

Cypriot CAP strategic plan

Transition to sustainability or (bad) business as usual?

What is at stake

Farming in Cyprus doesn't come without challenges, both on a general level but also as regards the impacts on the environment and nature. They range from the abandonment of traditional agriculture (mainly in the uplands) to the intensification of agriculture (mainly in the lowlands) linked to extensive use of pesticides and ineffective protection of remaining natural vegetation. Farming is also challenged by urbanization and the conversion of fertile farmland to other land uses. The CSP submitted to the European Commission falls short of adequately addressing these challenges.

What is wrong with the Cypriot CSP

- Inadequate baseline for supporting biodiversity: While studies show that a >10% of areas set aside from production in farmland plots is required to benefit biodiversity, Cyprus has set this standard (GAEC 8) at 4%, which is the very minimum required by the EC legislation.
- Most eco-schemes failing to deliver for environment: Out of the 16 eco-schemes included in the CSP, only around 1/3 are likely to deliver for the environment. The rest supports unambitious interventions with no clear benefit for the environment or practices that should already be standard.
- Fake eco-schemes get generous funding, while the good ones are underfunded: An eco-scheme for banana cultivations commits the farmer to removing and trimming banana trees and placing plant residue (prunings) between rows, with no relevant requirement to reduce fertilizer. The benefit to the environment or climate cannot in any way be substantiated. For comparison, this intervention is supported with a total of €760.000, while an eco-scheme for delayed harvest for breeding and feeding birds and other animals, which is likely to deliver for biodiversity, receives less than 10% of that, a mere €75.000.
- Fake agri-environment schemes under rural development: Out of the 16 AECMs included in the CSP, less than 1/5 are likely to deliver for the environment. The rest support unambitious interventions with no clear benefit for the environment or practices that should be standard.

This is how the Cypriot CSP can help the transition to sustainability

- Putting in place a strong baseline requirement (GAEC 8) for space for nature on all farms that has a meaningful percentage of at least 10%, in line with the Biodiversity Strategy.
- Introducing an eco-scheme to support biodiversity that adds clearly and significantly to an ambitious baseline in an attractive way for farmers.
- Doing away with eco-schemes and AECMs supporting standard practices (e.g. keeping hygienic conditions in pigsties), that are business as usual (e.g. use of insect traps in citrus cultivations) and that are not substantiated as delivering for the environment or the climate.
- Reducing the extensive lists of eco-schemes and AECMs to fewer, more useful interventions for the environment and the climate, with more attractive budgets for farmers rather than diluting the budget for standard practice interventions.
- Capitalizing on the opportunity cost of maintaining existing, traditional, low intensity agriculture that is at risk of abandonment by providing interventions that allow for its maintenance, as it is less costly than future restoration.

