

# **European opinion on the use of public money in the agricultural sector**

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## Introduction

The EU will within the coming months decide on the EU budget for the period of 2014-2020. An important part of the budget is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), currently taking up around 40% (or 55 billion Euro per year) of the whole budget. The CAP is today used in two major ways:

- About three fourths are mainly provided as *Direct Payments* where farmers receive subsidies based on how much land they own. As provisions are also based on how much subsidies farmers have received in previous years, the system tends to favour large land-owners in richer countries. For historical and political reasons, old Member States are favoured over new Member States.
- The other fourth is used within *Rural Development Programmes*. These are target driven measures to improve competitiveness, the environment and the countryside, as well as the quality of life in rural areas.

The new CAP is likely to have a smaller budget than the present and there is currently a debate over where cuts should be made. To assess the position of European citizens on this issues, WWF has asked Factwise to coordinate opinion polls in six selected Member States: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Sweden.

## Key findings

Some very clear conclusions can be drawn from the results of the polls:

- European citizens (in the polled countries) believe that subsidies to farmers to deliver to the whole society rather than be an income support for farmers.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents believe that farmers should deliver public goods in return for the subsidies they receive.
- Europeans strongly believe that public funding to farmers should be based on specific measures farmers take to support a sustainable agriculture rather than be an income support to farmers.
- Respondents are most willing to use their tax money to “ensure safe and healthy agricultural products”. “Improving the environment, nature and rural landscapes” and “maintaining lively rural communities” are also important. Least important is “increasing farmer’s income” and “intensifying the production of food”.
- Some of these trends are slightly stronger in the old Member States than in the new.

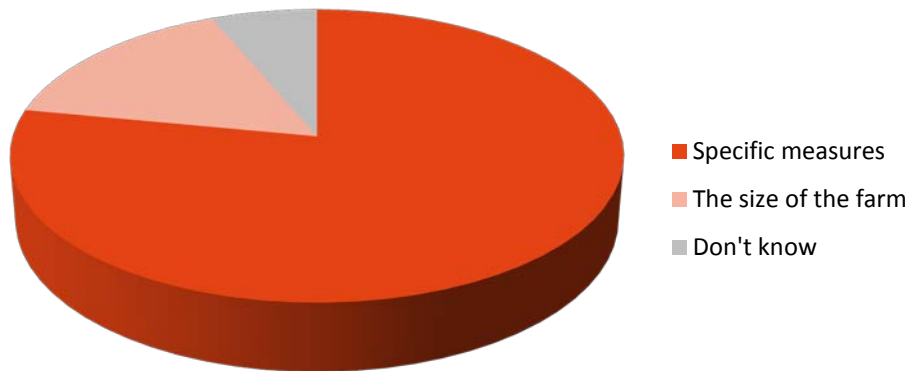
## Results

The following table summarizes the results of the polls:

	France	Germany	Italy	Poland	Romania	Sweden	Average*
Q1. In your opinion, what should subsidies to farmers be based on?							
a) The size of the farm so that bigger farms receive more money.	8%	9%	12%	30%	29%	6%	<b>16%</b>
b) Specific measures that farmers take to support a sustainable agriculture and rural development.	89%	86%	82%	65%	61%	85%	<b>78%</b>
c) Don't know.	3%	5%	6%	5%	10%	9%	<b>6%</b>
Q2. How important do you think it is that farmers deliver public goods in return for the subsidies they receive?							
a) Very important	38%	59%	69%	53%	54%	54%	<b>55%</b>
b) Fairly important	48%	32%	27%	39%	30%	36%	<b>35%</b>
c) Not very important	8%	4%	2%	4%	5%	4%	<b>5%</b>
d) Not at all important	3%	3%	0%	1%	4%	2%	<b>2%</b>
e) Don't know.	3%	1%	2%	3%	7%	4%	<b>3%</b>
Important (a+b combined)	86%	91%	96%	92%	84%	90%	90%
Not important (c+d combined)	11%	7%	2%	5%	9%	6%	7%
Q3. What do you think is most important that tax-payers money paid to farmers should be used for?							
a) Ensuring safe and healthy agricultural products.	38%	50%	50%	56%	31%	33%	<b>43%</b>
b) Improving the environment, nature and rural landscapes	23%	26%	26%	16%	22%	25%	<b>23%</b>
c) Maintaining lively rural communities.	24%	12%	10%	5%	8%	29%	<b>15%</b>
d) Increasing farmers' income.	8%	6%	6%	10%	12%	5%	<b>8%</b>
e) Intensifying the production of food.	5%	5%	3%	9%	17%	4%	<b>7%</b>
f) Other.	1%	0%	0%	1%	4%	1%	<b>1%</b>
g) Don't know	1%	1%	4%	1%	7%	4%	<b>3%</b>

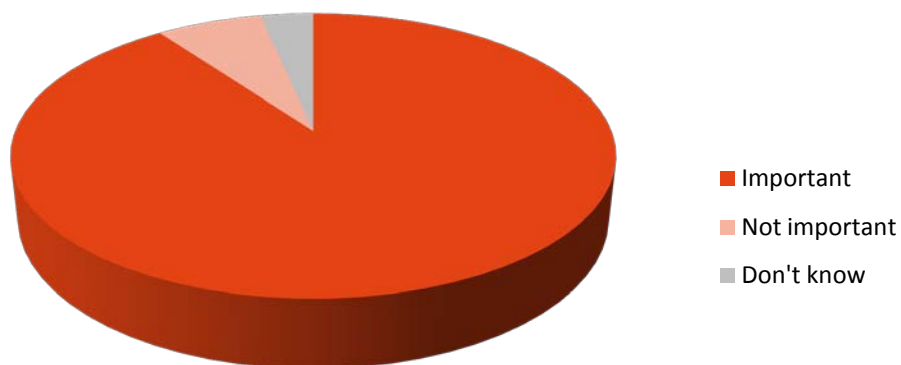
\*The average is not weighted to reflect different population sizes.

The first question shows a very clear favour for specific support for sustainable agriculture and rural development over general support based on farm size.



*Question 1 (all countries): In your opinion, what should subsidies to farmers be based on?*

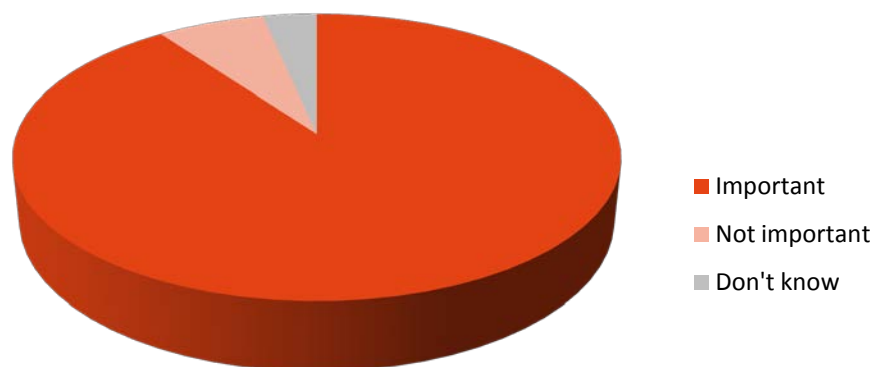
This tendency is even more pronounced in the four old Member States that were polled:



*Question 1 (old Member States only): In your opinion, what should subsidies to farmers be based on?*

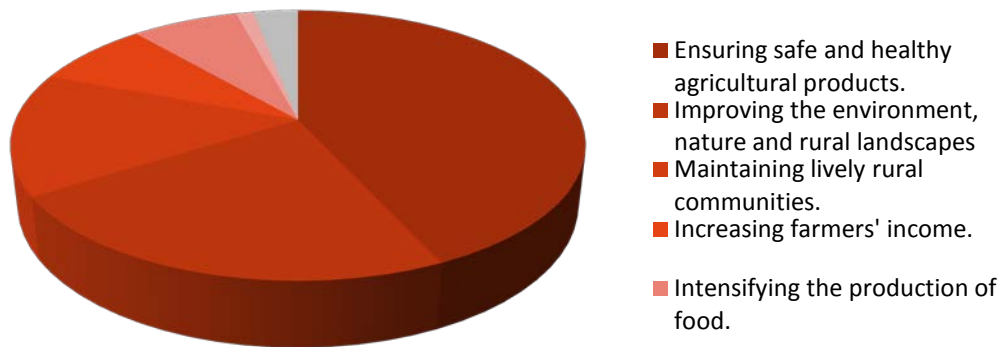
The difference between old and new Member States may be explained by the strong focus on economic development and the modernization of society, including agriculture, in the new Member States. But even in these two countries (Poland and Romania), the majority of respondents are clearly in favour of directing support to specific measures.

When asked how important it is that farmers deliver public goods in return for the subsidies they receive, an overwhelming majority (an average of 90 %) of citizens in all countries think it is either *very* or *fairly important*, while only 7 % find it *not very* or *not at all important*:



*Question 2: How important do you think it is that farmers deliver public goods in return for the subsidies they receive?*

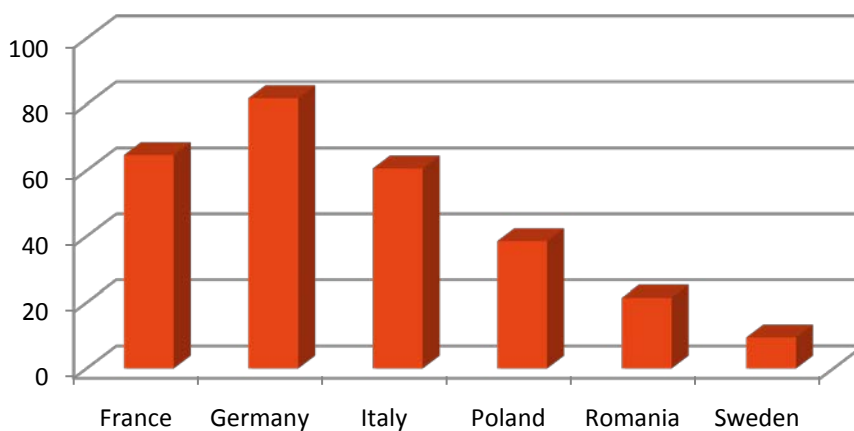
Respondents were also asked what, in their opinion, public money paid to farmers should be used for. The answers emphasize the earlier finding that citizens want the production of public goods in return for their tax money:



*Question 3: What do you think is most important that tax-payers money paid to farmers should be used for?*

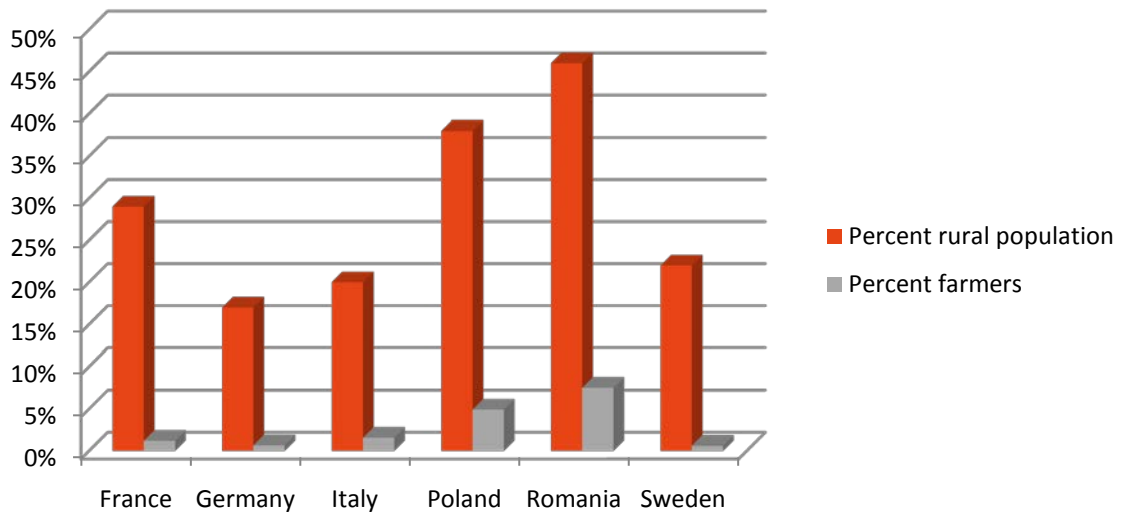
In France and Italy, the polling agencies provided results divided per respondents' occupation and, for France, per residence area (see data sheets in Annex I). Although the samples are much too small to draw any statistically significant conclusions, it is interesting to note that people in rural areas or farmers and/or people employed in agriculture have very similar patterns of responding as their fellow countrymen.

It should be pointed out that the average percentages are not weighted to reflect population sizes in the six countries. Population sizes differ quite substantially between countries:



*Population size in million persons per country*

It may also be relevant to look at percentages of rural population and of people owning or working on farms. The main conclusion here is that there is a quite small percentage in each country that is directly involved in farming:



*Percentages of populations that live in rural areas and that are directly involved in work on farms<sup>1</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> Source: Eurostat. "People directly involved in work on farms" include farmers and farm workers but not persons in other agricultural occupations.



## About the survey

### Methodology

The field work was carried out between and was coordinated by TNS-SIFO. All interviews were made by telephone in the period between 17 December 2012 and 14 January 2013.

Country	Polling agency	Field period	Sample size
France	TNS-France	8-9 Jan 2013	1016
Germany	TNS-Germany	11-12 Jan 2013	1003
Italy	TNS-Italy	10-13 Jan 2013	1001
Poland	Norstat Polska	8-14 Jan 2013	1000
Romania	IWD Market Research	9-14 Jan 2013	2013
Sweden	TNS-SIFO	17-20 Dec 2012	1000

### Questions

The questions were provided in English to each polling institute and translated into the local language by the institute.

#### Question 1

*A portion of the taxes every citizen pays goes to the EU. The EU, with approval of its Member States, currently uses nearly half of these funds, about 40 %, as payments to farmers in the form of agricultural subsidies.*

*Three quarters of these subsidies are currently income support, based on the size of the farm. This means that 20% of the largest farms in Europe receive 80% of the money.*

*The majority of the remaining money, about one quarter, goes to support farmers who are taking specific measures to improve the environment and support a sustainable rural development.*

*The EU is currently debating how to distribute the funds between these two purposes in the future. In your opinion, what should subsidies to farmers be based on?*

- a. *The size of the farm, so that bigger farms receive more money.*
- b. *Specific measures that farmers take to support a sustainable agriculture and rural development?*
- c. *Don't know.*

### **Question 2**

*Public goods are benefits to the whole society that cannot be bought or sold on the market, like clean water, beautiful landscapes or biodiversity. How important do you think it is that farmers deliver public goods in return for the subsidies they receive?*

- a. *Very important*
- b. *Fairly important*
- c. *Not very important*
- d. *Not at all important*
- e. *Don't know*

### **Question 3**

*What do you think is most important that tax-payers money paid to farmers should be used for? (Chose one option.)*

- a. *Improving the environment, nature and rural landscapes*
- b. *Maintaining lively rural communities*
- c. *Intensifying the production of food*
- d. *Increasing farmers' income*
- e. *Ensuring safe and healthy agricultural products*
- f. *Other*
- g. *Don't know*

## **Annex I: Data tables**

The annex contains all the original data tables as they were received from the polling agencies.