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PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture**

Agence Europe

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## 1. SECURING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE: A STRATEGY FOR GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

European agriculture is more than food production. It is part of our food security, climate action, environmental protection, and it is essential for preserving the vitality of rural areas. Yet, farming faces serious pressures, including an ageing workforce and the decline of rural populations and a challenging international environment. In 2020, the average age of farmers was 57, with only 12% under the age of 40 <sup>(1)</sup>. Of this younger group only 2.5% were women. These are not just demographic adversities: they are strategic challenges, and it is our societal responsibility to address them.

Food security is an essential component of a wider European security and strategic autonomy. **The future of food security in Europe rests on the shoulders of the next generation of farmers.**

Already, the Vision for Agriculture and Food <sup>(2)</sup> sets the framework for the EU approach to make farming more attractive, competitive, future proof and fair. With the new approach proposed for the next multi-annual financial framework, we have a window of opportunity: The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has traditionally been supporting young farmers with dedicated measures and budget, including through installation aid, higher support rates for investments, and credit measures. With the new proposals of the CAP post-2027, this support has become even more ambitious. Dedicated measures such as a starter pack for young farmers, better targeting of funds through degressive payments in favour of young farmers and investment support will generate the necessary impetus and increase the attractiveness of the profession for younger generations.

This Strategy for Generational Renewal in agriculture, a political priority of von der Leyen's second term Commission <sup>(3)</sup>, prioritises policy actions and support for young and new farmers, particularly those under 40 years of age. It addresses key barriers identified through extensive stakeholder consultations <sup>(4)</sup>, with particular attention to young farmers and rural youth, and data from multiple sources <sup>(5)</sup>, providing a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities ahead. It also supports older farmers in transmitting their business to the next generation of farmers with dignity, by ensuring fair and reliable pension schemes, all within a broader effort to foster inclusive and resilient rural development. It aligns with the European Parliament <sup>(6)</sup>, the Council <sup>(7)</sup>, and the Strategic Dialogue <sup>(8)</sup>.

Securing sustainable, productive, and resilient farming requires determined action today. Farms closed because there is no successor to a retiring farmer do not reopen. If we fail to act now, the ageing trend will lock in, making renewal far harder. It requires whole-of-government approach.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Eurostat.

<sup>(2)</sup> [A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations](#)

<sup>(3)</sup> [Mission letter to Commissioner Hansen](#)

<sup>(4)</sup> See Synopsis Report

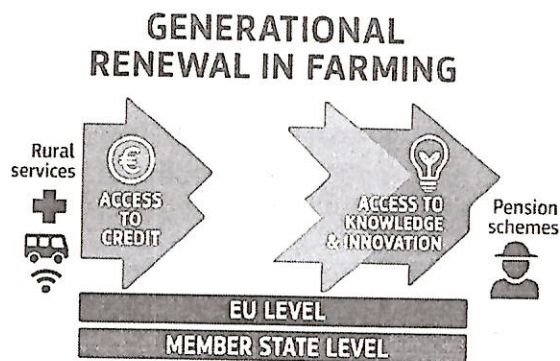
<sup>(5)</sup> See Analytical Report

<sup>(6)</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 October 2023 on generational renewal in the EU farms of the future (2023/2014(INI))

<sup>(7)</sup> Council Conclusions on a Long-Term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas (LTVRA) (5031/23)

<sup>(8)</sup> [Strategy for the future of EU Agriculture, A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe](#), 2024.

While public support remains crucial, a true shift only comes with necessary **reforms, mainly at the national level**, to address the key barriers to generational renewal. This includes **the need to improve access to finance and land, enhance skills and knowledge transfer, and make rural life more attractive** through providing better public services and adequate infrastructure. “The right to stay” applies to the setting up of young farmers who wish to stay and farm in their territories.



For 2028-2032, the planning approach proposed under the National and Regional Partnership Plans will allow the Member States to achieve synergies across policy areas to better address these challenges and will therefore provide a meaningful policy response for young farmers and citizens living in rural areas.

Furthermore, **innovation will shape the competitiveness and transformation of agriculture**. The next generation of farmers holds great potential to drive this transformation. **Young farmers are entrepreneurial and adaptive; often at the forefront of adopting innovative technologies, sustainable practices, and diversified business models**. Their involvement is essential to shaping a forward-looking, resilient agricultural sector. These opportunities will be even bigger in the future, with the proposed significant increase of the overall budget for research and innovation to approximately €40 billion under the European Competitiveness Fund and the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Its window ‘*Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment*’ stands to benefit food and farming.”

## 2. IDENTIFYING THE OBSTACLES TO GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

Between 2002 and 2022, the share of the European Union population aged over 65 grew from 16% to 21%, while those aged 0-19 fell from 23% to 20% <sup>(9)</sup>. This shift affects many sectors, but the impact is particularly acute in rural areas and agriculture.

**Ageing in agriculture is faster than in other sectors**. More farms are managed by farmers above retirement age (33.2%) than by young farmers (12%) <sup>(10)</sup>, though this varies across Member States. This imbalance threatens long-term food security, the EU’s strategic autonomy in food production, and the future of Europe’s farming landscapes.

**Young people are discouraged from entering farming by a number of interconnected barriers such as access to land, affordable credit, and essential skills/expertise**. Farm succession requires long-term investment and often involves complex legal, financial, and emotional issues, especially in family farms. Combined with the capital-intensive nature of modern agriculture, these challenges deter many potential new entrants.

Farmers manage over 40% <sup>(11)</sup> of EU land, positioning the sector at the heart not only of food security, but also of vibrant rural areas and vital environmental services such as climate and water resilience, and biodiversity conservation. The sector supports the vitality of rural landscapes, where economic, environmental, and social functions are deeply connected to

<sup>(9)</sup> Eurostat.

<sup>(10)</sup> Eurostat.

<sup>(11)</sup> Source:

local communities, natural resources, heritage and cultural identity. By keeping land actively managed and cultivated, farmers also help reduce the risk and severity of devastating summer fires, strengthening resilience in rural areas. Ensuring the generational renewal of farmers is essential for stability, resilience, and aligning productivity with sustainability. This is especially true for family farms. Supporting generational renewal means ensuring these farms continue their activity across generations and pass on vital knowledge. Alongside food production, many also contribute and reap the benefits of renewable energy through bioenergy, solar or wind, supporting climate goals and energy security. For example, joint programming and combination of reforms under the NRP can optimise the connection to grids and pipes and generate additional income to farmers and provide consumer groups with local energy. The future of farmers also depends on rural areas becoming stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous, in line with the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas <sup>(12)</sup>.

However, **making farming a viable and fulfilling career choice for young people requires action beyond the agricultural sector alone.** The pool of rural youth is shrinking. Between 2013 and 2019, the number of young people aged 15–24 living in rural areas in the EU-28 <sup>(13)</sup> dropped from 3.6 million to 1.9 million, and those aged 25–29 fell from 6.9 million to 5.9 million <sup>(14)</sup>.

**Vibrant communities, high quality infrastructure, accessible services, and strong social connections are key to retaining young people** and enabling the 'right to stay', while also **attracting new farmers.** Rural areas are central to our European way of life, and we need to ensure that rural areas remain attractive places to live, for farmers, and for all citizens of rural areas. The "farmers of the future" will engage in more diversified networks that include new entrants to farming, a variety of farming and business models, and innovative partnerships, reflecting the growing diversity of food systems <sup>(15)</sup>.

New forms of collaboration, such as partnerships, intergenerational exchanges, and land sharing, play a role by lowering barriers to entry and reinforcing community ties. These models help create more inclusive and resilient farming systems, which in turn contribute to the social and economic vitality of rural areas. Supported by cooperatives and other producer organisations, they offer practical pathways for newcomers while strengthening the fabric of rural life.

Ultimately, the future of farming and rural areas depends on creating the right conditions for young people to build their lives and careers there so that farming can continue to contribute to a resilient and sustainable European Union.

### 3. UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EUROPE'S NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

**EU agriculture offers a broad and evolving set of opportunities to attract, support, and retain young and new farmers and farm workers.** Despite the challenges, these opportunities span economic, technological, environmental, and social domains, contributing to a resilient and future-oriented agricultural sector.

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<sup>(12)</sup> CAP 2023-2027 Final

<sup>(13)</sup> <sup>(13)</sup> EU-28 includes the United Kingdom before its departure from the EU on 31 January 2020.

<sup>(14)</sup> Young people in agriculture and rural areas | European Commission

<sup>(15)</sup> IR - Farmers' Resilience Repository - Farmers of the future

Different farm models remain relevant, each contributing in different ways to productivity, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, the preservation of rural traditions and local heritage and food systems. Embracing this diversity ensures an inclusive sector responsive to varying conditions, consumer demands, and business visions. Whether through innovation or traditional skills, young farmers play a critical role in shaping the future of agriculture.

**Diversification of farm activities and products contributes to the sector's robustness by broadening income sources:** agri-tourism, on-farm processing, bioeconomy such as the production of renewable bioenergy are amongst the activities having a significant potential in contributing to the viable rural livelihoods. For example, bioeconomy and circular solutions turn waste into resources and energy while contributing to the Union's strategic autonomy and climate and environmental objectives. In this context, new and interesting jobs are created. For many young farmers, who often farm part-time or alongside other jobs, these opportunities may be key in building flexible and stable professional careers in the wider farming sector.

**The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays a central role in enabling these opportunities** supporting sustainable business, better access to finance, knowledge, and innovation. Measures programmed by Member States also help facilitate access to land, a main barrier for new entrants<sup>(16)</sup>. The new CAP proposal<sup>(17)</sup> goes further to support generational renewal and facilitate the entry of new farmers alongside with a strengthened research and innovation support, fundamental to generational renewal, driving modernization and productivity, creating economic opportunities, and improving rural living conditions.

Yet, generational renewal is not driven by the CAP alone. **Broader investments in rural infrastructure and services are vital for attracting young and new people, including quality healthcare, education, housing, water, childcare, transport, and leisure services.** Cohesion Policy complements the interventions provided by the CAP and already provides significant support in rural areas. It provides economic, social and territorial support through targeted investments, including broadband, clean energy, health, education and local infrastructure. These investments bring added value and well-being to rural areas as a whole. The mid-term review of Cohesion policy programmes<sup>(18)</sup> also provides incentives and flexibilities for goals such as water resilience, housing, energy transition and greater competitiveness and innovation, all relevant sectors for rural areas.

As farming transforms through consolidation, value chain integration, technology adoption, and climate adaptation, tools to help farmers and policymakers anticipate and respond with forward looking coordinated actions, are necessary.

#### 4. THE NEW CAP: DRIVING THE CHANGE FORWARD

Building on these foundations, the CAP post 2027 proposal marks a major step towards a more modern, inclusive, and future-oriented European agriculture, placing generational renewal at its core. Generational renewal is one of the specific objectives of the NRP Plan, at

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<sup>(16)</sup> See Study & Analytical Report -- Best practices

<sup>(17)</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing the conditions for the implementation of the Union support to the Common Agriculture Policy for the period from 2028 to 2034, COM 2025 560 final.

<sup>(18)</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) 2021 1058 and (EU) 2021 1056 as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges in the context of the mid-term review.

par with social and cohesion requirements, thus ensuring that national plan must demonstrate how these objectives will be addressed. Additionally, under the CAP requirements, a key element is the requirement for all Member States to adopt national strategies that identify demographic trends, address entry barriers, and define targeted support measures. To be effective, these strategies must be thorough, reflecting the complex realities young farmers face in each Member State while ensuring coherence with broader national and regional efforts to revitalise rural areas and contributing to the EU common generational renewal efforts.

The NRP and CAP proposals strengthen this logic: Member States must set concrete targets for generational renewal, report regularly on progress, and adjust where results fall short. The Member States will have to justify how the Plan will concentrate resources on supporting generational renewal. The Commission, in turn, will use benchmarks and dedicated CAP recommendations to steer national policies, ensuring accountability and alignment with EU-wide goals.

With the next MFF proposal, the Commission also puts forward a more integrated approach to rural support. Investments require coordinated action across governance levels, supported by necessary reforms, and is central to the Commission's proposal for new National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRP), complemented by EU measures and national and regional initiatives.

**Central to this in the new CAP is a comprehensive “starter pack” for young farmers,** including installation aid, degressive income support, investment aid, and access to financial instruments. Complementary measures support business start-ups, innovation partnerships, succession schemes, training and relief services to help them to have a better work-life balance. To improve accessibility and efficiency, all support is proposed to be made accessible through a single-entry point in each Member State.

**To succeed, the Commission considers that Member States must double their current total CAP budgets for generational renewal to at least 6% of their ring-fenced amounts for agriculture** <sup>(19)</sup>, to be topped up with additional funds from availabilities under the NRP Fund to ensure adequate funding for the delivery of the national strategy. The Commission will issue its CAP Recommendations first, then assess the Member State Plans against this target and the comprehensive delivery of the national strategy, using them as a key steering mechanism.

Through this combination of binding national planning, measurable targets, and Commission guidance, the CAP strengthens its role as a driver of renewal, enabling young farmers to build viable careers and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Europe's agriculture.

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<sup>(19)</sup> 6% of the amounts in Annex XVIII of [NRP Regulation – COM(2025) 565 final]

### *Flagship Actions:*

- *Comprehensive, mandatory strategies on generational renewal in agriculture in each Member State.*
- *Doubling current allocations so that at least 6% of Member States ring-fenced agricultural expenditure under the National Regional Partnership Plans is dedicated to generational renewal, to be topped up with additional funds from availabilities under the NRP Fund to ensure adequate funding for the delivery of the national strategy.*
- *The "Starter Pack for Young Farmers" to facilitate the entry and establishment of young farmers in the sector through a comprehensive package of interventions.*

## 5. DELIVERING THE STRATEGY: NEXT STEPS FOR GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

This Strategy sets out a clear path to support generational renewal in European agriculture by turning policy ambition into practical action:

1. It provides a comprehensive framework that connects different policies and governance levels, tackling barriers faced by young people and identifying emerging opportunities.
2. It targets persistent barriers and promotes fair conditions for older farmers transitioning out of the sector, including through adequate retirement and pension schemes.
3. Complementing these measures, a new *Women in Farming* platform will foster equal opportunities and create space for sharing experiences and networking.

The Strategy gives particular attention to farmers under the age of 40, who face the most significant barriers, particularly in accessing finance and credit, while also recognising the important role new farmers of all ages play in generational renewal. Empowering them today is key to safeguarding the EU's food systems, maintaining rural vitality, and preserving its environmental legacy for future generations.

To ensure young farmers are not only supported but actively engaged, the Commission has put in place a structured **youth engagement** to embed their voices throughout policy design and implementation. As part of this approach, the Commission has hosted in this term two Youth Policy Dialogues on agriculture where generational renewal was discussed, providing young people with an opportunity to shape agricultural policy.

At national level, Member States should guarantee that young farmer representatives are included in monitoring committees **to ensure their perspectives inform policy decisions** within the CAP. This creates an institutional space for their voice in decision-making allowing them to contribute to improved implementation and strengthen accountability for delivering on generational renewal commitments.

By integrating young people directly into the governance of agricultural policy, this Strategy lays the foundation for stronger accountability, more responsive support, and a dynamic, future-oriented farming sector. It reflects the EU's commitment to ensuring that those ready to lead European agriculture into the future have both the tools and the voice to do so.

To build on this momentum, Youth Policy Dialogues will continue on an annual basis throughout this mandate, enabling the regular exchange of views, sharing of experiences, and informed debate on key policy matters.

### **Key objectives and strategic priorities**

The main objective of this Strategy is to **ensure the long-term resilience of the farming sector by supporting farm income**. This is essential not only for the vitality of rural areas but also for Europe's food security. This means helping farmers build economically viable, sustainable, and future-proof businesses. To achieve this, innovation and entrepreneurship are fundamental cross-cutting enablers.

Equipping young farmers to benefit from emerging opportunities and **supporting the diversification of farm income is key**. This aims to make farmers more resilient and less dependent on subsidies in the long term. It builds, among others, on the potential of the bioeconomy, renewable energy, nature and carbon credits, and short supply chains.

The Strategy recognises that farming must provide a stable and **fair income through fair prices** <sup>(20)</sup> to support a viable and attractive livelihood. Participants in the Youth Policy Dialogue <sup>(21)</sup> identified fair income as the most pressing challenge. For many young Europeans, limited economic prospects remain a deterrent to entering farming. The Commission recognises these concerns and is already addressing them through broader initiatives, including reforms and new tools aimed at improving fairness and transparency in the agricultural and food supply chain <sup>(22)</sup>. It is important to recall the key role of Producer Organisations (POs), which can strengthen farmers' bargaining power, improve market access, and contribute to fairer incomes.

Additionally, there is wide consensus <sup>(23)</sup> in identifying five areas where action is most urgently needed: access to finance, education and skills, land, fair standard of living in rural areas, and assistance in succession and retirement. These challenges are addressed in five strategic blocks each with key flagships and supporting actions:

#### **A. Access to credit and finance**

Access to funding remains a major challenge for all farmers, in particular young and new farmers, since establishing or taking over a farm requires high upfront investment with delayed and often uncertain returns. Many begin their journey burdened by debt, which makes it difficult to finance new operations, adopt sustainable practices, or modernise equipment. In 2023, young farmers had a liabilities-to-assets ratio of over 34%, compared to 24% for farmers over 65 <sup>(24)</sup>, highlighting the heavier financial pressure faced by the younger generation.

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<sup>(20)</sup> There is no official definition of a "fair price," however a reasonable interpretation is one that covers the full cost of sustainable production, ensures a decent income for producers, and remains affordable for consumers.

<sup>(21)</sup> [Youth Policy Dialogue in Agriculture](#)

<sup>(22)</sup> Proposed amendments to the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation aimed at strengthening farmers' position in contract negotiations, fostering cooperation, and improving price transmission. In parallel, new rules on cross-border enforcement under the Unfair Trading Practices Directive aim to better protect farmers. These efforts are complemented by the EU Agrifood Chain Observatory (AFCO), which will provide data on price formation to support fairer policy decisions.

<sup>(23)</sup> Synopsis report

<sup>(24)</sup> FADN data

In 2022, young farmers in the EU-24 faced a financing gap of EUR 14.1 billion, representing 22% of the sector's total shortfall, an increase of 11% since 2017 <sup>(25)</sup>. A new EIB fi-compass survey <sup>(26)</sup> shows no improvement in key sectors: cereals, oilseeds and protein crops face a EUR 4.9 billion gap; vegetables EUR 3.2 billion; and dairy cows EUR 0.4 billion. This growing gap underlines their central role in meeting the sector's investment needs and the urgency of addressing their financial constraints. The green transition, with its long adaptation timelines and inherent risks, is likely to further complicate access to credit, as financial institutions remain hesitant to support newcomers.

One of the most pressing issues is limited access to financial products tailored to their needs. They often **struggle to obtain long-term loans**, particularly those exceeding 12 years, due to a lack of collateral or credit history. To address these barriers, financial instruments such as loans and guarantees must be specifically designed for them. These instruments can support a wide range of investments, from business development and climate adaptation to digitalisation and the gradual acquisition of farms through share buyouts. Public-private partnerships and stronger collaboration with the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions can further ease access to finance, while counter-guarantees could offer untapped potential for Member States seeking to support generational renewal.

**Financing is essential especially in land acquisition.** Young farmers must be able to use EU co-financed instruments to purchase agricultural land without restrictive conditions. This would allow them to consolidate their operations and invest in long-term improvements such as soil health, agro-ecological practices, or carbon sequestration. Access to land remains a major hurdle and facilitating land purchase is critical to ensuring long-term viability.

In parallel, **investment in innovation and modern technologies** is essential to improve productivity, increase resilience, and support the green transition. Financing must go beyond conventional tools to enable young farmers to adopt new techniques, digital tools, and sustainable solutions that will allow them to meet the challenges of climate change and shifting market demands. This is particularly relevant for organic farming, where lower yields can heighten financial risk. In this regard, effective risk management instruments are crucial, and while the new transition payments of EUR 200,000 under the future CAP represent a good example for supporting organics and the transition, they remain clearly insufficient to address the scale of challenges faced

In addition, regulatory changes make it difficult for farmers to make long-term investments with confidence. They take loans based on current rules, only to face changes in those rules before their investments are paid off, undermining legal certainty and predictability. A more predictable agri-food sector for 2040, is therefore a key objective of the Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food. The Commission commits to long transition periods when considering regulatory changes affecting farms, such as for animal welfare.

Against this backdrop, CAP and national funding remains vital. Installation aid and targeted investment support are essential to help young farmers launch their businesses, build resilience, and manage both market and climate risks. Transition lump sums, such as those foreseen under the future CAP, could also play a valuable role in supporting farmers during the critical early stages of adaptation. Tailored financial tools and integrated support

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<sup>(25)</sup> Source (B1)

<sup>(26)</sup> Source pending

mechanisms will be key to unlocking the potential of the next generation and driving a sustainable transformation of EU agriculture.

**Flagship action**

- **Tripled maximum level of the CAP support (Gross Grant Equivalent) for setting up of young farmers when the support is provided through financial instruments** (from EUR 100 000 to EUR 300 000), enabling much higher loan volume per project and/or significant lowering of the interest-rate payments.
- **Increased investment support rate of up to 85% and option for Member States to set minimum spending levels or higher EU co-financing rates for this group.**

Actions in the CAP 2028-2034		
<b>Support for financial design and raising awareness</b>	Provide technical assistance for designing and implementing financial instruments tailored to young farmers. This includes coaching and support through platforms such as fi-compass, as well as enhanced communication and dissemination efforts under the CAP Network to raise awareness of financing opportunities.	Q2 2026 <sup>(27)</sup>
<b>Access to finance and improved risk management in Member State strategies and through the Starter Pack covered on page 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member States to integrate dedicated chapters on access to finance for young farmers within their generation renewal strategies, and to apply additional measures, such as higher grant rates or bonus points in project selection for underrepresented groups, with particular attention to young female farmers.</li> <li>• Provide Loan and Guarantee Funds dedicated to young farmers, including instruments with reduced interest rates, lower collateral, grace periods, and longer repayment periods, under Member States' national envelopes and via the tools under the Starter Pack, including for organic farming.</li> <li>• Utilise resources from European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) InvestEU Instrument as well as under the various ECF Policy Windows and project advisory for support of projects developed by young farmers or with a participation from young farmers.</li> </ul>	New CAP – as from 2028
<b>Working capital flexibility under CAP envelopes</b>	Enhancing the use and volume of working capital finance ensured by the increased maximum amount of CAP support to EUR 300.000 for three fiscal years, which would further increase the flexibility and the possibilities for young farmers when dealing with risk management and transition, under the national envelopes of Member States provided through the CAP simplification proposal in 2025.	New CAP – as from 2028
<b>Support for small-scale farming</b>	Prioritise small farms with CAP incentives to help young farmers enter and sustain smaller operations, which are vital for rural jobs and communities.	New CAP – as from 2028
<b>Actions under other EU Policies</b>		

<b>Dedicated EIB lending envelopes</b>	Promote and monitor EIB lending envelopes for agriculture and bioeconomy, including financing dedicated to young farmers. Ensure transparency and reporting of the specific expenditures benefiting this group.	2025-2027 and after/ New EU Bioeconomy Strategy
<b>Support under ECF InvestEU Instrument and EIB instruments</b>	Facilitate access to financing through financial instruments and develop specific financial products for young farmers under the ECF, in particular, guarantee and/or equity products to be developed with the EIF and EIB, allowing the purchase of farms by young farmers and the scaling up of innovative technologies	New MFF -- as from 2028
<b>Actions at Member State level</b>		Voluntary
<b>Enhancing credit access through promotional banks</b>	Partner with national promotional banks to develop schemes that improve access to credit for farmers.	From Q4 2025
<b>Business plans</b>	Advisory services to support young farmers in drafting and updating business plans.	From Q4 2025

## B. Access to knowledge and skills

**Young farmers encounter considerable challenges in accessing the tailored knowledge and support necessary to establish and maintain viable farms.** These challenges arise well before farm setup, navigating complex legal and financial frameworks and preparing business plans that balance economic viability with social and environmental sustainability. Without structured support systems providing training, advice, and mentoring before, during, and after farm establishment, the risk of failure increases.

In addition to business planning and development, agricultural education and advisory services need to adapt to emerging challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, digitalisation, or renewable energy integration. Financial literacy is equally crucial, enabling young farmers to manage investments, credit, and risk effectively, and to make informed decisions for long-term viability. Providing young farmers with the skills and tools to adopt agroecological practices, combine digitalisation with (scarce) labour, and engage in adding value through e.g. bioeconomy ventures is essential for the sustainable transformation of the sector. Lifelong learning opportunities, part-time training formats, exchanges, and digital tools are key to ensure knowledge and skills are accessible.

In addition, targeted efforts to include part time farmers, farm workers and women are essential to inclusivity and expanding opportunities. Mental health and well-being are increasingly acknowledged as important. Advisory networks need to be equipped to identify and address these concerns through integrated support systems, as it is proposed under the future CAP.

Collaborative platforms that encourage sharing of knowledge, equipment, and services help lower costs, strengthen community resilience, and foster innovation. Horizon Europe now includes a dedicated agriculture and bioeconomy window, creating new opportunities to connect CAP support with advanced research and innovation, ensuring young farmers can benefit directly from EU-funded solutions. Easier access to this knowledge, alongside initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity (EIP-

AGRI), and aligned CAP instruments, is necessary to enhance the ability of young farmers to adopt and develop solutions together.

Many farmers are also forest holders, making access to specialised forestry training, including safe work practices, crucial for proper forest management, rural resilience, and security in border areas.

Addressing these challenges is vital for modernising the agri-food sector, ensuring environmental sustainability, revitalising rural areas, and securing a promising and attractive career path for young farmers across Europe.

### **Flagship actions**

- **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) as a powerful tool to foster generational renewal in agriculture.** It is designed for entrepreneurs, allowing new and young farmers to gain vital business skills, confidence, and networks by working with experienced entrepreneurs in over 40 countries. The Commission aims to boost visibility in rural areas so more young and new farmers' benefit.
- **"Farmers of the future" best practices pack to all EU agricultural schools**  
The pack will give students clear, practical examples of modern farming approaches like diversification, digital tools, sustainability, and working together in new business models. These examples show that modern farming is innovative and connected to the wider economy. Including them in education helps students see farming as a dynamic, future-oriented career.

<b>Actions in the CAP</b>		
<b>Strengthen AKIS and advisory services for intergenerational collaboration</b>	Integrate under AKIS fund tailored training for young farmers to support generational renewal. Young farmers receive mentoring before and after farm setup, covering land access, business planning, technical, legal, and sustainability issues with focus on innovative solutions.	New CAP – as from 2028
<b>Actions under other EU Policies</b>		
<b>R&amp;I targeted to younger generations needs</b>	Use Horizon Europe funding to support generational renewal in the sector, by providing R&I adapted to the needs of young generations, by involving young farmers in the innovation process and by fostering related advisory services.	Horizon Europe Work Programme 2027
<b>Linking Retiring and Young Farmers</b>	Link retiring farmers with prospective new farmers, support agricultural education and entrepreneurship in rural areas at EU level. Building on MS initiatives, an EU network would connect national platforms.	Q3 2026
<b>Adapt ALMA to support young farmers</b>	ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) is an EU initiative helping NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education, or Training) gain skills and work experience abroad; adapting it for agriculture would boost rural opportunities. Adapt ALMA to fund personalised training, cross-border work placements, and coaching for young people interested in farming. Facilitate skills development and intergenerational knowledge exchange by pairing participants with experienced farmers as mentors. Integrate this ALMA-based approach into national AKIS to strengthen rural employment and generational renewal.	Q3 2026

Actions at Member State level		Voluntary
<b>Innovating Agri Skills</b>	Use Smart Specialisation, the Talent Platform, and the Agri-Food Pact for Skills to boost innovation, reskilling and upskilling, and talent retention in rural areas. Regions should prioritise agriculture and generational renewal in Smart Specialisation Strategies. Local authorities and training providers can use the Talent Platform to attract young people to farming through tailored education and mobility support. Agri-food actors should engage in the Pact for Skills to co-develop training and commit to upskilling young farmers, also in the use of innovative technologies.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Flexible and modernised agricultural education</b>	Adapt curricula and offer flexible formats with new or existing digital tools to meet part-time farming needs and address new challenges, including diversification and income strategies.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Targeted innovation support</b>	Boost young farmers' participation in EIP-AGRI Operational Groups with targeted information.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Support young farmer's organisation</b>	Steering funding and programs to support young farmers' organizations, ensuring their voices are heard.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Mental health awareness</b>	Train advisory staff on mental health and build local networks to identify issues and offer support through a one-stop-shop approach.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Action by stakeholders</b>		<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Peer learning for young farmers</b>	Young farmers' organisations, cooperatives, and partners to provide mentoring, training, and peer learning to strengthen young farmers' business and leadership skills.	From 2026

### C. Access to land

**Transfer of land is at the heart of generational renewal.** The challenge is illustrated by the imbalance in land tenure: while most older farmers own their land, younger generations are often confined to tenancy, operating 15 million hectares as tenants compared with 10 million as owners. Leasing offers a more accessible option for many new entrants, although short term leasing may limit their ability to invest and plan for the long-term.

While specific administrative schemes and provisions to facilitate farm transfer exist in some Member States, early succession is often challenging: administrative and fiscal disincentives discourage farmers from handing over their holdings before retirement. **More simplified rules and targeted incentives would make earlier transitions more attractive.**

Passing the farm after a farmer's decease is often hampered by complex legal frameworks and high tax burdens. Even where tax relief or simplified succession exists, traditional practices in some regions lead to fragmentation, complicating the consolidation of viable farming units. Member States should address these barriers to facilitate more effective land transfer to farmers. The Commission will therefore integrate economic and social aspects related to generational renewal in the European Semester to ensure that national policies are aligned with the EU objectives and that adequate reforms are put in place.

For those without inherited land, purchase is the main route into farming but also the most difficult. Prices average EUR 11,791 per hectare across the EU but reach more than EUR 280,000 in certain regions. With credit scarce, repayment terms heavy, and returns on investment often modest, young farmers face major entry barriers. Member States can ease this through affordable loan schemes, pre-emption rights, and dedicated matching mechanisms to connect retiring farmers or landowners with aspiring farmers. At the same time, they must act against speculative acquisitions and land grabbing to keep farmland available for farming.

Leasing offers a more accessible option, nearly half of EU farmland is rented, but short-term arrangements leave new entrants vulnerable. Stronger long-term contracts, combined with the prioritisation of young farmers in the allocation of municipal or public land, would improve stability and confidence.

Alternative models are also emerging, from land banks and community trusts to farm incubators. These need supportive legal frameworks and regional backing if they are to become viable at scale.

Land take reduces farmland availability. Ongoing conversion of agricultural land to urban and industrial uses inflates prices and limits access for young farmers. Member States should align with the EU goal of “no net land take by 2050” through stronger farmland protection in land-use planning.

Finally, land policy remains fragmented across the EU, which calls for stronger cooperation and data sharing across Member States. To support this, the Commission is developing the analytical basis for a **European Land Observatory** designed as a forum for discussion to help close information gaps and enhance transparency in land transactions, prices, use changes, and market trends. It will provide Member States with evidence and tools to design fairer and more effective measures, tailored to their national contexts while contributing to shared EU objectives including generational renewal.

**Flagship Action**

- *A **European Land Observatory** to improve land transparency, helping farmers access available land, supporting farm succession, informing policy, and preventing land speculation, making it easier for new entrants to start farming.*
- *The **European Semester** will ensure that national **land policies** address access barriers, prevent speculative acquisitions, and align with EU objectives for generational renewal.*

Actions in the CAP 2028-2034		
<b>Producer Organisation (PO) led support for farm succession</b>	Enable Producer Organisations to use Operational Programme funds to facilitate farm takeovers by young farmers or PO employees. Include flexible transfer models (sale, rent, profit-sharing) and tools to match retirees with successors.	New CAP as from 2028
Actions under other EU policies		

<b>Land market studies for generational renewal</b>	Conduct two interlinked studies to better understand land-related barriers to generational renewal in agriculture: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine the financialization of farmland and its socio-economic and environmental consequences through literature review and AI-supported analysis; and</li> <li>2. Analyse the evolution of farmland prices in relation to agro-environmental and social factors.</li> </ol>	By Q4 of 2026
<b>Actions for Member States</b>		<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Land services mobility</b>	Support confidential land mobility schemes that connect landowners with new entrants through leases, partnerships, share farming, and land-matching tools. Encourage legal frameworks that secure long-term leases and promote lease stability to enable gradual farm takeovers and investment by young farmers.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Alternative ownership and business transfer models</b>	Support intergenerational and worker-led ownership transfers, including worker buyouts where employees acquire farm shares. Prioritise support for models enabling gradual or collective ownership transitions.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Cooperative and community land management</b>	Promote cooperative and collective land management models that help young farmers access and lease land under fair terms. These models support joint investment, legal advice, and inclusive rural development, while reducing barriers to access beyond inheritance.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Land banks and reuse of abandoned land</b>	Support public land banks to manage and repurpose abandoned or fragmented land, easing access for young farmers and new entrants. Encourage cooperative leasing mechanisms where appropriate.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Involvement of state-owned financial institutions</b>	Encourage financial institutions, public or private, to support farmland access and development. These institutions would offer financial products like purchase loans, loan guarantees, and subsidized rates for land improvement and consolidation, helping young farmers overcome financial barriers and improve farm viability.	From 2025 Q4
<b>Lower land transaction costs for small farms</b>	Support reforms and subsidies to reduce high land registration and transaction costs, a major barrier for young farmers. To balance discouraging speculation without hindering new entrants, consider exempting or reducing fees for small farms, such as setting thresholds or making costs proportional to land size.	From 2025 Q4

#### **D. Resilience, fair living conditions, and access to new income opportunities**

**The renewal of farming depends not only on access to land, skills or finance but also on the overall economic opportunities in farming and attractiveness of rural life.** Many young people hesitate to stay in or return to farming and rural areas if earning opportunities, services, and quality of life lag behind urban standards. The CAP plays an essential role to ensure the economic viability of farming in the EU. Further, improving access to healthcare, childcare, eldercare, transport, housing, local infrastructure, education, and social support, delivered in flexible formats and strengthened by digital tools and community networks, is essential to make farming compatible with family life and to counter isolation and depopulation.

### Examples of Rural Services Supporting Farmers

- **Austria – Rural childcare cooperatives:** community-based childcare initiatives that allow farm families to balance family and work responsibilities.
- **Finland – Mobile healthcare and social service units:** bring essential health and social support directly to remote rural areas, improving quality of life and reducing pressure on farm households.

Stronger social protection tailored to farmers can also play a decisive role. Stable incomes, health coverage (including mental health), parental leave, and adequate pensions provide the security entrants need to take on risk and build careers in agriculture. Inclusive systems that also support part-time farmers, women, and vulnerable groups, and that address mental health challenges in rural areas, strengthen fairness and resilience across rural communities.

At the same time, economic diversification is central to resilience. Young farmers who can combine traditional farming with climate-smart practices, agritourism, renewable energy production, or digitalisation gain competitiveness and long-term viability. Local food systems, from short supply chains to community-supported agriculture, increase income stability and reinforce social ties, while entrepreneurship beyond farming creates additional livelihoods within rural areas. Funding opportunities for on-farm renewable energy installations can reduce upfront investment barriers and translate into long-term cost reductions, strengthening both farm viability and rural energy resilience.

One persistent challenge is perception: farming is still often seen as an outdated profession. Changing this image by showcasing innovation, sustainability, and available support will be crucial to attracting new generations.

Taken together, these measures create more vibrant, diverse, and resilient rural areas, places where young people want to live, work, and invest their future. This is the foundation for lasting generational renewal in European agriculture.

### Flagship actions

- **Farm relief services,** reintroducing support to help farmers take time off for illness, injury, parental responsibilities, caregiving, holidays, or training. Funding should cover the setup of relief services and wages for replacement workers during short-term absences.
- **Rural Youth Ambassadors.** The European Commission will establish a Rural Youth Ambassadors programme. Young individuals will be selected and supported to act as advocates for agriculture and rural life. Through outreach, storytelling, and peer engagement, the ambassadors will help reshape public perceptions, inspire greater interest among young people, and improve the overall image of farming and rural areas across Europe

Actions in the CAP 2028-2034		
Energy & climate transition investments	Support on-farm renewable energy projects and investments aligned with climate adaptation strategies to help young farmers build resilience to climate risks, and adaptation.	Current. new CAP. NRP

<b>Rural strategies, infrastructures and services</b>	Promote an integrated approach to rural areas in the national and regional partnership plans and the programming of integrated territorial development instruments, providing funding for rural infrastructure, especially in remote areas, including connectivity, to improve the viability of rural living.	NRP – as from 2028
<b>Business innovation and rural diversification</b>	Promote diversified bioeconomy and farming models through tailored CAP interventions and entrepreneurship initiatives. This includes agritourism, direct sales, short supply chains, biogas and biomass processing, by-product and waste valorisation, social economy projects, rural start-ups, and carbon/nature credits. These efforts create new income streams, reduce risk, support family businesses, and contribute to climate and sustainability goals.	Current and New CAP/ new EU Bioeconomy Strategy
<b>LEADER/CLLD</b>	Further support local rural development and networking through LEADER/CLLD, promoting youth and women's involvement and reducing rural isolation	Current and New CAP
<b>Actions under other EU Policies</b>		
<b>Competition Exemptions for Cooperation</b>	Make full use of exemptions under EU competition policy, including Article 210a of the CMO, to enable young farmers and their organisations to cooperate in areas such as joint marketing, supply management, and sustainability initiatives, without legal uncertainty, to strengthen their market position and resilience.	Q4 2025
<b>Promote social farming <sup>(28)</sup> via European Solidarity Corps</b>	Encourage volunteering in care and social farms by engaging the European Solidarity Corps, while supporting Member States in developing clear legal frameworks and practical support systems, such as voucher schemes and other initiatives, for young farmers providing social and care services in rural areas.	Q4 2026
<b>Carbon Farming, Markets, and Resilience</b>	The EU Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Certification (CRCF) Regulation connects farmers, foresters and land managers to carbon markets providing them with an additional income stream, strengthening their competitiveness and the resilience of their farms.	From Q4 2025
<b>Actions at Member State level</b>		<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>local value-added in food systems</b>	Supporting local and regional food strategies and food-related innovation strategies, promote direct sales through local and on-farm markets, helping young farmers access opportunities and encouraging community-based farming, processing and retail.	From Q4 2025
<b>Promotion by food chain actors and retailers</b>	Expand promotion policies to not only market products but also highlight farming as a career to the public. Involve all food chain actors by offering technical support, promoting young farmers' products in stores, and providing advance payments.	From 2026, in line with "buy European Food" campaign
<b>Social Security</b>	Ensure stability, close gender gaps, and support life transitions through inclusive social security for farmers, including women, retirees, and people with disabilities.	From Q4 2025

<sup>(28)</sup> Social farming (or *care farming*) refers to the use of farming activities to provide health, social or educational services for vulnerable groups, while at the same time diversifying farm activities and contributing to rural development.

## E. Succession and retirement

Pension schemes and succession planning are fundamental to securing generational renewal in agriculture. Across the EU, many older farmers delay retirement because of inadequate pension coverage and a lack of viable alternatives to farm income. This financial insecurity often leads to reluctance in transferring land or stepping back from active work, ultimately reducing land mobility and blocking opportunities for younger farmers to enter and establish themselves in the sector.

The CAP often plays a social role in this context. For many older farmers without adequate pension entitlements, CAP payments represent a substitute form of pension income, becoming a safety net. This highlights the need for complementary national measures to strengthen social protection and retirement options specifically tailored to farmers.

Succession planning is equally essential yet remains a significant obstacle. Without legal and advisory support, farm transfer can be delayed or poorly managed, causing conflict and uncertainty. Early and planning for long-term viability, while allowing older generations to exit gradually and on their own terms.

To address these systemic barriers, the Commission will integrate the social and economic dimensions of retirement and succession into the European Semester. This will ensure that national pension and succession policies are aligned with EU objectives, and that reforms adequately support timely farm transfers, land mobility, and income security for retiring farmers.

### Examples of Pension Systems Supporting Generational Renewal

- **Austria** – The *Farmers' Social Insurance Act (BSVG)* offers flexible retirement options, including early old-age and heavy labour pensions, tailored to the physical demands of farming. Pensions are often linked to formal succession, encouraging timely farm transfer while securing income for retirees.
- **France & Finland** – Tailored pension schemes provide similar support, showing how adapted social protection can facilitate generational renewal in agriculture.

Successful systems share key features: they include all family members in coverage to avoid contribution gaps; offer flexible, income-based or flat-rate contributions to reflect farm income variability; and rely on public subsidies, rightly viewed as investments in rural equity and food security. Clear legal definitions and fair means-testing further ensure inclusivity.

Ultimately, investing in adequate and stable pension systems for farmers is not only a matter of social justice: it is a strategic lever for ensuring generational renewal, land mobility, and the long-term sustainability of EU agriculture.

### Flagship actions

- *Linking direct payments to farmers' pension age by 2032. Farmers at retirement age receiving a pension will no longer get direct payments, encouraging older farmers to retire*
- *Integrating into the **European Semester** aspects on generational renewal on succession, embedding pension, retirement, and farm transfer reforms into national policy frameworks will facilitate timely succession, land mobility, and income security for retiring farmers.*

<b>Actions in the CAP 2028-2034</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Support farm succession planning through AKIS</b>	Provide targeted training and advisory services through AKIS to support smooth and timely farm succession. Older farmers should receive guidance on legal, financial, and inheritance planning, while young farmers are trained in succession frameworks, business continuity and modernisation plans, and negotiation skills. Facilitate joint planning sessions between generations, supported by trained advisors or mediators, to develop clear and realistic transition plans.	New CAP – as from 2028
<b>Actions under other EU Policies</b>		
<b>Improve knowledge on Tax and Farm Succession</b>	Study on how inheritance and gift tax policies influence farm succession across Member States, drawing on evidence from the European Land Observatory. Identify fiscal and legal barriers that delay or complicate timely transfers, providing a basis for reforms that facilitate earlier retirement, smoother succession, and more effective generational renewal.	Starting in Q4 2026
<b>Exchange of best practices</b>	To support the linking to direct payments with pension age, promote exchange of best practices on tailored social security schemes via a joint discussion with Member States.	Q2 2026
<b>Actions at Member State level</b>		<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Pension Schemes</b>	Design and introduce (where necessary) pension schemes that provide adequate retirement security for older farmers and farm workers. Coverage should include all family members to prevent contribution gaps, and public subsidies should be seen as investments in rural equity and food security.	From Q4 2025
<b>Legislation for Renewal</b>	Adopt legislative measures in areas such as taxation, inheritance, and land transfer, that facilitate passing farm assets from one generation to the next.	From Q4 2025
<b>Action by stakeholders</b>		<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Collaborative intergenerational farm succession</b>	Farmers' organisations, representing both older and younger generations, together with cooperatives, advisory services, and rural networks, to collaborate on intergenerational cooperation and provide training on farm transmission, succession planning, and the legal/financial aspects of handover.	From Q4 2025

## CONCLUSION

The Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture is built around key flagships supported by a comprehensive set of actions implemented at three interconnected levels: measures under the current and future CAP<sup>(29)</sup>, initiatives within other EU policies, and actions led by Member States, which hold exclusive competence in crucial areas like access to land, tax policy, education, and pensions, and stakeholders. Overcoming major barriers requires strong national and regional engagement.

<sup>(29)</sup> Several of the actions presented in the text boxes and tables build on the proposals set out in the post-2027 CAP and MFF framework. As these proposals are subject to the co-decision procedure, their final content will depend on the outcome of the legislative process.

The Commission proposes that all Member States are required to develop their own **integrated generational renewal strategy for agriculture by 2028 as part of their national and regional partnership plans**, combining actions under EU agricultural policy, national rural policies, as well as fiscal and social frameworks. The Commission calls on Member States to tailor measures to their specific needs, acknowledging the diverse agricultural systems and rural realities across Europe.

Achieving the Strategy's goals requires **close cooperation between national and regional authorities and farmers of all generations, backed by political leadership, dedicated funding, and long-term commitment from all actors**. These factors are vital to design effective, context-specific interventions and to unlock the potential of the next generation.

Complementing these efforts, communication, promotion, and support for farm diversification raise the profile of farming as a meaningful and viable career, while emphasising the wider societal importance of generational renewal for the future of Europe's food systems and rural communities.

Reflecting this ambition, the Strategy sets an **aspirational target to double the current share of young farmer in the EU by 2040 up from the current 12%**, and in line with the goal of dedicating at least 6% of agricultural spending to generational renewal, particularly important for those Member States that are lagging in this area.

The Commission will continue its engagement with young farmers and envisages to take stock on progress during a final youth policy dialogue in the spring of 2029 at the end of the current College mandate.