

IAWR calls on EU member states to avoid a setback for organic farming and groundwater/drinking water protection by ill-designed national CAP strategic plans

Karlsruhe, 24 September 2021. Trilogue negotiations on the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been concluded but the final vote in the European Parliament is still to come. In its CAP appeal of December 2020, IAWR highlighted the relevance of redirecting EU's agricultural policy beginning with conversion to organic farming in water protection areas to protect groundwater/drinking water from pesticide inputs as well as manure and fertilizer overdoses. As outcome of the EU trilogue negotiations, 25 % of the direct payments of CAP pillar 1 will now be dedicated to so-called eco schemes. „For drinking water supply, it is of fundamental importance that member states now use these eco schemes to support organic conversion and maintenance in their national CAP strategic plans otherwise there could be a massive setback for organic farming.“ IAWR President Prof. Matthias Maier explains. „By all means, misdevelopments like in Germany have to be avoided. The draft German CAP strategic plan would result in considerable cuttings for the budget for organic farming, even in both CAP pillars.“

IAWR had pointed out this setback for organic farming in Germany last week in an open letter to German agricultural minister. „Instead, EU member states now must find solutions for the underlying problem of double funding between eco schemes and funding for organic farming to avoid disadvantages for organic farmers compared to conventional farmers. Drafts must be discussed again and adopted to the needs of sustainable drinking water supply.“ The national CAP strategic plans have to be sent to the European Commission for approval by the end of 2021.

In its Organic Action Plan of 25 March 2021, the European Commission had proposed to Member States to boost organic farming by supporting organic operators under both the rural development funds (CAP pillar 2) and with targeted direct income support eco-schemes (CAP pillar 1). According to research IFOAM Organics Europe commissioned, the EU needs to dedicate 3 to 5 times the current amount of CAP budget dedicated to conversion and maintenance of organic farming to reach the EU target of 25% organic land by 2030.

Call to sign the European Citizens' Initiative "Save Bees and Farmers!" before 30 September

To increase pressure on the European Parliament and the European Commission, responsible for approval of the national CAP strategic plans, IAWR calls for signing and distributing the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) „Save bees and farmers!“. The ECI is about a redirection of agricultural policy in the EU by averting pesticide use. A successful ECI could give strong support to the European Green Deal which would suffer from a major setback if the German CAP strategic plan becomes a model for other member states and the European Parliament adopts the proposed CAP regulations.

External link: European Citizens' Initiative "Save bees and farmers!" (until 30 September 2021), <https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu>

The International Association of Waterworks in the Rhine Basin (IAWR) is the association of the drinking water supplier associations AWBR, ARW and RIWA in the upper, middle and lower Rhine river basin with 61 million people depending on clean drinking water. Currently, the IAWR office is located at Stadtwerke Karlsruhe.

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