



UNISECO



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Recommendations for future agricultural and food policies promoting agro-ecological transitions

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Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU

POLICY BRIEF

The support to knowledge creation and cooperation are key instruments to encourage the shift from input-intensive agricultural systems to knowledge-intensive agro-ecological systems.

The UNISECO project carried out a participatory multi-method assessment of current and newly proposed market and policy instruments to inform policy making about how to remove the barriers to agro-ecological transitions. The assessment included a multi-criteria analysis and a reflection on the potential for innovation of the policies and the required governance changes. The investigation benefited from the active contribution of European-level stakeholders and 130 experts of the Multi-Actor Platforms of 15 case studies across Europe.

Research Findings

Measures to promote knowledge and to support cooperation are key to encourage agro-ecological transitions in Europe, especially where the transition has still to be initiated. The support to advisory services is the backbone of agro-ecological transitions, which involve shifting from an input-intensive to a knowledge-intensive production paradigm. Cooperation measures have the potential to create synergies between and within different food chains, to sustain capacity building, as well as to encourage consumer involvement. Agri-environment payments and payments for investments can favour the adoption and maintenance of agro-ecological practices, if adequately tailored and targeted to specific farm types (e.g. small and medium farms). The Rural Development Program of the Common Agricultural Policy includes such instruments, which, however, might benefit from adjustments and targeting to embrace agro-ecology as a priority. Result-based payments for agro-ecological practices are important innovative instruments, the benefits of which are observed via pilot projects. Involving farmers in result monitoring could improve the cost-effectiveness of these measures.

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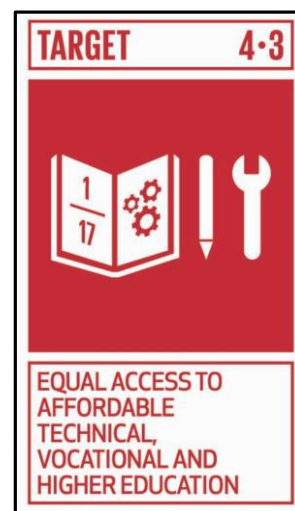
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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Agro-ecological transitions require medium-long term strategic plans, to foster farm-level change (through practice adoption) and allow a gradual upscale at the territorial level, by:

- Improving farmer knowledge, through cooperation and peer-to-peer learning, about the environmental benefits and economic opportunities of agro-ecology, e.g. by mainstreaming the experiences of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups;
- Increasing the capacity of local actors to create agro-ecological networks and long-lasting horizontal and vertical collaboration in the food chain, with dedicated initiatives, involving small and medium farms. This would improve farmers' bargaining power and value added, thereby reducing their dependence on public support;
- Enhancing sustainability standards for farming systems, where farmers are given greater responsibilities and rewards to reach environmental targets, also through new result-based Agri-Environment-Climate Measures;
- Aligning private schemes and value chain initiatives to public sustainability standards, as foreseen by the Farm to Fork Strategy;
- Improving the design and governance of agricultural policies to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Galioto, F., Gava, Oriana, Povellato, A., Vanni, F. (2021). Innovative market and policy instruments to promote the agro-ecological transition strategies. Deliverable D5.4. Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU (UNISECO), Report to the European Union, pag. 48. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5578065>

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ABOUT UNISECO:

UNISECO is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of socio-economic and policy drivers and barriers for further development and implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems.

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<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/773901>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/uniseco-h2020/>

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>

VISIT THE UNISECO AGRO-ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE HUB: <https://uniseco-project.eu>



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