



Brussels 1.4. 2022

Dear Minister,

You have been invited to adopt Council Conclusions on Carbon Farming at your next Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting on the 7th of April. Members of Climate Action Network Europe support the efforts to improve carbon removal capacity in the land sector, but we have identified a number of critical issues that we urge you to consider in finalising your position.

Emission reductions first. The message from science is clear: deep and urgent emission reductions -including those from the agriculture and forestry sectors- must occur during this current decade in order to avoid crossing the 1.5°C warming threshold. Carbon sinks cannot replace these deep emissions cuts, but must also be increased based on approaches which restore ecosystems.

Offsetting helps neither the climate nor agricultural systems. Allowing offsetting of emissions with cheap and temporary land-based offsets, including in the voluntary carbon markets, does nothing other than delay mitigation in other sectors. Land-based carbon sequestration must not be considered fungible for emissions reductions due to reversibility, impermanence, measurement uncertainties and the different timescales of fossil and biogenic carbon cycles. Land-based carbon stocks cannot be considered permanent in the same way as reducing fossil fuel emissions and keeping fossil fuels in the ground can. Emissions reductions and carbon removals are fundamentally different, and therefore require separate targets and differentiated policy frameworks.

The climate crisis cannot be separated from the collapse of biodiversity. The climate and biodiversity crises are intimately linked and must be tackled jointly. In the agriculture sector, the focus should therefore be on promoting agroecology and the restoration of agricultural ecosystems as the only approaches which can simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sinks, restore biodiversity, and increase resilience. Biodiversity restoration should not be considered a co-benefit, but as an integral and equal outcome of carbon farming.

CAP must do more for climate and biodiversity. Farmers have a crucial role to play in biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, building agricultural climate resilience, reducing emissions, and increasing carbon sinks this decade. They need stable and predictable financing for a just transition out of high emitting models of production. Carbon markets are therefore ill-suited to guide their transition to agroecology and climate resilience given their volatility and singular focus on carbon. The Common Agricultural Policy, however, contains a range of instruments necessary to support farmers in this transition, including through national CAP Strategic Plans. Member States should collectively and individually commit to do more to promote carbon farming through these national plans.

We hope that you will consider these essential issues and we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you at the earliest occasion.

Yours sincerely,

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