



ECVC proposes European Directive on agricultural land to stop land concentration and ensure more farmers in Europe

Today, ECVC published a farmer-written [proposal for a European Directive on Agricultural Land](#). The directive outlines how EU institutions can implement fair, democratic and sustainable land policies to combat the economic, ecological and climate crises and guarantee food sovereignty, as without access to land, farmers cannot produce good quality food for the population.

As recognised by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [jurisprudence](#), agricultural land is not a commodity like any other; it is a precious, scarce and threatened resource. In 2013 in Europe, 3.1% of farms controlled 52.2% of the land, while 76.2% of farms owned only 11.2% of the agricultural land. In Italy, 20% of farms receive 80% of CAP subsidies and control 75% of the utilised agricultural area. In Hungary, foreign individuals and companies have taken over up to 1 million hectares through fraudulent contracts. The expansion of farms leads to the industrialisation of practices, and today 60-70% of the EU soil is degraded.

In the face of these trends, ECVC has long since been calling for the implementation of a European Directive on Agricultural Land. This is a minimum standard to combat land concentration and land grabbing, to promote agro-ecological land use and to favour generational renewal. The proposal presented today is the result of a rich grassroots-led process, empowering peasant organisations from all over Europe, in conjunction with several allies, academics and lawyers. It sees ECVC develop an analysis of the state of land in Europe and proposes several important measures: the capping of surface areas, the constitution and proper functioning of public land banks, their allocation to young farmers and to agro-ecological projects, and the public regulation of transfers of agricultural land use rights.

The need for European legislation on land has also been recognised by the European Parliament itself. In a 2017 own-initiative [report](#), the EP recognised that access to land is an essential right and called for the harmonisation of European land policies based on the Committee on World Food Security's (CFS) Voluntary [Guidelines](#) for Responsible Governance of Land Tenure. Following these recommendations, ECVC calls on the EU institutions to re-engage in this important debate, and offers its proposal on transformative land policy as a foundation for this work.

Tove Sundström, member of the ECVC Coordination Committee, ECVC Youth Articulation and Swedish farmers' organisation NOrdBruk, explains: "Access to land is a right. Ensuring this right is necessary for the future of European agriculture. It must be a priority in national and European agricultural policies. For ECVC, we need to double the farming population by 2040, and this directive is one of the main pillars to achieve this goal. The next Commission must include it in its work plan."

Antonio Onorati, peasant farmer from the Italian peasant organisation ARI, adds: "This directive is also a tool to demand and support necessary land reforms at local and national level. It is a tool that, above all, will allow us to ensure the generational renewal that we so deeply need."

It is time to shift away from our mercantile approach to land and recognise its important social, cultural, and ecological functions. The EU must act to ensure access to land and the settlement of large numbers of farmers. The CFS's Voluntary Guidelines and Article 17 of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other Persons working in Rural Areas](#) must be the basis for any land policy. Land is not a commodity; land is a right!

Notes for editor

Read ECVC's [proposal](#) for a European directive on agricultural land.

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