



# GREEN WEEK

satellite event 2012

**GRÜNE LIGA** Netzwerk  
Ökologischer  
Bewegungen

Water Policy Office

## Key messages for the GREEN WEEK 2012 What Does the Common Agricultural Policy Deliver to Safeguard Europe's Waters?

Conclusions from the GRÜNE LIGA seminar

**"Reform der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik (GAP) – Wo bleibt der Gewässerschutz?"**

May 9, 2012 in Hamburg, Germany



## JEDER TROPFEN ZÄHLT

**WASSER: DIE HERAUSFORDERUNG**

[www.ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek)

Dieses Projekt wird gefördert von:



Bundesministerium  
für Umwelt, Naturschutz  
und Reaktorsicherheit

**Umwelt  
Bundes  
Amt**  
Für Mensch und Umwelt

Kooperationspartner:



## I. Status quo

**Public spending within the EU Common Agricultural Policy is among the most significant pressures jeopardizing Europe's waters.** These payments to a large degree support unsustainable farming practices, entailing massive environmental impacts on our waters. These impacts include

- eutrophication of rivers, lakes and coastal waters (caused by excess nutrients and erosion)
- pollution of ground and surface waters (e.g. with pesticides)
- habitat destruction (through excessive maintenance of water courses, drainage of groundwater dependent wetlands and flood protection)
- overabstraction of available water resources
- climate effects (particularly on carbon rich soils and peatlands)

Additional pressure on water resources is caused by the massive increase of **public money spent on biomass payments in the context of renewable energies policies.** Truly alarming developments can be observed in Germany. Artificially created high returns of biomass production, mostly maize and rapeseed, have led to drastic increases of the price for agricultural land. Investments in these lands compete with agricultural use for food production. Large investors from outside the agricultural sphere increasingly enter the game. In light of the low net renewable energy gain of biomass production through conventional farming, these production schemes need much stricter environmental criteria.

As of 2011, approximately 17 % of all arable land in Germany was used for biomass production (2 million hectares). Particularly the **increase in maize production has in many areas resulted in a significant deterioration of the status of Germany's waters.** The modest successes of agri-environmental schemes and other measures that had been achieved in reducing eutrophication are literally overrun by these developments.

From official estimates it can be clearly concluded that with current impacts, **the environmental goals of the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will not be achieved** in any of the groundwater bodies classified in bad status in 2009, in all coastal and marine waters (Baltic Sea and North Sea), as well as in most rivers and lakes e.g. in the state of Schleswig-Holstein.

CAP direct payments without clear Cross Compliance standards based on existing EU-legislation and harming or destroying public goods qualify as **perverse subsidies**: In contradiction to both the precautionary and the polluter pays principle, they actually pay the polluter through **payments putting ecosystems out of service.**



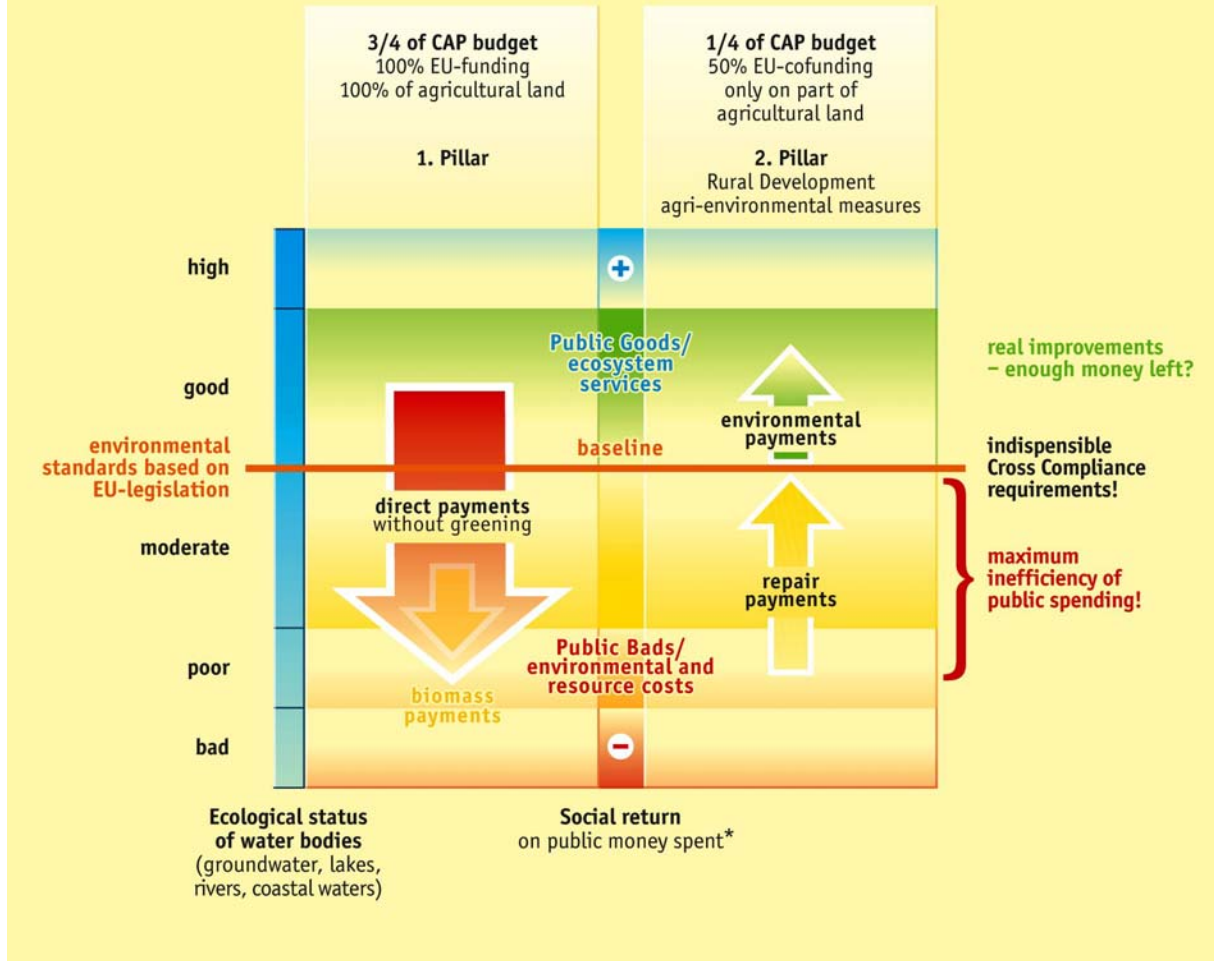
Cyanobacterial bloom (blue algae) in the Baltic Sea, summer 2010.

Note also that on the southeastern coast, the large Vistula and Curonian Lagoons are difficult to distinguishable as water bodies, due to massive bloom of green algae.

Source: ESA - European Space Agency



## What Does the CAP Deliver to Safeguard Europe's Waters: Public Goods for Public Money?



\* The EU spends an approximate 55 billion Euros per year on agricultural subsidies ([www.farmsubsidy.org](http://www.farmsubsidy.org)).  
Illustration: Jan Birk / GRÜNE LIGA.

## II. Way forward

Environmental obligations within the First Pillar are key to greening the CAP:

1. A clear **baseline including Water Framework** requirements is indispensable for sensible Cross Compliance.
2. Including **10% ecological focus areas** on agricultural lands is paramount. These areas should functionally **integrate wetlands, riparian zones and buffers into the agricultural landscape**, providing benefits for water quality, biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. Obligations for **grassland conservation, crop rotation and erosion control** can further contribute to providing public goods related to water protection.

Payments for agri-environmental measures within Second Pillar should not serve as mere repair payments, but be targeted towards real environmental improvements. Along with dark green obligations for direct payments, they should **safeguard and improve the status of the fundamentals of the European Agricultural Model: Water, soil, climate and biodiversity.**

In more general terms, CAP payments should incentivize the establishment of more sustainable farming practices and [not continue to prevent the search for alternatives](#) to environmentally harmful production schemes. Sensible and economically viable farming practices with high positive effects on waters and on a wide range of ecosystem services presented at the Hamburg seminar include

- **Flow path oriented ecohydrological management** aimed at reducing nutrient losses within agricultural catchments

cf. GRÜNE LIGA (2011): *Wetlands for Clear Water*. [www.wrrl-info.de/en/docs/wrrl-sonderinfo\\_en.pdf](http://www.wrrl-info.de/en/docs/wrrl-sonderinfo_en.pdf)

- **Extensive grazing** in floodplains
- **Paludiculture:** Rewetting degraded peatlands and integrating environmental protection and use through wetland adapted fibre and wood production

[www.yepat.uni-greifswald.de/paludiculture](http://www.yepat.uni-greifswald.de/paludiculture)

Such land uses require sufficient funding through the CAP. Currently however, the high social benefits of such farming practices can regularly not be reaped due to strong adverse incentives.

### III. Context

The [failure to estimate – let alone to revise – harmful subsidies](#) in connection with the economic analysis of water uses is one of the most striking shortcomings of the first River Basin Management Plans in Germany and throughout the EU.

cf. GRÜNE LIGA (2010): *Economic Instruments in the Water Framework Directive: An Opportunity for Water Protection*. [www.wrrl-info.de/brosch\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.wrrl-info.de/brosch_en_web.pdf)

"The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus" was promoted by the UN-Water Conference in Bonn in November 2011. However, the adverse effects of ongoing CAP and renewable energies payments on Europe's water represent a [failure to achieve such a nexus in EU-policies](#).

cf. GRÜNE LIGA (2011): *Water for Life – GRÜNE LIGA Policy Paper on the UN Water for Life decade and the Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus*. [www.wrrl-info.de/docs/positionspapier\\_water\\_for\\_life.pdf](http://www.wrrl-info.de/docs/positionspapier_water_for_life.pdf)

The GRÜNE LIGA seminar "Reform der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik (GAP) – Wo bleibt der Gewässerschutz" in Hamburg brought together representatives from state and federal environmental and agricultural authorities, environmental as well as agricultural organisations, research institutions, consultants and farmers. [Program and presentations of the seminar](#) are available at [www.wrrl-info.de](http://www.wrrl-info.de) > Seminare.

As member of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels and its Water Working Group, GRÜNE LIGA supports the [EEB position on the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters](#) and on "Integrating water protection into the Common Agricultural Policy" (May 2012), available at [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org).

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Authors: Michael Bender, Tobias Schäfer

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**GRÜNE LIGA Water Policy Office**  
Greifswalder Str. 4  
D-10405 Berlin  
[wasser@grueneliga.de](mailto:wasser@grueneliga.de)  
[www.wrrl-info.de](http://www.wrrl-info.de)