

INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

"FROM FIELD TO SEA – A COMMON VISION FOR EU FOOD SECURITY AND STRATEGIC AUTONOMY"

Croatian Parliament, Agriculture Committee, Dubrovnik, 28 September 2026

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on the future of the *Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)*¹ and the *Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)*², including their financing under the *Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)* after 2027³, are entering a crucial stage in determining the future policy framework.

The proposed changes to the way these policies are financed and implemented, including the pooling of resources within National and Regional Partnership Plans, the lack of clarity regarding the level of funding, and the possibility of financing certain measures from unallocated resources within national envelopes, are creating uncertainty for farmers, fishers and other beneficiaries. Such a model could make long-term investment planning more difficult and lead to competition between sectors for funding at national level.

Greater flexibility for Member States, in the absence of a clear common framework and appropriate safeguards, could result in different levels of support, undermine cohesion and create an uneven playing field in the Single Market. It is therefore essential to ensure stable, predictable and adequate funding for agriculture, rural development, fisheries and aquaculture and to preserve the common character of the CAP and the CFP.

Furthermore, for the new financial architecture to work effectively, it will be essential to ensure a clear legislative framework, reduce administrative burden, establish comparable monitoring systems, and make reliable data on the actual costs of implementing interventions available. Failure to do so could lead to further fragmentation, legal uncertainty and more complex implementation for national authorities and final beneficiaries.

¹ European Commission (2025). *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the conditions for the implementation of the Union support to the Common Agricultural Policy for the period from 2028 to 2034* [COM(2025) 560 final; 2025/0241(COD)]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0560> (Accessed: 22 July 2026)

² European Commission (2025). *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the conditions for the implementation of the Union support to the Common Fisheries Policy, to the European Ocean Pact and of the Union's maritime and aquaculture policy as part of the National and Regional Partnership Fund set out in Regulation (EU) [...] [NRP Fund] for the period from 2028 to 2034* [COM(2025) 559 final; 2025/0235(COD)]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0559> (Accessed: 22 July 2026)

³ European Commission (2025). *The 2028-2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe*. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en (Accessed: 20 July 2026)

The Conference will place particular emphasis on the sustainability and competitiveness of Europe's agri-food and fisheries sectors, the vitality of rural, island and coastal areas, and food security as a matter of Member States' national security and resilience.

PANEL I – MEDITERRANEAN AGRICULTURE AND THE CAP AFTER 2027

The post-2027 CAP must continue to pursue its fundamental objectives: ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers, the stability of food production, the sustainable management of natural resources, and the vitality of rural areas.

The proposed changes to the structure and implementation of the CAP, together with a 20% reduction in CAP funding, the move away from the current two-pillar structure and the integration of rural development into the broader framework of national plans, could weaken its strategic and territorial focus. The proposed target of allocating 10% of funding to rural areas could be insufficient both in terms of the level of funding and its ability to fully replace the existing rural development framework. This could jeopardise the objective of creating stronger, more connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040, as set out in the *Long-Term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas towards 2040*⁴, which identifies the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development as a key source of funding for rural areas.

The lack of clarity regarding the future treatment of sectoral interventions, including wine envelopes, apiculture programmes, and operational programmes for fruit and vegetables and olive oil, creates additional uncertainty for sectors that are particularly important to Mediterranean Member States. It is essential to ensure continuity of targeted support and stable production, as well as continued investment in modernisation and in processing, storage and logistics capacity, without which it would not be possible to retain added value in rural areas and strengthen the competitiveness of the food industry.

The effective delivery of the *Vision for Agriculture and Food – Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations towards 2040*⁵ will depend, among other things, on the simplification of the regulatory framework affecting farmers and the entire agri-food value chain, as well as on innovation that offers solutions for a sustainable transition. This should be taken into account, as the CAP proposal carries the risk of a complex legal architecture and fragmentation of the legislative framework, which could make policy implementation more difficult for national authorities and final beneficiaries and increase the administrative burden and legal uncertainty. These and other

⁴ European Commission (2021). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas* [COM(2021) 345 final]. European Commission. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0345> (Accessed: 23 July 2026)

⁵ European Commission (2025). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Vision for Agriculture and Food – Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations* (COM(2025) 75 final). European Union. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0075> (Accessed: 25 July 2026)

challenges were also highlighted by the European Parliament in its *Resolution on the future of agriculture and the post-2027 common agricultural policy*⁶.

Increased flexibility for Member States could, contrary to the objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy, undermine a level playing field in the Single Market. Ensuring equal levels of support for European farmers across all EU Member States should therefore be a cornerstone of the policy, alongside effective mechanisms for monitoring and comparing levels of support, thereby preserving the common character of the CAP.

When setting objectives and obligations for Member States as part of the green transition, account should be taken of their different starting points, past performance and specific characteristics of agricultural production. Applying the same percentage requirements to all Member States could place a disproportionate burden on those that already use lower levels of pesticides, antimicrobials and mineral fertilisers and have made a significant contribution to environmental protection. Future targets should therefore be fair, proportionate and based on the actual situation in each Member State.

Generational renewal remains one of the key challenges facing European agriculture. The high average age of European farmers (57 years)⁷ threatens the long-term sustainability of the sector and the vitality of rural areas. Support measures for young farmers should be linked to access to land, capital, knowledge and markets, while carefully considering the effects of the proposed changes to income support entitlements for older farmers. Appropriate national and European support to address the housing needs of young families in rural areas, particularly young farmers, should also contribute to generational renewal.

Mediterranean Member States face specific challenges related to climate change, water scarcity, soil degradation, wildfires, rising temperatures and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. The horizontal approach of the CAP should better recognise the Mediterranean as a functional agro-climatic region whose sustainability depends on targeted solutions for water management, climate change adaptation and the preservation of agricultural production.

Discussion points

1. **How to ensure stable, predictable and adequate funding in the new financial architecture while preserving the common character of the CAP?**
2. **How to safeguard rural development and ensure the continuity of targeted sectoral interventions within the new CAP structure?**

⁶ European Parliament (2025). *Future of agriculture and the post-2027 common agricultural policy* (2025/2052(INI)). European Parliament resolutions, P10_TA(2025)0189. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0189_EN.html (Accessed: 25 July 2026)

⁷ European Commission (2025). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture* (COM(2025) 872 final). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0872> (Accessed: 3 August 2026)

3. **How much flexibility should be granted to Member States without undermining a level playing field for farmers in the Single Market?**
4. **Should the future CAP better recognise the specificities of the Mediterranean and provide for targeted interventions to address climate risks, water management and the preservation of agricultural production?**

PANEL II – MAINTAINING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES AND THE VITALITY OF ISLAND COMMUNITIES

Against the backdrop of the need to manage marine resources sustainably, rising production costs, strong global competition and the announced reduction in funding for the Common Fisheries Policy, it is essential to ensure that the specificities of the Mediterranean are adequately reflected in future European policies and financial instruments.

Fisheries and aquaculture are not merely economic activities; they are also an important foundation for employment⁸, generational renewal, food security and the survival of island and coastal communities. Small-scale, traditional and professional fishers provide high-quality local food, help sustain island and coastal communities, pass on knowledge and traditions, and help maintain a balance between the use and conservation of the marine environment.

The Commission's *Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation for the 2014–2024 period*⁹ shows that progress in the economic and social dimensions of the policy has been slower than expected. It also shows that the fisheries sector continues to face persistent challenges, such as an ageing fleet, rising operating costs and, particularly for small-scale fishers, limited access to fishing opportunities. Fish stocks have also not recovered as expected, adding to the economic challenges facing fishers.

Sustainable management of marine resources cannot rely solely on restrictions and stock conservation. It must also have a social, financial and market dimension, so that fishers, particularly small-scale and coastal fishers, do not bear the greatest burden of restrictions, rising costs and regulatory requirements. The protection of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit in Croatia is an example of marine resource management in which limiting fishing pressure has contributed to the recovery of marine populations and ecosystems. In addition to its environmental benefits, the protection of this area is also economically significant, as stable fish resources provide long-term support for sustainable fisheries and coastal communities.

Safeguarding jobs, sustainable management of marine resources and food security depend largely on adequate, stable and predictable European financial support. Under the *2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework*¹⁰, the proposed allocation of €2 billion directly to fisheries is significantly lower

⁸ European Commission (2025). *The EU Blue Economy Report 2025*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/mare/eu-blue-economy-report-2025/index.html> (Accessed: 24 July 2026)

⁹ European Commission (2026). *Commission evaluation shows slow progress in fishing sustainability and ongoing challenges for EU fishers* [Press release]. European Commission Press Corner. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_938 (Accessed: 30 July 2026)

¹⁰ European Commission (2025). *EU budget: Fisheries, aquaculture and the ocean* [Factsheet]. Available at: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0fa98c34-da30-437b-ab95-267c99c72c76_en?filename=eu-budget-fisheries-aquaculture-ocean_en.pdf (Accessed: 31 July 2026)

than the needs of the European fisheries sector. The proposed abolition of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund in the new MFF and the pooling of fisheries funding within National and Regional Partnership Plans, as well as the possibility of greater investment through national budgets, could make long-term planning more difficult and lead to different levels of support across Member States. At the same time, account should be taken of the investments required for the green transition of the European fleet and the need to secure substantial funding for fleet renewal and the uptake of more energy-efficient technologies.

European fishers and aquaculture producers comply with high environmental, health, social and production standards, which increases production costs. To prevent unfair competition and protect consumers, fisheries and aquaculture products from third countries placed on the EU market should meet the same standards as products from the European Union.

Discussion points

1. **Can the proposed funding model for the Common Fisheries Policy ensure sustainable management of fish stocks, the green transition, and the economic sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture?**
2. **How to ensure a just transition while safeguarding incomes, jobs and generational renewal in small-scale, coastal and island fisheries?**
3. **How can the renewal and energy transition of the Mediterranean fishing fleet be financed in the context of a reduced and insufficiently defined European funding envelope?**
4. **How to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture products from third countries placed on the EU market meet the same environmental, health, social and production standards as products from the EU, with a view to preventing unfair competition and protecting consumers?**

PANEL III – FOOD SECURITY AS A PILLAR OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

The numerous crises in recent years – from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change to wars, energy crises and other geopolitical disruptions – have shown that a country's ability to ensure sufficient quantities of safe, high-quality and affordable food for its population is an important element of its national power and resilience.

The Commission's *Communication on strengthening EU economic security*¹¹ notes that economic security will be monitored across all key industries, including the agri-food sector, while the Commission's *Vision for Agriculture and Food*¹² points out that EU food sovereignty depends to a

¹¹ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2025). *Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Strengthening EU economic security* (JOIN/2025/977 final). EUR-Lex. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0977> (Accessed: 31 July 2026)

¹² European Commission (2025). *A vision for agriculture and food – Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European

large extent on imported inputs and stresses the need to reduce these strategic dependencies and derisk supply chains. The European Parliament's *Resolution of 7 May 2025 on a revamped long-term budget for the Union in a changing world*¹³ highlights food security as a vital component of strategic autonomy and calls for the next MFF to continue supporting the competitiveness of the Union's agri-food sector.

European policies are increasingly focusing on strategic planning and strengthening national resilience. The European Commission's proposal for a Common Market Organisation for agricultural products after 2027 provides for the development of national food security preparedness and response plans, including the establishment of reserves. Such plans should not be limited to the physical storage of stocks, but should also cover the assessment of risks and vulnerabilities and measures to ensure continuity of food production, processing, storage, logistics and distribution in times of crisis. In this context, it is critical to strengthen agricultural crisis management mechanisms, including by ensuring access to funding and establishing clear rules for interventions in the event of market disruptions and exceptional circumstances.

Strategic commodity reserves and other food security mechanisms are important tools for responding to crises, but they must be adapted to the national systems and production capacities of Member States. Their resilience can be strengthened by diversifying sources of supply and by greater integration of small and medium-sized farms, the food industry, and storage, processing and distribution capacities into these systems. For such systems to function, agricultural production and processing must be sufficient, and the functioning of the entire food supply chain maintained.

We live in a time of increasing defence spending at EU and NATO level, and defence security cannot be guaranteed without food security. NATO Member States have decided to increase defence and security spending to 5% of GDP by 2035¹⁴, with 1.5% allocated to protecting critical infrastructure, ensuring civil preparedness and resilience, and strengthening the defence industrial base. It is essential to recognise and support investments in strategic dual-use agri-food and fisheries infrastructure as part of this spending. Such investments could include silos, storage and distribution centres, processing facilities, mills, slaughterhouses, cold storage facilities, the fishing fleet and other capacities important for ensuring food security in both normal circumstances and times of crisis.

Such infrastructure also contributes to the competitiveness of domestic agriculture, regional development, civil preparedness and the ability of the state to ensure continuity of food supplies in

Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM(2025) 75 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075> (Accessed: 3 August 2026)

¹³ European Parliament (2025). *Resolution on a revamped long-term budget for the Union in a changing world (2024/2051(INI))* [P10_TA(2025)0090]. Official Journal C/2026/575. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0090_EN.html (Accessed: 31 July 2026)

¹⁴ NATO (2025). *The Hague Summit Declaration, issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in The Hague*. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2025/06/25/the-hague-summit-declaration> (Accessed: 3 August 2026.)

times of crisis. Food security ¹⁵ is an important element of a state's national power and resilience and should therefore be more fully integrated into defence and security planning, alongside the systematic identification and protection of critical infrastructure for food production, processing, storage and distribution¹⁶. Greater involvement of European small and medium-sized producers in supply chains that contribute to food security, at both national and European level, could significantly help shorten food supply chains, preserve agricultural production, maintain the vitality of rural areas and reduce pressure on the environment and production resources. These benefits should be recognised in food security policies.

Discussion points

1. **How to ensure sufficient domestic agricultural production and processing as the basis for food security, the functioning of strategic commodity reserves and national resilience?**
2. **How to strengthen and diversify national systems of strategic commodity reserves and other food security mechanisms, while further integrating small and medium-sized producers and the food industry**
3. **How to identify and protect strategic agri-food and fisheries infrastructure as critical infrastructure essential to food security?**
4. **How to ensure that investments in strategic dual-use agri-food and fisheries infrastructure can be financed as part of the 1.5% of GDP allocated to protecting critical infrastructure, ensuring civil preparedness and resilience?**

¹⁵ FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (1996). *Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action*. World Food Summit, 13–17 November 1996, Rome, Italy. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/4/w3613e/w3613e00.htm> (Accessed: 3. August 2026)

¹⁶ Niinistö, S. (2024). *Safer together: Strengthening Europe's civilian and military preparedness and readiness*. European Commission. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en (Accessed: 3 August 2026)