

# The European Commission approved the Strategic Plan for Bulgarian agriculture

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*Last week the European Commission approved the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) strategic plans of Bulgaria and Romania. The approved strategic plan of Bulgaria amounts to EUR 5.6 billion, the Commission announced.*

The new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which will start to apply from 1 January 2023, aims to shape the transition towards a sustainable, resilient and modern European agricultural sector. Under the reformed policy, funding will be distributed more fairly among farms, with a focus on small and medium-sized farms, as well as on young farmers. In addition, farmers will be supported to address and make use of innovation in agriculture — from precision farming to agro-ecological production methods. By supporting specific actions in these and other

areas, the new CAP can be a fundamental pillar for food security and farming communities in the European Union.

The new CAP also provides for a more efficient way of working, which will include the implementation of national strategic plans of the EU Member States, combining funding for income support, rural development and sectoral programmes.

When drawing up their CAP strategic plan, each Member State will choose from a wide range of EU-level interventions, adapting and targeting them to specific needs and local conditions. The Commission will assess whether each plan addresses the ten main objectives, which concern the common environmental, social and economic challenges. The plans must be in line with EU legislation and must also contribute to achieving the EU's climate and environmental objectives set out in the "Farm to Fork" strategy and the biodiversity strategies. The CAP will benefit from EU funding of EUR 270 billion for the period 2023—27.

Income support plays an important role in the Bulgarian plan to reduce the income gap between farmers and workers in other sectors. In order to achieve a fairer distribution of support, small and medium-sized farms will receive a redistributive payment, and a ceiling of EUR 100 000 will apply to larger farms. Over EUR 600 million will be earmarked to support the meat, dairy and fruit and vegetable sectors, which are facing difficulties.

As highlighted in his profile by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture Georgi Sabev, Bulgaria's Strategic Plan will include specific support for the winegrowing and winemaking sector and for the beekeeping sector. A new element will be the provision of the environmental service – natural pollination, a cause for which Sabev has been advocating over the past few years.

With regard to environmental actions, the plan will ensure that over 80% of arable land has minimum soil cover during sensitive periods in order to improve soil quality.

The Bulgarian plan also provides for specific investments to increase the area under organic farming. Funding for rural development will help address the challenges related to depopulation, poverty and population ageing.

The plan will support the creation of 9 413 jobs and 650 infrastructure investments in rural areas. These include the construction or reconstruction of water supply systems or the reconstruction of local roads, schools and kindergartens. More than 5 200 young farmers will also receive specific support to start agricultural activities.