



Greenpeace European Unit,  
199 rue Belliard,  
1040 Brussels  
27 February 2019

Commissioner Phil Hogan,  
Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development

*Re: European Commission response to Greenpeace CAP report*

Dear Commissioner Hogan,

I am writing to you regarding the European Commission's response to a recent Greenpeace report: *Feeding the Problem – the dangerous intensification of animal farming in Europe*.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on publicly available data sourced from Eurostat and the Commission's directorate-general for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), the report estimates that 71% of the European Union's farmland – both grasslands and arable land – is taken up by the production of fodder for livestock. The research considers permanent grasslands as fully dedicated to animal fodder, but also finds that 63% of the EU's arable land is used to produce animal feed. This percentage was calculated using data on cereals, oilseeds and sugar beet production provided by the European Commission via email on 14 December 2018. These findings are aligned with other recent studies on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

Based on these estimates, the report calculates the amount of common agricultural policy (CAP) subsidies tied to farmland used for grazing or fodder production, as well as targeted subsidies for livestock farms themselves. A conservative calculation, based on a clearly spelled-out methodology, puts the number at between €28 billion and €32 billion annually.

When contacted by the report's main researcher, the Commission was unable to provide an estimation of public funds linked to the livestock sector, or the total amount of land used to feed livestock. And yet, in a speech at the European Economic and Social Committee on 20 February, you dismissed the report, accusing Greenpeace of making 'a lot of assumptions' that you 'totally disagree with'.

Following the release of the report, a European Commission source, speaking to the media on condition of anonymity, dismissed the research findings as 'dubious' but failed to

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<sup>1</sup> *Feeding the Problem: the dangerous intensification of animal farming in Europe*, Greenpeace European Unit <https://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/issues/nature-food/1803/feeding-problem-dangerous-intensification-animal-farming/>

<sup>2</sup> *Impacts of European livestock production: nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus and greenhouse gas emissions, land-use, water eutrophication and biodiversity*, Leip et al. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/10/11/115004/meta>



clarify which of the report's findings was to be rejected, or why it should be.<sup>3</sup> Instead of these vague comments, could you or your spokesperson tell us exactly which fact in the report the European Commission disputes?

The same anonymous source is reported as saying that the only amount of CAP money going to the livestock sector for which the Commission receives numbers is targeted payments for specific livestock sectors ('voluntary coupled support'), worth €3.185 billion, instead of €28 billion as Greenpeace estimated. While it is true that voluntary coupled support is the only CAP money linked directly to the livestock sector for which the Commission appears to have exact figures, it is scandalously disingenuous to imply that no other CAP money goes to the animal farming system. Voluntary coupled support only represents around 10% of CAP subsidies that farmers receive based on the farmland they work ('direct payments'). In order to estimate the total amount of public funds reaching the livestock sector, it is essential to consider how much of the remaining 90% of direct payments is linked to farmland producing fodder for animals.

The Commission source was also quoted as saying that the CAP has preserved the family farm model, not encouraged industrialised farming.<sup>4</sup> This would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic. Eurostat's own figures show that 3.2 million European farms disappeared between 2007 and 2013. Out of those, 2.9 million were livestock farms, a loss of almost a third. Eurostat also shows that the farms of the smallest economic size took the biggest hit. Europe's livestock farms are disappearing, but livestock production increases, and now 72% of all EU livestock products come from 'very large' farms, also according to Eurostat.

It is in the public interest to know what the current scale of animal farming in Europe is, as well as how much public money supports and promotes it. If the Commission can produce its own estimations of the area of EU farmland producing fodder, and the amount of CAP funding linked to the livestock sector, through this land and coupled support, we would be delighted to see them.

Given the increasingly documented impacts the industrial livestock sector has on the environment, the climate and our health it is vital to shift to a farming system that works with nature, not against it. The common agricultural policy must reverse the current trend of agricultural intensification that it contributed to create, and publishing honest data on the scale of animal farming and related subsidies is an important first step.

Yours sincerely,

Jorgo Riss  
Director, Greenpeace European Unit

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<sup>3</sup> Commission source rejects Greenpeace report on farms, EUobserver <https://euobserver.com/tickers/144153>

<sup>4</sup> EU Commission, farmers fume at Greenpeace on animal farming report, Euractiv <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eu-commission-farmers-fume-at-greenpeace-on-animal-farming-report/>