KLUG
Deutsche Allianz
Klimawandel und Gesundheit

EuroHealthNet

# Health in the CAP after 2027

*A joint letter from public health research and practice: public health bodies, research organisations and health professionals*

2 November 2026

Dear Members of the European Parliament,
Dear Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
Dear Members of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety,
Dear Members of the Committee on Public Health,

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the European Union's largest health-relevant instrument. It influences what Europe grows, feeds, fertilises and eats. Agriculture is the largest single user of land and a main driver of the planetary boundaries already crossed.[1] However, the Commission's proposal for the period after 2027 drops the objective of the current CAP that protects food and health quality.[2] On 26 October 2026 the Agriculture and Fisheries Council adopted its negotiating position without restoring it.[3] The European Parliament is now the only institution that can still make changes, and it has reopened the funding question in doing so. We write as health and care professionals and researchers in public and planetary health to call for urgent changes to the CAP proposal for 2028–2034 in order to protect human and planetary health.

**46 %**
of premature deaths in the EU caused by four major NCDs[13]

**182,000**
deaths from fine particulate matter, EU-27, 2023[5]

**600,000**
premature cardiovascular deaths attributable to dietary risks.[14]

**56 Mt**
CO2e a year if every Member State ate like the healthiest quarter[13]

## What the reform changes for climate and environmental goals

- The minimum share of the CAP budget that is ring-fenced for environment, climate and animal welfare disappears.
- Such interventions also become costlier for Member States: national co-financing rises to at least 30 percent, while area-based and coupled income support stay fully EU-financed.
- The objectives are stated without magnitudes, no quantified emission or water targets are set, and the Farm to Fork targets are not carried over.[4]

The environmentally protective and thus health-protective option becomes the more expensive one for every national treasury. The Council's position of 26 October does not restore the minimum share, and the funding is deferred to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations.[3]

## Why this is health policy

The CAP shapes how land is used in the EU, which production systems are economically viable, and with that the exposures the population lives with:

- nitrate in drinking water and fine particulate matter formed from agricultural ammonia;[5]
- antimicrobial resistance as a result of the production system, not of the prescribing decision;[6]
- global warming, to which food systems contribute about a third of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions;[7]
- loss of landscape features and semi-natural habitats that buffer floods and droughts;[8]
- decline of wild pollinators under intensive management, pesticides and fertilisers;[9]
- diets shaped by what production supplies, down to what the school scheme puts on a plate.[10]

The summer of 2026 showed both sides: more than 30,000 excess deaths across Europe,[11] and EU cereal production down 9 percent with grain losses of 2 to 2.3 billion euro.[12] The proposal weakens prevention and provides compensation after the event. Food security in Europe is a question of climate adaptation before it is one of volume.

## What an unhealthy diet costs

Four non-communicable diseases (cancer, cardiovascular disease, COPD and diabetes) account for 46 percent of premature deaths in the EU.[13] Unhealthy diets are among the main modifiable risk factors behind them: an estimated 600,000 cardiovascular deaths in the EU-27 in 2019 were attributable to dietary risks.[14] Without these four diseases, annual health expenditure would be 40 percent lower and annual GDP 3.9 percent higher, and the Union would not lose the equivalent of 5.2 million full-time workers.[13]

## How far the shift has to go

That same best-quartile consumption level would cut EU emissions by 56 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent a year, the emissions of more than 13 million petrol cars. It is not a utopian ask: it describes consumption already observed in the best-performing quarter of OECD and EU countries.[13]

Technology is not a substitute. Even at the maximum feasible level of every technical measure, direct livestock emissions fall by about 25 percent; three quarters stay tied to herd size and feed demand.[15] The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change puts the achievable reduction at 23 to 57 percent by 2040, the span depending on how far diets shift.[16] The reduction under way is one of farms, not of livestock: 6 percent of farms hold more than 70 percent of the Union's livestock units, and the share keeping animals fell from 55.7 to 41 percent between 2010 and 2020 at constant livestock numbers.[17] Supply and demand must move together, or production and its emissions simply move outside Europe.

## What we ask for

**1. Reinstate a binding minimum budget for environment, climate and animal welfare, and establish co-financing parity with income support.**

Neither works alone: a minimum budget without parity leaves the disincentive in place; parity without a minimum budget leaves no guaranteed money behind it. A single binding minimum is also simpler to administer than the present patchwork of conditions.

**2. Reinstate human health as an explicit objective of the CAP (Article 2).**

The objective exists in the current CAP.[2] Article 2(1) should cover healthy diets and the prevention of diet-related, environmental and occupational disease; Article 2(2) should place nutrition quality and disease burden alongside food security. It belongs in the CAP Regulation itself: the partnership plans run under a separate regulation, COM(2025) 565, with broader objectives. Without it, the CAP interventions inside those plans cannot be assessed, amended or refused on health grounds.[18] Ammonia, antimicrobial resistance, emissions and water cross borders, so the objective belongs at Union level while the design stays national. Progress can be tracked with indicators already reported in the Union: nitrate exceedances, veterinary antimicrobial sales, ammonia emissions and school-scheme fruit and vegetable uptake.

**3. Redirect coupled income support from intensive to sustainable livestock systems.**

In five Member States alone, 4.6 billion euro are currently spent on coupled income support for livestock with no emission mitigation requirements attached.[15] Instead these funds should be tied to extensification, healthier practices and the exit of the most intensive units, with antimicrobial reduction through stocking density, housing and herd health planning. The shift also pays farmers: growing markets for legumes, fruit and vegetables, lower input costs, and premiums for high-welfare production.

**4. Invest in adaptation as upstream prevention.**

Water retention, soil carbon, shade, agroforestry and heat protection for outdoor work belong in the ring-fenced CAP budget. A crisis reserve of 630 million euro a year set against summer losses in the billions is a short-term stopgap, not an adequate answer to the resilience the sector needs.[19]

**5. Secure budget for the EU school scheme and apply health criteria to promotion funding.**

These are the only two CAP instruments acting directly on what people eat; the school scheme would lose its guaranteed budget and compete inside the plans.[4]

**6. Extend conditionality to the health of farmers and farm workers.**

Social conditionality should extend to occupational health; advisory services, relief services and heat protection should be funded by the CAP. The transition cannot rest on farms alone.

We offer meetings with the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs in the Agriculture and Environment Committees and will bring the underlying evidence into the negotiations.

Yours sincerely,

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