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# **EU AGRICULTURAL POLICY: AN EASY TARGET FOR CRITICISM OR INSTRUMENT WORTH COMPLIMENT?**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Agricultural Policy of the EU has been proceeding to be one of the mostly debatable areas of the Union since the foundation of the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1960s. Various standpoints exist concerning this controversial policy. Division of individuals into either the exponents or the opponents of this sectoral regulation can arguably be contingent on their relation to it. Opposing perspectives on the same topic draws attention to ascertain in what respects and whether the CAP may be considered an integral part of the EU or to the detriment of the Union, which is in turn also the focal question of this work. This paper seeks to address the conflicting attitudes related to the EU Agriculture Policy and to examine to what extent this legal instrument deserves to be condemned or commended. At the beginning of the main part, the paper gives information about the historical establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy, whilst calling into a question its role in the European internal market and the level of its influence over the process of the accession of a new Member State into the Union. Moreover, this chapter is also a review of the different actors involved in this procedure and these consist of each EU institution. The next chapter provides a succinct description of the specific pros and cons of this policy. The variety of disputable perspectives together with the subsequent reforms will be highlighted there. In addition, these analyses are extended in the following two sub-chapters, where the former concentrates on relatively broad beneficial properties of the CAP along with its pivotal involvement in stable availability as well as abundant range of food products in the EU shelves and incentives provided by it for the preservation of environment and farming. By contrast, criticism of the CAP arisen from the huge expenditure from the EU budget on it that imposes a burden on the taxpayers, the emergence of food products in excess and destructive impact of intensive farming on the environment are present in the latter sub-chapter. Finally, after the contemplation and elaboration on the merits and drawbacks of the CAP, the last chapter of the paper attempts to offer conclusive speculation with respect to whether the importance of this policy can be justified. The aim of this paper is hence to determine the relevance of this policy to the prosperity of the EU by the method of evaluating both of its pros and contras.



## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN THE EU

Prior to embarking on the imperative role of Agricultural Policy in the EU, it is necessary to examine the historical steps that led to the foundation of The Common Agricultural Policy. The reason for the establishment of the CAP was attributed to the necessity to have political harmonization between France's interest to acquire a larger market for its agricultural exports and the industrial benefits Germany was aiming at. Owing to this, although agricultural policies of the six founding countries of the EU widely diverged, it was decided to include agriculture in the new common internal market of the community.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, 1957 The Treaty of Rome founded the European Economic Community (a precursor of today's EU), between six western European countries. The emphasis on the objectives to provide food for EU citizens at affordable prices and a fair standard of living for farmers was placed there as well, foreseeing the Common Agricultural Policy as a common policy. 1962 entered the history then as the year of the birth of the common agricultural policy (CAP)! The original focus of the policy was on the creation of decent prices for farmers. This stimulated farmers to produce more food year after year, whilst supplying the shops with a vast range of foods at affordable prices. The initial goal that is food security was hence realized.

The influence of the CAP on the common EU market is undisputable, since after having come into force, it strengthened the process of integration. While it created a common market organization for the most important agricultural items enabling to have entirely free agricultural trade through all EU States, a protection and support of agriculture was uniformly provided by it within the whole of the EU as well. Therefore, all future decisions concerning agricultural policies had to be reached centrally at the supranational EU level. One of the key roles was supposedly played by the CAP in the evolution of the European common market and empowering the idea of European Integration. In addition to abovementioned deed of this policy, its relatively considerable influence related to the procedure of the Accession of a new member State into the Union should be also acknowledged. Over the course of the EU integration process, which is in turn significantly intricate too, Candidate countries are obliged to found new institution and to implement a range of policy reforms regarding agriculture. Integration and negotiating process focuses on enhancing the competitiveness, regional trade and advancing rehabilitation of food chains in prospective Member States. These States should also conform to and harmonize legally four primary CAP regulations, which include Direct Payments, Single Common Market Organizations, Rural Development and Financial Rules, to complete reform process and attain a successful integration.

Throughout this procedure, would-be EU States certainly interact with the EU Institutions, the involvement of which ensures the efficacious fulfillment and application of agricultural policies. The European Commission is, for instance in charge of managing the implementation of the EU budget together with each EU States' financial package for agriculture. Being composed of 27 members, the Commission assigns a specific portfolio, also referred as 'Directorate General' to each commissioner. Interestingly, comparatively



large Member States cannot be selected as the Agricultural Commissioner due to an unspoken law, which is justified with politically sensitive nature of agricultural policy and since it owns such a large share of EU spending. The last Agricultural Commissioners hence have come from Austria, Denmark, Romania and, currently, Ireland. As regards the Council, it is made up by 27 national ministers, one from each MS, and its composition deviates pursuant to the policy topic in agenda. 'Agriculture and Rural Development Council' accordingly comprises the 27 ministers in charge of agricultural policy in their respective national governments. Finally, the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors may appear to have indirect influence over EU agricultural policy making, consisting of especially ensuring the compliance with food standards, the enforcement of a free, common market within the EU and the generation of transparency in a complex area of policy making respectively.<sup>5</sup> Despite the direct and indirect participation of the Common Agricultural Policy in laying a cornerstone in the evolution and promotion of Common Internal Market of the EU and the Accession procedure of a Candidate country, it is not devoid of minuses. Having said that, visible assets of the CAP should not be understated as well.

## CONCLUSION

It is true that that food can be referred as one of the imperative strategic commodities of any State, thus food security is among ultimate economic goals of each government. The establishment of the CAP in Europe worked as a decisive factor in the intended common market and the subsequent accession of other European countries into the Union in the long run. The attractive feature of this policy may be attributed to its extensive or to some extent comprehensive involvement in the rural sector of the Member States so that food heritage of Europe is preserved and handed down successfully from generation to generation. Furthermore, several EU procedures, such as the negotiations concerning the accession into the EU, are under the influence of this policy, when it attempts to secure harmonization of various standards of a would-be State with those in the developed Members of the Union. However, this operation can be both time-consuming and complex to implement without bilateral partnership, since it is necessary that a local government contributes to this process by its assistance in the distribution of the subsidies shared among aimed groups, by its active engagement in modernizing pivotal domestic sectors and the introduction of new institutions. The support given by the CAP plays a key role in the protection of numerous stakeholders. Starting from the provision of affordable and stable food products for consumers and ending with the promotion of the farming, the CAP strives to avoid any possibility of land abandonment and deprivation of the rural environment. Furthermore, it generates new agricultural vacancies by subsidizing the start-up projects of young farmers and offers trainings for them to advance their business, while its contribution can be also noticeable in maintaining the social fabric of most rural territories. Albeit the presence of numerous negatives of this policy, they appear to be eclipsed by the overwhelming amount of merits and improvements ascribed to the CAP. However, this should not mean that it is totally immune to criticism. On the contrary, its resistance to any condemnation should be formed from analyzing unfavorable outcomes of the way it functions



so that the CAP would proceed making its own contribution to the integrity as well as the prosperity of the EU.

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