or two villages. To manage this, some farmers have bought small tractors or harvesting machines for blackcurrants. This has been made possible by the use of the measure "Modernisation of agricultural holdings." Some farmers also qualify for support under the measure "Supporting farmers who participate in food quality schemes".

There are still old orchards on some farms. These were planted by the current farmers' fathers or grandfathers between 40 and 60 years ago. The varieties are old ones, sometimes historical varieties of Ukrainian origin. The trees yield up to a tonne of fruit per tree. The apples are collected and processed for juice or apple juice concentrate and sold on the European market and sometimes to American customers. In this way the agricultural biodiversity is really

protected by the practice of using the crop. This is one of the best ways to protect biodiversity, since the existing market will ensure that the old trees will be kept on and not replaced by industrially standardised, modern small trees.

All the farmers are certified organic and they are supported by the agri-environmental programme - measure Organic Farming (approximately EUR 400 per ha). The producer group helps to develop a collective efficiency by organizing shared purchasing of seeds, plants such as strawberries and raspberries, as well as biological plant protection products and fertilizers authorised for use in organic agriculture.

Tomasz Obszanski has developed a small processing unit on his farm. There, he built a unit to cold-press rapeseed oil, with support under the measure "Diversification into non-

*Established apple orchards, planted by fathers and grandfathers of current farmers contain historic regional varieties. Yielding about a ton of apples per tree, the fruit is picked for juice or concentrate production.*



Checking soft fruit on its way to the cooperative's freezing line.  
Photo: Dorota Metera.



The new Bio-Food Roztocze fruit processing facility centralises storage and distribution. Photo: Dorota Metera.

agriculture activities.” He has also established a small company - Barwy zdrowia (The colours of the health): he sells his products and the products of neighbouring organic farmers in his farmshop.

Every weekend he travels 400 km each way in a minibus to Warsaw and to Katowice, where he sells his vegetables at a weekly organic market - Biobazar. This market is located at a former manufacturing site, which gives the place has a real post-modernist atmosphere. The crowded Biobazar is visited by thousands customers every Saturday.

It is long way from the hills of south-east Poland to the environmentally-aware customers in the capital. It is long, not only in terms of the 800 km round trip, but also in terms of the daily work over the past 10 years, to develop organic farming and to conserve traditional landscapes and biodiversity.

In order to support practices like the one of Bio-Food Roztocze, governments should increase their support for organic farming and funding for producer groups for organic food as well as for quality schemes under the new CAP.

By stocking locally adapted varieties, converting to organic, forming producer groups and adding value for themselves as both a group and as individuals, these Polish farmers are making the most of CAP to help them operate agro-ecologically.

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**CONTACT:**

Bio-Food Roztocze Sp. z.o.o. Grupa producentów  
bfr.net.pl

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Established orchards planted up by past generations have found a new lease of life for juice production. Photo: Dorota Metera.

**KEY FACTS**



- Opportunity to promote organic fruit for mainstream markets
- Flexible structure can include holdings as small as 0.2 hectares
- Supports jobs on small farms
- New outlet for heritage apple varieties retains existing diversity with established, traditional full-size trees

# A landscape with livestock needs local abattoirs to survive intact

**Over the past two years, west France's agrifood heartland has been hit by a series of company failures and job losses.** The Doux poultry group and rival Tilly Sabco both had business models based on third country poultry exports which used to qualify for export restitutions based on the cereals fed to the birds. Struggling pig slaughtering and processing business Gad was bought up by one of France's large agricultural cooperatives, which was unable to turn the business round, before closing one abattoir and finally selling off what was left of the business.

As local and national political figures vie for the limelight to save the failing food industry giants, the plight of small, local abattoirs goes unreported.

Local slaughterhouses are an indispensable but often ignored part of regional food chains. They are a missing link in an



*The independent butchery trade depends on local abattoirs for its day to day procurement needs. Photo: Fotolia.*

agroecological food system, which may well have high environmental and other standards on the farm, but then involve very long distances to slaughter. This is not optimal, from an animal stress or local food system perspective.

There are few alternatives. Mobile slaughterhouses are not adapted to large animal units like cattle and on-farm slaughterhouses are forbidden. Even where they are still allowed, for example in Germany and Spain, the hygiene rules are the same as for the larger scale abattoir buildings. There can thus be a lack of economy of scale and profitability for these very small scale options: just a handful of breeders are likely to be profitable long-term.

Jean-Claude Galland, a breeder in the Indre et Loire departement (Centre region) and once a representative on the Chamber of Agriculture explains the work he has done to keep a local abattoir going. "Over the past 15 years, five slaughterhouses have stopped. Many of them were family businesses with no succession. Nor did they invest in new equipment to meet hygiene standards." He has set up a local development project based on short supply chains including breeders and butchers as key partners.

Upgrading hygiene standards had kept the abattoir in business. But the 100-year old town centre premises is holding the business back, despite having "the volumes and the expertise."

Working with a small team of motivated people, with the goodwill of many farmers, Galland and his colleagues started lobbying local policymakers and recruited the support of Chambers of Agriculture, as well as Chambers of Commerce and artisan associations. Land has been made available by the inter-commune local authorities. Local schools have committed to buy meat from the new abattoir and the Mayor of Tours sees the new slaughterhouse as a way of meeting some religious slaughtering requirements.

The main aim is to promote local meat production for retail butchers, adding value to their businesses and offering better quality products. By operating a local slaughterhouse, processing 700 tonnes of meat a year, the business also supports numerous livestock breeders, including those who sell their pork, beef or lamb directly to their own customers.

"If a local abattoir closes, it's too late," explains Galland. "So we need to plan ahead. That's what some farmers in local food chains did when they realised that the last remaining abattoir faces problems." The result is a cooperative business structure



*Livestock is as much part of the rural economy as it is of the landscape. Access to agricultural infrastructure is essential. Photo Fotolia.*

based on France's new SCIC (Société civile d'intérêt coopératif) framework, which allows consumers and consumer associations to join.

The project is built around offering a multi-species service, with a cutting and boning workshop. It has a target of 700 tonnes of meat a year to become viable. The catchment area extends over an 80-kilometre radius. The budget for this project is EUR 3 million, with the expected support of EAFRD (CAP Pillar 2) of EUR 143,000 and with significant regional and local grants. The new slaughterhouse is scheduled to open in 2016.

This regional case in France shows how a future for livestock farming exists using local markets. Local food systems can take into account all the animal production chains including the processing stage for diverse animal categories. Local slaughterhouses are thus a key piece of local food chains. This case study shows how local and regional authorities are becoming influential driving forces favouring local food systems. From 2014, French regions are management authorities for Rural Development Programmes, so have the power to make the most of CAP for their territories.

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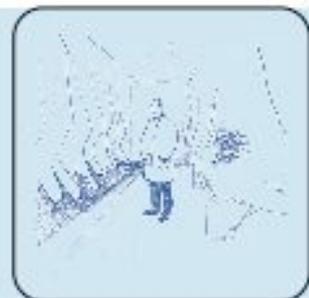
**CONTACT:**

Bourgueuil multi-species abattoir

[http://www.indre-et-loire.chambagri.fr/fileadmin/documents/site\\_1/internet/AgricultureProximite/Plaqueette\\_Ab-Bourgueuil-imprimeur\\_01.pdf](http://www.indre-et-loire.chambagri.fr/fileadmin/documents/site_1/internet/AgricultureProximite/Plaqueette_Ab-Bourgueuil-imprimeur_01.pdf)

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**KEY FACTS**



- **Development of links between farmers and butchers who choose local food chains**
- **Essential rural infrastructure for livestock sector**
- **Multi-species abattoir complying with EU hygiene standards including beef, veal, sheep, goat, pig, horse**
- **More than 150 breeders**
- **700 tonnes/year needed to become viable**

# The Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society initiative

**Ecological Recycling Agriculture (ERA) is a form of organic farming based on the full utilisation of local and renewable resources to better manage and recycle nutrients.** In the Baltic Sea region agriculture has accounted for about 50% of nitrogen and phosphorus leakage leading to high levels of water pollution. The ERA concept was developed by the Building Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Societies (BERAS) - an international network - set up to respond to the negative impact of intensive and specialised conventional arable and livestock farms in the region. BERAS works with farmer organisations, advisory bodies, research institutions and local governments to promote sustainable production, consumption and livelihoods in the Baltic region.

Between 2003 and 2005 BERAS conducted pilot studies on 48 organic farms in eight countries surrounding the Baltic Sea to evaluate and demonstrate the potential of organic farming practices to reduce the negative effects of intensive agricultural practices especially on the marine environment.



*Algal blooms in the Baltic Sea have been visible from space since 2005, when this dramatic NASA picture was taken. Photo: USGS/NASA/Landsat 7.*

Activities also included engagement with established local and organic food and farming initiatives in each country to promote exchange on the obstacles and solutions for change. The environmental benefits and social impact of ERA vis-à-vis conventional agriculture were also assessed as well as the possibilities and economic implications of converting to organic farming and applying the ERA practices. The aim is to achieve a good balance between crop and livestock enterprises and to use and recycle local renewable resources through practices such as crop rotation, the cultivation of nitrogen-fixing crops and manure management in order to increase farm self-sufficiency and significantly reduce nutrient losses. Organic farming in combination with the ERA practices have the potential to reduce nitrogen surpluses by more than 50%, avoid synthetic inputs, improve soil fertility and biodiversity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance rural development and the regional food supply.

*The Baltic's legacy from industrialised farming requires a carefully planned, integrated toolbox that takes regional factors into account, while still applying the evergreen organic principle of 'thinking locally, acting global'.*

Between 2010 and 2013 BERAS has worked to promote and implement its findings on a whole food chain basis. This has involved cooperation with 42 farms to develop and communicate good farming practice, and the establishment of 20 information centres across nine Baltic countries to demonstrate and advocate conversion to organic farming and the uptake of ERA practices, as well as to develop networks of Sustainable Food Societies (SFS) from farm to fork. The information centres serve as education and training forums for farmers, policymakers, teachers, students and the general public. Centres provide practical farming guidance on the implementation of agronomic practices proven to support more efficient nutrient management on and between farms during and after conversion. A range of agroecological practices are covered from building soil fertility and crop rotation design to plant protection, animal husbandry and manure management. Agronomic guidance is supported by tools such as a nitrogen budget calculator and an organic crop



*The BERAS network reflects a shared need to restore the Baltic farming environment. Photo: Fotolia*

rotation planner. Learning material is complemented by additional guidance related to economic planning for the conversion process, and market development as well as farm case study overviews. In addition the learning centres place a strong emphasis on consumer and SME engagement in the development of a Diet for a Clean Baltic (DCB) which is based on the concept of healthy, high-quality and seasonal organic and local production, reduced meat consumption and food waste.

BERAS shows just what can be done when farmers have the opportunity to put into practice a whole farm approach to nutrient management and recycling. The BERAS project also shows just how comprehensive regional approaches to food systems can be.

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**CONTACT:**



Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society (BERAS)

beras.eu

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## **KEY FACTS**



- Intensive farming contributes to excessive nutrients in water environments, causing significant pollution
- Better nutrient management can be achieved by applying organic and agroecological practices
- A wide range of stakeholders can be integrated into this better way to produce food

# Grassland protection and building Ecological Focus Areas in Germany

**At EU level, the German Ministry of Agriculture was one of the harshest critics and opponents of the approach adopted by the European Commission to reform direct payments and make them "greener and fairer".** Berlin rejected both capping (a business-level ceiling on payments) and compulsory greening (environmental rules for direct payments). This position is also reflected in the national implementation of the CAP reform. But two things remain as positive outcomes for the discussion at an EU level: the protection of permanent grasslands as well as the ban of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides from some ecologic focus areas. Although this German ban has not yet been applied, it shows possibilities in EU regulation.

Germany, along with Belgium (Flanders), is the only EU Member State in favour of an authorisation system at farm level for the conversion of permanent grassland within greening. Post 2015, every holding seeking to transform

permanent grassland into, for example, arable land, must have authorisation to do so. The compulsory authorisation is applicable immediately and not just when the percentage of permanent grassland in the region has dropped by a further 5%. German law specifies the situations in which such conversion must be approved by regional authorities:

- when the permanent grassland was created after 2014;
- when another area in the region of the same size is to be converted to permanent grassland;
- when the permanent grassland in question has been created because of the requirements of agri-environmental measures.

If a holding were to convert permanent grassland into arable land without authorisation, the greening payment and, in some cases, even further elements of its direct payments would be cut.

If the percentage of permanent grassland in a region drops by 5% despite the compulsory authorisation, no further conversions will be authorised and an obligation to restore or create new permanent grassland will come into force.

The implementation of greening with respect to maintenance of permanent grassland is a positive development. However, the picture is tainted by the fact that only Flora-Fauna-Habitat (FFH) areas qualify as environmentally-sensitive permanent grassland. This means that permanent grassland located in moors and wetlands not included in the FFH areas can be ploughed up to plant new grasses. This would have a negative effect on environmental and climate protection.

As a grassland type, permanent grassland - especially when managed with reduced fertilizers use - performs well for erosion prevention, maintenance of soil fertility, as a carbon sink, for biodiversity including as a habitat for specific fauna and flora and for landscape and natural heritage formation more generally.

For the recent round of CAP reform, two issues were intensively debated in Germany - what types of areas should be deemed ecological focus areas and whether the use of pesticides and fertilizers should be allowed in them. Eventually, all 19 possible area types included in the EU regulation, including catch crops and undersown grass also in maize, were accepted. The use of pesticides and mineral fertilizers is, however, prohibited for catch crops and undersowing grass from the harvest of the previous crop up to the



*The new German laws to protect permanent grassland are very strict and involve penalties. Photo: MH*



German debate on Ecological Focus Areas gives an idea of what can be achieved under EU regulations. Photo: MH

end of the claim year. However, pesticides or mineral fertilizers in this interim period are not used on these areas anyway. These areas can only be treated with manure, which can also be used in ecological focus areas. This temporary ban on plant spraying and mineral fertilizers can therefore be only seen as a symbolic gain in the political framework. But it shows that such a ban is possible under EU regulation.

The case of Germany shows that each Member State, or region, has the power to make the most of the CAP. There are options and opportunities everywhere, as the partial ban on pesticides and mineral fertilizers in Ecological Focus Areas shows. Likewise, the maintenance of permanent pastures as an approach, whether at farm or regional level, is beneficial environmentally. Ecological Focus Areas - an agroecological idea and practice introduced into the Pillar 1 Direct Payments - show what is possible in terms of best environmental practice. These areas, however, need protecting from chemical inputs in each region and Member State.

CONTACT:



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## KEY FACTS



- There are numerous environmental benefits to permanent grasslands and some to ecological focus areas
- Germany has opted for compulsory authorisation for the conversion of permanent grasslands.
- While these rules have limits, they still show what is possible under the rules of CAP.

# Flowering meadows are a continuous food source for pollinators

**Good management of traditional meadows serves a number of purposes including grazing for livestock, protecting biodiversity and supporting pollination. To this end, Flowering Meadows initiatives have been established across France to preserve the ecology and biodiversity of grasslands.** These initiatives seek to promote, among farmers and local communities, the importance of preserving traditional meadows and at the same time, communicate the strong correlation between biodiversity management and high quality produce such as milk, cheese and meat. This includes highlighting the added value of promoting environmental delivery in product marketing.

As part of the original *Flowering Meadows* scheme, farmers in conservation areas - primarily designated Natura 2000 areas - receive agri-environmental payments for maintaining species-rich grasslands. The scheme which is applied at field level combines different management practices such as limitations on the use of fertiliser and stocking densities. Farmers are required to demonstrate that at least four different types of plants species can be found across the managed meadow. Importantly, payments are results-based and so are linked to what is actually achieved. This incentivises farmers to go a step further, and places them at the heart of

the process where they take the lead in adopting good grassland management practices. So, as a result, farmers decide when to mow, or when to use different inputs, based on what they think will work with their own local, on-farm conditions. And farmers, not arbitrary calendar dates, are the driving force. This increases farmer autonomy, and is an innovative approach found in a few other agri-environmental schemes in the EU.

Concurrently, farmers develop an understanding of the importance of maintaining semi-natural grasslands for livestock production. Training sessions and guidelines are also provided to farmers to support participation and the uptake of management practices. To this end farmers understand better how to protect and enhance the management of agro-ecosystems. Farmers not located in these areas can also participate, however organisers of similar initiatives must self-finance themselves, which can often be a major obstacle to the extension of the original scheme.

The *Flowering Meadows* approach is linked to an annual competition which has helped to encourage greater farmer participation. The first competition was organised in 2007 in the Massif des Bauges and helped to demonstrate that species richness can be combined with a viable fodder production. This was followed with the launch of similar competitions by other federations of regional and national parks in 2010.



Award winners in the Vosges gain recognition through the Concours Général Agricole. Photo: Jean-Marie Henry (PNR du Ballon des Vosges)

Competitions includes a field test by experts to assess the ecological quality of the meadow - including the different grass and flower types associated with local and regional conditions. Above all it examines whether farmers maintain a good balance between agricultural production and environmental management and the extent to which this can contribute to quality of life in local communities. During the field tests, different experts - from agriculturalists, to ecologists to beekeepers - accompany farmers in their fields. They assess the farmers' meadows in terms of the contribution of species richness to forage production (quality, palatability, flexibility) and farmer's ability to maintain or enhance biodiversity. The whole process is followed up by feedback sessions and questionnaires with a national working group established to develop assessment criteria and guidance. The scheme now has its own website and an annual bulletin created to promote the competition.

The *Flowering Meadows* initiative has been adopted by 33 out of 46 Regional Parks and the six National Parks organise local contests over the last seven years with some parks holding joint contests together with bordering parks in neighbouring countries. The whole project is built on the enhancement of sustainable management practices in grassland areas. It helps to give a better image of the value of agroecological approaches to farmers and how these methods can help to improve their land and productivity. It also gives farmers the opportunity to feel that their work is recognised and rewarded. In 2014 the *Flowering Meadows* competition became part of France's prestigious General Agriculture Competition (Concours Général Agricole).



*The judges for the Concours Général Agricole are looking for diversity in both flora and fauna. Photo: Vincent Ruin (Chambre d'Agriculture Savoie-Mont Blanc).*

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CONTACT:



Concours Général Agricole  
 prairiesfleuries.espaces-naturels.fr

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### KEY FACTS



- Protects habitats for pollinator populations
- Diversified flora ensures constant supply of nectar throughout the growing season
- Farm trials proved that flowering meadows can be a good source of fodder for livestock
- Take-up of extensive farming practices in regional parks

# More about the CAP

**Since 1999 the CAP architecture has been divided into two pillars. Pillar 1 funds market intervention measures and direct aid to farmers while Pillar 2 is intended to support rural development and in particular environmental measures.** At EU level, annual Pillar 1 direct aids represent 70%; market measures 10%, while multi-annual Pillar 2 schemes only 20% of the total CAP budget.

## **Pillar 1 measures 100% financed by the EU include:**

- a basic payment scheme: decoupled payments per ha which are not linked to production. Depending on each Member State's history these payments will progressively converge towards a more uniform rate per ha by 2019;
- an optional top-up payment: applicable to the first 30ha to support small and medium size farm-holdings in a case where a Member states does not apply any cut on direct aids above EUR 150,000 per beneficiary;
- greening payment : a new payment corresponding to 30% of total direct aid which is subject to three measures - crop diversification, protection of permanent pastures and grasslands, and a minimum of 5% farmland managed as an ecological focus areas. Some farms are exempt from these measures, due to their size and production. Organic farms are recognised for their environmental delivery and therefore qualify automatically;
- young farmer aid, up to 2% of the national envelope;
- coupled payments: can represent up to 15% of the national envelope, paid per ha or per animal, for some specific sectors facing economic, social or territorial difficulties. The cultivation of proteins crops is also included;
- a common market organisation: includes a range of measures such as a safety net, producer organisation and inter-branch organisations schemes, a vineyard planting regime.

## **Pillar 2 measures cofinanced by the EU and Member States include:**

- knowledge exchange
- farm modernisation and young farmers
- less favoured areas
- agri-environmental and climate schemes
- organic farming
- basic services and village renewal
- LEADER scheme

Measures are part of seven-year Rural Development Programmes managed by national or regional authorities and approved *ex-ante* by the European Commission. Member states have a lot of flexibility to implement measures of their choosing - with the exception of agri-environmental and LEADER components which are compulsory. However they still have to respect financial rules and some cross compliance measures (e.g. EU regulations, good agricultural and environmental conditions...) otherwise some penalties may arise.

# Transitioning the CAP towards more agroecological approaches

The case studies in this publication highlight different ways farmers and citizens are already making the transition towards food sovereignty and agroecological approaches. It shows the ambitious pathways communities are taking in the pursuit of more sustainable livelihoods that can really stimulate a greener economy, job creation and better well-being for people.

## **A CAP that supports farmers and citizens engaged in agroecological approaches**

With political will and investment this is what our food and farming systems could realistically look like in the future. It is now time for public policies to support this transition. Citizens demand farming systems that support the environment and sustainable rural-urban food economies - it is the responsibility of the EU and national policymakers to ensure that CAP funding is used for this. Many Member States have already agreed spending priorities for supporting farm viability, environment and social inclusion, amongst others, in partnership agreements with the European Commission under the Common Strategic Framework 2014-2020. It is critical that these spending allocations are channelled towards initiatives similar to those highlighted in these case studies.

The CAP and in particular, Rural Development measures should be used only to fund farmers and food enterprises delivering for the environment and people. These can include supporting organic farming, quality products, cooperation and local and regional producers groups, agri-environment-climate, advisory services and agro-ecological innovation. In the process such support should stimulate the development of:

- Food production based on food sovereignty and agroecological approaches
- Community-led short supply chain development
- Agro-ecological knowledge transfer, advice and innovation

## **A CAP with ambitious agroecological investments and policy coherence**

Today, despite only representing a small fraction of the overall CAP budget, many measures available under Rural Development Programmes remain the best vehicle for supporting the necessary transitions - if implemented in the right way. Significantly more of the CAP budget needs to be invested to improve the sustainability of the food chain and support local economies and businesses. Over the coming years Member States must make a major shift in food policy and prioritise agro-ecological approaches by shifting money from the direct payments budget in order to target these measures available under rural development. This support needs to be strongly aligned to other EU and national funds and policies to ensure coherence and maximise the impact of all, from the development of a sustainable food policy to greater investment in organic and other agroecological research and innovation.

The mid-term review of the Multi-annual Framework 2014-2020 scheduled for the end of 2016 is a key opportunity for EU Heads of State and government to show real leadership by dedicating a strong proportion of the CAP budget to the further transition towards agroecological production systems.

# Further reading

## EU institutions

European Commission

[ec.europa.eu/agriculture](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture)

European Parliament (Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development)

[europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/AGRI/home.html](http://europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/AGRI/home.html)

Council of the EU

[consilium.europa.eu/en/topics/agriculture](http://consilium.europa.eu/en/topics/agriculture)

Committee of the Regions

[cor.europa.eu](http://cor.europa.eu)

European Court of Auditors

[eca.europa.eu](http://eca.europa.eu)

European Economic and Social Committee

[eesc.europa.eu](http://eesc.europa.eu)

Eurostat

[epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu)

## NGOs, platforms and think-tanks

ARC 2020

[arc2020.eu](http://arc2020.eu)

Friends of the Earth Europe

[foeurope.org/agriculture](http://foeurope.org/agriculture)

IFOAM EU Group

[ifoam-eu.org](http://ifoam-eu.org)

European Network for Rural Development

[enrd.ec.europa.eu](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu)

Groupe de Bruges

[groupebruges.eu/e-learning](http://groupebruges.eu/e-learning)

Institute for Environmental European Policy

[cap2020.ieep.eu](http://cap2020.ieep.eu)

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

[iatp.org](http://iatp.org)

## Blogs

[capreform.eu](http://capreform.eu)

[tomascarciaazcarate.com](http://tomascarciaazcarate.com)

# Glossary

BERAS	Building Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Societies
BMW	Border Midland West region of Ireland
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CRIES	Resource Center for Ethical and Solidarity Initiatives
DCB	Diet for a Clean Baltic
DNA	DeoxyriboNucleic Acid, which provides the building blocks for chromosomes
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EFA	Ecological Focus Area
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
ERA	Ecological Recycling Agriculture
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FFH	Flora-Fauna Habitat
GLAS	Green, Low-carbon, Agri-environment Scheme
LOFC	Leitrim organic farmers co-op
MVP	Manchester Veg People cooperative
PDO	Protected Denomination of Origin
SCIC	Société coopérative d'intérêt collectif
SFC	Sustainable Food Societies
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
USAMV	University of Agricultural Sciences of Cluj-Napoca





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## **TRANSITIONING TOWARDS AGROECOLOGY: using the CAP to build new food systems**

This publication aims to showcase some successful examples from a number of different EU member states where a transition in agrifood systems is already taking place.

We have gathered here a number of farming and community project leaders, diligent observers of the CAP, actors in rural development, food systems and agroecology innovators. We believe that what they have to tell is important for the future of the CAP.

It gives some clear indications for the priorities that governments should have, if they are serious about making good use of public money for supporting and scaling up an agroecological transition.



Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer  
pour le Progrès de l'Homme

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