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Does the new Common Agricultural Policy resonate with the ambitions of the European Green Deal?

By Emily Binchy | December 2022

Abstract:

2022 marks the 60th anniversary of the European Union's landmark Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This paper is written in anticipation of the introduction of the new CAP Strategy for 2023-2027, which follows a two-year transition period due to end in December 2022, and which requires each Member State to design and implement a National CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) based on their individual circumstances.

The EU is currently dealing with several crises pertinent to agricultural policy, including the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine, the concomitant disruption of supply chains for grains and fertilizers, which is exacerbating food insecurity in developing countries, increasing production costs for farmers, and hindering food affordability.

This paper explores how the new CAP can help the agri-food sector to meet the obligations of the European Green Deal, to achieve the EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050. It is accompanied by a complementary explainer, which provides an overview of the main strategic objectives of the new CAP and outlines how Ireland's national CSP is tailored towards the EU's aims of social, environmental, and economic sustainability in agriculture and rural areas.

As part of the European Green Deal,¹ the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy² was designed to make food systems fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly and to make the EU a leader in sustainable global food standards. Also, under the auspices of the European Green Deal and of relevance to the future of agricultural policy, the EU's 'Fit for 55' package³ comprises various pieces of legislation designed to fulfil the bloc's political pledge to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by a minimum of 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. It will take time for regulators and food system actors to align their policy, regulation, and business decisions with the requirements for sustainable food systems and emission reductions and finance will play a determinative role in supporting smallholder farmers.

Through the prism of "food systems", this paper will analyse the potential implications of EU climate and environmental policy for agriculture and the agri-food sector and analyse what these could mean for food production and viability of life in rural Ireland. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines the term "[food systems](#)" as *encompassing all elements and activities related to producing and consuming food and the effects of such, including economic, health, and environmental outcomes*. Exploring the new CAP through a food systems lens, this paper analyses the European Green Deal, focusing on strategies of relevance to food systems, namely the Biodiversity Strategy and the Farm to Fork Strategy, and other tangential pieces of legislation aimed at aligning environmental and agricultural policy, such as the EU's Nature Restoration Regulation.

Lastly, the paper will examine the trade/foreign policy implications of the reformed CAP and whether the forging of new partnerships or further diversification of supply chains would help to increase the resilience of the agricultural sector to price fluctuations and the demands of implementing Green Deal policies.

1 [A European Green Deal | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

2 [f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

3 [Delivering the European Green Deal \(europa.eu\)](#)

The new Common Agricultural Policy

While Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine and challenges to supply chains placed a renewed importance on the original objectives of the CAP, these have been [superseded by other objectives](#) of high importance outlined in the European Green Deal and specifically its Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.⁴ Viewing agriculture and the environment as inextricably linked, the new CAP rewards farmers through the innovative vehicle of 'Eco-schemes', which are expanded upon below. This approach widens the net of agricultural policy to include the whole food system, which is heavily dependant on a sustainable environment.

Addressing the concern that agriculture cannot achieve high standards of sustainability and increase production, an initiative of the Irish Government called Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI)⁵ is a source of expertise on achieving safe, secure, and sustainable value chains in the agri-food sector developed through a network of partner governments and organisations globally. This initiative aims to foster and encourage the intensification of food and agricultural production in Ireland whilst maintaining high standards of human and animal health and mitigating negative environmental externalities. Of the EU's €1.21 trillion multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, and the €808 billion NextGeneration EU recovery instrument, the new CAP amounts to €386.6 billion, divided across 'two pillars'. Of this €386.6 billion, €9.8 billion will be delivered to Irish farmers from 2023-2027. Research and innovation are essential to aligning food systems with the European Green Deal and are accordingly at the heart of the new CAP, with the Commission doubling the amount of funding allocated to [R&D to a total of €4.5 billion](#), signalling the need to shift to knowledge-based farming in order to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal.

Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) is centred around a 'Green Architecture'. The three core foundations of this 'Green Architecture' are:

1. Conditionality

A baseline requirement for farmers in receipt of CAP payments, the CSP proposes a system of enhanced conditionality which includes new standards for the maintenance of land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAECs). New GAECs include standards pertaining to peatland and wetland, and rotation and diversification requirements.

2. Pillar 1 Eco-Schemes

These Eco-Schemes are described by MEP Norbert Lins as one of the most promising innovations of the new CAP from an environmental perspective.

To qualify for this new voluntary annual agri-environmental scheme, farmers in Ireland must implement two of the following five measures:

- a. Devote an increased proportion of land to non-productive areas above the baseline required by the CAP.
- b. Remain under the maximum rate of livestock per calendar year
- c. Limit chemical nitrogen input to the specified amount per year
- d. Plant a minimum number of native trees per eligible hectare
- e. Use GPS controls when spreading fertiliser

⁴ [Biodiversity strategy for 2030 \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ <https://www.sfsi.ie/>

3. Pillar II Climate and Environment-related interventions

Interventions under Pillar II aim to deliver long-term environmental improvements through an ambitious rural development policy. This pillar is designed with flexibility to achieve a greener and fairer CAP and to improve the competitiveness of the agri-food sector.

The European Green Deal

The European Green Deal encompasses policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preserving Europe's natural environment, and stimulating investment in research and innovation to achieve a sustainable environment in the EU. The core aim of the European Green Deal is to transform the EU into a carbon-neutral bloc with a fair and competitive circular economy.

Including food systems in this transformation will be imperative if the goals of the European Green Deal are to be achieved. Under the rubric of the European Green Deal of particular relevance to agriculture, are the 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Farm to Fork Strategy. These two strategies highlight that agricultural policies must be congruent with other policies and not approached in isolation.

In designing the new CAP, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, said that the EU intended to design a CAP which is both green and environmentally and socially sustainable by [breaking the trend of intensive monocultures](#) and empowering small and medium sized farms. He identifies the tendency of concentration of production and upscaling towards bigger farms as creating many negative consequences in terms of sustainability and highlights the importance of orientating supply chains towards *local markets, both for supply chain resilience* and to reduce the food miles of food by curtailing emissions from transporting agri-food over long distances. By directing policies encouraging organic farming and animal welfare towards small and medium size farms, the Commissioner hopes to use the new CAP as the vehicle through which these smaller farms can both become more competitive and more sustainable.

The new CAP will be assisted by complementary policy and regulation at both EU and national levels, creating a patchwork landscape of policy which will encompass and address incongruencies in interrelated sectors of the economy and society. The relative success or failure of incorporating these policies into an integrated, mutually beneficial approach, will depend to a large extent on implementation measures adopted which, to a greater degree than ever, resides with the EU Member States.

Nature Restoration Regulation

On 22 June 2022, the European Commission tabled proposals for a Nature Restoration Regulation⁶ and to strengthen rules reducing the use of chemical pesticides. The proposed Nature Restoration Regulation is the first of its kind and aims to repair European habitats and ecosystems, from forestry, agricultural land, marine, freshwater, and urban environments. Under this proposal, [legally binding targets](#) for nature restoration in different ecosystems will apply in each Member State, scaling up existing measures such as rewilding, replacing trees, greening cities and infrastructure or removing pollutants and anthropogenic pressures in order to facilitate nature's self-recovery.

Underpinning the logic behind this regulation is the premise that nature itself is the most efficient remover of carbon from the atmosphere and that restoring and protecting forests, wetlands and seas

⁶ The EU #NatureRestoration Law (europa.eu)

should be the basis for a sustainable economy. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that wider societal benefits flow through the food system as a whole, from the restoration of ecosystems. These include benefits beyond carbon sequestration, such as improvements to human health and wellbeing, strengthening food security and increasing environmental resilience. Benefits to the agricultural sector include better soil quality, assured pollination, better flood protection, clean water, replenished fish stocks and improved air quality. Moreover, in its February 2022 report,⁷ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) called for the urgent restoration of degraded ecosystems in to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The proposed Nature Restoration Regulation therefore emphasises the intrinsic link between natural ‘carbon sinks’, such as wetlands and forests, and a stable environment.

A key example of nature restoration is Ireland’s peatlands which, as the main national energy source for centuries, have suffered extreme degradation and loss. In 2017, the [EU Life-funded ‘Living Bog’](#) project was launched to restore 3000 hectares of raised bog across the country. This was a proactive form of restoration which involved the blocking of drains, raising of water levels and removal of invading trees and scrub to restore the original hydrological and ecological conditions, that would facilitate full recovery. Central to the success of this project was the successful engagement of local stakeholders, which highlights the importance of not approaching agricultural policy in silos but rather as a community, in which those who have a role to play or a benefit to acquire are involved ab initio. This initiative has further spurred a more ambitious peatland restoration programme nationally called the ‘Peatlands and People’ project, which will receive €10 million in funding through the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Fund.

However, the proposal for a Nature Restoration Regulation has raised concerns among stakeholders as to its enforceability and whether or not its implementation is realistic due legal obstacles such as the protection of property rights and ambitious targets to cover at least of [20% of the EU’s land and sea areas by 2030](#). The proposal has been referred to the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI), which is due to discuss the rapporteur’s draft report in January 2023.

Food Security

Continuing with agricultural practice under the current CAP, which frequently is characterised by high volumes of agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, has to the potential to pose a threat to food security. The sharp rise in energy costs in recent month has, in turn, increased the cost of producing fertiliser, which is an energy-intensive process. This risk is compounded by war in the European continent, continued disruption in supply chains precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impacts of climate change which are already being felt by farmers, such as drought, flooding, and extreme weather events. Taking action to combat climate change, therefore, as is envisaged in the new CAP 2023-2027, is a prerequisite for food security and a necessity for both human and animal health.

However, it is important to note that food insecurity for the purposes of this paper, may also be interpreted as ‘nutrition security’. Supply of food is unlikely to reach catastrophically low levels, but the supply of nutritious, high-quality food, that is good for the environment and for human and animal health, is at risk.

⁷ [Sixth Assessment Report – IPCC](#)

Intensive Farming and Biodiversity Loss

The link between agriculture and anthropogenic climate change is well documented. Food systems account for one third of global Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Moreover, the impact of intensive monoculture agriculture on the environment can adversely affect soil, water, and air quality. Furthermore, Commissioner Wojciechowski has dismissed the “myth” that to improve food security, production must be intensified. This echoes the Sustainable Food Systems Ireland initiative which outlines the capacity of food systems to be simultaneously sustainable and generate significant output in terms of production.

Food Security and Cybersecurity

Furthermore, beyond the threats to continuity of supply posed by monoculture and biodiversity loss, food security is also endangered by the heavy reliance of big agricultural producers on computer systems, making them vulnerable to cyberattacks. Supporting small farmers therefore can assist in ensuring long-term food security due to their resilience to cyberattacks. Increasing resilience to external threats such as cyberattacks can be achieved through the localisation of supply chains, something which is aided by the existence of the CAP and its support to EU farmers.

During this period where governments must focus on mitigating the effects of climate change, a trade-off can exist between this long-term goal and other more short-term objectives, such as adapting to price fluctuations and supply chain issues. This seemingly binary choice has generated debate throughout the EU. For example, the German Ministry of Agriculture is of the view that whilst pausing certain environmental policies could alleviate grain shortages arising from the war in Ukraine, allowing the use of pesticides in protected areas would be counterproductive for achieving the goals set out in the EU’s Farm to Fork strategy. Alternative responses which are being debated in Germany, such as changing crop profiles and increasing the competitiveness of domestic, protein-rich legumes such as peas and broad beans could offer a solution to the dual threats of food security and climate change.

Trade Disruption

Disruption in global trade in fertilisers has been one of the most serious consequences for the agriculture sector of Russia’s war in Ukraine. The implications of this disruption globally mean that the shortage also impacts countries who have no dependency on Russian fertiliser but extends to all importers of fertiliser. These shortages elevate prices, which were already heightened before the war due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rising energy costs. However, these two relatively recent phenomena are both exacerbated by the increasingly visible effects of climate change. Against this backdrop, discussions in other EU Member States centre around whether to make use of exemptions from EU regulations. An example from Germany is [the debate](#) around whether to temporarily suspend a provision under the Nature Restoration Regulation which obliges farmers to keep 4% of their land as ‘unproductive’ in order to foster more space for wildlife in order to mitigate food shortages.

Evaluating Opportunities & Costs

In this context, it would involve weighing up the costs of superimposing a ‘Green Architecture’ on the CAP versus the environmental, social and health costs of continuing the business-as-usual approach.

Referring to the natural affinity between agricultural policy and other policies, Commissioner Wojciechowski [highlighted](#) the opportunity to prioritise rural areas in cohesion policy and the synergies this has with the new CAP: “for these funds we can support and organise the market for consumption, for example, through public procurement – embedding preference for organic products in the public procurement system”. He also cited the importance of the Next Generation EU⁸ funds in achieving the target of 25% of organic farming by referring to the fundamental link between agriculture and the processing industry. The concentration which characterises the processing industry adds further pressure on small farmers, from whom processors are often uninterested in buying.

Consumer Preferences

Consumers increasingly play an integral role in precipitating the societal shift towards greener agricultural practices by demanding sustainable produce which is both good for the planet and nutritious. Effective policy change requires behavioural change and [price is the key driver](#) in guiding consumers to consider other options. Samo Jareb, chair of the European Court of Auditors audit chamber for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, suggests that [enshrining the “polluter pays principle”](#) in food prices may therefore be necessary in order to ensure that all costs are reflected in food prices. This approach would facilitate fair competition between sustainably produced food, such as organic farming, and unsustainably produced food, which places negative environmental externalities on society.

The Origin Green brand has proved to be a positive policy choice for both farmers and consumers as it identifies the origin and the sustainability of agri-food products. Formulating policies which aim to reduce the quantity of grain required to feed livestock would be important in improving the sustainability and resilience of the agricultural sector in the long run. [Substituting kelp in the diet of livestock](#) is one of several innovative solutions to reducing the quantity of grain needed to feed animals and could be beneficial to overall herd health.

Trade Policy Lens

Green objectives in the agricultural sector can be greatly aided by positive changes in trade policy. The World Trade Report 2022 published by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) offers some recommendations on how to reconcile sustainability and climate policies with trade. In presenting the report at COP27 in Egypt, Director General of the WTO, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, [outlined her hope](#) for “a trade and investment facilitation pathway in support of a just transition to a low-carbon economy”.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine [Annual Review 2022](#) cites a record €15.4 billion worth of agri-food exports for the year, with the sector accounting for 9.5% of total goods exported to 180 markets worldwide. This underscores the global-orientation of the Irish agri-food sector, with approximately 90% of Irish beef, sheep and dairy produce being exported. The EU accounts for 31% of these exports, with the UK remaining our largest trading partner as a destination of 38% of agri-food exports. The United States and the Netherlands were the second and third largest export destination respectively. Given its intrinsic link to trade and economic prosperity, agriculture has resided at the heart of Irish trade policy for decades. The current international context presents an opportune moment for a re-evaluation and incorporation of the aims of the European Green Deal into trade policy.

8 [NextGenerationEU \(europa.eu\)](#)

The initiative of the Irish Government Food Vision 2030 aims to make Ireland a world leader in sustainable food systems, which will in turn deliver tangible benefits for the Irish agri-food sector, for society and for the environment. It is believed that adopting the highest standards of sustainability, including economic, environmental, and social, will provide the basis for a future competitive advantage for the sector in terms of trade. It is hoped that the source of this competitive advantage will lie in the ability to gain market share in premium international markets.

Thorny Issues

The EU-Mercosur Agreement, between the EU and the four Mercosur states of South America – Brazil, Argentine, Paraguay and Uruguay – has proven to be a divisive issue among the 27 EU Member States in the context of the debate on agriculture and the environment. In an attempt to circumvent national parliaments and expedite the deal, the European Commission in [October 2022](#), indicated it would seek to split the deal and make the trade part ‘EU only’, meaning it would require approval only from the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Environmental and agricultural concerns are at the heart of Member States’ concerns over the deal, with the rate of deforestation in Brazil, Mercosur’s largest member, and cheaper South American produce undercutting European farmers being central to the debate.

A [report](#) by the Irish Centre for Human Rights (ICHR) claims that ratification of the deal would result in a 25% increase in deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest per year. Additionally, the text of the Agreement states that there is no legally binding mechanism which would ensure adherence by the two trading blocs to either the Paris Agreement or the European Green Deal. The ICHR suggests that stricter standards are needed before ratification, to protect both the agri-food sector and the environment. Farmers in France, Ireland and Belgium have heavily criticised the deal, arguing that the reduction in tariffs and extension of quotas for agricultural products, particularly beef and chicken, threaten their livelihoods. Moreover, European farmers are concerned that perceived lower cost of production and environmental standards in Mercosur countries could place them at a competitive disadvantage.

On the other hand, the deal could also mark a significant step towards reform of EU agriculture. The Commission has argued that the wider Association Agreement, which includes agreements on political cooperation, offers the Commission more leverage in discussions on environmental and human rights protection with Mercosur countries. It argues that incorporating environmental protection mechanisms, especially protection of the Amazon, would be an imperative, were the deal to be ratified. It can also be argued that the deal [safeguards against further erosion of multilateralism](#), which at the time of writing is in peril.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, coupled with a desire to decrease reliance on China, offer a possible impetus towards ratification of the deal as they highlight the need to forge new partnerships and to diversify trade flows and supply chains. Furthermore, the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as President of Brazil on Sunday, 30 October 2022, may mean that objections to the deal based on the anti-human rights rhetoric of former-President Bolsonaro, are no longer a concern for da Silva’s term. Moreover, on 30 November, EU HRVP Josep Borrell, [outlined](#) the mutual dependence of the EU and Mercosur in an increasingly unpredictable and multipolar world, highlighting both the political and environmental potential of the accord.

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a climate measure designed by the European Commission in the Fit for 55 package in 2021 to impose levies on the imports of carbon intensive products to prevent EU products being replaced by cheaper products from countries with lower environmental standards and to avoid the risk of carbon leakage, whereby companies based in the EU might move carbon-intensive activity beyond the bloc, – whilst adhering to WTO rules. However, CBAM is viewed, particularly by China, India and Japan as protectionist and could exacerbate trade relations with the Indo-Pacific region. CBAM would allow EU farmers to reduce emissions and potentially raise prices in the EU without concerns that EU consumers might opt for cheaper products from third countries with less stringent environmental and climate standards. However, the adverse effects of CBAM on African countries needs to be considered. If food production shifts northwards due to CBAM, it is argued that we will not have sufficient food production to feed the planet.

The Inflation Reduction Act

Another thorny issue in current trade negotiations is the Biden Administration's \$369 billion Inflation Reduction Act, (IRA) signed into law on 16 August 2022. The IRA allocates [nearly \\$40 billion](#) towards agricultural provisions designed to foster “climate-smart agriculture”, support a clean energy transition in rural communities and strengthen forestry management. In providing unprecedented government supports for climate-friendly activity, including pertaining to agriculture, the IRA creates an additional political stimulus to ensure that a delicate balance is achieved between placing undue pressure on EU farmers to reach some of the environmental targets outlined in the European Green Deal and ensuring that does not hamper the competitiveness of the EU's agricultural sector.

The new CAP and The European Green Deal viewed through the lens of the Department of Foreign Affairs

At a domestic level, several initiatives below are indicative of a “whole of government approach” adopted by DFA as it tries to avoid silos in departmental thinking. It also elucidates the merit of systems value thinking in approaching the intersection of agriculture and environmental policies with foreign policy, mapping interconnections between policy areas and identifying potential synergies both within the Department and between other Departments.

The European Green Deal is Europe's flagship strategy to bring about a more sustainable food and agricultural system based on creating more space for nature and motivating farmers and consumers to change their habits. Discussions in the EU are currently focused inwards on instruments to protect the Single Market, help achieve open strategic autonomy and a bolder industrial policy to strengthen the competitiveness of the Single Market. However, it will also affect Ireland's bilateral relations with its key partners outside the EU, such as the UK, the US and with Africa.

One area of foreign policy which looms large in the debate about aligning the new CAP and the European Green Deal is Ireland's relationship with the UK. Ireland has two major interests in UK agriculture policy as, the UK is our single largest market for food and agriculture, accounting for 37% of our exports valued at €4.5bn and agriculture and food production on the island of Ireland is currently highly integrated. The UK is also Ireland's nearest market, with food product requirements that we

can supply. On the island of Ireland, the same agriculture and food policy applies, cross-border trade is seamless, and the structure of the industry has become increasingly shaped by commercial rationality rather than historic borders. While the UK has been seeking to find a replacement for the CAP since Brexit, no substitute for the CAP has yet been found and efforts by the UK to strike deals with New Zealand could have a huge impact on Ireland.

(i) One initiative worth underscoring is: **The Shared Island Initiative**, which set out an unprecedented commitment of [€3.5 billion for all-island investment to 2030](#), including at least €1 billion from the government's Shared Island Fund. This North/South initiative, with East/West implications of the UK post Brexit policy mentioned above, aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement, which has been the bedrock of Ireland's Peace Process and of political and community relationships on the island of Ireland. As rural communities in the border regions have always had a cross border connection, realising the potential of these areas to meet challenges such as biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism through all-island partnerships requires drawing on investment in sustainability and devising measures to enable rural and community development by working with local authorities across the shared island in line with the ambitions of Pillar 2 of the new CAP under the oversight of several government departments.

(ii) **Sustainable Food Systems:** The aim of the Irish Government's Strategy: [Food Vision 2030](#) is to make Ireland a world leader in sustainable food systems by 2030, and this could deliver tangible benefits for the Irish agri-food sector, for society and for the environment. The premise for this is that adopting the highest standards for safe, nutritious, and sustainable food would provide the basis for a future competitive advantage for the sector in terms of trade and the ability to gain market share in premium international markets. A unique part of the preparation for the Food Systems Summit in 2021 was the convening of national multistakeholder dialogues on food systems, devised by the DFA and the Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine. While the EGD involves changing farm management practices such as the use of fertilisers, reducing vulnerability in supply chains and nudging consumer behaviour in a more eco-friendly direction, the strategy of linking food with nutrition and health could enable Ireland to rightly claim its sustainability credentials globally and enable it to export ideas and technology in the future, creating a whole new range of opportunities for the agrifood industry and simultaneously supporting the European Green Deal.

(iii) **Ireland and COP 27:** A coherent, whole of government approach to the recent COP27 climate negotiations in Egypt was demonstrated in the representation of Ireland by several key political and official figures across several government departments. The Taoiseach's delegation included the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, Minister of State for Overseas Aid and the Diaspora, Colm Byrne; and Minister for the Environment, Eamon Ryan. Minister Ryan was appointed as lead negotiator for the EU on loss and damage talks at COP 27, confirming Ireland's green credentials at EU level. In turn, the appointment of Dr Sinead Walsh, Deputy DG of Irish Aid, as Ireland's climate envoy in 2020, highlights the links between climate as both an environmental challenge and a security issue.

(iv) **Food Security and Multilateralism:** Ireland has highlighted the link between climate and conflict during its term as an elected member of the **UN Security Council**. While there are many serious global

impacts from climate around food insecurity from droughts to floods and famines, Ireland has strongly supported UN Resolution 2417 on conflict and hunger, which condemns the use of food as a weapon of war, as it can lead to displacement and humanitarian tragedies and the starvation of civilian populations.

(v) **Food Diplomacy and the SDGs:** Food systems are directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is often an assumption that EU standards only affect European farmers, but the Green Deal architecture will have a significant human impact on rural activities around the globe. It will be important to focus on the possible unintended consequences for EU policy goals for coherence in the development, migration and security nexus. Furthermore consideration will have to be given to the objective of sustainability standards related to agri-food elements of the European Green Deal, which may impact negatively on third countries such as those in Africa, if account is not taken of the possible negative impact of CBAM on third countries and the need for due diligence.

While the discussion within the EU present is focused inwards on the competitiveness of the Single Market, it should also look at the external impact on food systems. Achieving the global sustainability of food systems should avoid negative spill over effects on Africa in relation to water and land use. Africa is said to hold most of the 600 million hectares of arable land left in the world, including 65 percent of the untapped arable land which makes it critical to the future of food production in the world. With 60 percent of Africa's population reliant on agriculture for income and livelihood, the continent's own future is also intricately bound to the success of agriculture. Agriculture is essential to the future of cooperation between the EU and Africa, so, closer engagement will be necessary to build sustainable food systems on both continents that address the challenges of **nutrition and food security**. Research and investment in African food systems will also be necessary because notwithstanding the importance of the green aspirations of the European Green Deal, it is equally important that enforcing higher standards does not have the unintended consequence of excluding African farm products from the Single Market. Ireland wants a more ambitious and effective EU/Africa partnership and the EU aims to establish an ambitious future-oriented alliance with Africa that can build an area of prosperity and stability, underpinned by a transformational investment package.

At EU level, Ireland could act to ensure that the EU's assertive trade strategy and the tools it uses to deal with escalating geopolitical challenges recognise the impact it will have on poorer nations where 800m people currently live in famine situations and any curtailment of food production would exacerbate this situation considerably. Similarly, at UN level, Ireland will have an important role to play in this regard in the coming year.

In September 2023, the UN will host a summit to review progress in the Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs) agenda for 2030 and Ireland and Qatar have been appointed as cofacilitators of the outcome document from that process. Previously, Ireland and Kenya were responsible for negotiating the original SDG agenda in 2015. Eight of the 17 goals are associated with the links between food security and climate: No poverty (goal 1), zero hunger, (goal 2); good health and well-being (goal three); access to clean water and sanitation (goal 7), responsible consumption and production (goal 12), climate action (goal 13), life under water (goal 14), life on land (goal 15). An important indicator is goal 17 which focuses on developing partnerships with like-minded and non-like-minded countries to

achieve these SDGs is a key task for foreign ministries now, underlining the importance of international solidarity and multilateral cooperation.

(vi) Finally, **Irish Aid**, working with the Departments of Health, Agriculture and Environment and related agencies at domestic level, and at EU and global level (HERA, WHO, WFP) on the “One Health” agenda highlights the nexus between environment, health and agriculture, and human and animal welfare and could help build up an evidence ecosystem and a network of partnerships to accelerate solutions to challenges in the areas of global food, nutrition and health. All these endeavors would help Ireland achieve the SDG’s ambition “to protect People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, and leave no one behind”; to curtail the impacts of unsustainable climate change and to create the potential to feed and nurture a future global population of 10 billion human beings in 2050, while meeting its climate goals.

Conclusion

Developing a policy framework aligned with ecological targets and environmental commitments in the context of the new CAP requires an all-of government and an all-of-society approach. Often such approaches are driven by consumer demand, which is complemented by government policy and regulation. In the case of agriculture, a virtuous circle of benefits emanates from policies and regulation designed to achieve the goals of the new CAP. In protecting nature and biodiversity, farmers improve their sustainability standards which heightens the attractiveness of Irish agri-food produce on the international market, increasing its resilience to future global shocks, such as spikes in energy prices, protectionist trade policies and supply chain blockages. The new CAP will not only help the agri-food sector to meet the obligations of the EGD but will: transform the way farmers operate as stewards of the land, provide for cleaner air and water, bolster sustainable food production, and engage both farmers and consumers in building viable and sustainable communities in rural Ireland. While Ireland’s CAP Strategic Plan goes in the right direction in terms of aligning the CAP with the ambitions of the EGD, it is likely, however, to meet with some resistance along the way.

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The IIEA acknowledges the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union



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