



Almost half of the European Union's (EU) land is farmed. Europe needs its farmers to meet the challenge of supplying us with safe, nutritious food and to protect the countryside and environment. Farmers are the first to realise the need to care for our natural resources — after all, farmers rely upon them for their day-to-day living. They manage the countryside for the benefit of us all. They supply 'public goods' — the good care and maintenance of our soils, our landscapes, ecosystems and habitats, and a great diversity of fauna and flora. Farmers are not rewarded for these services so they need the EU's support to provide them, which they receive in the form of public funding.

The CAP began in 1962 and in the early years it encouraged farmers to use modern machinery and new techniques, including chemical fertilisers and plant protection products. The policy was effective and food productivity greatly increased, but in recent years the emphasis has changed. The CAP reforms of 2013 focus more on the environment, with an increased percentage of funds now allocated to sustainable farming methods. Today farmers keep ecological focus areas such as buffer strips and wildflower meadows in farmed areas so that biodiversity can be maintained. While such areas might reduce the overall output of the farm, sustainable farming practices like these benefit soil quality and support ecosystems and wildlife habitats, biodiversity and the environment. The reformed CAP also provides special support for organic farming and the productive use of forests and woodland.

This module will help students explore:

- ▶ how farmers and the environment can be adversely affected by climate change and how the EU enables farmers to be part of the global fight to mitigate the changes brought about by global warming (see **worksheet 'Agriculture and the challenges of climate change'**);
 - ▶ how farmers work to protect nature and safeguard biodiversity (see **worksheet 'Safeguarding biodiversity in agriculture'**);
 - ▶ how environmentally sustainable farming which uses natural resources prudently is essential for our food production and for our quality of life — today, tomorrow and for future generations (see **worksheet 'Sustainable farming'**);
 - ▶ how we too have a role in protecting the environment, supporting biodiversity and combating food waste (see **worksheet 'Take action on food waste!'**).
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The module's project suggestion is a visit to an arable farm.



Additional resources

- EU agriculture map
- CAP factsheet
- Glossary

