EU Farm Policy

What should we want from reform?

Wyn Grant and Jack Thurston explain the basics

The reform agenda for rural communities, international justice, public health and the environment

Should we scrap the CAP? Mariann Fischer Boel, Hilary Benn, Jonathon Porritt, Barbara Young, Don Curry, Helen Phillips, David Baldock, Hannes Lorenzen and Michael Jack
From the editor

It is hard to get the measure of Europe’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Is it really a big deal or does it just look big, because you have to get up so close to make head of tail of it? Tens of billions of euros are spent through the CAP each year. How large the numbers look depends on what you hold them up against: very large (nearly half) as a portion of the total EU budget; small (less than one percent) compared with the turnover of Europe’s economy; or large again, when we zoom in on farm incomes.

Take the cost to us all as taxpayers and at the shop till. The UK government has put this at about €950 for an EU family of four. How they came to this figure isn’t too clear but, if they got it right, would that seem a lot or a little? Playing fast and loose with household spending data, that’s roughly twice what UK families spend on fruit and veg combined and about the same as we fork out on booze and cigarettes. Do we want the CAP to cost that kind of money? Well that surely depends on what it achieves.

This edition of Food Ethics discusses some of the CAP’s consequenc-es. Mariann Fischer Boel, the European Commissioner responsible for agriculture, says the CAP gives us safe and high quality food envi-ronmental protection, good animal welfare and more besides. Other contributors focus on the CAP’s perversities, such as the harm it has caused to the environment and people in poorer countries. Many of the problems are familiar, since they have preoccupied reformers for decades. Changes in 2003 addressed some complaints, but not all. We assembled this issue to take stock. Given where the CAP now is, we wanted to know from leading experts, decision-makers and campaigners what progressive reformers should be calling for. Or, to put this as an ethical question, is it right for EU governments to do?

The articles in this collection contain a great array of ideas – some immediate and practical, others more long term. While some concur, others are at odds. What stand out, though, are three points. First, the reform agenda has shifted – from being primarily about the CAP’s problems to being about its prospects. Reformers are still acutely aware of what is wrong with the CAP, but they are also more interested than ever in how the resource it represents could be better used.

This is partly pragmatism. The worry is that if we really scrapped the CAP, the money would be lost to rural and sustainable de-velopment altogether. While some still use that slogan, it now stands for reinvesting this area of com-mon policy so it focuses on ru-ral communities, nutrition or the environment, not for doing away with it altogether.

Yet this change is not purely prag-matism. It also reflects a second fea-ture of current calls for reform – a bold, outward-looking optimism that a different set of common policies around agriculture, not for agriculture, could help Europe square some awkward circles. A reformed CAP could help us clean up our environmental footprint without just outsourcing our pol-lution to poorer countries. The right policies could help tackle global poverty, no longer fuelling it, yet also benefit public health and rural communities within the EU.

If that sounds naive, try turning it around – we certainly won’t rise to these challenges without common policies on farming, rural areas and much of the territory now covered by the CAP.

So the third point takes us back where we started to the question of how much CAP reform matters. The thrust of the articles here is that CAP reform is necessary to achieve all sorts of aims but suf-ficient for few of them. The shape of international trade rules, multi-lateral environmental agreements and business regulation are among many factors that will affect how any reforms play out.

That shouldn’t stunt our ambition – it should extend it. Getting CAP reform right, not just for Europe but for the world, will wipe clean one of the biggest blots on the EU’s copybook and strengthen our abil-ity to be a progressive influence in international affairs.

How do we get it right? This edi-tion has many suggestions but also highlights some gaps. One reason there are gaps is that we face some new challenges – the Food Ethics Council sets some of these out in a discussion paper available at www.foodethicscouncil.org.

But another reason for gaps is that, as Wyn Grant writes, the CAP is so complicated that few outsiders understand it. Yet it is ‘outside’ – people from civil society groups and marginal communities – who are often closest to the constitu-ences reform is supposed to serve.

We make a small step towards bringing out- and insiders together in this magazine, but it would be great to see more thorough en-gagement. Support for civil soci-ety to work directly with people whose careers are the CAP would no doubt be richly rewarded with practical proposals for reform.

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Food miles’ or ‘food minutes’ – is sustainability all in the timing?

Over the past two years, food businesses and the public have been deluged with reports about the environmental footprints of food supply chains. On the face of it, however, far from simplifying the task of ‘greening’ that footprint, these studies seem to have made it more complicated. In particular, they have revealed that the contribution our food makes to climate change depends on how it is produced, processed and consumed, and not simply on how far it is transported.

The first meeting of the Food Ethics Council’s Business Forum asked how far a focus on timing could help cut through this complexity. Timing matters because the environmental impacts of producing, processing and distributing food depend in part on whether that food is in season locally and on how quickly it perishes.

We have published a short report that highlights key points from the meeting.

To read the report visit www.foodethicscouncil.org/node/292

Analysis: background

The CAP was so complex that few outsiders understood it, making it difficult to mount an effective critique

All this might seem testament to the power of the farm lobby, but the reality was more complex. The European-level farm lobby, COPA, lost influence over time because of internal divisions, although national farm lobbies were able to influence the conduct of agriculture ministers in the Farm Council. What one should not underestimate is the influence of the multinational companies that provided inputs to the farm sector: the producers of farm machinery, agrochemicals, fertilisers and veterinary medicine, and the providers of farm finance. The food processing industry had a rather complex set of divergent interests in relation to the CAP, depending on the raw materials it was using. Moreover, the CAP was so complex that few outsiders understood it, making it difficult to mount an effective critique. The first challenge to the CAP came from elsewhere in the world that had been allowed to enter the European market. So, second, the Community erected a set of variable import levies which ensured that its own farmers were protected. This did not particularly suit the United States, but it was prepared to go along with it so that it could maintain a more competitive challenge and because its broader strategic objectives required a prosperous Europe.

The surplus product stored in Europe had eventually to be disposed of and this was achieved by a system of export subsidies. This had a distorting effect on the world market, encouraging the United States to develop its new forms of subsidy for its own exports so as not to lose out in third country markets. Commodities like skimmed milk powder being dumped in this way was a convenient way of determining local dairy farmers and drove them out of business.

Sir; When you watched this year’s wet Wimbledon I hope you spared a thought for strawberry growers. The rain dampened people’s appetites just when they were expected to eat most.

You’d have thought this would dent imports and UK growers would take what market there was. Far from it. As it happens to some degree every year, it was UK growers that bore the brunt of a slump in demand.

The reason is that fruit growers sell to supermarkets through supply agents, they only get a small commission. While the USA, to make up for predicted shortfalls in supply. While the reason is that fruit growers sell to supermarkets through supply agents, they only get a small commission. While the USA, to make up for predicted shortfalls in supply.

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percent of the whole Community budget. Even now it takes around 45 percent of all EU spending. One response to the rising bill was to introduce dairy quotas in 1984 in an attempt to halt further increases in production. This was achieved at the expense of giving a windfall capital gain to existing farmers, making it more difficult for new entrants to join the industry. Other pressures were building up on the CAP. There was an increasing awareness of the fact that around 80 percent of the benefits went to 20 percent of the farmers – producers who were prosperous anyway. The negative environmental effects of the encouragement given to intensive production were increasingly apparent, particularly in terms of the pollution of streams and rivers. Above all, the Uruguay Round trade talks threatened to stall over the question of the CAP – this posed a threat to German industrialists, which led to a decisive German intervention to persuade France to moderate its position (although not by that much).

This window of opportunity was seized by farm commissioner Ray MacSharry, who introduced a reform in 1992 which have provided the basis for all subsequent reforms. What was different about them was the idea of ‘decoupling’, breaking the link between the provision of subsidy and production. The food scares surrounding dioxin, salmonella and BSE provided further impetus for a new approach to farming, while the impending accession of the new Member States led to new budgetary pressures.

The EU is now operating a dual model of agriculture

The wily Austrian, Franz Fischler, who was farm commissioner from 1995, took reform further. Pretending to be a simple farmer from the Alps (he was even portrayed in his peddling kit on his website), Fischler blended vision with an acute sense of political tactis. He forced through another set of reforms that were put into place in 2003. Most payments to farmers are now made in the form of a ‘single farm payment’ that is a potentially more transparent form of income subsidy. Considerable emphasis has now also been placed on the ‘second pillar’ of the CAP which supports rural development and agri-environmental schemes. Farmers don’t receive their subsidies if they don’t demonstrate ‘cross-compliance’ with a range of Community measures covering such matters as animal welfare and environmentally friendly farming.

The EU is now in effect operating a dual model of agriculture. In the most internationally competitive areas, highly productive and intensive farming continues, for example in grain producing landscapes, ecotourism, biodiversity and high-value-added, high-technology areas such as the Paris Basin or East Anglia. In more marginal and less productive areas, the emphasis is on preserving traditional landscapes, ecotourism, biodiversity and high-value-added, high-quality niche products such as specialist cheeses.

What does the future hold? Within Europe, the unfunded accession of Bulgaria and Romania is putting increasing pressure on the budget. On the global scene, the Doha Round trade talks seem to have failed, but the ‘Everything but Arms’ agreement with least developed countries will open up trade to some extent anyway. Meanwhile, the CAP faces a ‘health check’, although that is presented largely as a talking up exercise. So, while the case for reform remains strong, the present arrangements are likely to remain in place until 2013 and subsidies are unlikely to disappear even then. There will probably be growing emphasis on rural development and greener forms of farming, but that’s what many consumers are demanding anyway.

The rich list

If we knew where farm subsidies went, would we still spend them?

Jack Thurston examines the menu for reform (and going-on in the kitchen)

Eight years ago, I was working as a political aide to the then UK Agriculture Minister Nick Brown. It was a difficult time for British farming. Prices were down, the tail end of mad cow disease was still affecting the livestock sector; the strong pound was hitting exporters and there was a sense of discontent in many rural communities. At the same time, European Union countries were negotiating a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the collective name for all the support programmes that exist to give a helping hand to European farmers.

We were having real difficulties getting across our argument that out-dated production-linked subsidies were part of the problem for British farming, not the solution. Economic studies told us that most farm subsidies went to a small number of large farm businesses, and that the principal effect of untargeted subsidy payments was to increase land values, rents and input costs. This was making it much harder for new entrants to get into farming and for successful, entrepreneurial farmers to grow their businesses. We also knew that farmers were making their production decisions with one eye on the market and another on the subsidy payment, and that subsidy-driven over-production was leading to a waste of resources and environmental damage and poor animal welfare.

Yet the inequality and the waste at the heart of the system were not registering with most farmers or the public at large. People still thought that the CAP was a system of aids for small family farms. One rainy afternoon, and in part out of pure curiosity, Nick Brown and I asked the top civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture, who was probably one of the 20 biggest recipients of farm subsidies in the UK. It read like a page out of Burke’s Peerage. If the public knew about the six and seven figure annual payouts to the likes of the Duke of Westminster and the Earl of Buccleuch, and big food companies like Nestle and Tate & Lyle, would they see things the same way?

At the time, British data protection laws prevented release of this information, but once I had stopped working for the government I began to push from the outside and, in 2005, the data were finally released under new legislation on public access to information. While the CAP has undergone some significant policy changes over the past few years, the distribution of payments remains more or less the same. In the UK, the top ten percent of recipients get half of all farm subsidies. Subsidies are concentrated in intensive arable regions like Lincolnshire and the Fens that are practically devoid of biodiversity.

The list of 20 biggest recipients of farm subsidies in the UK reads like a page out of Burke’s Peerage

This campaign for transparency has snowballed across Europe and is having a real impact on the debate on the future of Europe’s farm policies. Cross-border collaboration has led to an online database of payments so that anyone with an internet connection can access the data in a user-friendly way. There are now 19 countries that have revealed data on farm subsidy recipients (see table opposite) and, last December, all EU countries signed up to new transparency provisions for all CAP payments starting at the end of 2008. Nick Brown’s ‘health check’ will be the first time that the CAP has been up for review in the new era of transparency. Yet it is important to remember

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Fischer Boel has already pre-announced a good amount of the agenda. She wants to remove the last vestiges of coupled subsidy payments and intervention buying so that farmers are freed to farm according to market demand rather than government diktat. She will also signal a permanent end to production-limiting tools like arable set-aside and milk quotas, which will be left to expire at the current end date of 2015. There will also be a proposal to limit individual payments to a maximum level (the Commission has previously proposed €300,000 although there is talk of a more sophisticated sliding scale this time around) and to exclude the very smallest claims (e.g. for very small hobby farms and pony paddocks) on the basis that the administrative costs are greater than the amount payable.

Becoming a net contributor will fundamentally change the outlook of the French government.

Possibly the most controversial element of the ‘health check’ will be a proposal to shift funds from the ‘traditional CAP’ of farm income support into the ‘new CAP’ of payments for farm-based environmental stewardship, rural infrastructure and enterprise development. Farmers do not like the idea of ‘their money’ being used for broader environmental conservation and rural development objectives and can be expected to resist these proposals with all their might. However, the more the European public learns about the limits of income support policy to support those farms in real need or to deliver anything tangible for rural communities, the more likely that reformers will be able to garner the support for such a shift in spending priorities.

Another hotly contested issue for the ‘health check’ is the environmental and animal welfare conditionality that applies to farm subsidy payments. As things stand, farmers are by and large paid for doing what they are already required to do by law. It is hard to see what extra value the taxpayer is getting from the substantial investment it puts into European farming every year. Environmental NGOs are certain to be pushing for a more rigorous approach to conditionality, although in recent months the Commission has appeared minded to do exactly the reverse and further weaken compliance requirements.

Looking beyond the ‘health check’ and towards the EU budget review it is becoming clear that the days are numbered for the CAP as a large centralised instrument for agricultural market management and farm income support. Ever since the mid-1990s, progressive thinkers have been talking in terms of a European rural policy, of which farming is an important though not dominant element. The EU of 27 Member States is so diverse, from peasant farming in Romania to highly industrialized livestock operations in Denmark and the Netherlands, from the forests of Scandinavia to the arid lands of the southern Mediterranean. It is clear that a one-size-fits-all policy cannot meet the diversity of need that exists.

There is no new money for the European project on the horizon – since agriculture accounts for the largest single chunk of the current budget the vultures are starting to circle.

Sometimes in the next five years France, the country that has done the most to defend a unified European farm policy, will move from being a net beneficiary of the CAP to become a net contributor, paying in more than it is getting out. This will fundamentally change the outlook of the French government towards the financial solidarity of the CAP. The new government of President Sarkozy has already signalled a desire for more national responsibility for the financing of agriculture policy. This is code for French taxpayers paying for French farmers but not for Spanish, Polish or Romanian farmers. Such a renationalisation has always been strongly opposed by the Brussels institutions as an attack on the European project itself, though it is hard to see how they could resist a call for greater co-financing, particularly in an era where contributor countries are unwilling to dig deeper into their pockets to fund the EU. Brussels is gradually waking up to the fact that there is no new money for the European project on the horizon, so any new initiatives such as economic competitiveness, research and development or a European defence force will have to be funded from within existing budgets. Since agriculture accounts for the largest single chunk of the current budget, the vultures are starting to circle.

Those of us who want to see a more sustainable European food production system can only expect the CAP to be part of a much bigger food policy agenda that takes in regulatory policy, education and basic consumer food choices. With the notable exception of the current rush to biofuels, the era when governments told farmers what to produce is finished. Yet the financial expenditure that accompanies the old command-and-control systems remains: around a third of European farm revenue is derived from one form of government subsidy or another. The challenge is to make that public investment in farming work much harder to achieve the things that the public wants, but that the market does not provide. Public payments for particular environmental or rural development objectives are preferable to untargeted income support payments that ultimately serve to enrich Europe’s largest landowners and boost the profits of farm machinery and agro-chemical companies. With commodity prices finally on an upward trend, now is a very good moment to wean farmers from permanent reliance on state support. Europe’s best farmers, whether big or small, can do well by farming to the market – we need to abandon the mentality that the taxpayer owes every farmer a living.
**The big question: Should we scrap CAP?**

Is it time to replace or re-nationalise European policies on agriculture? What should the policy landscape look like after the end of current budget commitments in 2013? We asked some of the people who will shape that future...

**Hilary Benn**
British farming, and the food it produces, is a very important part of our economy. It also has a huge influence on our landscape.

To best support it we need a policy framework for European farming, which allows farmers the freedom to be successful entrepreneurs, whilst maintaining high standards in food and non-food production – a framework in which the farming sector is profitable without subsidies or a high level of tariff protection, which have both proved to be damaging to developing countries and to the environment. I would like to see a shift in the focus of CAP funding away from market intervention and direct payments, to delivering public benefits such as protection of the environment.

In a rapidly changing world, a successful farm will have found a market which brings it the best financial return, will use resources efficiently and, crucially, it will manage risk effectively. It will be flexible and adaptable, keeping pace with consumer preferences, the expectations of society, new technology and innovation. Viewed like this, climate change is as much of an opportunity as it is a threat.

The farmer who achieves these things will be in charge of a resilient, profitable and socially responsible enterprise which is no longer dependent on subsidy for its viability. We have already taken some major steps in this direction by reconnecting farming with the market and establishing schemes through which farmers can also help the environment.

Over the next few years we have a major opportunity to make substantial further improvements to European agricultural policy. The forthcoming CAP ‘health check’ is the first such opportunity. Governments really have the chance to fulfil their part of the partnership with farming and the public – we make the most of the reviews ahead.

That is the long term contract which we need to agree with our farmers and which we commit ourselves to achieving.

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**Michael Jack**
Yes. As the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee said in its recent report on The UK Government’s ‘Vision for the Common Agricultural Policy’, the objectives of the CAP set out in the EU Treaty have remained unchanged for decades and are now anachronism. They have nothing to say about some of the key challenges facing agriculture and the rural economy: animal welfare, protection of the environment and biodiversity, or protection against animal diseases.

The UK Government should grasp the fresh opportunity presented by the CAP ‘health check’ and lead the debate towards scrapping the existing CAP and replacing it with a ‘Rural Policy for the European Union’. This should have greater emphasis on environmental protection, climate change and wider rural issues.

The EFRA Committee sees the only long-term justification for future expenditure of taxpayers’ money in the agricultural sector as being the provision of the public benefits - environmental, rural, social - that the public wishes to enjoy.

The winds of change are already blowing. Farmers deserve to be given early notice of the changes that are coming. Decisions on CAP reform could be made in 2008, during the CAP ‘health check’, and then implemented in 2014, on an annual basis of a financial agreement reached in the budget review in 2013.

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**Helen Phillips**
No, but we should only keep the CAP if it can be transformed into a policy framework, which will help secure the future of the rural environment across Europe. It needs to evolve into a mechanism for paying farmers and other land managers for the forms of land management necessary to maintain and restore our environment, which cannot be secured in other ways.

The current CAP is no longer fit for purpose in light of the pressures our natural environment faces, particularly the need for a European approach to enabling our natural environment to adapt to climate change. In some countries, CAP is still part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

After 2013, EU policy will need to provide a framework that enables the land to be used and managed wisely, flexibly and sustainably. We need a framework that reconciles the need for food, energy and water, whilst allowing natural systems such as floodplains to function and maintaining landscapes rich in wildlife for people to enjoy.

This policy framework should help to build a new social contract between farmers and the rest of society – a contract where farmers see their primary roles being to manage the environment, and where the public see farmers as guardians of the environment and are happy to pay them for these ‘public goods’ through taxation.

This contract would also involve farmers moving towards more environmentally and economically sustainable production of food that consumers want to buy and are prepared to pay a fair price for.

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**Mariani Fischer Boel**
It’s all about the CAP, I’d say. The CAP has a lot of different goals, the most important goal is to ensure food security. That is the most central question facing agriculture in Europe today. This is the CAP’s goal, and it is the reason why we are continuing the CAP.

The CAP in 2007 performs many functions:

- It provides the production of safe and high quality food.
- It guarantees the respect of high standards of environmental protection and animal welfare.
- It ensures that farming remains at the heart of the rural economy.
- It contributes to economic diversification in rural areas, mainly through rural development policy.

And, thanks to recent reforms, our farm support is largely trade-friendly. But we should not rest on our laurels. The policy must continue to evolve to keep pace with a changing world. That is why I plan a ‘health check’ of the CAP in 2008, to streamline and simplify the policy, and deepen the reforms already undertaken.

The following year, I plan a debate on what the policy should look like post-2013. I believe there will be a role for direct payments, linked even more closely to farmers’ fulfilment of ‘public goods’ like environmental protection. There will be no place for the old interventionist and trade-distorting support measures of the past. Rural development policy must be extended to maximise the economic potential of our rural areas. And the CAP must remain a common policy with a common budget and common rules.

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**Hannes Lorenzen**
No. We keep the C for Common and we add it for Rural. The European Common Agriculture and Rural Policy (CARP) would have three major goals:

1. To preserve the Common goal of food security – one of the pillars of European integration after the war. More than ever, we should encourage farmers and consumers to move towards more sustainable farming practices and consumption patterns.

2. Second, to curb Agriculture from industrialisation; European agriculture must be based on animal welfare, cultural and geographical diversity, and the sustainable use of genetic resources as a rule, not as an exception.

3. Third, Rural development is much more than agriculture – it includes the heritage of our farmers and the countryside. It needs to balance between historically and geographically advantageous and disadvantaged regions, between small and big farms and enterprises.

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**Elizabeth Adams**
I am opposed to re-nationalisation, which I believe would be a mistake and would not achieve what its proponents believe.

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**David Baldock**
No. Unless responsibility for trade policy unexpectedly reverts to the Member States an agricultural policy is needed. Payments to many farmers will diminish but the challenges governing a nexus of agrifood and bioenergy supplies will not. The EU’s position as a huge market, major supply zone, influential trade player needs to be strengthened and not harnessed to the goal of a sustainable and just food system.

Rapid, unfettered liberalisation would shift food and bioenergy production to the cheapest suppliers; in few cases these are low-income developing countries. Instead, trade policy needs to be attuned to development priorities and to the likelihood of rising commodity prices as governments promote bioenergy supplies.

The EU should not shrink from setting standards where these are needed, for animal welfare, use of GMOs and the protection of biodiversity, for example. There is a legitimate case for applying these to imports as well as to domestic production – and for compensating European producers where this is not possible. Pursuit of demonstrable public...
The CAP is one of the most powerful environmental as well as economic and social influences in Europe. The CAP focused on production and caused big environmental damage, yet a chance by-product of the policy – large areas of set-aside land – has been the single most important salve for declining farmland birds and plants. So the CAP is too poten an influence on the environmental impacts of land management to throw away lightly – don't scrap the CAP.

The positive environmental outcomes we need from farming cannot be secured without a strong common policy. And we need to prepare for new environmental pressures, too, not least tackling climate change.

I believe CAP should transmute into a large-scale, long-term public funding mechanism that helps deliver a healthy rural environment, where:

- Agriculture is profitable and provides not just food for the rural economy.
- Land managers have adopted to climate change, reduced flooding impacts and planned for drought.
- Their understanding of the impacts on land, air and water are supported in work to reduce adverse consequences.
- Agricultural production uses low carbon techniques to produce, and fuel and waste streams that generate energy without damaging the environment.

In the UK all this needs to be founded on a debate about what land is for as it becomes one of the scarcest commodities in the developed world in the face of climate change.

Come November, the gargantuan, gothic St. Pancras station will become London’s impressive new gateway to Europe, the terminus for the Channel tunnel rail link. It is salutary to think that, in 1982, there were plans to flatten it. In retrospect it seems better renovated than demolished.

The CAP is many years past its sell-by date. It commands a ludicrous share of the EU’s total budget, fails to help those farmers that most need help, damages the interests of many developing countries and, despite all the good achieved in recent years, remains an environment policy, still has a predominantly negative impact on the environment.

The CAP is a problem. The CAP will enable us to be forward-looking and innovative players on international environmental issues. But the CAP is also a symbol of the CAP’s continuing failure to deliver the public goods we are seeking! Whilst I stand by the Policy Commission’s position on the need for CAP reform, I believe that the proposals for CAP reform should be.

The original objectives of the CAP are an anachronism – the call to make it about something different than agriculture seems to miss the point.

To give would-be wreckers their due, they actually fall in two camps, each with a quite different philosophy. Some, like the UK Treasury, see reform as a simple trajectory away from the CAP – the traditional path of CAP reform – at issue is how fast it happens and how much of the CAP is left at the end. For traditionalists, reform = the same, but less of it.

Others, like the UK House of Commons select committee that recently called for the CAP to be abolished altogether, are more radical. They do not want to dismantle the edifice completely but instead gut it and then change its purpose so fully, say, to a Rural Policy for the EU, that it can no longer be described as an agricultural policy at all. They differ from traditionalists because they make a strong, principled case for active policy intervention. The issue is not to what ends it is directed. For radicals, reform = different.

The traditionalists’ one-track approach to reform looks increasingly blinkered and outdated. It is a modelle’s view of the world – SimCity™ without the graphics – where agricultural markets work smoothly without erratic price shocks, regulatory standards are tightly enforced, rich countries meet nutritional and health targets, and development commitments and, so long as GDP is on the up, everyone is happy, wealthy and well.

The radicals, by contrast, know that common policies and substantial public spending will probably always be needed to provide what people want from European agriculture: biodiversity, a carbon sink and other environmental public goods; thriving rural communities; a positive contribution towards international development; high standards of animal welfare, a resilient food system, and supply-side support for public health policies. The trouble is, while they believe common policies are needed and that these should no longer focus on promoting EU agriculture as such, they cannot agree what their new common policy should be about instead.

So the new case for agricultural exceptionalism – for a policy that treats farming differently – is no longer to boost agricultural productivity or increase agricultural earnings, as the founding 1957 Treaty of Rome promised to have it. Rather it is that, compared with other businesses, farming has a disproportionate social and environmental footprint – food use, the environment, animal welfare, public health and the livelihoods of people in poorer countries – yet it is insulated from public priorities and consumer demand because of its close dependence on ecological processes and because of the structure of food supply chains. The ambition for CAP reform should not simply be to reduce the externalities of agriculture and agricultural policy, but to switch their polarity from negative to positive.

The ambition should not simply be to reduce externalities but to switch their polarity from negative to positive.
short-term competitive advantages against other EU countries, rather than longer term sustainable development.

A renovated CAP needs new design principles. Instead of mixing up means and ends, like the Treaty of Rome’s original objectives, it needs a sharply defined public purpose. It should aim to make sure Europe’s agriculture:

• Promotes public access to safe and nutritious food.
• Enables viable, diverse and dignified rural livelihoods.
• Respects the biological limits of natural resources, combat climate change and is a net positive contributor to the environment.
• Achieves consistently high standards of animal health and welfare.

Finance ministers should not start rubbing their hands quite yet

The target is to capture ‘win-wins’, where these aims complement each other, and to make trade-offs between them rationally and fairly. But that is not enough — the hardest part is to pursue these aims even-handedly, so we do not have double-standards that short-change future generations, poor countries or people who are not farmers. That means pursuing our aims:

• Now, yet also sustaining the social, economic and natural resource base into the future.
• Within Member States and for all third countries that the CAP affects.
• Recognising that agriculture supports and depends on other aspects of rural development.

So much for new principles — how would we put them into practice? An unintended consequence of the CAP overhaul would include some familiar elements of previous reform: that EU export subsidies need to go, quickly, and that import tariffs should be reduced, and that the rationale for direct support is shaky, so CAP spending in future should be less like ‘Pillar 1’ (direct and market support) and more like ‘Pillar 2’ (rural development). In general, a much greater share of CAP funds should pay for environmental and support sustainable rural development, while Member States and regions should have more say in exactly how that money is spent.

Among some reformers, at least, consensus is emerging that what we want from the CAP may not come cheap, even if it is good value for money, so those finance ministers should not start rubbing their hands quite yet. The usual way to express this is in the new lingo of ‘tradeoff’, as environmental sustainability and our environmental impacts to elsewhere? Could investment in low-input, high-quality production and markets, higher environmental and animal welfare standards and substantial support for poorer countries to meet those standards, help us put on the right track?

We need a much broader range of reform scenarios than have been on the negotiating table to date

If the history of the CAP tells us just one thing, though, it is that even good intentions can have unintended consequences. The outcome of CAP measures will depend on their context. That context has changed since the last reforms in 2005 and it will doubtless be different by 2013. For instance, though decoupling has not completely banished concerns about dumping or the need for mechanisms to control it, and it looks like the trouble in future may be that Europe drives up world prices — say through its biofuels commitments — posing a risk to food security in some of the poorest parts of the world.

So we need a much broader range of reform scenarios than have been on the negotiating table to date — broader in perspective, seeing the CAP as part of Europe, and better balanced between policy instruments and contingencies they consider. This will help us rebuild the CAP so it no longer looks inward and backward, but sees out beyond our borders and is ready for tomorrow’s challenges. A bit like that train station really.

Our starting point is a concern for the social and economic wellbeing and environmental sustainability of rural areas and communities in the UK and the rest of the EU. Rural Europe is experiencing profound change, but is extremely diverse, with a wide range of local socio-economic development challenges. Some areas are experiencing growth, and others are declining and have been populated. Others are economically buoyant, with strong development pressures and people wishing to move to them. Yet the CAP does not make a common experience across the whole of the rural EU.

Historically, the EU, through the CAP, has emphasised the role of agriculture in rural development. Too often this has resulted in damaging consequences, both through the intensification of agriculture leading to environmental degradation, and by making rural economies less flexible and competitive, so creating an economic dependency.

Now, in theory, CAP reform is changing the nature of agricultural support, reflecting the view that farming should be valued beyond its food-producing role to include its contribution to wider policy goals such as food safety and animal welfare. In practice, however, ‘rural development’ measures beyond the ‘Farm gate’ are given short shrift because the emphasis continues to be on agricultural support, improved competitiveness and the mitigation of environmental impacts, so payments go to farmers rather than other types of recipient.

Our vision for CAP reform, through a 15 to 20 year transition period, is based on the replacement of the CAP’s ‘Pillar 1’, whose primary objective of boosting farm production and productivity is now defunct, by ‘Pillar 2’ measures to be used to support environmental, social and economic development in rural areas.

To do this, we need to go back to first principles: what is the CAP for and what is agricultural support for? We believe they should be for supporting socio-economic development (and structural adjustment) in rural areas first and foremost. Environmental management and competitiveness comes under that heading and might be priority areas for spending in some Member States. Crucially, however, rural development is a broader yet more profound objective than agricultural support for its own sake.

There will remain a need for a common European policy but it should centre on the following objectives:

• To invest in the wider rural economy. We believe that CAP support should be directed at the wider rural economy, not just at agriculture, and to support rural communities to develop local economies that are more diverse, dynamic and resilient.
• To encourage the provision of valued environmental goods and services. Carbon use and habitat destruction are just two examples of how farming practices have impacts within and across Member States, and often extend far beyond the reach of EU regulations. Public funds must not be used to support these processes, but instead should aid the environmental modernisation of farming and land management industries. Farming and sustainable environmental management must become synonymous.
• To give support where it is needed. Direct payments under the CAP cost around €30 billion each year and can lead to perverse economic outcomes. The historic basis for subsidies continues to favour larger farmers, while smaller rural development support, increased competitiveness and the mitigation of environmental impacts, so payments go to farmers rather than other types of recipient.
• To invest in civil society. Farming and environmental lobby groups are both relatively strong, while wider rural development interests are relatively weak and poorly organised at European level. This is not necessarily optimal for the development of rural areas or the economic wellbeing of rural communities. CAP reform should address this imbalance, by opening up new possibilities for public, private and voluntary sectors to work together. Much good practice pioneered by the third sector has already been appropriated within the mainstream agrifood system. Yet the capacity of the third sector needs to be strengthened so it can emerge from its current dual role as an unpaid market innovator and an underpaid social safety net.

Achieving these objectives will require improved prospects for Pillar 2, with specific progress on three fronts:

• First, significantly greater resources must be allocated to Pillar 2 by shifting resources from Pillar 1. Without significant planned growth in Pillar 2 funds, this alternative approach is likely to stagnate.
• Second, Pillar 2 needs to be radically simplified to allow Member States much greater flexibility so people in very different parts of Europe can make all the best use of this instrument.
• Third, a Pillar 2 needs updated delivery structures. We suggest the third sector, and wider local business interests within rural communities, might be integrated into this reform. The role and functions of Pillar 2 need to be fundamentally reviewed in line with a progressive vision for growing the second pillar eventually to replace Pillar 1.

We want to see a fairer, more objective based for allocating EU rural development money to Member States – one founded on social justice, wellbeing and environmental sustainability rather than on historical spending or efforts to maintain the status quo. Requiring Member States to co-finance Pillar 1’s Single Farm Payment would also help to bring a new and stronger imperative for further progressive reform to strengthen Pillar 2.

The reform agenda

We need investment but not just in farming

The main objective should be to move away from direct support to Pillar 2 support, by:

2. Eating biodiversity project. www.reexus.ac.uk/research/epjt/Projects/Buller.htm
3. www.foodethicscouncil.org
4. www.foodethicscouncil.org
5. www.foodethicscouncil.org
6. www.foodethicscouncil.org
7. Neil Ward is Professor of Rural and Regional Development and Director of the Centre for Rural Economy at the New Economics Foundation. www.neweconomics.org
8. Dan Keech and Jessica Sellick work on food and farming at the New Economics Foundation. www.neweconomics.org
9. Christopher Ritson is Professor of Agricultural Marketing at Newcastle University and a member of the Food Ethics Council.
10. www.foodethicscouncil.org
11. Tom MacMillan is Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council. tom@foodethicscouncil.org
Teresa Cavero is a Senior Policy Researcher at Intermón Oxfam, where she leads the research programme in Economic Justice. She has a Master in Public Administration degree in International Development from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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Rich countries are largely responsible for climate change • they must start compensating for the damage it causes in poor countries

The EU urgently needs to adapt the CAP to meet the real challenges Europe faces in a globalising world while also, crucially, attending to the needs of developing countries. The EU’s position on international negotiations is determined by its internal contradictions between agricultural products and services, it insists on maintaining domestic support for agriculture and has only marginally opened up access to markets in developing countries. The fact is that public health has been on the back burner so long when it comes to the CAP, that top of the public health wish-list for CAP reform is research. As a priority, the European Commission must carry out a proper Impact Assessment, similar to one carried out by the Swedish Institute of Public Health in 2005 but larger in scale.** This means moving beyond the usual focus on how EU prices compare with world markets to understand how the relative costs of different foods affect what ends up in people’s bellies. As well as aiming to eliminate perverse incentives and rules, it should identify interventions that can make it easier for consumers to eat a healthy diet – perhaps, for example, by reducing business risks for horticulture and supporting the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables that have a low environmental footprint.

This impact assessment needs to be supported by political commitment to implement change.

Tim Marsh is Associate Director of the UK’s National Heart Forum that promotes policies that prevent coronary heart disease, representing nearly 50 organisations.

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One of the founding principles of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was to ensure a steady supply of affordable food – a clear public health priority. Since then, however, public health concerns seem to have fallen by the wayside. It is time the public health community joined with environmentalists to promote a healthy and sustainable food system for Europe.

Why? According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), four percent of the overall disease burden and nearly 30 percent of the coronary heart disease burden in developed countries is caused by low fruit and vegetable consumption.1 The WHO says the seven leading risk factors for chronic disease in Europe are tobacco use, hazardous alcohol use, low fruit and vegetable intake, high cholesterol, being overweight, high blood pressure, and physical inactivity.2 Some estimates show that one third of cardiovascular disease deaths in Europe are linked to poor nutrition.3

The Eurodiet Core Report laid out population goals for nutritional intake to reduce the disease burden.4 These include at least 400 grams of fruit and vegetables, less than 30 percent of energy from fat, at least 55 percent of energy from diverse carbohydrates, and at least 5 percent per day of fibre. The WHO made similar recommendations, calling for 400-500 grams of fruit and vegetables a day. Only four EU countries meet these goals.6 When the population meeting the fruit and vegetable target, while Portugal is alone in having more than half its population meeting the goals for dietary fat and saturated fat intake.7

Although a number of factors influence diet, time and time again studies show that people’s choice of food is largely determined by price and availability.8 Price and time in turn, are shaped by the terms of production and trade, including the CAP. The relationship between production subsidies and dietary habits is well understood. If the CAP were to incentivise production, this could be the cause of significant health problems.9 For example, large farms in EU countries are growing more than 50 percent of the fruit and vegetables consumed in the United States, while EU countries are growing only a small part of the fruit and vegetables consumed in the United States.10 This means moving beyond the usual focus on how EU prices compare with world markets to understand how the relative costs of different foods affect what ends up in people’s bellies. As well as aiming to eliminate perverse incentives and rules, it should identify interventions that can make it easier for consumers to eat a healthy diet – perhaps, for example, by reducing business risks for horticulture and supporting the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables that have a low environmental footprint.

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It's easy to take farming for granted. Take a walk in the countryside and you forget that the landscape is forged by farming and the wildlife has, over the millennia, evolved alongside agriculture. Corn flour, harvest mouse, corkscrew? All part of our heritage, but their existence depends on sympathetic farming continuing.

This is why farming is different. It produces ‘public goods’ that we all benefit from, including wildlife, landscapes, but also clean water and healthy ecosystems. But, like us, the market takes these for granted, rewarding farmers only for producing food and, increasingly, fuel. As a result, we lose: farmland, birds, for example, have declined by half over the last 25 years in the EU, and species such as the tree sparrow have crashed by as much as 91 percent in the UK.

Government intervention is needed to correct this market failure and ensure that these benefits are delivered. This principle is increasingly recognised by policy makers in the UK and in the EU. As a result, the system of public support for agriculture is slowly changing, with a significant amount of funds spent subsidising farming shifted slowly towards supporting public goods. Nowhere is this more apparent than in England, where 50 percent of the CAP budget supports agri-environment measures, benefiting wildlife and supporting good soil and water management.

But this has been a gradual shift, and the CAP remains overwhelmingly a policy of subsidy with few strings attached. Seventy-eight percent of the €48 billion spent each year on the CAP goes to the Single Farm Payment (SFP) - a subsidy that has no clear aim or purpose. Halting this by 2010 looks doomed to failure. The CAP needs to support biodiversity and be climate-proofed.

It is true that farmers must now meet a set of minimum environmental standards - known as cross compliance - in order to receive their subsidies, but Member States have been given so much flexibility in setting these standards that they are completely inadequate in most countries. In many, you can destroy hedges, plough up natural grasslands and still claim your subsidy.

Increase the funds allocated to rural development significantly and reform cross compliance so that it is fit for purpose.

So, the backbone of the CAP delivers little more than an easy way of disposing of almost £50 billion of public money.

The one redeeming feature of the CAP, however, is the ‘second pillar’, which is dedicated to rural development. This pillar includes agri-environment schemes, such as England’s Environmental Stewardship, which, along with effective regulation, is key to delivering higher environmental standards on farmland through paying farmers to deliver public benefits. Already, agri-environment has successfully averted the extinction of caterpillars in England, and has given a new lease of life to vinegar traditions in the valley of the Minho in Portugal. It has also been used in many countries to address water pollution, soil erosion, and even to improve public access to the countryside.

Yet, agri-environment - one of the part of the CAP that is able to deliver something that society wants, enjoys and benefits from - receives only five percent of the CAP pot. Clearly, we are still a long way from the CAP being a force for sustainable farming, and radical reform is needed to abolish the SFP in favour of better quality rural development and agri-environment.

At this stage, policy-makers usually point to the 2003 reform and say ‘slow down, let’s get used to this new system’, but further reform is an urgent imperative. Biodiversity loss continues rapidly, with a decline already evident in the new Member States just three years after their accession. Meeting the Gothenburg target of halting this by 2010 looks doomed to failure. Water pollution and unsustainably irrigated farms are becoming increasingly damaging. Soil erosion threatens the productivity of nine percent of EU farmland.

Then there is climate change, which will exacerbate all of these trends and, as a result of the dash for biofuels, put our land resource under increasing pressure. Last year - the 2005 reform decade - the European Commission recently claimed that 18 percent of our agricultural land should be used for biofuels by 2020. The CAP needs to be climate-proofed so that it supports farming systems which minimise greenhouse gas emissions (CO2, methane and nitrous oxides in particular) whilst providing other benefits. Two major targets should be livestock production and fertiliser use - both major sources of emissions. We will need other policy measures to ensure farmers get a fair deal from food industry buyers. This is essential to ensure that sustainable farming systems and livelihoods are viable.

The message to produce and intensify will also be amplified by increased demand from a global population that is growing in size and affluence, and increasing livestock consumption. While Europe’s agricultural land will continue to be lost to new homes and increased water scarcity.

If we are to overcome these challenges, the CAP needs to be transformed into a new policy that is dedicated to securing higher standards, greater sustainability and public benefits. The CAP ‘health check’ in 2008 must firmly put the EU on this path by increasing the funds allocated to rural development significantly and immediately, and through reforming cross compliance so that it is fit for purpose. The subsequent EU budget review provides the opportunity for radical reform.

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The reform agenda

Food sovereignty comes of age

Africa leads efforts to rethink our food system

A frica can feed itself” was a ringing cry at Nyéléni 2007 - Forum for food sovereignty, held earlier this year in Mali. But, the spokesperson for the African Region added, “three successive globalisations have obstructed us”. He then outlined the waves of colonial interventions that have subsequently undermined smallholder family farmers and local food provision in the continent: European empires, extractive international market-led growth policies and new Free Trade and Economic Partnership Agreements.

This new globalisation can be promoted because many people in industrialised countries still have a perception that African countries could not produce enough food to feed their people or that the land and waters are mostly unproductive. “But Mali is an eye opener,” commented a Thai journalist present at the forum, “the ecologically friendly agricultural practices have provided food sovereignty to the people.” This theme was echoed by President Amadou Toumani Touré in his opening address to the forum. These were key reasons why Mali was selected to host the Forum for Food Sovereignty in the year of the legendary Malian goddess of fertility, Nyéléni.

The National Coordination of Peasant Organisations of Mali (CNOP) welcomed to the forum more than 500 people representing organisations from over 80 countries: women, men, young, old from all sectors of food providers - farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples – together with environmentalists, consumers, among others. They gathered in a purpose built centre in the Malian countryside some four hours’ bus ride from Bamako, the capital. For five days there were multilingual exchanges and debates between sectors and regions about how to achieve food sovereignty.

Outcomes included the Declaration of the Nyéléni Synthesis report within which the ‘Six pillars of food sovereignty’ are recorded (see box). These ‘pillars’ are inalienable principles of food sovereignty, all of which must be equally respected.

Importantly, the differences often asserted between North and South, when it comes to food sovereignty, were resolved. It was agreed that these principles of food sovereignty apply in all regions although the contexts are clearly different. Food sovereignty is a common struggle against corporate, industrialised food systems and a common determination to link socially, ecologically and economically benign models of production, processing and distribution in all societies. It is not a North-South battle.

In solidarity with other regions, European delegates resolved to incorporate food sovereignty principles into their existing campaigns and to work towards a Common Agricultural Policy based on food sovereignty that would reconcile development, community supported agriculture systems, strengthen local markets and break the armlock of supermarkets.

Nyéléni 2007 has set the agenda for the future of our food – a counter-approach to the dominant globalising food system that destroys, often violently, its monopoly privileges and controls over territory, technology, markets, livelihoods and private profits. Rooted in the local, community supported agriculture systems, strengthen local markets and break the armlock of supermarkets.

It is time to rethink our food system.
Mud and maggots

Bad weather reminds us how hard – and important – farming can be.

The wettest summer on record, say the Met Office. Living at the sharp end of the weather forecast, we have no doubt about it. Most people consider they live in houses but farmers would, I think, consider they live outdoors and the house is reserved for sleeping and doing paperwork.

Our Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs, which would normally be playing and sunbathing in their runs, bicker inside the sties. The barrows, which should now be brimming with hay and silage to feed stock through the winter, are all but empty. The pasture looks green but if you part the grass down to the soil, the bottom 10 cm is yellow, as are the maize plants in the surrounding fields, all rotting gently in the ground. Cattle have had to be housed, increasing the workload and eating winter rations – in July!

Any brief sunny spell sees flies swarming to lay their eggs.

The sheep’s fleeces have regrown sufficiently since shearing for greenbottle maggots to cling on, so any brief sunny spell sees flees swarming to lay their eggs. Once they hatch, more flies are attracted to the site and a sheep can be literally aching with maggots within a couple of days. The fleeces are too wet to use a pour-on preventative, which would be diluted beyond effectiveness. We’ve been housing our flock of Southdown sheep in batches for two days to dry them off, treating them, then leaving them in the shed for another couple of days for it to dry and begin working its way through the fleece, to stop flystrike for ten weeks. This is not an option for those with larger flocks or smaller sheds, so infestations are a widespread animal welfare problem in the county at the moment.

The housed sheep have also been eating their way through our remaining stock of 2006 hay, now down to just 14 small bales. Our two fields of cutting grass that haven’t been grazed since April have passed the most nutritious meadow hay stage. Even if the rain stopped right now, it would take fields a week to dry out properly, and then five days of sunny weather and warm nights to make hay of a reasonable quality. Without it we won’t have enough feed for the sheep once the grass stops growing in the autumn. If we leave the fields uncut and allow them to graze over the winter, the grass would be rank and of very low nutritional value by then.

Potatoes are a major crop here in Herefordshire, but the half-grown crop is already suffering as soil is washed from around the tubers, leaving them to go green and poisonous. Around 25 percent of the wheat and barley crops have been flattened, losing not only the grain crop but also the straw crop that would be used for bedding over the winter and to feed cattle. Young fodder beet plants have been washed out of the ground, despite 15 cm roots, and lie in heaps at the lowest point in the fields.

On the other side of the planet, the drought in Australia has now reached the point where food parcels and water tankers are supplying outback townships. Australian farmers, overwhelmed by debt because they have nothing to sell, their stock destroyed and their farm turned into a giant orange dustbowl, are committing suicide at an average rate of one every four days.

Farmers have been told by the EU that they’re not a special case.

Producing food is hard, wherever in the world you farm, and sometimes it’s impossible. The supermarket shelves are full but this doesn’t mean there’s an overall abundance of food. Farmers have been told by the EU and by the government that they’re not a special case, that they must live without subsidy and adapt to market forces. The farming press is filled with farm sales and stock dispersal sales every week, as farmers give up the struggle to make ends meet because prices remain low and costs continue to increase, while they struggle with the never ending tide of paperwork and leave the industry. They take with them the sum of generations of expertise in animal husbandry, crop production and land management. Think of your own list of Most Important Jobs: Doctor, Nurse, Policeman... One thing everyone’s list will have in common is that the people on it have to EAT!

Farm losses in this summer’s floods were significant and widespread. A Lincolnshire farmer lost one million chickens, about half the British pea crop and perhaps the same proportion of potatoes are rotting in the fields, and some livestock farms lost all their winter forage production. The National Farmers Union vice president, Paul Tenby, commented that “this summer’s floods demonstrated if this extreme weather becomes more frequent then we need to have schemes that work for the environment, tackle the challenges of climate change as well as support viable business”. So, why not farm floods?

The summer’s events brought misery to around 60,000 insured households and businesses, and uncounted others who were uninsured. Clean-up and repairs will take well over a year. Insurers estimate that damage and consequential business losses will reach around £3 billion. The Government is applying to the EU Solidarity Fund to cover some of these costs. Farmers have called for government compensation for their uninsured farms losses, yet farming practices encouraged by the Common Agricultural Policy may actually have exacerbated the flooding.

The link between agricultural practices and flood risk is well established. In the South Downs there were 60 incidents of property damage, nearly all due to run-off from newly planted winter cereal crops, during the winter months of 1975/6. In Wales, upland areas with traditional grassland management release rainwater over a much longer period than similar areas in intensive management. In Norway, changes in farming practices from cereal and grass rotations to intensive cereals have increased the risk of flood damage from erosion and subsequent sediment deposition. Around 200 hectares of topsoil were stripped during a flood in 1995, removing one million m³ of soil which was then dumped on 500 hectares of land downstream.

In the Broadlands, North Kent and the Thames Valley, between one and two thirds of wet grassland was lost between the 1930s and 1970s. Nationally, around 500 Sites of Special Scientific Interest are under threat from low water levels brought about by intensive land drainage, affecting species as diverse as snakeshead fritillaries and breeding snipe. Reversing post-War trends in land use in critical parts of river catchments could not only avoid flood damage but also increase biodiversity.

The case for paying farmers to produce these public goods is far stronger than the case for taxpayer-funded compensation for them failing to insure their crops and livestock.

What exactly could farmers do that would make a difference? First, let’s acknowledge the limits. A proportion of the recent flooding could not have been avoided through changes to farming. During intensive rainstorms it makes no difference whether the land surface is woodland, grass, bare soil or concrete. The rain cannot infiltrate quickly enough and there will be run-off.

However, there are measures that could avoid flooding in low duration, more frequent events, and some that could provide a partial solution even during exceptional events. The critical function would be to reduce the peak run-off and enable gradual release of rainwater. This would enhance the effectiveness of engineered solutions elsewhere, currently being eroded by climate change.

Effective land use measures include:

• Improving rainwater infiltration by changing tillage practices and adopting more extensive cropping and stocking patterns.
• Reducing run-off by introducing ‘barriers’ such as grass buffers and temporary ponds.
• Providing more vegetative storage by increasing mature forestry areas with build-up of leaf litter.
• Slowing drainage by breaking up field drainage systems, re-establishing ‘boggy areas’.
• Providing flood storage through creating wetlands and washlands.
• Increasing river channel flood flow capacities by reinstating natural water courses and reducing or setting back flood protection for agricultural land.

Next issue - December
I'm supposed to review a restaurant that has something to do with the Common Agricultural Policy, but I'm in a bind. The CAP costs each family about €500 a year through direct payments to farmers and inflated prices from rigging the market – but as someone sitting open-mouthed at the end of the food chain, I haven't the faintest where all this money goes. It's a wasteful and pointless regime, but more to the point, how do you do a themed restaurant review about something so opaque?

By Clive Bates

Clive Bates was Head of Environmental Policy at the UK Environment Agency and is about to become the Head of the UN Environment Programme in Sudan.

babazonutblogspot.com

Petits propos culinaires B3 2007 | Prospect Books

An intriguing and broad-ranging collection of essays, book reviews and food history. This journal has been published three times a year for the past 21 years and, if you find this edition interesting, all the back issues are available online. EA

Planet chicken

Hattie Ellis | 2007 | Sceptre

An unrelenting critique of today's chicken farming and factories. This is an easy and informative read that follows how we led chickens out of the jungle and up the garden path, and then started cramping them in sheds. It's packed with facts, some of which may put you off your dinner. EA

Quality management in food chains

Ludwig Theuven, Achim Spier, Martin Peupert & Gabriele Jahn | 2007 | Wageningen Academic

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Declining to report on the lifeless fodder of the Defra canteen or go undercover to the National Farmers’ Union café, I headed for the one place I actually meet real live farmers – the Stoke Newington farmers market. First, the week’s crucial personal food security purchases – a supply of smoked back bacon, some chilli, garlic and paprika sausages and about 8 inches of black pudding from the Stocks Farm stall. From there, I move on to their fast food outlet, which claims its bacon sandwiches are “the best in London”.

I opt for a bacon and sausage roll (£3.50). Let us consider the elements of this glorious experience one at a time. First, the Soviet-style queuing and slow service arising from the complete absence of high-powered retail business process engineering. So far so good: a chance to relax and anticipate the joys to come.

Then the choice. One type of bread (a soft white roll), then any mix of bacon, sausage and egg and you have the menu. I tend to agree with Barry Schwartz in The Paradox of Choice that there is too much choice in life and this forces us to “invest time, energy, and no small amount of self-doubt, and dread” in making unnecessary choices.

How I rate it: Overall ****

Fairness **

Health **

Animals **

Environment **

Taste ****

Ambience ****

Value for money **** (maximum five stars)

Now the meat. Sublime and delicious. Three slices of thick cut bacon, only lightly cooked (at my insistence) and tender with a strong taste and great restoring properties. None of that white stuff that leaves you later. A good bit of mustard on the bread whilst waiting for the meat. I opt for a bacon and sausage roll (£3.50). Let us consider the elements of this glorious experience one at a time. First, the Soviet-style queuing and slow service arising from the complete absence of high-powered retail business process engineering. So far so good: a chance to relax and anticipate the joys to come.

Then the choice. One type of bread (a soft white roll), then any mix of bacon, sausage and egg and you have the menu. I tend to agree with Barry Schwartz in The Paradox of Choice that there is too much choice in life and this forces us to “invest time, energy, and no small amount of self-doubt, and dread” in making unnecessary choices.

How I rate it: Overall ****

Fairness **

Health **

Animals **

Environment **

Taste ****

Ambience ****

Value for money **** (maximum five stars)
## Upcoming Events

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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| 1st – 2nd Sep '07 | Soil Association Organic Food Festival  
Soil Association | [www.soilassociation.org/festival](http://www.soilassociation.org/festival) | Bristol, UK |
| 8th – 9th Sep '07 | Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery: Food and Morality  
| 10th – 12th Sep '07 | BES Annual Meeting  
British Ecological Society | [draft.britishecologicalsociety.org](http://draft.britishecologicalsociety.org) | Glasgow, Scotland |
| 10th – 14th Sep '07 | Interdisciplinary Aspects of Nanobiotechnology  
Interdisciplinary Institute TTN | [www.ttn-institut.de/call.pdf](http://www.ttn-institut.de/call.pdf) | Munich, Germany |
| 13th – 15th Sep '07 | Bioethics in the Real World  
European Association of Centres of Medical Ethics | [www.ethik.unizh.ch](http://www.ethik.unizh.ch) | Zurich, Switzerland |
| 13th – 15th Sep '07 | EurSafe 2007: Sustainable Food Production and Ethics  
European Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics | [www.eursafe.org](http://www.eursafe.org) | Vienna, Austria |
| 16th – 19th Sep '07 | World Conference on Research Integrity  
European Science Foundation | [www.esf.org](http://www.esf.org) | Lisbon, Portugal |
| 17th – 19th Sep '07 | Pathways to Legitimacy? The Future of Global and Regional Governance  
Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick | [www.csgr.org](http://www.csgr.org) | Warwick, UK |
| 20th Sept '07 | SRDN Annual Sustainable Development Research Conference  
| 23rd – 26th Sep '07 | Harnessing Science for the Evolving Consumer: the Fit of Agricultural Biotechnology  
Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference | [www.sbic.ca/abic2007](http://www.sbic.ca/abic2007) | Alberta, Canada |
| 27th – 30th Sep '07 | Daily Telegraph Greener Living Show  
Daily Telegraph | [www.greenlivingshow.co.uk](http://www.greenlivingshow.co.uk) | London, UK |
| 2nd Oct '07 | The Real Cost of Flowers and Veg?  
Women Working Worldwide | [kate.women-ww@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:kate.women-ww@mmu.ac.uk) | London, UK |
| 3rd – 5th Oct '07 | International Seminar on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty  
CEHAP & SOAS | [cehap.bellinux.net](http://cehap.bellinux.net) | Cordoba, Spain |
| 13th Oct '07 | Bristol Schumacher Lectures 2007: Crisis & Opportunity  
Schumacher UK | [www.schumacher.org.uk](http://www.schumacher.org.uk) | Bristol, UK |
| 17th Oct '07 | Carbon footprinting versus food labelling  
Food and Drink Innovation Network | [www.fdin.co.uk](http://www.fdin.co.uk) | Daventry, UK |
| 18th – 19th Oct '07 | Technology, Innovation and Change in Health and Healthcare  
| 21st Oct '07 | Apple Day  
Common Ground | [www.england-in-particular.info](http://www.england-in-particular.info) | Various locations, UK |
| 23rd – 24th Oct '07 | Healthy Foods European Summit  
New Hope Natural Media | [www.healthyfoodssummit.com](http://www.healthyfoodssummit.com) | London, UK |
Epsilon Events | [www.epsilonevents.com](http://www.epsilonevents.com) | Brussels, Belgium |
| 24th – 27th Oct '07 | Aquaculture Europe 2007: Competing Claims  
| 25th – 26th Oct '07 | Genomics and Society: Today's Answers, Tomorrow's Questions  
Economics and Social Research Council | [www.genomicsforum.ac.uk](http://www.genomicsforum.ac.uk) | London, UK |
| 31st Oct – 1st Nov '07 | Sustainability: Creating the Culture  
Sustainable Development Research Centre | [www.sustainableresearch.com](http://www.sustainableresearch.com) | Inverness, Scotland |
| 31st Oct – 4th Nov '07 | Pathways to Human Dignity: from Cultural Traditions to a New Paradigm  
European Science Foundation | [www.esf.org/conferences/07235](http://www.esf.org/conferences/07235) | Västern, Sweden |
| 7th Nov '07 | Unlocking Change in the Food Chain  
RELU | [www.relu.ac.uk/events](http://www.relu.ac.uk/events) | London, UK |
| 13th – 14th Nov '07 | 1st Annual European Climate Change Conference  
Epsilon Events | [www.epsilonevents.com](http://www.epsilonevents.com) | Brussels, Belgium |
| 19th – 21st Nov '07 | Food in a Future Climate – Conference on Sustainable Food Systems  
| 5th – 6th Dec '07 | Theoretical Population Ecology and Biocontrol: Bridging the Gap  
Association of Applied Biologists | [www.aab.org.uk](http://www.aab.org.uk) | Warwick, UK |