



## Press Release

Luxembourg, 21 May 2019

# Auditors scrutinise EU contribution to biodiversity in farming

The European Court of Auditors is conducting an audit to assess whether the EU's agricultural policy helps maintain and enhance biodiversity. In particular, the auditors will examine the design of the EU biodiversity strategy and its application in the common agricultural policy (CAP). They will also assess the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EU funding for biodiversity in farming.

Agricultural biodiversity refers to all ecosystems and life forms directly related to farming. This includes rare seed varieties and animal breeds, many organisms such as soil fauna, weeds, pests, predators, and all of the native plants and animals living on and passing through a farm. Biodiversity in the EU is in a continuous, strong decline, particularly as a result of farming activity.

On the eve of the International Day for Biological Diversity, the auditors have published an Audit Preview on EU support for biodiversity in farming. Audit Previews provide information on an ongoing audit task. They are designed as a source of information for those interested in the policy or programmes being audited.

*"One million species worldwide are at risk of extinction, a recent international report warns. In the EU, agriculture is the largest contributor to biodiversity loss", said Janusz Wojciechowski, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit. "Our audit will determine how helpful EU contribution has been to correct and even reverse this situation."*

In 2011, the EU adopted its current biodiversity strategy, which aims to help stop biodiversity loss by 2020. One of its main targets is to increase the contribution of agriculture to at least maintaining the same level of biodiversity. According to European Commission estimates, around €85 billion has been earmarked for the 2014-2020 period to tackle biodiversity loss. EU support for farmland biodiversity comes mainly from the CAP.

*The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' audit preview. The full preview is available at [eca.europa.eu](http://eca.europa.eu) in English.*

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The audit will assess the contribution of the EU's agriculture policy in the period 2014-2020 to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity by 2020. In particular, the auditors will examine whether:

- o the EU biodiversity strategy and the CAP legal framework were well-designed;
- o the Commission and the Member States have improved farming's contribution to biodiversity;
- o the Commission used pertinent, reliable and up-to-date information and data to monitor and evaluate the farmland biodiversity situation.

The audit will include visits to five Member States: Germany, Ireland, Poland, Cyprus and Romania.

### **Note to Editors**

The audit report is expected to be published by mid-2020.

Biodiversity has also been discussed in other recent ECA special reports, in particular those on:

- [greening](#), in which the auditors examined whether greening payments enhanced the CAP's environmental and climate performance;
- the [Natura 2000](#) network, on which significant progress is still needed if the EU's ambitious goals to protect biodiversity are to be met;
- the effectiveness of [cross-compliance](#) rules linking subsidies payments to environmental objectives;
- combating [eutrophication](#) in the Baltic Sea, in which the auditors examined whether EU action has been effective in helping Member States to reduce nutrient pollution.

On 6 May 2019, the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) released its Global Assessment report, which highlights nature's dangerous decline.