



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate A – Strategy & Policy analysis
The Director

FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABILITY (15-16.02.2024)

JOINT MEETING WITH

THE MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL DIALOG GROUP

ON CAP STRATEGIC PLANS AND HORIZONTAL MATTERS AND

**THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAP STRATEGIC PLANS
REGULATION**

DISCUSSION PAPER

Aim

This discussion paper aims to provide an (1) overview of the main sustainability challenges faced by the farming sector, focusing mostly on environment/climate and economic aspects, followed by short descriptions of three topics: (2) the role of certification at farm level, (3) CAP design and scope in support of environment/climate actions, (4) sustainability transition in the livestock sector and (5) regenerative ways of farming for sustainable soil management. The questions listed for each of the specific topics will support discussions at a technical workshop on sustainability on 15 and 16 February 2024. This paper is also meant to complement and build upon exchanges in the previous workshops on food security and on resilience.

The workshop as well as this paper do not intend to be comprehensive and to examine each of the specific environment/climate challenges; they approach only selected aspects of the sustainability transition and specific sectoral angles to deepen their understanding and relevant implications for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Issues related to social aspects of farming and rural areas will be a subject of a separate technical workshop.

Theme 1: Farm sustainability in perspective

The agricultural sector faces multiple sustainability challenges, covering environmental, social and economic aspects. In a very competitive market, farmers need to earn fair returns to be able to continue to produce and to contribute to ensuring food security, while addressing environmental concerns and societal expectations, including in terms of quality and diversity of products.

Legislative requirements and financial incentives have been progressively put in place to reduce, on one hand, negative externalities generated by agriculture and the food system and, on the other hand, stimulate the uptake of more sustainable farming practices. The CAP has been adapted over the years to address economic, social, and environmental challenges and accelerate a sustainability transition at farm level, more recently in line with the priorities of the Green Deal and more specifically the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. Based on the food systems approach laid down in these strategies, this means, seeking to reduce the use of pesticides, antimicrobials, preventing nutrient losses, better husbandry systems integrating better animal welfare conditions, farming practices able to increase carbon sequestration and reduction of GHG emissions or increase biodiversity, as well as ensuring sustainable forest management. The Commission also aims to further increase the importance of organic farming in both production and consumption of food in the EU. To further ensure viability, new business models such as carbon farming, are being rolled out, and policy frameworks to facilitate, foment and ensure their effectiveness being set up.

Challenges in the sustainability transition for farming

This transition to greater environmental and climate sustainability comes with synergies and trade-offs and in the context of different perceptions of short- and long-term benefits and costs.

Recent farmers' protests in several Member States highlighted the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in pursuing this transition and its perceived risks. There is a growing resistance towards policy measures requiring change of practices and compliance with targets that are seen as incompatible with farms' economic sustainability, where costs for implementing changes at farm level are not internalised in the market price, even more in case of imported products from production systems with lower standards, and the need to preserve food security.

Farming relies on the availability and quality of natural resources (soil, water, biodiversity...), which is very much impacted by climate change. The actions necessary to preserve those natural resource are in many cases considered as a disproportionate obligation and burden instead of an opportunity to become more resilient and sustainable, to enhance productivity, and to ensure food security for current and future generations. This gap needs to be bridged, so that farmers who are the stewards of land and natural resources obtain fair revenues for their activity.

Long-lasting change in production modalities, in quantitative and qualitative terms, is linked to and affected by the attitudes and behaviours of all food system actors. Among others, change in farm practices depends on consumption patterns as well as consumers' willingness and capacity to pay higher prices for products with a higher level of sustainability. It is also important to understand the extent of consumers' awareness of the impact of their choices. Pricing is affected by the extent to which the risks and transition costs are shared across the food supply chain, including from input providers, processors, retailers and consumers.

The challenges are different across the (sub-)sectors and territories as specific farming practices and systems exert different pressures on natural resources, biodiversity, and climate while others provide environmental and social goods. Addressing these challenges requires identifying and dealing with trade-offs and complementarities in terms of sustainability achievements. For example, many valuable habitats and their associated biodiversity rely on the existence of specific farming systems, the economic rationale for maintaining grasslands relies on livestock production, animal welfare improvements trade off with some climate efforts, while many farming by-products can and are used in the circular bioeconomy.

Ultimately, progress depends on individual farmers changing their agricultural practice or farming model, considering risks and benefits; there are lessons to be learned from the success stories and on-going experience of farmers communities where changes are taking place.

Reflection on the future of farming and the relevant policy tools to support the sustainability transition needs to take place in a systems approach, looking at all the actors in the value chain and their capability to share the risks, benefits, and cost of such transition. It is important to look at the position of farmers in the food chain, working with very tight profit margins, with difficulties in accessing the capital market, limiting their ability for long-term investments. Linked to this, territorial and sectoral specificities and farm characteristics deserve tailor made solutions which must be designed together with the farmers on the ground.

Questions to focus reflection and discussion:

- *Where and what change is needed in farm systems and practices for improved outcomes in terms of environment, climate and consumer expectations? How do these differ between different (sub) sectors, territories and types/sizes of farms?*
- *What are key barriers for farmers to adopt sustainable practices? What would make farmers engage further with more sustainable farming systems?*
- *Which market mechanisms and policy instruments and specific tools or their combination (including but not limited to the CAP) are best suited to contribute to more effective environment/climate delivery on farms and to improving farmers' livelihoods?*

Theme 2: Role of certification in support of transition to a sustainable food system - certification as a tool to reward farmers for their sustainability

The role of certification will be explored more in detail to help assess the potential for effective combination of instruments in support of transition. In recent years, the role of **certification** schemes has been increasing both **at farm level** and **along the value chain**. The EU scheme for organic farming is the best known throughout the EU.¹ But in addition, and driven by a very competitive market, certification schemes both for agricultural products and foodstuffs are growing in importance to provide assurance that certain **characteristics or attribute of the product** or its **production method** have been duly observed.

A research project funded by the European Parliament² in 2022 identified **170 farm certification schemes** established in the EU covering a broad scope of commitments from environmentally friendly methods of production to climate related practices, animal welfare and health, origin and quality of the products, traceability and safety, non-GMO and fair trade. More than one third has been set up by **private bodies** (e.g. NGOs, farmers' coop, inter-branch or certification body) and one-third is owned by **public entities**. The most represented **sector** is livestock, followed by fruit and vegetables, crops, wine and seafood.

A large majority of these farm **certification schemes** are established at national level, mainly in Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and Poland. Several certification/quality schemes have been

¹ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming_en

² Chever, Gonçalves, Lepeule -AND International (2022), Research for AGRI Committee – Farm certification schemes for sustainable agriculture, state of play and overview in the EU and in key global producing countries, concepts and methods, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

also developed at EU level, some process-based, such as the aforementioned EU organic scheme, and other product-based such as the Geographical Indications (GIs), Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs), and the Traditional Specialties Guaranteed (TSGs)

- The recent reform of the GI legislation³ has introduced, among other things, the possibilities for producer groups to agree on social, environmental, or economic sustainability requirements that would be added to production specifications with the aim to reinforce their contribution to sustainability.
- The EU organic scheme is an overall farm management system clearly defined by a long-standing European regulation. It provides a set of rules and a robust control and certification system, which is also recognised in third countries (the equivalencies). Only operators certified against the organic regulation can use the logo and claim the word organic. The implementation of these schemes/practices can also be supported by the CAP. For example, 10% of the EU agricultural land is scheduled to receive CAP support from eco-schemes and rural development for conversion and maintenance of organic production methods.

Throughout the value chain, there is an even higher number of **sustainability labels/claims** accompanying food products, not necessarily based on a public certification scheme. The proliferation of all these labels raises questions about their clarity and reliability concerning the sustainability ambition, with increasing problems of comparability and consistency. This can indeed lead to greenwashing by manufacturers and retailers, information overload for consumers, leading to confusion and mistrust, as well as difficulties for farmers to comply with different standards.

To address greenwashing, the Commission adopted in 2023 a proposal on green claims⁴ with a number of requirements regarding the substantiation of these voluntary claims on the “green” nature of products (organic exempted due to well defined EU rules), ensuring that they are verified and certified by a third party. To scale up carbon removal activities as well as to fight greenwashing, in 2023, the Commission also adopted a proposal⁵ for an EU voluntary carbon removal certification framework. This proposal sets out the criteria to define high-quality carbon removals resulting, among others, from carbon farming activities and to set out the process to monitor, report and verify the authenticity of these removals.

Questions to focus reflection and discussion:

- *Is a certification scheme an effective and efficient tool to determine and reward levels of sustainability at farm level and under which conditions? What is the role of public policy?*
- *Should we rely more on private, voluntary certificates to accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems? Under which conditions?*

³ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en

⁴ COM(2023) 166 final, Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the council on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive).

⁵ COM(2022) 672 final, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union certification framework for carbon removals

- *Would certification help to move towards a more result-based approach in the next CAP? What would be the implication per size/type of farms?*
- *What would be the impact of certification for the implementation of the CAP (e.g. conditionality and voluntary environmental schemes)? Would it simplify or add administrative burden for farmers? Would it impact the level playing field in the EU?*
- *What is the experience of farmers in relation to the costs/burdens of certification and related market rewards?*

Theme 3: Delivering on environment and climate taking into account economic viability – added value and potential for the CAP: The scope and design of the CAP in support of environment and climate actions

The **2023-2027 CAP** introduced significant changes **to improve its effectiveness, fairness and achieve better environmental and climate outcomes**. With a single planning tool (CAP plans) encompassing instruments of both EU funds, the CAP shifted focus to performance and country specific needs. The main innovations are reflected in the new green architecture accompanied by various framing conditions (enhanced conditionality, higher ring-fencing⁶, new eco-schemes, obligation to take account of specific pieces of environment and climate legislation in the design, greater environmental ambition, more flexibility e.g., in definitions allowing for more space for nature/certain beneficial activities in eligible areas even though they are not primarily agricultural in character.

The **new green architecture** maintained a distinction between mandatory practices – ‘the enhanced conditionality’ linked to area and animal-based payments, and voluntary practices/measures. Conditionality was refined, upgraded and expanded to new areas (e.g., for wetlands and peatlands, a minimum share of non-productive areas/features) and with new links to certain statutory rules from the EU water and pesticide legislation. At voluntary level, a new direct payment instrument - eco-schemes - was introduced to provide more opportunities to reward farmers for further and more ambitious practices beyond the requirements of conditionality (including animal welfare). Within the safeguards set in the legislation, in their CSPs, Member States had the flexibility to fine-tune the requirements and find best arrangements for voluntary tools (eco-schemes and other long-standing instruments of rural development funding) considering their specific needs and strategic choices. Subject to conditionality, tools relevant more to farmers’ economic standing and socio-economic needs of rural areas (e.g., basic income support for sustainability) remained rather unchanged, while other instruments were introduced in order to address specific redistribution needs (e.g. payments for small farmers).

In November 2023, the Commission adopted a **report assessing the Plans’ joint effort/collective** ambition in relation to the CAP’s specific objectives and their contributions to the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, based on their potential in the absence yet of uptake data. This assessment acknowledges the role of the green architecture of the CSPs in boosting the uptake of farming practices with a potential to reduce negative pressures and to benefit the climate, natural resources and biodiversity. It also identifies various strengths and weaknesses of the Plans, from an aggregate perspective.

⁶ includes animal welfare

This assessment shows progress in climate mitigation, especially for carbon sequestration and storage in soil and biomass while reducing livestock emissions – deemed necessary by many Member States - relies mainly on investments. There are substantial efforts on soil and on nutrient management and water quality, substantial contributions to the EU ambitions on organic farming and a good potential to reduce pesticide dependency and risks. In contrast, ambition could have been stronger for water use and droughts, emissions of air pollutants, and promising practices for biodiversity, especially in more intensively farmed areas. Result-based or collective approaches are underused, as is the tailoring to hotspots (nutrients), use of more integrated approaches (pest management) or compensation opportunities (for requirements stemming from the water framework legislation). More generally, the CAP support's targeting and effectiveness deserve attention. The report calls for more holistic approaches to sectors, encompassing their economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities and benefits and stresses the importance of complementarities with both national and EU level instruments.

This first year of operation of the Plans brought various **other assessments** from stakeholders and academia and **ideas on the functioning of the CAP** now and in the future. At the same time, concerns are being raised on the capacity and the willingness of farmers to take up some of the voluntary practices already scheduled in the Plans and the complexity of modalities under the CAP support.

The various ideas floated range from adjustments to more fundamental alternatives to the current ways of CAP public support. Reflection is needed on the effective criteria to provide CAP support that leads to further improvements of environmental performance of farming while taking account of the diversity of farmers' income situation and need to ensure farmers' livelihoods.

The reflection should include lessons learned, barriers and success factors of the current CAP design in introducing innovative solutions such as result-based and collective approaches, or obstacles in bringing research results into farm practice (such as for nature-based solutions).

Questions to focus reflection and discussion:

- *What are the key driving forces and barriers towards uptake by farmers of CAP funded voluntary environment/climate-beneficial interventions?*
- *What are the gaps and constraints of the tools to promote wide-spread use of innovative approaches to sustainable practices? Which solutions could be used to ensure that 'hotspot' areas are targeted; and synergies and complementarities fomented?*
- *What are the implications of the evolving statutory environmental rules and principles (e.g. the 'do no significant harm' principle)?*
- *How could the design of the policy be improved? What are conceivable alternative ways to award, condition and distribute CAP support (linked to practices and/or results and/or other criteria)?*
 - o *What would be their practical implications, including in terms of income and environmental public goods, territorial and sectoral dimension, fairness and social consequences, financial planning and uptake by farmers?*

Theme 4: Sustainability transition of livestock and the role of the CAP

Scope – significance and challenges

Livestock production is an integral part of the EU agri-food system. It is central to the activity of 3.7 million holdings, or about 40% of the EU total farm population. The value of livestock production amounts to around 40 % of the agricultural activity in the EU. In 2022, the EU produced around 42 million tonnes of meat products (more than 50% of which was pork, 31% - poultry meat, and around 16% - beef). The ruminant livestock sectors produce approximately 150 million tonnes of raw milk each year. In addition to manure and organic fertilisers, in the EU, over 20 million tonnes of animal by-products emerge annually from slaughterhouses, plants producing food for human consumption, dairies and as fallen stock from farms.

From a social and economic point of view, livestock is pivotal in many rural areas. Livestock production accounts for 13% of EU rural area employment. Livestock by-products, such as manure, fibres (wool, leather) and other, are part of the circular bioeconomy and could play an increasing role in the decarbonisation of the EU economy.

The sector lies at the crossroads of different pressures, vulnerabilities, and societal expectations and **at the centre of debates on the sustainability transition**. It is a diverse and complex sector, encompassing both intensive and extensive modes of production, including a significant organic sector. It is currently confronted with major sustainability challenges ranging from **environmental and societal** concerns to **economic** pressures, trade dynamics and regulatory concerns.

The livestock sector is a source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and some livestock farming practices have negative impact on water, soil and, air in some areas. Society is calling for improved conditions in livestock farming with **animal welfare** increasingly seen as an indicator of both sustainability and product quality. The role of livestock in **antimicrobial resistance** is a continuing health and policy concern. Supplying adequate food produced **with sustainable practices** is a strategic objective. The livestock sector depends on water availability; water scarcity in some territories and climate change impacts could limit its development.

On the other hand, specific production systems **may provide multiple positive environmental externalities**. Efficiency measurement benefits from taking account of the multi-functional use of livestock and land. **Ruminants through grazing** support environmental management by regulating and supporting ecosystem services, and soil carbon via the maintenance of permanent grassland and agroforestry systems. These positive effects heavily depend on the type and intensity of livestock farming, alternative land uses and local practices.

The livestock sector and production are subject to pressures from an economic viability point of view. Several sub-sectors, especially grazing systems, are characterised by **low profitability** and incomes lagging behind both within agriculture and compared to the rest of the economy, that often translates into a **weaker position of farmers in the value chain**. Fluctuations in input costs (e.g., feed) and market demand, developments in external trade and exogenous factors, such as animal diseases and geopolitical events, can significantly impact **competitiveness within the sector**. Consideration is needed to the vulnerability of small farmers from a financial and digital perspective.

EU standards in food safety, traceability, and environmental protection induce costs to farmers that are not necessarily compensated by the market or shared fairly along the supply chain.

Several pathways for improvement and adaptation to allow for a sustainable and resilient future for the EU livestock sector could be developed, based on technological innovation, improvement of practices, policy initiatives, safeguards, and support (within and outside the CAP), as well as a response to changing consumer preferences.

State of play and perspectives

Agricultural **greenhouse gas** (GHG) direct emissions (11% of total EU emissions) decreased since 1996 (in particular from livestock that account for some 85% of them) but more needs to be done in terms of emission reductions and carbon removals as they are stagnating in the last decade.

Livestock farming can both reduce GHG emissions compared to its baseline through **mitigation measures** in relevant production systems, and contribute to increase **carbon sinks**, in particular by: (i) permanent grassland and agro-forestry (e.g. grazing ruminants); (ii) adapting feed composition to include enteric methane inhibitors, improved herd management and breeding; (ii) introducing circular flows reducing further industrial GHG emissions (e.g. use of manure for digestate and biogas production that in turn reduce the need for inorganic fertilisers and electricity).

The EU Climate Target plan projects remaining **agricultural emissions in a climate neutral EU to be balanced by carbon removals**. While livestock is the biggest emitter of agricultural direct emissions, grass-based livestock farming (mostly cattle and sheep) is key for carbon sinks in grassland and the **vitality of rural areas**, particularly in those areas where grasslands would not be valorised otherwise and where many livelihoods depend on livestock production. In other words, the livestock sector is part of a circular economy (producing e.g. food, organic versus mineral fertilisers, wool, leather) and contributing to food and nutrition security. Consequently, it is important to ensure continued competitiveness for this sector.

Depending on the livestock sectors, approaches to reduce emissions and address specific environmental externalities (e.g. air, soil and water) entail either **synergies or trade-offs** with other environmental (biodiversity), societal (animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance) and food security goals. Reducing the impact of livestock **on the climate** (through methane from ruminants and N₂O from synthetic and organic fertilisers) and **on the environment** (through concentration of nitrogen compounds and other pollutants) must be weighed against supporting ecosystem services and maintaining permanent grassland as carbon sink. The potentials of livestock by-products compared to fossil fuel-based products have also to be better assessed notably to close nutrient loops (mineral vs organic N-fertilisers). It will be crucial to **identify key trade-offs, ways to minimise them, possible synergies and win-win options**.

There is **no one size fits all solution** for all agricultural sub-sectors and all EU pedoclimatic conditions. A differentiation **between production systems and species** is essential as well as a **local/regional approach**. Some sub-sectors' resilience (e.g. pigs and poultry) may be affected by their dependence on purchased feed. Rethinking production models from a **circularity** point of view at local/regional level could increase their anchorage in the territory and economic stability. Certain European regions may need to maintain or even increase extensive livestock systems to preserve permanent grasslands (carbon sinks) and rural livelihoods. In this context the **growing organic sector** should be underlined: a production system that successfully aims to integrate and seek synergies regarding the different environmental, economic and social challenges.

Consumer food demand is becoming increasingly segmented and driven not only by price, but also by health, environment/climate, and animal welfare considerations, with an observed

shift from beef to other meat sources and a slow rebalancing of consumers' total protein intake towards plant-based protein.

There is an urgent need for a **better and harmonized quantification** of the impact of mitigation actions carried out on farms, including those supported by the CAP. To ensure that progress in climate change mitigation is adequately reflected, the impacts have also to be assessed beyond the current GHG inventories reported by Member States. Farm level reporting might be useful to factor-in the beneficial farming practices already implemented or planned.

Transition to a more sustainable and competitive EU livestock production systems must consider both **supply and demand** in the EU (to take account of evolving consumer behaviour) and globally.

Current support through the CAP

Farm income support is important for the subsectors which face low profitability. As EU direct payments are predominantly area-based, basic income support for sustainability (BISS) covers all agricultural sectors, and a part of those payments support the livestock sector. Livestock farmers benefit from other CAP payments such as coupled income support (CIS), the eco-schemes, complementary redistributive income support for sustainability (CRISS), rural development support in terms of investments, cooperation, agri-environment-climate commitments, payments for areas of natural constraints, where applicable. Investment is mostly used for manure storage and processing. Livestock farmers in many Member States are eligible to support for upgrading farm buildings and equipment.

A significant part of the financial allocation to CIS (about 70%) is directly supporting the ruminant livestock sectors. Part of the CIS support allocated to crops, notably protein crops (about 15%) can be argued to indirectly supports the livestock sectors. Safeguards – in terms of livestock density limitation – were included in the design of several CAP Plans⁷. Intensive livestock sectors (often pigs and poultry) do not directly benefit from area – based payments, except for those farms that combine livestock production and crop cultivation, with land eligible for direct support. Farmers, including those engaged in livestock production are eligible for support to invest in restructuring and modernisation and enhance competitiveness.

Reflections are further needed on what are main barriers and incentives for increasing the uptake of sustainable practices for livestock production while **minimising negative externalities, on the economic perspective related to change of practices** benefiting environment and climate for specific sectors, on ways to **minimise trade-offs**, on ways to **maintain ecosystem services, connected to permanent grasslands**, on key practices that require policy support or should not be supported, on further use of **safeguards and targeting**.

Attention is needed on the role of other actors in the supply chain in the process of transition in view of a fairer and sustainable pricing of animal production.

Questions to focus reflection and discussion:

- ***Gaps and issues:***
 - *What are the key problems, threats and opportunities for EU livestock in a broader circular economy perspective?*
 - *How are these distributed among different (sub) sectors, territories and types/sizes of farms?*

⁷ Thresholds are higher under eco-schemes or agri-environmental commitments.

- **Direction:**
 - *What should be the objective of the EU's social, economic, and environmental sustainability transition in the livestock sector? In which timeframe?*
- **The role of the CAP policy and design:** *Should there be changes?*
 - *Which elements of the CAP support the transition to a sustainable and competitive livestock system?*
 - *How can the CAP better contribute to reducing water and air pollution (nitrates, ammonia), and reduce GHG?*
 - *What is the most appropriate scale (for socio-economic and environmental purposes) to address support for livestock in CAP design? Farm level or territorial level?*
 - *Which areas, farms, livestock sub-sectors, production systems, should be targeted by the CAP*
- **Inspiring models:** *What could be transferred?*
 - *Which concrete models could inspire livestock farmers in the EU to address sustainability challenges?*
 - *Which effective measuring systems applied at farm level could be reproduced across Member States?*

Theme 5: Sustainable soil management - understanding what is behind regenerative ways of farming: Costs and benefits. The role of the farmer. The role of the CAP

“Regenerative agriculture” is a concept that has entered the debate on transition towards sustainable farming and food system transformation. There is no formal definition. Although the term has been in circulation since the 1980s, more as a farmer-led movement, the last 10 years have seen an explosion in interest and usage (Giller et al., 2021). It is often used in relation to farm practices that aim to ‘restore’ or ‘regenerate’ natural ecological functions of resources on which farming is dependant.⁸ According to publications and practitioners, it is related mostly to enhancing ‘soil health’, to reintegrating livestock and arable farming, minimising tillage, and optimising the carbon sink potential of agricultural soils (through permanence of soil coverage and plant diversity). Regenerative agriculture improves soil health, primarily through the practices that increase soil organic matter. This aids in increasing soil biota diversity and health, biodiversity both above and below the soil surface, while increasing both water holding capacity and sequestering carbon at greater depths.⁹ According to some, regenerative agriculture goes beyond sets of practices that can be applied on a farm and is **more adaptive and result - based**. Is regenerative agriculture primarily about the attainment of outcomes or the adoption of specified practices? According to practitioners, the

⁸ [What is regenerative agriculture_TABLE Explainer_2023.pdf \(tabledebates.org\)](#)

⁹ [Regen-Ag Definition 2.23.17.pdf \(regenerationinternational.org\)](#)

final purpose is to improve farm profitability by s reducing the use of inputs (mineral fertiliser and plant protection products)¹⁰.

Some initiatives on regenerative agriculture are coming from farmer organisations with the support of advisory services. In addition, actors along the food supply chain are actively promoting and introducing certification using the notion of regenerative practices as a tool to obtain certain sustainability outcomes and demonstrate this.

These regenerative farming initiatives call for analysis. Moreover, also from a market confidence point of view, measurement of results and outcomes as well as certification of approach is important. These issues are not only relevant from a market and supply chain perspective, but also for policy. Can market driven and business-to-business certification linked to regenerative farming complement existing EU policy on e.g. organic farming or the CAP green architecture (conditionality, eco-schemes, agri-env-climate interventions)? What role does EU policy have in this regard – if any?

The discussion in the workshop aims to **discuss principles, practices and desired outcomes from regenerative ways of farming** in relation to and linked with outcomes and results for sustainable soil management in the general context of such practices and approaches. It aims to explore **the understanding of stakeholders (administration and farmers) of links with transition to sustainable farming and links with policy support that is accompanying transition**. The discussion aims to build upon the experience of the farming community.

Questions to focus reflection and discussion:

- *From the farmers perspective, why and how to implement practices and attain outcomes for sustainable soil management stemming from regenerative agriculture and more generally practices which preserve/enhance soil health (agroecology, conservation agriculture...)? What are the main challenges for farmers to move towards these approaches? What is the role of advisors/advisory services in this process?*
- *What are the environmental benefits and economic losses or gains? What are the drivers and barriers for adoption of these practices? What outcomes are expected and are they verifiable and controllable?*
- *Should public policies and the CAP play a role? What role do the market and other players have in the agri-food chain?*
- *Are certification schemes necessary?*

¹⁰ <https://www.ipes-food.org/pages/smokeandmirrors>