
Sustainable agrifood systems and ecosystem management

- **Purpose:** Ensure resilient food systems and protect biodiversity through sustainable practices.
- **Challenges:** Pressure from industrial agriculture, climate impacts, and market volatility.
- **Relevant EU Policies and Initiatives:** Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Farm to Fork Strategy, EU Biodiversity Strategy.¹
- **Opportunities for Rural Actors:** Farmers and rural networks can shape CAP strategic plans, promote agroecology, and engage in policy consultations.

MFF Insights²

- The MFF proposals ecosystem framing is both environmental (i.e. biodiversity, forests, soils) and industrial (innovation, competitiveness). The dual conceptualisation creates space for agroecological and digital transitions across the food chain, with potential synergies between food production, climate resilience, and ecosystem services.
- The reinforcement of the Do No Significant Harm principle strengthens safeguards, ensuring agri-food investments do not undermine biodiversity or water resources.
- However, the fragmentation across the Common Agricultural Policy, European Competitiveness Fund, and environmental funds risks (and paradoxically the new NRPP structure merging all existing programmed per Member States) risk diluting systemic change.
- The lack of coherent indicators for soil health, resource recycling, and resilience in food supply chains is a critical gap, making it difficult to track the real sustainability of rural agri-food transformations.

Questions

1. Sustainable agrifood systems and ecosystem management

1.1 How do we future-proof farming communities against depopulation and climate stress without locking them into subsidy dependence?

1.2 Can EU agrifood policy shift from “supporting farmers” to “supporting sustainable rural food systems” — and what would that mean in practice?

1.3 How to use EU tools to make biodiversity and soil health *profitable assets* instead of “burdensome compliance”?

EU Budget Specific

¹ Sinerma, J., & Pazos-Vidal, S. (2025). Analysis of EU policies around rural innovation, RURACTIVE Policy Brief. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15227863>

² AEIDL on behalf of RURACTIVE submission public consultation EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – implementing EU funding with Member States and regions - Feedback from: European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

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- a. How can EU tools and funds make biodiversity, soil health, and resource recycling profitable and visible assets for rural communities, rather than just regulatory obligations?
 - b. Given current gaps in indicators for soil health, resource efficiency, and food chain resilience, how can we develop metrics that track true sustainability and systemic transformation in rural agri-food systems?