



# HOW THE CAP IMPACTS ACCESS TO LAND

**SMALL FARMERS  
BIG SOLUTIONS**

**Land politics** – who controls what land, how it is used, for what purposes and to whose benefit – dictates how food you eat is produced, where it comes from and what you pay for it. It shapes rural communities, impacts climate change and biodiversity. Land politics both determine and are shaped by the distribution of subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), funded by public money. There is an intrinsic link between land and the CAP: More land means more subsidies, and a lack of transparency and concentration of power means powerful industry actors exert pressure to control access to land in order to reap the benefits of the CAP subsidies this land comes with.

**Land grabbing:** the control of larger than locally-typical amounts of land for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification<sup>1</sup>

**Land concentration:** large areas of land in the hands of fewer, increasingly powerful actors

**Land artificialisation:** the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses

What are the main issues related to land in Europe today?

How does the CAP influence land issues?

Land grabbing is particularly fuelled by agricultural policies subsidising farms based on **how big they are**. CAP direct subsidies are paid per hectare. As **more land leads to more money**, the incentive is to acquire as much land as possible, leading to land concentration. **Land is treated as a commodity and financial asset** and is used to reap huge profits for a small number of people, without considering that **access to land is essential to grow healthy food** for the population, **combat climate change and biodiversity loss, provide jobs and maintain communities**.

One of the consequences of this policy is the loss of small farms over the years. **The EU lost 4.2 million farms** (one quarter) across the Member States **between 2005 and 2016**, about 85% of which were farms under 5 ha.

Concrete measures that the CAP should enforce to support access to land to small-scale farming

For ECVC, within the CAP **a farm should not be able to receive more than €100,000 a year** and after €60,000 there should be a progressive reduction of payments. Bigger farms generally have more capital and resources, so this kind of compulsory **capping measure would only reduce subsidies for 2% of beneficiaries** but at the same time ensure direct aid is redistributed to **prioritise small and medium-sized farms**, as well as **young farmers and new entrants**, who really need the payments to set up or continue in agriculture.

Land use is also not taken into consideration by the CAP subsidies. This means that **those working or using the land are often not the ones who benefitting from the subsidies**. Not only should **payments** not be paid per hectare of land, but they **need to be dependent on positive environmental and social outcomes**, such as the number of farmers employed or the purpose land is used.

**Eco-schemes** will be introduced into the post-2020 CAP as a way to protect the environment and promote sustainable farming practices. However, these subsidies are still to be paid per hectare, meaning they **contradictorily will encourage land grabbing and land concentration**, both of which have negative effects on the environment, and which lead to the depopulation of rural areas, a problem which the CAP itself sets out to tackle in its objectives.

**The small farmers scheme** is one of the measures within the CAP that is aimed to **support small and medium-scale farmers**. However, there is a **limit of €1250 per farm**, and to date, the measures have not been made compulsory. **This mean that support within the CAP for small scale-farmers, most affected by land concentration, is limited** whilst lobby and industry powers are able to use their control over land to maximise their CAP profits. **Specific and additional, compulsory CAP support for small farmers** should be given to ensure the long-term viability of these farms, which are **essential in maintaining and protecting the biodiversity and fertility** of the land itself.

<sup>1</sup> For the complete definition of landgrabbing, see <https://www.eurovia.org/how-do-we-define-land-grabbing/>

**Land cannot be treated as a commodity: it is a finite resource with social, cultural, environmental, and economic functions!**