



Press Release

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Base future farm spending on ambitious and relevant performance targets, say EU Auditors

The European Court of Auditors has today called for future spending under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to be based on ambitious and relevant performance targets while also fully respecting the legality and regularity requirements. Funds also need to be spent where they can achieve significant EU added value, say the auditors.

The call comes in a briefing paper on the future of the CAP, in response to the European Commission's Communication on the future of food and farming after 2020. The CAP is currently under review, as the current seven-year planning period for EU finances ends in 2020.

Some CAP measures have unclear objectives, say the auditors. For example, the objective of the greening measure introduced with the last CAP reform – to enhance the CAP's environmental performance – lacked specific targets for the measure's contribution to the environment and climate. Objectives should be quantified where possible, not just for outputs, but also for results and impact.

“Agricultural funding may be allocated where it is likely to be fully spent, rather than where it addresses key needs and produces results”, said João Figueiredo, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the briefing paper. “This reflects a culture of spending rather than a culture of performance.”

The auditors acknowledge that the Commission has taken into account a number of recommendations they have made over several years, and the Commission has stated its ambition to deliver a new, performance-based framework. However, they note that some of the statistics do not meet the criteria they have set out in previous reports, and that the measures supported are likely to be similar to those supported in the past.

There is currently no EU statistical system capable of providing information on the living standards of the agricultural community. The auditors have repeatedly called for such data to be

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the briefing paper by the European Court of Auditors. The full paper is on www.eca.europa.eu.

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produced to inform policy aimed at ensuring a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, and for other CAP objectives.

A key element of the Commission's thinking is a "new delivery model" – based on increased flexibility and subsidiarity and giving Member States more responsibility for performance. In the auditors' view, the success of the new model requires:

- measures based on sound scientific and statistical evidence, that will clearly deliver the desired results;
- relevant, ambitious and verifiable targets for the new "CAP strategic plans", aligned with EU objectives;
- a robust performance monitoring and evaluation framework;
- a solid accountability and audit chain, providing assurance on both compliance and performance.

The ECA's briefing paper "Future of the CAP" is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in English. Other languages will be added shortly.